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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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## Slaves and Their Owners in Ile Royale, 1713-1760\*

IN 1733, CHARLES, AN 18-YEAR OLD black slave, produced much of the food consumed in his owner's household. Charles was the property of Pierre Benoist, an ensign in the garrison at Louisbourg, who lived with his family in block 2 of the town. By 1733, Pierre and his wife, Anne Levron, residents of the town since 1722, had two daughters, 15-year-old Anne and eight-year-old Marie Anne. Maintaining the Benoist household was a full-time job for Charles. The courtyard of the property had a garden measuring 34 by 45 feet and three animal sheds housing two goats, a sow, 30 hens and roosters, eight ducks and six turkeys. In addition, Benoist had a half share of an ox and a heifer. Besides their backyard garden, the Benoists had another 90 square-foot garden in nearby block 22 of the town. When not planting, weeding, harvesting the vegetables or feeding the livestock, Charles would have been busy cutting kindling and keeping the stoves and fireplaces supplied with wood. By December 1733 the Benoists had 10 cords of wood in their backyard. A prized member of the household, Charles was valued at 512 *livres* in 1733.<sup>1</sup>

At least 216 individuals such as Charles were enslaved in Ile Royale, most in Louisbourg.<sup>2</sup> As the capital and commercial centre of the colony, Louisbourg had an economy which depended on the fishery, the military and trade.<sup>3</sup> Its stratified

\* Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Atlantic Canada Workshop, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, 14-17 August 1991; The Southeastern American Society for 18th Century Studies, University of Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama, 4-6 March 1993; the Planter's Studies Conference, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 30 September-3 October 1993; and the French Colonial Historical Society, Sydney, Nova Scotia, 31 May-3 June 1995. I would like to thank Sandy Balcom, Philip Boucher, Pierre Boule, Carolyn Fick, Robert Forster, Cornelius Jaenen, John Johnston, Martin A. Klein, Bill O'Shea, Sue Peabody, Graham Reynolds, Hilary Russell, David Schmidt, David States, and the four anonymous *Acadiensis* readers for their comments on this paper.

1 Inventory after death of Anne Levron at the request of Pierre Benoist, her husband, 19 December 1733, G 2, vol. 182, fols. 986-1009, Aix-en-Provence, France, Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer [A.N., Outre-mer]. See also Brenda Dunn, "The Private Properties of Block 2", unpublished manuscript, Fortress of Louisbourg, 1978 [revised], pp. 78-85.

2 The colony of Ile Royale included the islands of Ile Royale (Cape Breton) and Ile St. Jean (Prince Edward Island). The French used the names Ile Royale and "Cap Breton" interchangeably. I have compiled a nominal list of the 216 slaves found in the Ile Royale documentation. See Kenneth Donovan, "A Nominal List of Slaves and Their Owners in Ile Royale, 1713-1760", *Nova Scotia Historical Review*, 16, 1 (June 1996), pp. 151-62. The list includes the name, age and origin of the slaves, if available, together with the date of their arrival in the colony. The names and occupations of the owners are also part of the data.

3 Louisbourg's permanent civilian population was 633 in 1720; 813 in 1724; 1463 in 1737; and 2690 in 1752. These figures do not include totals for the garrison, fishermen or other transients who were

#### 4 *Acadiensis*

society was dominated by senior colonial officials, military officers and successful merchants — categories that were not mutually exclusive. Down the social scale, petty merchants, innkeepers and artisans served garrison, port and fishery. Each summer French and Basque migrant fishermen swelled the population throughout Ile Royale. In Louisbourg's newly formed society, people tended to change occupations more readily than in France but, because almost all manufactures were imported, their occupational choice was narrow. As in small French towns of the day, people of different status lived side by side.<sup>4</sup> Slaves were part of the local society.

Most of the slaves in Ile Royale were involved in some sort of domestic service. The women among them performed a wide range of duties, from looking after children to cleaning clothes, scrubbing floors, preparing meals and washing dishes. The men, like Charles, performed many outdoor functions. They tended gardens, fed animals, cleaned stables, carried water and cut firewood. Thus, for those who could afford it, purchasing a slave brought higher status and improved living conditions. Since they could not write, slaves in 18th-century Cape Breton left few records of the kind that are usually used by scholars. Yet the Louisbourg archives contain evidence that relates to the African presence on the island. Few in numbers, the slaves in Ile Royale would have known each other, and there is evidence they gathered together on occasions such as slave baptisms and weddings. Of the slaves whose birthplaces are known, 28 individuals were born in Louisbourg, 21 were from the French West Indies and another 12 were natives of French West Africa. Most of these people, with different backgrounds, but a common experience as slaves, would have spoken French, and had a variety of occupations. On Ile Royale they became servants, gardeners, bakers, tavern keepers, stone masons, musicians, laundry workers, soldiers, sailors, fishermen, hospital workers, ferry men, executioners and nursemaids. Most important, the enslaved people of this society became mothers and fathers; they were part of an evolving African-French colonial culture.

Slave holding in Ile Royale was part of a broader phenomenon that began in the 16th century, when the first slaves were brought from Africa to America. By 1750, 3,800,000 African slaves had been sent across the Atlantic. More than half were sent to Brazil and Spanish America; the rest (1,700,000) were transported to the British, French, Dutch and Danish colonies. A small proportion of this latter number, 120,000, had been shipped directly to the North American mainland north

in the colony on a seasonal basis. By the late 1750s Ile Royale's population, including soldiers, approached 10,000 people. See A.J.B. Johnston, "The Population of Eighteenth-Century Louisbourg", *Nova Scotia Historical Review*, 11, 2 (December, 1991), pp. 75-86.

4 Kenneth Donovan, "Ile Royale, 18th Century", in Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada: From the Beginning to 1800*, Vol. 1 (Toronto, 1987), plate 24; Kenneth Donovan, "Tattered Clothes and Powdered Wigs: Case Studies of the Poor and Well-to-Do in Eighteenth-Century Louisbourg", in Kenneth Donovan, ed., *Cape Breton at 200: Historical Essays in Honour of the Island's Bicentennial* (Sydney, 1985), pp. 2-3. See also Peter N. Moogk, "Rank in New France: Reconstructing a Society from Notarial Documents", *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, VIII, 15 (May, 1975), pp. 34-53; and his "'Thieving Buggars' and 'Stupid Sluts': Insults and Popular Culture in New France", *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXVI (October, 1979), pp. 524-47; W. J. Eccles, "The Social, Economic, and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France", *Canadian Historical Review*, LII, 1 (March, 1971), pp. 1-22.

of Florida and Texas.<sup>5</sup> Of the 120,000 slaves sent to North America by 1750, only a small proportion, 1400 people, came to New France, an area which encompassed the territory from the Gaspé peninsula up to and including Detroit and Michilimackinac. From 1681 to 1818 there were approximately 4100 slaves in French Canada, representing less than one per cent of the population. Within the boundaries of present-day Quebec, there were 2,092 slaves from 1681 to 1759. During the period under study here, Ile Royale, which had a smaller population than the communities along the St. Lawrence, included some 216 slaves: 136 males, 70 females and ten whose gender could not be determined. In Canada, the majority of the slaves, almost 2700, or 65 per cent, were Panis Indians.<sup>6</sup> In Ile Royale, by contrast, over 90 per cent of the slaves were Blacks, reflecting the colony's close trade links with the French West Indies.

