

The Kaskaskia Manuscripts:
Illinois' French Notarial Archive

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Old Kaskaskia, the villages of Chartres and St. Philippe have all vanished, fallen victim to the Mississippi River. But, most unexpectedly, in Chester, Illinois, the county seat of Randolph County, the earliest records of the French habitants did survive the river's ravages. Today they form a heterogeneous group of more than six thousand documents, dating from 1714 to 1816. These Kaskaskia Manuscripts, as they are known, are primarily notarial acts, a legacy to us of France's ancient civil law tradition.

The first people of European origin to make their homes in the mid-Mississippi valley were the French. In the early years of the eighteenth century small settlements began to dot the banks of the Mississippi in the country of the Illinois. They formed links in a fragile chain connecting Canada's old towns of Quebec and Montreal with the young and struggling Gulf port of New Orleans. Perched on the threshold of the vast, unexplored wilderness of the American West, hundreds of miles from the established European centers of the Atlantic seaboard, the tiny villages of Cahokia, Kaskaskia and later Fort de Chartres, Prairie du Rocher, St. Philippe and Ste. Geneviève quietly prospered, and shared the bounty of their wheat and game with New Orleans and other more needy settlements downriver. Illinois settlers were among the first European explorers of the great western river system, traders with the Native American tribes of the Plains, miners and farmers. Their story, although not well known, is important in American history.

Already three centuries old when Quebec was founded in 1608, the notarial system of record keeping is based on the full and complete recording of all business transactions. To it is due the creation of an amazingly large number of documents: the notaries of Paris, in the 125 years prior to 1608, produced documents at such a rate that seventeen million of them survive today.¹ And so from Quebec to New Orleans are scattered the remnants of many notarial files. The forty-eight notaries, who practiced in the town of Quebec before the conquest left most of their work to us, about 75,000 documents. Montreal's fifty-one notaries gave us slightly fewer, about 60,000.

To most of us whose native legal tradition is that of Anglo-American common law, the notary is an unfamiliar figure. But in France's North American colonies especially, he was of great importance because by law no professionally trained lawyers were allowed to practice in the colonies. The ministers of Louis XIV regarded the members of the bar as an unproductive and potentially destabilizing force in colonial affairs, as emphatically expressed in the Royal Instruction to Bienville, governor of Louisiana, dated September 2, 1732.

He must also prevent lawyers and attorneys from being tolerated in the colony except for the purpose of making settlements in it and without taking part in lawsuits directly or indirectly. Experience has shown only too clearly how dangerous people of this sort are for colonies where chicanery is even more baneful than the obstacles that it brings to commerce and to the cultivation of the fields from which it diverts the settlers than by the immense expenses that it causes them.²

The notary was the primary legal representative charged with properly drawing up, registering and preserving all the forms and public records required by law and to maintain his records to be retrievable on demand. This was no trivial task, for by the end of the seventeenth century a multitude of document types had evolved: various acts, the *acte de tutelle*, the *acte de société* and the *acte de caution*, many contracts such as the ubiquitous *contrat de mariage*, the *déclaration*, *donation*, *échange*, *engagement*, *inventaire*, *obligation*, *partage*, *procès verbal*, *procuration*, *quittance*, *testament*, *vente*, and so on. The notary was also required to keep annual lists of his past and current notarial acts, plus a number of other registers required by law.

Several of these records of acts or notaries' lists have been found in the Kaskaskia Manuscript collection that serve as a reference and guide to the extant documents and to those that have not survived. One of the remaining registers is a portion of the *Registre des Insinuations des donations au siège des Illinois*, the record of the registrations of donations. The Custom of Paris that regulated the legal system in the colonies required all contractual donations be registered in order to be valid. This *Registre* discussed by Clarence Alvord in detail in one of his early articles³ is in the holdings of the Illinois State Archives and is called the Perrin Collection.

The fifteen men who acted as notaries over the years in the towns of Kaskaskia and Fort de Chartres were for the most part inexperienced and untrained. The only requirements for office were age (twenty-five), good moral character, and literacy.⁴ Fortunately there were some aids available to the novice notary. In New Orleans, by the year 1763 at least, an edition of a standard text of notarial forms was in use, *Le Nouveau parfait notaire* by C. de Ferrière.⁵ Three of these sample "fill-in-the-blanks" forms have been located in Illinois. One illustrates the proper form for a power-of-attorney in case of nonpayment of debt, having survived because the back was used in 1750 for a promissory note.⁶ Two other forms from 1738 for the sealing and unsealing of property prior to an official inventory dated are among the Kaskaskia and Cahokia Papers of the Schmidt Collection at the Chicago Historical Society.⁷

One of the Illinois notaries, usually the one at Fort de Chartres, served concurrently as *greffier* or clerk of the court recording the acts and judgments of the Provincial Council, an institution unique to Illinois in all of French colonial North America. His duties included maintaining a number of registers and acts serving as a depository for the records and minutes of deceased notaries. Very little of this sort of documentation and few other records of the civil and military administration of the Illinois district exist in the Kaskaskia Manuscripts, because notarial archives are by their very nature private rather than public records.