For the French, as for the Spanish and the Portuguese, slavery was a social as well as an economic system in so far as it enabled slave owners to attain higher status within various French colonies. Official French policy towards slavery was established in 1685 with the adoption of the Black Code for the West Indies. Reissued, with minor revisions, in 1724, the Black Code offered some protection to slaves in the West Indies. Composed of 60 articles, the Black Code "insisted on the basic humanity of the slave: each was to be instructed, baptized, and ministered unto as a Christian, families were to be recognized, and freed slaves were to receive the rights of common citizens — in theory the African could aspire to become a Frenchman".<sup>7</sup> There was a wide gap, however, between theory and practice. And in Canada and Ile Royale the Black Code was not even registered, although it was observed to the extent that slaves were to be baptized and adults were not to work on Sundays and holy days of obligation.<sup>8</sup> In effect, the Black Code was ignored in most French colonies.

Yet some scholars maintain that French racial attitudes were more subtle and not as harsh as those of the British and Dutch. The more subtle French racial attitude, so the argument goes, was reflected in miscegenation, acculturation and manumission. Writing in 1986, historical geographer Donald Meinig argued that a flourishing Afro-Catholicism, with its elaborate rituals, together with numerous mulattoes and the wide acceptance of different degrees of colour, to say nothing of free black plantation owners with their own black slaves, reflected the open,

5 Phillip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI., 1969); D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America. Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven/London, 1986), p. 226.

6 Marcel Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français* (Québec, 1990), pp. xiii-xxviii. See also Marcel Trudel, *L'esclavage au Canada français: Histoire et conditions de l'esclavage* (Québec, 1960), pp. 20-1.

7 Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, p. 171. For a contemporary description of the Black Code, see Le Romain, "Negroes", in *Encyclopedia Selections Diderot, D'Alembert and A Society of Men of Letters*, trans. with an Introduction by Nelly S. Hoyt and Thomas Cassirer (Indianapolis, 1965), pp. 258-73. The Black Code has been printed in Mederic Louis Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry, ed., *Loix et constitutions des colonies françaises* (Paris, 1784-1790). A complete version is available in *Le Code Noir, au Recueil des Reglemens* (Basse Terre, 1980), p. 446.

8 Cornelius J. Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France* (Toronto, 1976), p. 152.

## 6 *Acadiensis*

intimate and vibrant nature of creole society.<sup>9</sup> Such a view must be questioned within the context of creole society in the French West Indies and cannot be extended to include France's possessions in the northern part of North America. In Canada and Ile Royale there is little evidence that slave society was less repressive than in New England and the Middle Colonies of British North America.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the northern colonies of British America, living conditions mitigated the harshest aspects of slavery. Employed on farms throughout the countryside, and working as house servants in the towns, slaves lived in close proximity to whites. Owning only one or two slaves, most slave holders remained confident of their hegemony, and hence slaves were allowed a certain degree of autonomy.<sup>11</sup> Similar slave-holding patterns emerged in Ile Royale. As in New England, few slaves (six out of a total of 216) were freed in Ile Royale.

In most Roman Catholic colonies the church's response to slavery was driven not so much by a humanitarian concern about the plight of slaves in colonial society as by a religious conviction that slaves had souls to save and therefore represented potential converts. Accordingly, the church maintained that the moral and spiritual nature of the slave was more significant than the slave's temporary servile status.<sup>12</sup> The Catholic Church did not make the temporal or spiritual lives of

- 9 Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, p. 171. For other scholars who maintain that French racial attitudes were more subtle, see Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada, A History* (New Haven, 1971), pp. 12, 21; Michael Zuckerman, "Identity in British America: Unease in Eden", in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds., *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton, 1987), p. 150, n. 101; Carl J. Ekberg, *Colonial Ste. Genevieve: An Adventure on the Mississippi Frontier* (Gerald, Missouri, 1985), pp. 197-239. For a contrary interpretation, see William Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington, 1980); Philip Boucher, *Les Nouvelles Frances. France in America, 1500-1815: An Imperial Perspective* (Providence, 1989), pp. 49-52.
- 10 In a recent work, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall maintains that the French in Louisiana showed little contempt for blacks and that French officials did not consider the Africans uncivilized. See *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1992), p. 150. For a less sympathetic interpretation, see Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill, 1992), pp. 36, 40.
- 11 Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America", *American Historical Review*, 85, 1 (February, 1980), pp. 44-78. During the 18th century slaves comprised a small proportion of the population of New England and the Middle Colonies (e.g. eight per cent of the population of New Jersey and less than four per cent in Connecticut and Massachusetts). See also Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); William Pierson, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Amherst, Mass., 1988); Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens, Georgia, 1991); Joyce D. Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730* (Princeton, 1992).
- 12 Jaenen, *The Role of the Church*, pp. 151-52; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 12. See also Marcel Trudel, "L'attitude de l'église Catholique vis à vis l'esclavage au Canada français", *Canadian Historical Association Report* (1961) and the "The Attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward the Negro during Slavery", in W.D. Weatherford, *American Churches and the Negro* (Boston, 1957); Mary Veronica Miceli, "The Influence of the Roman Catholic Church on Slavery in Colonial Louisiana under French Domination, 1718-1763", Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1979.

slaves any easier in Ile Royale. Admittedly, slaves in Cape Breton were baptized and acquired Christian names from the master's family. Ninety-seven black and Amerindian slaves appear in the Louisbourg parish records; 57 of those were records of baptism. Even though many of the 57 had come from the French West Indies, where, according to the stipulations of the Black Code, slaves "were to be baptized" and "masters were to instruct their slaves in the Catholic religion, on pain of a discretionary fine", they had not been baptized before their arrival in Louisbourg.<sup>13</sup> Slaves were baptized more readily in Cape Breton, and throughout New France, because there were no powerful interests — primarily slave owners and plantation managers — who opposed religious instruction of the slaves.<sup>14</sup> But in some cases such baptisms occurred only on their death beds, after years of service in their masters' households. Moreover, the baptismal ceremony often became a demeaning experience for slaves. Young children of the slave's owners served as godparents at most baptisms. Chattel slaves did not usually merit the appearance of adults as godparents or witnesses. The baptismal ceremony only became more elaborate to suit the whims and social aspirations of powerful slave owners.

The founding of Ile Royale in 1713 coincided with the rapid expansion of the French slave trade. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, French merchants purchased more than a million men, women and children of African origin to be sent to the New World as slaves. It was the establishment of the French empire in the West Indies, specifically the colonies of Saint Domingue (Haiti), Martinique and Guadeloupe in the second quarter of the 17th century, that provided the impetus for the French slave trade. Tropical commodities, such as tobacco and indigo in the 17th century, and sugar and coffee in the 18th century, required a large labour force. Amerindians and black slaves provided the least expensive source of labour for the plantation economies. These non-white people were thought to be more suited to the tropical climate of the Antilles. The dark skin of the Amerindians and the Africans also helped the French to overcome any moral doubts about slavery.<sup>15</sup>

More recent scholarship has challenged the role of all Christian churches, citing an "African spiritual holocaust" in which the psychological balm of Christianity helped to control slaves. See Jon F. Sensbach, "Charting a Course in Early African-American History", *William and Mary Quarterly*, L, 2 (April 1993), p. 401; Norrece T. Jones, *Born a Child of Freedom, Yet A Slave: Mechanisms of Slave Control and Strategies of Resistance in Antebellum South Carolina* (New London, Conn., 1990); Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labour: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, 1987); and Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, 1990).

- 13 Le Romain, "Negroes", p. 270. See also E.V. Goveia, *The West Indian Slave Laws of the 18th Century* (Barbados, 1970) p. 39.
- 14 Many plantation managers opposed religious instruction of the slaves in the West Indies. The French Catholic Church in the sugar islands during the 18th century was also a pale imitation of the church in France. See Robert Forster, "Slavery in Virginia and Saint-Domingue in the Late Eighteenth-Century", in Philip Boucher, ed., *Proceedings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Meetings of the French Colonial Historical Society* (Lanham, Maryland, 1990), p. 9; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1972), p. 174; C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London, 1980); Alfred Metraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, translated by H. Charteris, (New York, 1972); A. Gisler, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris, 1981).
- 15 Robert Louis Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business* (Madison, WI., 1979), p. XIV. See also, Jean Mettas, *Repertoire de la traite négrière française au XVIIIe siècle*, Serge Daget, ed., 2 vols (Paris, 1978, 1984); Robert Louis Stein, *The French Sugar*

## 8 *Acadiensis*

By 1718, Ile Royale had become a thriving French colony, producing and exporting 150,000 quintals of dried codfish. Throughout the 1720s and 1730s production of cod ranged between 120,000 and 160,000 quintals annually. Cape Breton cod production in the first half of the 18th century accounted for one-third of all the cod caught by the French in North American waters. Much of Ile Royale's fish was marketed in Europe and the Caribbean. As the slave population of the French West Indies expanded, the French Caribbean demand for dried cod increased dramatically and Ile Royale provided a portion of this trade. By the 1740s, Ile Royale was selling up to 40,000 quintals of cod per year in the West Indies, particularly in Saint Domingue. The colony also became a market for Caribbean products. Shiploads of sugar, molasses and rum were brought to Ile Royale and immediately re-exported, primarily to the British American Colonies. So extensive was the trade in rum and molasses that, by the 1750s, the value of Ile Royale sugar products rivalled the value of the colony's codfish production.<sup>16</sup>

Import records for the colony have not generally survived, yet the few records that remain can provide some indication of the extent to which the 18th-century slave trade touched Cape Breton. Three slaves brought to the island in 1737 were valued at a total of 1800 *livres*. In 1752, two vessels, out of a total of 57 coming from the West Indies, carried slaves for sale in Cape Breton: a female arrived in April on *L'Hirondelle*, and, two months later, a male debarked from *Le Bien*. Ship captains from the West Indies occasionally came to Cape Breton and sold their slaves to prospective buyers or used them as barter for the purchase of trade items. On 10 November 1734, for example, 12-year-old Cesard found himself with a new master on an unfamiliar shore when his owner, Captain Charles Le Roy, struck a bargain with a merchant, Louis Lachaume. According to the sale agreement, Lachaume "inspected and was content" with Cesard for the price of 350 *livres*.<sup>17</sup> Cesard was only one of tens of slaves sold in Cape Breton by captains of merchant vessels. In 1742, Arny, a Guadeloupe mulatto, likewise became a resident of the island, when Captain Pierre Cosset sold him to Julien Bannier for 800 *livres*.<sup>18</sup> Some captains brought more than one slave. Captain du Houe, commander of a Malouin merchant vessel, arrived in 1755 with two slaves, one for sale and one for his personal use. Since most ships departed soon after discharging their cargoes, some captains hired commission agents to sell their slaves. Thus, in 1757, Captain Sieur Villard asked Louisbourg councillor Guillaume Delort to sell his slave,

*Business in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge/London, 1988).

- 16 Christopher Moore, "Cape Breton and the North Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century", in Kenneth Donovan, ed., *The Island: New Perspectives on Cape Breton History 1713-1990* (Fredericton/Sydney, 1990), pp. 40-1.
- 17 Contract of transfer of a negro named Cesard from Charles LeRoy to Louis LaChaume, 10 November 1734, G 3, 2039-1, pièce 57, A.N., Outre-Mer; Recapitulation of cargo brought from the French West Indies to Cape Breton, 1737, C11C, vol. 9, fol. 94, Archives Nationales, Archives des Colonies, Paris, France [A.N., Colonies]; Table of commerce, list of vessels coming from the French West Indies to Louisbourg and the merchandise which they are transporting, 1752, C11C, F 2, B, vol. 2, A.N., Colonies.
- 18 The sale of a mulatto named Arny from Guadeloupe, 1742, B, 275, fols. 47-47v., Archives départementales, Charente-Maritimes, La Rochelle, France [A.C.M.]. See also Louisbourg merchant Josse Bette who bought 11-year-old Jean from Captain James Spellen of New York on 27 April 1753 for 420 *livres*, G 3, 2047-2, no. 74, A.N., Outre-Mer.

Jacques, to the financial commissary of the troops for 800 *livres*.<sup>19</sup>

For tens of slaves, perhaps hundreds, who came to Cape Breton during the 18th century, the island was merely a port of call. These men and boys served as crew members on merchant ships or as personal slaves of officers on the King's vessels.<sup>20</sup> Louisbourg vessels also had slaves among their crews. In July 1724 Michel Daccarette sent one of his ships to Bordeaux loaded with codfish. The vessel departed Bordeaux at the end of September for the return voyage, only to be wrecked with all hands lost on Sable Island. Included among the dead was "a small negro". Thirty years later, another Louisbourg vessel foundered in a storm off Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Of the 12 men aboard the ship, 10 drowned, including the captain and four slaves.<sup>21</sup> New England and Halifax merchant ships also had slaves among their crews. On 22 November 1752 the brigantine *Portsmouth* left Piscataqua, New Hampshire, bound for Louisbourg with a crew of nine, including Longford, a black man.<sup>22</sup> Some slaves, apparently, even experienced a measure of independence on board ship. Halifax merchant Joshua Mauger, who traded with Louisbourg throughout the 1750s, "owned three vessels, manned by his own slaves, captains and crews all Black".<sup>23</sup>