In addition to the register of donations previously mentioned, part of another *greffier's* register is extant, called a Hearings Register or *Registre d'Audience*.⁸ In it the clerk Barrois entered thirty-four items during the years 1737 through 1743, the majority of them being the election of guardians for minor heirs, the exercise by widows of the renunciation clause in their marriage contracts, and sworn statements attesting to the comprehensiveness of property inventories. Although few of the official records of the Provincial Council are among the collection's manuscripts, there are a significant number of petitions made to the Council by individuals. These were executed by the notary and kept in his files and they provide information on the Council's day-to-day deliberations.

After a notary's death his files like all his other possessions were inventoried. Those from the estates of three deceased notaries have been located. The inventory of the late Leonard Billeron of

Kaskaskia has a list of 243 individual instruments.⁹ This particular document allows conclusions to be drawn about how M. Jerome ordered his files. In 1741 the widow of Jerome *dit* Roussilliet had her husband's notarial papers inventoried before selling them to another notary for 100 livres.¹⁰ Fifteen different notaries are known to have served in the Illinois (Table 1, p. 6). When a notary was unavailable, the parish priest might draw up and sign documents. The documents written by the priest later were certified and deposited with the notary.

The first notary in Illinois was Nicolas Michel Chassin whose official position was Keeper of the Royal Storehouse. He was not a professional notary, but because no other was available, he appears to have served in this capacity from at least March 1723 to February 1725, when he turned his papers over to the Sieur Duvernay, the notary from the first few months of 1725 until August 7th of the same year, when he transferred his records, Chassin's, and a group of Buffreau de Bellegarde's to Andre Perillau. Bellegarde had been certified as a notary by Boisbriant on April 11, 1724. There is no list of Bellegarde's acts. Perillau made a copy of the inventories of Chassin and Duvernay.

Perillau was clerk of the court as well as notary and appears to have been active between 1724 and 1726, but there is no inventory of his acts. The next notary was Jean Baptiste Placet(t), who acted between 1724 and June 1732 when he apparently returned to France on personal business.¹¹ He turned the registry over to Jacques Jerome Rousilliet, generally known as Jerome, who in his turn made a list of Placet's documents. Jerome handled numerous transactions at the village of Chartres until 1741 when he was reported to have run away into the woods and found dead.¹² The cause of his flight and death are not known, but his writing noticeably deteriorates towards the end of his life. He may have been suffering from some illness.

While Jerome was working at Fort de Chartres, Leonard Billeron *dit* La Fatigue was the notary at Kaskaskia, serving from 1734 until his death in 1738. Billeron was not as well educated as Jerome and much of his French is written phonetically. An inventory of Billeron's documents was made in February of 1738 by Fr. Tartarin S.J., priest at the church Kaskaskia, by his widow Marie Catois, Paul Ponge and by the notary Jean Baptiste Berthlot Barrois. An additional list of Billeron's documents dated between 1734 and 1737 was prepared by Barrois in 1741. This list included not only Jerome's acts but those of the preceding notaries whose papers Jerome had incorporated in his file. Barrois also did an alphabetical index by topic of his own acts for the years 1737 through 1757 "in order to facilitate reference."¹³

Joseph La Buxiere was Clerk of the Court and notary from 1757 to 1765. Louis Cabazier apparently served as a temporary notary, first under Barrois and then under La Buxiere. He drew up documents in Kaskaskia from 1756 to 1765 and then in Ste. Genevieve until 1769. However, he appears to have acted only as a designated substitute in the absence of the official notary. In 1765 Joseph La Buxiere turned over the records to Captain Sterling of the British occupying forces. Jean Baptiste Senet was the notary at Cahokia in 1765 and Jean Louis Robinet was the notary at Ste. Genevieve around 1766-67. Vivault Lesperance continued as Notary during the British period, serving from 1764 until his death in 1775. A list of his acts is extant (See Table 1, p.6). During Lesperance's time, Fort de Chartres was abandoned by the British due to its imminent destruction by flood and the official military government was removed to Kaskaskia; presumably the documents had been transferred. The next notary was Francois Carbonneaux who served until 1784. The last French notary was Pierre Langlois until his death in 1789. There is no list of his acts. Later Carbonneaux came out of

retirement to act as Clerk of the Virginia court. La Buxiere continued to work in Cahokia, perhaps until his death in 1791.

In the political and administrative turmoil of the next twenty-five years, it is astonishing that any records at all were made or preserved in the Illinois. On June 12, 1790, those documents which had survived this critical period were given by François Carbonneaux, the clerk of the Virginia court at Kaskaskia, to William St. Clair, the first recorder of the newly established county of St. Clair.

Notaries				
Name	Dates	Document	Copy made by	Catalogue number
N. M. Chassin	March 1723-Feb. 1725	1 pg. 2 sides	Perillau 1725	25:2:19:2
Buffreau de Bellegarde	Ap. 1724-1725	—	—	—
Du Vernay	?Feb. 1725-Aug. 1725	1 folded sheet 4 sides	Perillau 1725	25:8:7:1
Andre Perillau	?1725-?	—	—	—
J. B. Placet	1724-1732	8½ pages	Jerome 1732	41:11:8:2
L. Billeron	1734-1738	18 pgs.	Barrois 1738	38:2:11:1
L. Billeron	1734-1738	5½ pages	Barrois 1741	41:11:8:2
J. Jerome	1725-1741	22½ pages	Barrois 1741	41:11:8:2
Barrois	1737-1757	58 pages	—	64:—:—:15
L. Cabazier	1765-1769	—	—	—
J. B. Senet	1765-?	—	—	—
J. L. Robinet	?1766-1767?	—	—	—
La Buxiere	1757-1765	—	—	—
Lesperance	1764-1775	16 pages	—	75:2:20:1
Carbonneaux	1778-1784	48 pages	—	84:—:—:6
Anglois	1784-1789	—	—	—

TABLE 1: Notaries

With the creation of the Kaskaskia Land District Office by an act of Congress of March 26, 1804, the old French documents became the object of much scrutiny and manipulation. From 1804 until 1813 two consecutive Boards of Commissioners received and examined claims based on French and British grants. During this process part of the original French records may have been lost or destroyed. Many, however, were copied first, generating a large body of new documentation. These records now form Record Group 952 in the Illinois State Archives.

In 1812 the Territorial Legislature at Kaskaskia passed an “Act for the removal and safe keeping of the ancient Records and Papers in this Territory,”¹⁴ ordering the Randolph County Recorder to deliver to the Secretary of the Territory all his records dated earlier than July 13, 1787. When Illinois became a state in 1818 they were housed in the Office of the Secretary of State in Kaskaskia and were removed with that office to the new state capitol at Vandalia.¹⁵ Then in January of 1821 another “Act concerning ancient Books, Papers and Records” ordered their return to the recorder of Randolph County at Kaskaskia. In 1848 the growing danger from the Mississippi River forced the removal of the county seat from Kaskaskia to Chester, and there the Kaskaskia manuscripts finally came to rest.

The State Legislature again took notice of the manuscripts in 1855 in an “Act to authorize the transcribing of certain records in Randolph county” which ordered William Henry, Esquire, of Prairie du Rocher to translate the records pertaining to land titles from French to English “in record books from A to L.”¹⁶ Presumably the transcription of Books “A” through “L” did take place, but only Books “G, I, J, K,” and “L” are now extant either in copy or in the original. Two volumes of translations of original French documents are presently in Chester, translations verified by Henry as Commissioner. Most of the original French documents translated in Henry’s two volumes still exist.

By 1879 according to Edward G. Mason all of the ancient records¹⁷ had been lost or destroyed with the exception of John Todd's Record Book along with a few documents that he secured for the Chicago Historical Society. The Record Book remains today at the Chicago Historical Society. It appears that this acquisition also may be the source of the other Kaskaskia documents now among its holdings.

Until 1905, Illinois historians assumed that the French records were completely lost. Then Clarence Alvord acting for the Illinois State Historical Library, went to Chester to attempt to locate the records, which he had reason to suspect were still in existence. Three record books were found promptly. Then "on top of the cases in the Circuit Clerk's office, behind a cornice which surmounts them, were found three large sacks and four paper packages full of old papers."¹⁸ Then, according to Alvord:

...the old French papers with other court and county records, old ledgers, daybooks and rubbish such as accumulates in a courthouse were left in the dry goods boxes, in which they had been brought from Kaskaskia. For about ten years these stood in the hall of the building, exposed to the depredations of the passerby. About 1868 they were placed on the landing of the staircase. Some time prior to 1878, the deputy circuit clerk packed the old papers in sacks and packages, which he placed on top of the bookcase in his office.¹⁹

A committee appointed by the County Commissioners counted 2950 documents dating from 1720 to 1790 prior to their loan to the University of Illinois for study. At the University the documents were unfolded and in many cases silked for preservation. In general, the quality of the preservation is excellent and the wheat mixture adhesive used for silking is not acidic. However, "tidying" of the documents included trimming irregular edges, in some cases resulting in the loss of a line. Pages with the *endossement*, the notary's brief file statement, but otherwise blank, were trimmed to leave only the written portion, thus acquiring scarce paper for further use.

Alvord sorted the documents into three categories: Commercial, Public and Private Papers. They were given a penciled date in English (not infrequently incorrect), mounted typically in groups of two, three or four on large sheets of paper and then divided into bundles of 100 to 200 sheets, wrapped in canvas and placed in stout wooden cases. When the records were returned to Chester by the University there were twelve boxes of commercial papers, five boxes of public papers and six boxes of private papers. The rationale for this sorting of the documents has never been quite clear. Later the dating and chronological arrangement of some records were found to be faulty. In the preface to his 1909 edition of the *Kaskaskia Records, 1778-1790*, Clarence Alvord explained that he did not choose to publish the great majority of the manuscripts from the Kaskaskia collection because:

...these are all of a private character, such as marriage contracts, settlements of estates, petitions to the Court in private law suits, etc., the printing of which would add very little to the knowledge of the history of the period. Some time in the future a calendar of these will be made and printed, which will serve the purposes of the genealogist, the antiquarian, and possibly the historian of economic conditions.²⁰