- 19 Sale of Jacques to Pierre De La Croix, 11 October 1757, G 3, vol. 2045, no. 49, A.N., Outre-Mer. For the two slaves of Captain du Houe, see Thomas Pichon to A. Hinchelwood, 9 October 1755 in J.C. Webster, *Thomas Pichon the Spy of Beausejour, An Account of his Career in Europe and America* (Sackville, 1937), p. 115.
- 20 The French and British navies had black seamen, slave and free, among their crews. See N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: The Manning of the Georgian Navy* (Annapolis, 1986), pp. 159-60; W. Jeffrey Bolster, "'To Feel Like a Man': Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860", *The Journal of American History*, 76, 4 (March, 1990), pp. 1173-99. For officers on the King's vessels who had slaves at Louisbourg, see 1 July 1755, G 1, vol. 409, register 1, fol. 62, A.N., Colonies. Numerous slaves arrived in Cape Breton in 1757 as part of Admiral De la Motte's fleet. Guy Fregault, *Canada: The War of the Conquest* (Toronto, 1969), p.149; James Lind, *An Essay on the Most Effectual Means of Preserving The Health of Seamen in the Royal Navy and a Dissertation on Fevers and Infection* (London, 1779), in Christopher Lloyd, ed., *The Health of Seamen: Selections from the Works of Dr. James Lind, Sir Gilbert Blane and Dr. Thomas Trotter* (London, 1965), pp. 96-7; Boyce Richardson, "1757, Year of Failure and Tragedy", *The Beaver*, 66, 2 (April-May, 1986), p. 38.
- 21 *The Boston Weekly Newsletter*, 7 November 1754. For the slave aboard Daccarette's ship, see Officers of the Admiralty to the Minister, 17 December 1725, C11B, fols. 396-99, A.N., Colonies. For the career of Michel Daccarette, see T.J.A. Le Goff, "Michel Daccarette", in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, [DCB] III (Toronto, 1974), pp. 156-7; Christian Pouyez et Gilles Proulx, "L'Ile Du Quai De Louisbourg", *Travail Inédit Numéro 149* (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 35-8.
- 22 *The Halifax Gazette*, 21 July 1753.
- 23 James S. MacDonald, "Life and Administration of Governor Charles Lawrence 1749-1760", *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, XII (Halifax, 1905), p. 23. For other slaves arriving in Louisbourg as crew members on merchant ships, see "Roles d' equipage", for the *King George*, 1735, Series 9 B, vol. 643, Archives départementales D'Ille et Vilaine, Rennes. I want to thank Olaf Janzen for this reference. See also, Statement of payment by Nicolas Botte of Louisbourg for various services, including slaves, for the outfitting of the *St. Michel*, 5 November 1741, B, 275, fols. 37v-39, A.C.M. For the slave aboard the brigantine *L'Aigle*, see 6 February 1740, G 2, vol. 186, fol. 208, A.N., Outre-Mer. There are also numerous references in the Louisbourg parish records to ship captains of merchant vessels having their slaves baptized shortly before the death of the slave.



## 10 *Acadiensis*

Although Louisbourg was home to the colony's largest slave community, not all slaves purchased there remained in the bustling port town. In 1734, Jean Pierre Roma, director of a company founded to set up a large fishing operation and concession on Prince Edward Island, wanted slaves to work for his company. Beginning in 1732, Roma established the headquarters for his settlement, Trois Rivières, at Brudenelle Point on the eastern tip of the island.<sup>24</sup> Agreeing to bring 80 people the first year and 30 each year thereafter, Roma ensured that slaves were an integral part of the settlement. Coming to Louisbourg in 1732, he sold a ship, valued at 3,000 *livres*, for four slaves, "2 negroes prime slaves and 2 negresses prime slaves, of the aradan nation". The Aradas were Africans from the coast of Ouidah in Benin.<sup>25</sup> During the years 1732 to 1749 Roma owned 12 slaves, making him the largest slave owner in the colony. Drawing upon his experience in Saint Domingue where he had been a landowner, Roma wanted the slaves to help develop Trois Rivières by rearing their own children there.

Twenty-two slaves in Ile Royale were born in the French West Indies, but those of African origin — 12 people in total — were often described as a "native of Grada in Guinée" or a "native of Gorée". The African-born slaves in Ile Royale came primarily from four West African points of departure: the Congo, Benin, Guinea and Senegal. During the 18th century, the French in the West Indies, like Roma, developed a fine sense of distinguishing among African peoples. Although some of the supposed distinctions were based on myths among the planters, they did represent a recognition of different ethnic groups and different cultures among Africans. Jean Baptiste Labat, a French missionary in the West Indies during the latter part of the 17th century, discussed such distinctions in travel accounts of his journeys throughout West Africa. Slaves of Guinea were thought to be most suitable for heavy work, whereas those of Senegal were judged to be good domestic servants and craftsmen. As for the Aradas, Labat judged them to be the finest slaves: "Enslavement disturbs them little because they are born as slaves".<sup>26</sup> Jean Pierre Roma agreed with Labat: Aradan slaves were superior to those from the Congo. Since the Aradas were prime slaves, Roma paid a premium price, some 4,000 *livres* for four slaves, "*pièce d'inde*". (A "*pièce d'Inde*" or prime slave was the theoretical value of a healthy, young, adult male slave.)<sup>27</sup> Roma's payment was the most costly transaction for slaves in Ile Royale. But he apparently believed the investment had been worthwhile since he returned to Louisbourg five years later seeking another four Blacks, two males and two females between 15 and 20 years old and of "good quality". He arranged to pay for the slaves, who were to be

24 D.C. Harvey, *The French Regime in Prince Edward Island* ([1926] New York, 1970), pp. 73-93; Margaret Coleman, "Jean-Pierre Roma", *DCB*, III, pp. 566-7; J.M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics on Eighteenth-Century Prince Edward Island* (Kingston/Montreal, 1987), pp. 6-7.

25 Sale of the vessel *St. Jean*, Jean-Pierre Roma to Jean Baptiste Morel, 3 September 1734, B, 276, fols. 24v-27, A.C.M. On the Aradas, see Karl Polanyi, *Dahomey and the Slave Trade, An Analysis of an Archaic Economy* (Seattle/London, 1966), pp. 105-9, and Le Romain "Negroes", p. 263.

26 Father Labat's observations are cited in Cohen, *The French Encounter*, p. 27.

27 All slaves that were sold were valued in terms of the "*pièce d'Inde*". For the value of a prime slave, see Stein, *The French Slave Trade*, p. 85.

delivered in July of the following year.<sup>28</sup>

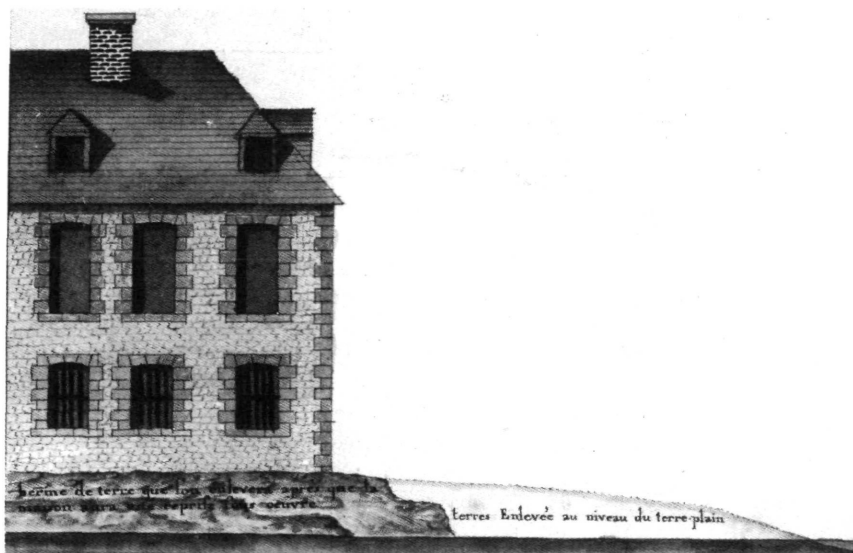
Such transactions indicated a growing wealth among most members of Louisbourg's familial and economic elite, who could now afford to purchase slaves. Slaves not only performed valuable services, they also reflected the social aspirations and affluence of the owner's household. Most of Ile Royale's governors and *commissaires-ordonnateur* had slaves. Since the governor and the *commissaire* were the two most powerful men in the colony, their actions set the tone for social behaviour in Ile Royale. The first governor of the colony, Pasteur de Costebelle, purchased a slave, Georges, in 1713, four years after slavery had been officially recognized in New France. Costebelle's successor, St. Ovide de Brouillan, bought two slaves: 10-year-old Jean-Baptiste in 1728 and 10-year-old Charles Joseph, the following year. St. Ovide was succeeded, in 1739, by Governor Issac Louis de Forant. Departing France on 30 July 1739, De Forant brought a domestic staff of four men and two women. Although this large staff was undoubtedly fully adequate to meet the day to day needs of his household, nevertheless, de Forant purchased a young male slave within a few months of his arrival.<sup>29</sup>

Ile Royale's *commissaires-ordonnateur*, prominent members of the governing elite of the colony, were, with few exceptions, also prominent slave-holders. Jacques Prévost, who became *commissaire-ordonnateur* in 1749, was typical. Prévost had first come to Louisbourg in 1735. The following year he served as godfather at the baptism of 17-year-old Jacques, the slave of merchant Louis Jouet. Prévost's wife, Marie Thérèse Carrerot, had long been accustomed to having slaves in her household; she was only nine when her parents purchased 14-year-old Rosalie to help raise their family of five children.<sup>30</sup> In 1749 the Prévosts had a household staff of 10 people, including a slave, Angelique, and her infant son. Four years later Prévost bought two more slaves, Jean Narcisse and Pierre, both of whom were baptized on 13 April 1754. The baptism of the newly acquired slaves was a social occasion; the witnesses at the ceremony included the Prévosts, the godparents and four other townspeople.<sup>31</sup>

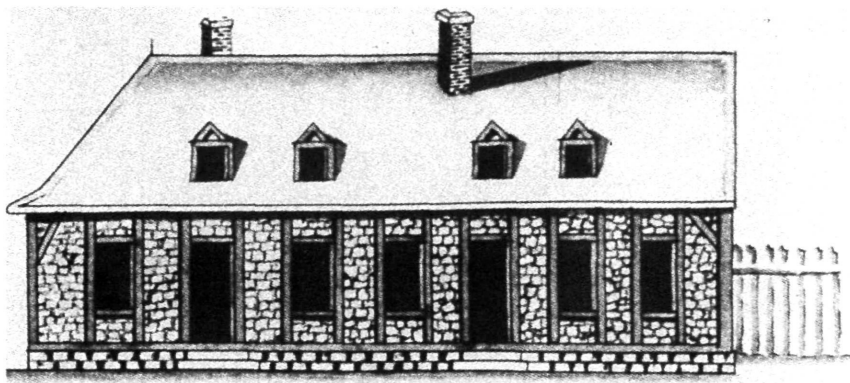
Since most of Ile Royale's *commissaires-ordonnateur* and governors acquired

- 28 Sale of the vessel *St. Jean du Port* by Jean Pierre Roma to Jean François Morel and Pierre Maurice, 2 July 1739 for the four slaves, G 3, 2046-1, no. 175, A.N., Colonies. See also Louisbourg, 22 October 1740, B, 269, fols. 25v-26, A.C.M.
- 29 See Accounts of Messieurs Lasson and Laccarette with Governor Costebelle, 1713, G 2, vol. 178, fols. 18-23, A.N., Outre-mer; Baptism of Jean Baptiste, 12 August 1728, G 1, vol. 406, register 4; Baptism of Charles Joseph, 5 April 1729, G 1, vol. 406, register 4. See also "Issac-Louis de Forant", in *DCB*, II (Toronto, 1969), pp. 224-6. For official approval of the "long-standing" practice of owning slaves in New France, see Dale Miquelon, *New France: A Supplement to Europe* (Toronto, 1987), p. 239; Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* (Agincourt, 1981), p. 4; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, p. 3.
- 30 Sale of the slave Rosalie, 19 June 1736, G 3, 2039-1, no.168, A.N., Outre-Mer. For Prévost as godfather to the slave Jacques, see 23 May 1736, G 1, vol. 406, register 4, fol. 61v.
- 31 Baptism of Jean Narcisse and Pierre, 13 April 1754, G 1, vol. 409, register 1, fol. 9v, A.N., Outre-Mer; Census of families returning to Ile Royale, 1749, G 1, vol. 462. For a biographical description of Prévost, see T.A. Crowley, "Jacques Prévost De La Croix", *DCB*, IV, (Toronto, 1979), pp. 643-6.

## 12 *Acadiensis*



By 1754 four slaves, Jean Narcisse, Pierre, Angelique and her five-year-old son, lived and worked in this building, the residence of the Commissaire-Ordonnateur. Aix-en-Provence, France, Archives Nationales, Dépôt des Fortifications des Colonies, Amérique Septentrionale, no. d'ordre 199, 1743.



Pompée, a 12-year-old slave, died in this Louisbourg house during the smallpox epidemic in March 1732. The burial entry noted that Pompée “had been baptised during his sickness”. Paris, Archives Nationales, Archives des Colonies, Dossiers Personnels, Series E, no. 258, 1753.

slaves, it became fashionable for other members of the bureaucracy, including representatives of the Superior Council and officers of the garrison, to do so as well. At least nine of the 14 members of the Superior Council purchased slaves.<sup>32</sup> Few heeded the advice of Louisbourg *ordonnateur* De Mezy, who noted, in 1724, that he preferred white indentured servants to slaves because they were less expensive.<sup>33</sup> Evidence in the Louisbourg archives supports De Mezy's contention. Slaves in Louisbourg cost anywhere from 10 to 20 times more than a typical servant. Throughout the first half of the 18th century, the services of a full-time servant could be purchased for approximately 50 livres per year.<sup>34</sup> During the 1740s an indentured servant could be hired for a three-year contract at 110 livres.<sup>35</sup> There were also hundreds of fishermen who hired their services to families during the fall and winter in return for room and board.<sup>36</sup> Of course, the governor and others who purchased 10-year-old boys could not have been seeking servants capable of heavy work.

Perhaps those who purchased young children believed they were making a long-term investment. If so, at least some were doomed to disappointment. Councillor Joseph Lartigue, born in Newfoundland, had come to Cape Breton as a fishing proprietor and eventually diversified, becoming involved in the mercantile trade. Lartigue's 12-year-old slave, Pompée, died in March 1732; the burial entry noted that Pompée "had been baptised during his sickness."<sup>37</sup> One fellow member of the Superior Council, Pierre Martissans, followed much the same route to commercial success and high status in the town as Lartigue. Martissans and his wife Jeanne had seven children by the time their slave Jeanneton died in April

32 The nine members of the Superior Council who purchased slaves included: Joseph Lartigue, Guillaume Delort, Louis Delort, Nicolas Larcher, Pierre Martissans, Alexandre-Rene Beaudeduit, Philippe Leneuf de Beaubassin, Guillaume Delort junior and André Carrerot.