Estimates of Record Survival

The 1722 regulations establishing the Provincial Council in the Illinois directed the clerk, Perillau, to keep a register of the deliberations of the Council and to make copies to be forwarded to New Orleans to the Superior Council and to France.²¹ In Jerome's copy of Placet's records he listed: (1) *un livre des deliberations et jugements du Conseil provincial et de m^r Chassin juge*; (2) *un autre idem des terres consedee*; (3) *un autre idem de reponses aux requestes des plusieurs habitans*. The inventory of Jerome's acts includes: *un Etat des terre concedees au nom de la comp. Royal des Indes* (in Placet's inventory this is number 2); and lastly *un Registre d'audience de fort de Chartres* (in Placet's inventory this is possibly Number 1). Among the records thought to be lost but found by Alvord in 1905, he notes a book entitled *Registre d'audience de la Jurisdiction Royale des Illinois*, which lists records from the French period and also a record from the Clerk of the Virginia Court.²² He also listed pages that were fragments of the *Registre d'audience*; five executed by Lefebvre, eleven by Buchet, and three by Flaucour. The Historical Survey Library project at the University of Illinois referred to these documents as "Record Book 2".

In the Chester Courthouse there is now a parchment cover entitled *Registre d'Audience de la Jurisdiction Royale des Illinois 1737-1743*. Although the cover was empty when found during the calendaring project, apparently at one time it had contained the records Alvord mentions. In association with the parchment cover was a manila envelope with twenty-one leaves paraphed by De La Loire on both sides. The verso of leaf 21 is numbered 22, and is labeled *Extraits des Registres du District des Kaskaskias en La comte des Illinois*. These pages are signed by Langlois. The first page of this folio has a notation that there are thirty-six pages, but pages 25-34 are now missing. In the same manila envelope, five of Lefebvre's pages and eleven of Buchet's remain. Those documents appear to be the ones mentioned by Alvord; the three additional ones by Flaucour do not seem to be extant. The empty cover titled *Registre d'Audience* may be equated with the register of the Court of Fort de Chartres found on the inventory of the contents of Jerome's office. However, the earlier materials that would have been contained on Placet's inventory and passed on to Jerome are missing and the register cannot be identified on St. Clair's list.

Probably the most important register was Placet's Register Number 2, the record of the Land Grants. In 1740 the Governor of Louisiana directed that a land Register be kept for all concessions and directed that the inhabitants bring in their titles to be verified and entered in the Register.²³ The *Papier Terrier*, as it was called, was in existence at least until 1812, when it was referred to as the Concession Book²⁴ and possibly until 1855, when Books A-L were copied. When the Kaskaskia Land Office opened, the ancient grants were examined. Presumably this is where the information noted in the margins of the maps in the *American State Papers*²⁵ was obtained. Only a few pages of the *Papier Terrier* survive today. One page is signed by Des Ursins who was in the Illinois between 1721 and 1724; another page has notes from the Kaskaskia Land Office at the bottom. A few grants from Cahokia were copied by John Hay in 1807 (seven pages), who stated that the copies were made from a book filed in his office which was inscribed on the cover "Grants made by Messrs. Noyon and Bobe." Noyon de Villiers was commandant at Fort de Chartres between 1756 and 1764. A few other grants noted as being from the *Papier Terrier* are copied into the Kaskaskia Record Books now in the Illinois State Archives. St. Clair stated that he had received four bundles of land records. But the *Papier Terrier* was not found at Chester or at the State Archives with the Kaskaskia Land Office Records, and presumably is lost.

Another register required by law was the record of gifts given by individuals, such as those in marriage contracts. The *Registre des Insinuations des Donations aux Sieges des Illinois* was inspected, verified and paraphed several times between 1738 and 1746 by De La Loere and then returned to Barrois, the Clerk of Court.²⁶ La Buxiere received the volume when he assumed the office of Clerk. He then took the *Registre des Insinuations* with him in 1765 when he left for St. Louis and again to Cahokia when he moved there. The book has been preserved in the Illinois State Archives in the Perrin Collection.

In Chester there is a parchment cover labeled *Contenant Les Registres du Greffe et Les Papiers consernants la sucesion J B Turpin*, which may have originally contained the Turpin estate papers and Jerome's own listing of his transcriptions but not the extant one written by Barrois in 1741. Apparently sometime after 1741 the Turpin estate papers were sent down to the Superior Council in New Orleans. Some are presently in the collections of the Louisiana Historical Society.

No other registers of the French regime are extant nor are the copies supposedly forwarded to France. It is not clear whether *Record Books A to L* mentioned in the 1855 Illinois Law represent documents from the French period (see footnote 16). *Book G* includes both French and English records, but *I, J, K, L* are entirely in English. *Record Book G* can be identified with a register listed by St. Clair as "the book ending with page 444." When Alvord saw this volume, he noted that *Book G 1768-1775* was written on the cover.²⁷ This volume is presently bound in dark green cloth and is stamped on the spine in gold letters *Kas. Mss. Record Bk. I*. One additional page has been bound with the volume in error and does not belong in the Register. In 1855 most deeds in English from this volume have been transcribed into a bound deed book and labeled *G, I, J, K* in 1855, presently in the County Clerk's office.