33 De Mezy to the Minister of the Marine, 1724, C11B, vol. 7, fols. 68-74, A.N., Colonies.

34 There are numerous contracts for the services of domestic servants in the Louisbourg archives. In 1728, 11-year-old Marie Doucet was hired out to Anne Guyon Depres at the rate of 40 *livres* in the first year of the contract, 50 *livres* in the second and 60 in the third, 30 June 1728, G 3, 2037, no. 20, A.N., Outre-Mer. The cost of slaves in Ile Royale, in comparison to the cost of a servant, was roughly the same as in Philadelphia throughout the 18th century. "At an average price of £45, an adult slave would have to serve for 11 years to match the £4 per year cost of an indentured servant." See Susan E. Klepp, "Seasoning and Society: Racial Differences in Mortality in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia", *William and Mary Quarterly*, LI, 3 (July 1994), p. 474, n. 3.

35 See, for example, indenture of Jean Chartier to Sieur Philipot of Scatary, 11 October 1741, B, 6113, dossier 24, p. 5, A.C.M.

36 For two examples of fishermen working for their room and board, see François Bernard, 6 October 1755, G 2, vol. 203, dossier 373, A.N., Outre-Mer, and Jean Eu, April 1752, "Tour of Inspection made by the Sieur De La Roque", *Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905*, 11 (Ottawa, 1906), p. 61.

37 Burial of Pompée, 13 March 1732, G 1, vol. 406, register 4, vol. 406, fol. 34v, A.N., Outre-mer. For background on Lartigue, see Kenneth Donovan, "Communities and Families: Family Life and Living Conditions in Eighteenth-Century Louisbourg", in Eric Krause, Carol Corbin, William O'Shea, eds., *Aspects of Louisbourg: Essays on the History of an Eighteenth-Century French Community in North America* (Sydney, 1995), p. 131.

## 14 *Acadiensis*

1739. Described as a “creole of St. Domingue”, Jeanneton was only 14 years old.<sup>38</sup>

Slaves such as Jeanneton and Pompée were more expensive as well as much riskier investments than ordinary servants, yet merchants, officers of the garrison and members of the bureaucracy were willing to spend money to enhance their stature in the community. The merchant Louis Jouet owned 11 slaves during his residence in Ile Royale from 1724 to 1758.<sup>39</sup> One of Jouet’s associates, Jean Laborde, owned five slaves in Louisbourg during the 1750s. By the time he left for France, in 1758, his property and holdings were valued at a quarter of a million *livres*.<sup>40</sup>

Even people who could not afford a slave desired one. Thomas Pichon, secretary to Ile Royale Governor Comte de Raymond during the 1750s, regretted that he could not afford a slave. Writing in 1755, Pichon wistfully noted: “I have no servant. My resources are, at present, too limited. M. Desages..., a Malouin merchant captain, has 2 negroes, one of whom he wishes to sell, but the price is much too high”.<sup>41</sup> Pichon was one of the few government officials unable or unwilling to become indebted to purchase a slave. Since he was a bachelor, Pichon was not preoccupied with the status of his family in Louisbourg’s tight social circles.

As status symbols, slaves could expect to be well provided for, if not necessarily well treated. In France, employers, notably women, hired handsome servants, including tall and robust young men, to serve as lackeys and pages. Waiting at doors and antechambers, these young men were an extravagant display of the owner’s wealth. Among the most highly prized servants and pages, largely because of their distinctive appearance, were black slaves from Africa. One caption on a 17th-century fashion plate extolled the value of a Moorish page for those women who wanted to highlight a pale complexion.<sup>42</sup> At least 14 women in Louisbourg owned slaves. Some, like Marie Anne Joseph Cheron, the widow of André Carrerot, who co-inherited a St. Domingue plantation from her brother Étienne in 1752, were women of considerable wealth. The plantation, including slaves, was sold for a net value of 75,000 *livres*. Marie Anne also inherited a slave named Françoise, presumably her brother’s personal slave, who was estimated to be worth 1,000 *livres*. There are a few examples in the Louisbourg documentation of such women slave owners visiting boutiques to purchase clothing for their slaves. The widow Madame Desmarest bought shoes for her slave at a cost of four *livres* per pair on at

38 Burial of Jeanneton, 13 April 1739, G 1, vol. 407, register 1, fol. 25v, A.N., Outre-Mer.

39 Terraance D. Maclean, “H History of Block 4: 1713-1758”, *Manuscript Report* 176 (Ottawa, 1975), pp. 30-5.

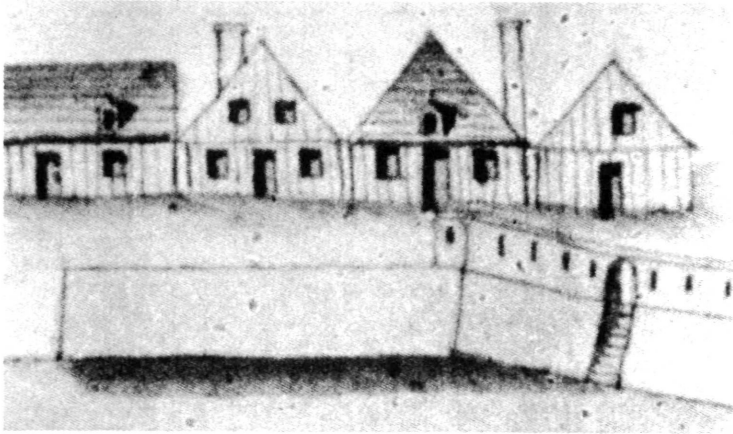
40 T.A.Crowley, “Government and Interests: French Colonial Administration at Louisbourg 1713-1758”, Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1975, p. 298; J.F. Boshier, “Jean Laborde”, *DCB*, IV, p. 421.

41 Thomas Pichon to A. Hinchelwood, 9 October 1755, in J.C. Webster, *Thomas Pichon*, p. 115. For a biographical description of Pichon, see T.A. Crowley, “Thomas Pichon”, *DCB*, IV, pp. 630-32.

42 Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 206-9. See also Shelby T. McCloy, *The Negro in France* (Lexington, 1961), pp. 30-1; Olando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death, A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 178.

least three occasions from 1739 to 1741.<sup>43</sup> Yet the slaves of even the wealthiest residents of the colony were not merely status symbols; they were expected to perform a range of domestic duties.

The more typical experience of slaves in the colony was that represented by 18-year-old Charles, kept so busy in the Benoist household, and the other slaves who, like him, lived in block 2 of the town. The slaves in block 2 undoubtedly knew each other, although their work would have left them little time for developing close friendships. In a few cases, however, some may have found a degree of friendship and companionship within their own households. Purchased in 1738 by Julien Grandchamp, Asar, a young black slave, may well have welcomed the addition to the household of Louis, a Panis, three years later. Grandchamp and his wife Thérèse had operated a modest inn in block 2 of the town since 1724. By the late 1730s Grandchamp was approaching his late 60s and the duties of managing an inn were becoming onerous. Besides a garden, the Grandchamps had sheep, chickens, turkeys and ducks. They purchased Asar to help with the chores, and he must have proved satisfactory since they bought another slave, Louis, in 1741.<sup>44</sup>



Houses along the Louisbourg waterfront. By 1741, the two houses in the centre, which comprised the Grandchamp inn, were the home for Asar, a black slave, and Louis Joseph, a Panis slave. Vincennes, France, Archives du ministère des Armées, Archives du Génie, article 14, Louisbourg tablette 22, 1731.

43 Buying of shoes, 1739-1741, G 2, dossier 475, fol. 63, A.N., Outre-Mer; Cheron inheriting Françoise, 29 April, 15 July 1752, G 3, vol. 2047-2, nos. 50 and 51.

44 Inventory after death of the estate of the late Julien Auger dit Grandchamp, 19 April 1741, G 2, vol. 197-2, dossier 142, no. 5, A.N., Outre-Mer; Sale of the estate of the late Thérèse Petit, widow of Julien Auger dit Grandchamp, 20 September 1753, G 2, vol. 202, dossier 286. See also Dunn, "The Private Properties in Block 2", pp. 46-61.

## 16 *Acadiensis*

Pierre Josselin scarcely had time either to make acquaintances among his fellow blacks or to prove his worth to the Acadian family who had purchased him. Joseph and Marguerite Dugas lived across the yard from the Grandchamps. Natives of Minas Basin, the couple had married in 1711 and, by 1722, had moved to Louisbourg. A carpenter, Joseph Dugas supplied wood and foodstuffs to the garrison as well as participating in the coasting trade. Although they had nine children and lived in a small house, the Dugas family purchased Pierre Josselin in the 1730s. Perhaps they felt some social pressure, since six of the 10 households within their block had slaves. On 20 January 1733, however, 25-year-old Josselin died of smallpox, a victim of an epidemic that recognized no colour bar and also took the lives of Charles' mistress, Anne Benoist, and her 15-year-old daughter.<sup>45</sup>

In a world where life was so precarious, slaves were particularly vulnerable. Those who did not predecease their owners were left with no recourse and virtually no protection under the law. At such times, even slaves who had provided long years of service were treated as commodities, their future to be decided in a sale agreement or at an auction. There is no way to determine how long Anne Despres' female slave had served her mistress by the time she faced auction in March 1745. A widow for 25 years, Anne Despres had maintained her independence by operating her husband's merchandising business and teaching sewing to young girls. Madame Despres had become a modestly successful business woman whose estate sold for 1,453 *livres* after her death in August 1744. Her slave had continued to live with her son Pierre Bellair and his family until the day of the auction, in March 1745.<sup>46</sup> At 2 o'clock on the afternoon of 22 March the judge of the Superior Council, accompanied by the King's proctor, the court clerk and the usher, proceeded "in front of the door of the house of the said Mr. Bellair to conduct the sale of a negress belonging to the estate of Madame Anne Guyon Despres". After the drummer had notified the public of the auction, and several people had appeared, the woman "was exhibited in public". In this case, perhaps partly out of a sense of filial obligation, Pierre Bellair did bid for the woman but only obtained her after the sixth bid.<sup>47</sup> Since she sold for the small amount of 350 *livres*, the slave was likely a young girl or an elderly woman.

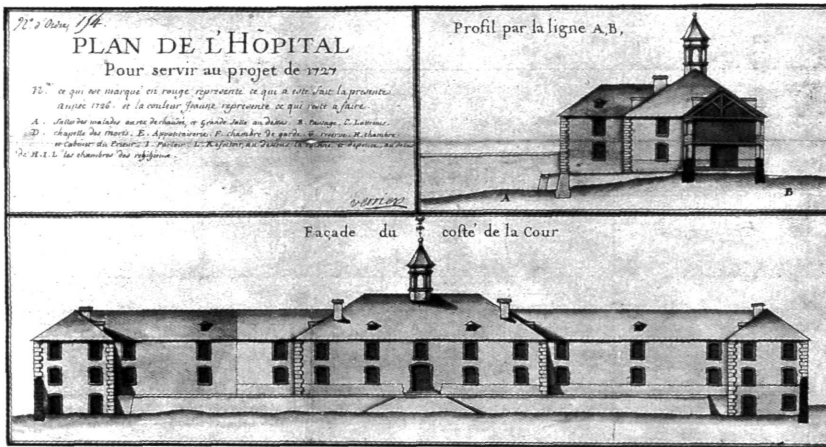
Held against their will, some slaves attempted to flee from their owners. According to Mi'kmaq oral tradition, the Mi'kmaq helped some slaves to escape during the French regime. Moreover, there was at least one marriage between a

45 Burial of Pierre Josselin, 20 January 1733, G 1, vol. 406, register 4, A.N., Outre-Mer; Inventory of the Dugas estate, 19 September 1733, G 2, vol. 182, pp. 641-58.

46 For Anne Despre's mercantile success, see Pouyez et Proulx, "L'Ile du Quai de Louisbourg", pp. 23-6 and Criminal proceeding against Charles Durand accused of theft from the home of the widow Chevalier, 19 August 1724, G 2, vol. 178, fol. 447, A.N., Outre-Mer. Two other auctions of slaves have survived in the Ile Royale documentation. In 1757 Madame Poincu purchased a 12-year-old slave from the estate of Captain Pierre Montalambert for 1300 *livres*. Four years earlier, Louisbourg merchant Milly Daccarette successfully bid 450 *livres* for a slave recently arrived from Martinique. Inventory and sale of the estate of Pierre Montalambert de Cert, 1757, G 2, vol. 209, dossier 513; 28 December 1753, G 2, vol. 202, no. 298.

47 Inventory and sale of the estate of Anne Guyon Despres, auction of the negress, 22 March 1745, G 2, vol. 199, pièce 187, A.N., Outre-Mer.

Mi'kmaq male and a freed black slave woman at Louisbourg.<sup>48</sup> This marriage underscores a degree of interracial acceptance between Mi'kmaq and black slaves in 18th-century Cape Breton. Without Mi'kmaq assistance, an inhospitable wilderness offered little consolation to any slave seeking freedom. The only alternative appeared to be as a stowaway on vessels departing Ile Royale. In the spring of 1750, Jean Baptiste Estienne, a slave of the Brothers of Charity, attempted to leave Louisbourg on board the vessel *Iphigenie*. Twenty-eight-years old, Jean Baptiste had worked at the King's Hospital since 1742. A refugee in Rochefort following the siege of Louisbourg, he had returned to Ile Royale with Brother Gregoire Chomey in 1749. Desiring freedom, Jean Baptiste wanted to return to France, but he was discovered aboard the *Iphigenie* and returned to Louisbourg.<sup>49</sup>



At least four slaves, Jean Baptiste Estienne, Madelaine, Hector and Jean La Vielle worked in the Louisbourg hospital, seen here in 1726. Aix-en Provence, France, Archives Nationales, Dépôt des Fortifications des Colonies, Carton no. 3, no. 154, 1726.

48 For the marriage of a Mi'kmaq male and a freed slave woman, see below. For oral evidence of Mi'kmaq helping slaves to escape, based on personal communication with anthropologist David Schmidt, University College of Cape Breton. See also the black slave, Isaac, in Canada, who could speak Mi'kmaq, French and English and the Panis slave Jacques, who married a Mi'kmaq woman in Acadia, Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves*, pps. 18, 122.

49 Prévost to the Minister of the Marine, 19 May 1750, B, vol. 91, A.N., Colonies. For the four slaves in the service of the Brothers of Charity, see Terry Crowley, "Religion in New France: Church and State at Louisbourg", in Philip B. Boucher, ed., *Proceedings of the Tenth Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* (Lanham, Md., 1985), pp. 139-60. Jean Baptiste had been a slave for the Brothers since 1742. Baptism of Jean Baptiste, 24 March 1742, vol. 407, register 1, A.N., Outre-Mer. For Jean Baptiste's stay in Rochefort, see 23 July 1749, Series 1 E, vol. 146, fol. 493, Archives du port de Rochefort.