The deeds in the French language in *Book G* have not been transcribed or translated by William Henry. *Book G* also can be identified as Folio 1 and Folio 5. At the top of page 190 in *Book G* is the lable Folio 1. At the page's bottom is the notation *en registre au greffe a la page cent quatre vingt dix folio premiere par moi greffier au Kaskaskias Le juillet 1783 Pre Langlois*. Some documents in books *A-D* in the Illinois State Archives contain notations that Langlois recorded them in Folio 1 and Folio 5 on certain pages. These documents occur on the appropriate page in *Book G*. However, similar references to Folio 3 at pages 14, 15, 16 do not correspond to *Book G* from which pages 15 and 16 are missing. Another reference to Folio 2, pages 11, 12, 13, does not correspond to the documents in *Book G*.

Other multiple references due to copying and recopying of documents can be illustrated by the record of a deed from Cadron to Franks done on August 8, 1771. The deed is found on pages 196-200 in *Record Book I / Book G*. The 1855 copy of this deed is in *Book G, I, J, K* at page 34 and also refers to *Book G*, pages 196-200. In *Kaskaskia Record Book C* at the Illinois State Archives, beginning on page 260, there is also a reference to Folio 5, pages 196-200.

The original volumes of *I, J, and K* are preserved in the County Clerk's office in Chester and are now contained in metal binders. *Book I* is labeled 1795-1799; *Book J*, 1779-1803; and *Book K*, 1797-1806. In 1855 these volumes were combined and copied into the volume now labeled *G, I, K*. Volume *L* is for the year 1805 and is labeled Deed Record 1794-1805; most of the documents are sheriff's sales. There is another bound volume *L* which begins with deeds from 1806. The whereabouts of *Books A, B, C, D, E, F, and H* in either original or copy are unknown. The Illinois State Archives books despite being labeled *Kaskaskia Record Books* are not those and do not contain those books. These books at the

Archives do refer to the missing registers and include deeds taken from them. As an example, there is a notation about *Estrais des Papier Terrier livre E page 31* in *Kaskaskia Record Book A*, page 155-156.

Kaskaskia Record Books — Chester				
Original volume	1855 copy	Pages	Missing pages	Comments
A				
B				
C				
D				
E				
F				
G	G,I,J,K (English only)	444	15-50; 113-116; 144-147; 419-420	Also called Kas, Rec. Bk. I
H				
I	G,I,J,K	270	255, 256	1795-1799
J	G,I,J,K	237	159 used twice	1779-1803
K	G,I,J,K	261	1-4; 5&6 reversed twice	1797-1806
L		172	68-108; 125-128	1794-1805
L		451	between 3&4 are 2 pages (4 sides) unnumbered	1806

Kaskaskia Record Books — State Archives		
A	copied Aug. 29, 1804 to April 30, 1805	Vol. 45
B	copied June 5, 1805 to Sept. 18, 1806	Vol. 46
C	copied Dec. 31, 1804 to Oct. 16, 1805	Vol. 47
D	copied Feb. 4, 1806 to June 10, 1814	Vol. 48
(A, B and D. were copied by George Ryan; C. by John Hay)		

Table 2: Record Books

Alvord attempted to make an estimate of the total number of documents produced in the Illinois country based on the notarial lists, especially Barrois'. In the end however he concluded that he could not accurately estimate the original quantity of material. Although it is not possible to venture any better guess than he of the total original number of documents, we are in a position to estimate the number of documents that have survived in relation to the quantity known to have been in existence on the notarial lists.

All the extant notary lists were used in the creation of the calendar. Because the later notarial lists incorporated the earlier ones, extensive crosschecking was necessary to eliminate multiple references to the same document. Existing documents were found on notary lists either from the *endossement* on the back of the document or from the content of the transaction itself. Of course some documents were not found on any notary lists because all lists did not survive. The most severe loss for the French regime was La Buxiere's list.

All documents collected for the calendar were checked against the notary lists. If no document corresponding to the notary entry was found, that entry became the calendar reference for the missing text. Since some of the notaries' lists do not include dates, the calendar entries from these lists had to be assigned a block of time. A sample date for this sore of entry is 1723-25:3.

The production of the calendar has made possible a better assessment of the number of original records existing through 1784. The total is 6,111. Over half of the known records are still in existence.²⁸ How or at what rate losses occurred cannot be determined. Mr. Henry copied 1,032 documents between 1855 and 1857; forty-eight of those are no longer in the Kaskaskia Manuscript Collection.

Extant documents	Notary List	Total known to have existed	Extant documents	Notary List	Total known to have existed
1708	1	1	1750 18	84	102
1714 1		1	1751 28	97	125
1716 1		1	1752 29	92	121
1718 1		1	1753 29	59	88
1719	1	1	1754 9	82	91
1720 2	3	5	1755 45	85	130
1721 4	7	11	1756 40	51	91
1722 14	40	54	1757 33	6	39
1723 69	10	79	1758 33	51	84
(1720-23)	(5)	(5)	1759 43		43
1724 56	5	61	1760 54		54
1725 137	5	129	1761 48		48
(1723-25)	(19)	(19)	1762 39		39
1726 87	7	94	1763 54		54
1727 18	8	26	1764 31		31
1728 46	8	54	1765 19	19	38
1729 23	11	36	1766 23	23	46
1730 54	3	57	1767 24	24	48
1731 44	7	51	1768 18	18	36
1732 6	38	44	1769 15		15
1733 44	9	53	1770 98		98
1734 14	99	113	1771 36	1	37
1735 10	41	51	1772 16	1	17
1736 13	113	126	1773 29	1	30
1737 176	71	247	1774 58	1	59
1738 96	123	219	(1764-74)	(139)	(139)
(1735-38)	(104)	(104)	1775 59		59
1739 192	85	277	1776 45		45
1740 281	34	315	1777 16		16
1741 237	63	300	1778 11		11
1742 21	145	166	1779 92		92
1743 117	66	183	1780 17		17
1744 89	52	141	1781 87		87
1745 95	58	153	1782 175		175
1746 88	43	131	1783 87	31	118
1747 117	24	141	1784 16	74	90
1748 131	28	159			
1749 12	58	70			
			Total 3,770	2,368	6,138
			279 (additional documents after 1784)		
			4,049	Alvord (ms.) listed 3,373 extant documents at Chester (Dr. Belting, letter 10 September 1979).	

Table 3: Estimated Numbers of Documents

Sidney Breese in his *Early History of Illinois*²⁹ translated four documents. Three of these have not been found including an important document concerning the Kaskaskia Commons. Tales of people having helped themselves to bundles of papers while the boxes sat in the hallway of the old county courthouse may be true. The large group of documents from 1738 at the Chicago Historical Society suggests that a collector may have acquired a bundle, later donating it to the Society. On the other hand it is also possible that these were part of the group of "old papers" acquired by the Historical Society in 1880.

Early Microfilm

In 1939 Dr. Natalia Belting microfilmed a part of the collection as a preliminary to writing *Kaskaskia Under the French Regime*.³⁰ Then in 1950 a large wooden box full of papers found in the

Circuit Clerk's office in Chester was taken to Southern Illinois University to be reviewed, photographed and returned to Chester. In 1952 the Illinois Historical Library microfilmed records from Chester including some early French period documents, and also the contents of a black metal boxes in the Circuit Clerk's office, a variety of records from the 19th century and a selection of materials found by Caldwell.³¹ Approximately 6% of the documents from the 1952 group were filmed at this time, the majority of which were dated after 1775. Mr. Ernest East prepared a microfilm of all the Randolph County records for the Illinois State Archives in 1952. The filming totaled 47 reels; the Caldwell papers were on reels 10, 11 and 12. Filmed on reels 39 and 40 were miscellaneous documents of 1795-1799 and Estate Papers. The final two reels of the 47 were condensed into a single reel, numbered 39; number 40 was left unused.³² Later information was received about another 5-reel set of microfilms done in the 1940's by Ed Hummel of the National Park Service at the request of Charles Peterson. In a personal communication Natalia Belting said that this work must have been done after the war because while she was working on her dissertation in 1940 she had not found any microfilm.³³ At that time she had worked with the contents of the Alvord boxes and also sent translations to Peterson.

In 1959 additional documents that had been borrowed by Alvord were found at the University of Illinois. These included Record Book I (G) and 269 documents. This material was microfilmed on reels numbered 11-39 and 11-40 and the documents were returned to Chester. Yet again in 1961 records previously inspected by Caldwell were reexamined, arranged and re-microfilmed in their entirety. This filming included selected documents that had been microfilmed in 1952 (reels 10, 11, 12). The new reels of the Caldwell materials were numbered 11-38 through 11-57. Although the new inventory noted that numbers 11-39 and 11-40 had previously been used for these reels filmed in 1959, the numbers 11-39 and 11-40 were reused yet again. The earlier set has the contents as described in Mrs. Pease's article in 1961.³⁴ Reel 11-39 begins with Kaskaskia Record I. In the second set 11-39 begins with the Caldwell documents and 11-40 begins with the Randolph County Circuit Court Records, 1790-1818.

The most recent microfilm, created during the Brown and Dean calendar project between 1976 and 1980 includes all the documents, the 3x5 calendar cards and their name indexes. A summary of the history of the collection and an explanatory user's guide are on the first three reels of the fourteen-reel total. The original 1952 microfilm was less than satisfactory when it was checked against the documents. It suffered from a lack of order, aggravated by the absence of frame numbers and a completely haphazard arrangement of frames. Also, some documents were missing or filmed incompletely because the technician neglected to include both sides of some pages. These omissions aside, the 1952 microfilm now preserves a record of the order and condition of the Kaskaskia manuscripts prior to the start of the calendaring process.

Preparing the Calendar 1976-1980

In 1976 Randolph County accepted a proposal to create a calendar as part of a continuing project to make the collection more accessible to researchers. Initial funds for the program came jointly from the Illinois Bicentennial Commission and the county, and in subsequent years the work was wholly supported by Randolph County. Thus began a four-and-a-half year project to prepare the complete calendar for the Kaskaskia manuscript collection with its accompanying name index. Work on the original documents soon made it evident that easier access and a finding aid were essential to make this important primary source useful to scholars and students of colonial history.

Part of the work included the search for documents previously separated from the collection and now held in other repositories. Thus, in addition to the Kaskaskia manuscripts, the calendar also

contains entries representing copies of items from the Illinois State Archives, the Illinois State Historical Society, the Chicago Historical Society, the Newberry Library, the Missouri and Louisiana Historical Societies and the Ste. Geneviève, Missouri Archives.

An important preliminary step to the calendaring in 1976 was to invite a paper preservation expert to examine and test a group of the manuscripts. His time and expertise were a gift to the project by the Chicago firm of R.R. Donnelley and Sons. Fortunately the condition of the documents is generally good, their acidity is at an acceptable level, and the silk and its adhering compound only slightly acidic. The large sheets on which they mounted were also neutral, but the canvas wrappers and the boxes in which they were stored were highly acidic. In accordance with expert recommendations, the manuscripts were detached from their mounting sheets. Acid-free paper was interleaved in multi-page documents which were given preliminary numbers based on their dates. Finally they were placed in open-ended Mylar envelopes and the entire collection was put in strictly chronological order. During this process, many separated leaves were found and reunited with their parent documents.

The documents with their numbers were also Xeroxed in a standard format creating a working file for easy reference and relieving the originals from the pressures of excessive handling. Two full sets of these Xeroxes are available for public consultation through the County Clerk's office in Chester. These copies are quite legible, almost as clear and occasionally more so than the originals. The manuscripts were stored in new acid-free archival boxes in an environmentally controlled vault in the office of the County Clerk.

Users' Guide

The Users' Guide serves as a brief clarification of the format used for the catalogue cards and for the electronic version. An English summary of each document was placed on a standard 3x5 index card. Included with the summaries are personal names, place names, and cross-references to other related transactions. Final catalogue numbers were assigned as each document was abstracted for entry into the calendar and a slip of archival paper bearing the calendar number was placed in its Mylar envelope. The simple four-part numbering system is based on the date the document was written. The number begins with the last two digits of the documents' year, followed by the month and the day. Multiple documents executed on the same date were given consecutive numbers in the final position, such as 23:7:5:1 and 23:7:5:2. A copy of a previously executed document made at a later date uses that later for its number.

When a document has only an incomplete date, the missing numbers in the date are represented by dashes, such as 23:--:--:1; 26:5:--1. In the case of a document with no date, occasionally a date may be inferred from dated material in other documents. In that case the number assigned to the document is underlined 23:10:12:1. Below are samples of calendar entries for the purpose of demonstrating notations.

55:9:29:1

Sale by Charles Vien to Father Joseph Gagnon, pastor of St. Anne's and royal almoner at the Fort, of a strip of Land 1 arpent wide running from the Mississippi to the bluffs for 350 livres paid in full. Parent; Fostin; Gabriel Dodie; Joseph Chapsal; Barrois. (3pp. Com. VIII, 102/K211)

The list of personal names at the end of the calendar entry includes all names mentioned in the document. The notation Com. VIII designates into which category Alvord sorted the documents: Public,

Private or Commercial. The Roman numerals stand for the numbers of the boxes of each type. K211 is the number assigned to the translation of 55:9:29:1 in the *Village of Chartres*.³⁵

The notaries' lists of the documents in their files have been included in the calendar. When such a document has not survived, its entry is dated, numbered and filed chronologically with the other calendar entries. Because these entries represent only lines on a list, they do not include summaries. The manuscripts of the notaries' inventories are variously filed. Four of them, numbered 25:2:19:2, 25:8:7:1, 38:2:11:1 and 75:2:20:1 are filed chronologically. Three others 41:11:8:2, 64:--:--:15 and 84:--:--:6 are filed after the "No Dates" at the very end of the series.

49:4:2:2

Inventory of the property of Portneuf and Therese Trudeau.

49:4:19:1

Donation by Jean Olivier and his wife to Nicolas Boyer and his wife.

See: 49:4:21:1, 62:6:2:1

The second example does include references to two later related entries.

Source/Location Numbers

Com. I, 17

In the lower right corner of the calendar card, there is often an abbreviation with Roman numerals and numbers, such as Com. I, 17. This represents the location of the manuscript before the calendar was begun in the system devised in the early part of the twentieth century by Clarence Alvord of the University of Illinois. Sorted into three categories, Public Papers, Private Papers, and Commercial Papers, the manuscripts were placed in roughly chronological order and then mounted on large sheets of paper, which were numbered more or less consecutively. Finally, each of the three categories was subdivided into smaller units, and numbered with Roman numerals to facilitate handling. Thus, Com. I, 17 was the number of the document on the seventeenth (approximately) sheet in the first box of Commercial Papers. In a few cases, the Alvord number has been lost and a question mark will be found in place of the number. This old numbering system has been preserved in the calendar because it was used in all scholarly references made to the documents prior to 1976.

Misc. I-IV, Misc. V-VIII

In 1959, additional documents that had been borrowed by Alvord from the county were found at the University of Illinois. These documents were bound into two volumes, labeled "Miscellaneous Doc. I-IV" and "Miscellaneous Doc. V-VIII" and returned to Chester. Since they consisted of separate documents and not ledger-style entries, it was decided to remove the documents from the bindings and to file them individually in chronological sequence.

Rec. I, 312

This designation refers to one of the ledger-style manuscripts, a large, green-cloth volume labeled "Mss. Record Book. I." It contains 445 numbered pages of copies of documents of many different dates and types, and was executed by several unknown copyists at an unknown date in the late eighteenth century. It has no document number representing it as a whole. However, each manuscript

entry was microfilmed separately and can be found in its proper chronological position on the microfilm.

Rec. II, 7 verso

Prior to the creation of the calendar, Record Book II was formed by a group of several unbound manuscript folios and included in notaries' lists. It also included a bound ledger (see Rec. IIa). One of these folios, document (37:1:15:3) is titled "The Register of Sessions of the Royal Jurisdiction of the Illinois" and bears the date January 15, 1737. It contains 36 leaves with entries from 1737 to 1743 and 1779 to 1789. Each calendar entry representing an item from this folio (37:1:15:3) bears a designation such as Rec. II, 7, verso. "7, verso" means that the entry can be found on the back side of the seventh leaf of the original manuscript, which is to be found on the microfilm at the end of the chronological series, after the "No Date" manuscripts.

Rec. IIa, 1

This ledger of extracts from the registers of court sessions, which was also part of Record Book II in the old filing system, is now distinguished from the manuscript of (37:1:15:3) by the designation Rec. IIa. It consists of 14 individual entries, most of which note the disposal of various suits by the court during the years 1747 to 1749. Because this manuscript has no number representing it as a whole, it is filed in Chester at the end of the entire chronological series. However, each manuscript entry was microfilmed separately and will be found in its proper chronological position on the microfilm.

Perrin, 5

The last of the ledger-style manuscripts is titled "The Register of Inscriptions of Gifts and Donations in the Seat of Illinois" (Registre des Insinuations des Donations aux siege des Illinois) and bears the number (37:1:15:4). The register contains 147 pages of extracts from various instruments, dating from 1737 to 1769. The original manuscript is held by the Illinois State Archives in Springfield, Illinois, as part of a group of documents referred to as the Perrin Collection. Thus, the calendar entries from this manuscript are marked "Perrin," plus the number of the page in the register on which the entry is found. There is no microfilm of this document because the register is not a part of the present Kaskaskia Manuscripts.

C.C.. A85

A number of documents that had originally been part of the manuscripts were found in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Randolph County during the calendaring project. These manuscripts have now been reunited with the rest of the collection and the numbering system used in the Circuit Clerk's office has been included in the calendar entries. For example, document 48:8:6:1 came from the Circuit Clerk's office; thus, its calendar entry gives the location indication C.C. with the document's old number, A85.

H356, K321

Some of the calendar entries bear location references such as H356 and represent deeds found in the two volumes of English translations of French land records made by William Henry from 1855 to 1857. The "Henry" number has been given in addition to the old Alvord number, in entries for documents that survive both in the original and in translation. Whenever the original document translated by Henry is no longer to be found in the collection, the record is included in the calendar, making the translation the only known record of the document. This has been done for the convenience of the calendar user who may prefer to consult a full English translation rather than the original French

document. For this same reason, where pertinent, the "K" number appears, referring to the complete translations of a selection of documents published in the Brown and Dean volume *The Village of Chartres in Colonial Illinois*.

No Location Number

In addition to the documents from the Kaskaskia manuscript collection, the calendar also includes a number of items that were formerly part of the collection and that are now located in other repositories. The calendar entries for them do not, of course, show Alvord's old numbering. These entries, for manuscripts whose originals are held elsewhere and that are present in the collection only in the form of facsimiles, give the name of the institution in which the original manuscript is to be found. These include the Illinois State Archives, the Chicago Historical Society, the Missouri Historical Society, and the Louisiana Historical Society. None of these manuscripts has been included on the microfilm. Finally, there are calendar entries that have no location or source indications at all. These represent either (1) an entry taken from a notary's list, in which case the summary is only one or two lines long and does not include a list of names, or (2) a manuscript that is not a part of the original collection but that was obtained in 1977 when the State Historical Survey Library in Urbana, Illinois, returned to Chester a number of original documents, for the most part fragments, that they had held, presumably, since the days of Professor Alvord.

Cross-References

The last line of the calendar entry may list other document numbers that refer to the manuscripts, providing more information about the particular transaction represented by that entry. When a great number of cross-reference numbers is necessary, instead of including the complete list in every pertinent entry, the full list will be found in the earliest (first) entry of the series, and the remaining entries will be cross-referenced only to the first one.

NAME INDEXES

Two alphabetical name indexes, one to all surnames and another to geographical and tribal names were made. At this period slaves had no surnames, although it may be possible to follow an individual slave as personal property in estate divisions, other inventories or commercial instruments. Certain names appear in many documents and therefore the list of numbers in the name index is lengthy. Document numbers referring to transactions in which the person is a central figure have therefore been underlined. Unlike the index to personal names, this list of geographical and tribal names does not include all references in the manuscripts. Only names found in the calendar summaries are included in the index. Some of the most common names are not included, such as Fort de Chartres, Grande Prairie, Kaskaskia, Metchigamia, Mississippi, New Orleans, Prairie Chassin, Prairie du Rocher and St. Philippe.

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