Jean Baptiste was one of four slaves who returned to Cape Breton with the Brothers of Charity in 1749. The remaining three included Magdeline, Hector and Jean La Vielle. In total, 28 slaves came back to Louisbourg after Cape Breton was returned to the French. The returning settlers numbered just under 2000 men, women and children as well as a garrison of more than 1000 men. Deported from Cape Breton in 1745, the French had to surrender their property and, more critical, their means of earning a living. Since they were refugees, many of the former residents of Ile Royale had to petition the government for assistance. Only the wealthiest merchants, men such as Louis Jouet and Louis Delort, together with military and government personnel on fixed incomes, could afford to keep their slaves. Besides the Brothers of Charity, 17 individuals and their families owned 24 slaves.<sup>50</sup> The legal status of the slave in France remained confused throughout much of the 18th century. No French citizen could be enslaved, yet slavery had official recognition in the colonies. Slaves in France were technically free since, by custom, all slaves who set foot on French soil were free. Royal decrees of 1716 and 1738, however, suspended the custom by permitting colonial masters to retain their slaves in France so long as they fulfilled certain formalities. Some slaves won their freedom in French courts on the basis of custom but the outcome of these cases was not always assured.<sup>51</sup> Rather than challenging their masters' ownership, it appears that many slaves who served the wealthiest owners of Ile Royale opted to return with them to the colony as slaves in 1749. Thus the slaves deported from Cape Breton to the metropole in 1745 remained slaves in France.

Like the Brothers of Charity, the Government also occasionally found it expedient to purchase slaves. At least one occupation in New France, that of torturer and executioner, was reserved primarily for social outcasts, such as convicted criminals and slaves, because it was considered to be such a degrading and shameful position. Of the seven executioners and torturers at Louisbourg, two had been convicted for theft, one had been sent to Ile Royale as a salt smuggler, and another, a slave, had been convicted of murder. In seeking a slave as executioner after 1740, Ile Royale officials adopted the precedent established in Quebec, where Mathieu Leveille, a slave from Martinique, had been an executioner since 1733.<sup>52</sup>

50 Census of settlers returning to Ile Royale in 1749-1750, G 1, vol. 466, pièce 76, A.N., Outre-Mer. There were 1966 men, women and children enumerated on the Louisbourg census for 1749. Another 21 people were described as inhabitants of Ile Royale living at Rochefort, 17 August 1749. See Series IR, vol. 47, Archives Maritimes, Port de Rochefort. Seven of the 24 slaves who returned to Ile Royale were located in Series F 5B, A.N. For the names of the 24 slaves returning to Cape Breton in 1749-50, see the longer version of this paper in the Fortress of Louisbourg library.

51 Sue Peabody, "'There Are No Slaves in France': Law, Culture, and Society in Early Modern France, 1685-1789", Ph.D. thesis, University of Iowa, 1993, pp. 98-111; Cohen, *The French Encounter*, pp. 45-6; Lucien Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux antilles françaises* (Paris, 1897), pp. 374-5; McCloy, *The Negro in France*, pp. 21-2.

52 Andre Lachance, "Mathieu Leveille", in *DCB*, III, pp. 398-9. For a list of the executioners and torturers at Ile Royale, see Gilles Proulx, "Tribunaux et Lois de Louisbourg", *Manuscript Report*, 303 (Ottawa, 1975), p. 26. Proulx lists only six executioners and torturers. For the seventh, Jean Baptiste, see Bordereaux, 1757, C11C, vol. 14, fol. 91v, A.N., Colonies. For background on

Louisbourg *commissaire-ordonnateur* Francis Bigot wrote the minister of the marine in 1740 asking that a slave from the West Indies be sent to Ile Royale to act as executioner. Acting on the Minister's request, the Superior Council of Martinique selected François, a slave who had been convicted of the unpremeditated murder of a small black boy. The court in Martinique offered François the choice of either being executed for the murder or taking the position of hangman at Louisbourg. François thanked the councillors and "voluntarily accepted the said charge".<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, the Intendant of Martinique, Monsieur de la Croix, purchased François for 1,800 *livres* and permitted him "to practise the skills of torture and execution at Fort Royal" before going to Louisbourg. De la Croix wrote to Bigot advising him to watch François carefully because "The negroes are for the most part of a difficult conception and very maladroit".<sup>54</sup> To ensure that François remained obedient, the Louisbourg authorities provided him with rations from the King's storehouse, paid him 300 *livres* per year, and, in 1743, purchased "an English slave" from Simone Millou, a Louisbourg widow, for 154 *livres*, to become his wife. Clearly, François and his bride, although still slaves, were granted a measure of independence.<sup>55</sup>

Black people were the most numerous slaves in Louisbourg, but there were at least 18 Amerindians enslaved in the town as well. In the Louisbourg parish records, Amerindian slaves were usually referred to as "sauvage" or "Panis".<sup>56</sup> Among the Panis slaves baptized in Louisbourg were Louis Joseph, described as a 14 or 15-year-old "who does not have any father or mother", and 17-year-old Marie Joseph. Sold to people in Montreal and raised in the Catholic religion from the age of four, Marie, nevertheless, had not been formally baptized. Most Panis slaves in Ile Royale, like Marie, came to the island by way of Canada. At least one Panis, however, was sent to Louisbourg via France. On 16 March 1743 the *Cire* departed LaRochelle for Louisbourg, but the "little Indian named Cola who was for M. Delort died during the voyage".<sup>57</sup>

At least three Panis slaves bore children in Louisbourg. Françoise was already a member of the household of a prominent Louisbourg merchant, Michel Dumoncel,

attitudes toward executioners, see Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering. Executions and the Evolution of Repression from a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 13-42.

53 Extract from the registers of the Superior Council of Martinique, 9 September 1741, G 2, vol. 186, fols. 437-38, A.N., Outre-mer. See also letter to de la Croix, 26 July 1742, B, vol. 74, fol. 89, A.N., Colonies; Bigot to the Minister of the Marine, 23 December 1740, C11B, vol. 22, fol. 223, ; de la Croix to Maurepas, 30 April 1742, F 3, vol. 80, fol. 249.

54 De la Croix to Bigot, 30 April 1742, C8A, vol. 54, fol. 273, A.N., Colonies.

55 Expenses and receipts for the colony, purchase of a wife for the executioner, 1743, C11C, vol. 12, fol. 107 v, A.N., Colonies; Rations for the executioner, 1742, C11B, vol. 26, fol. 149.

56 The term "Panis" derived from the enslaved Pawnee tribe, located in the region that would eventually become the state of Nebraska. The French name Panis had become a generic term for Amerindian slave by the mid-18th century. See Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Friend and Foe. Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto, 1976), p. 139; Miquelon, *New France 1701-1744*, pp. 238-9; James Cleland Hamilton, "The Panis — An Historical Outline of Canadian Indian Slavery in the Eighteenth Century", *Proceedings of the Canadian Institute* (February 1897), pp. 19-27; Trudel, *L'esclavage au Canada*, pp. 60-4.

57 Louisbourg, 2 May 1743, B, vol. 272, fol. 137, A.C.M.; Baptism of Marie Joseph, 28 October 1749, and Louis Joseph, 7 July 1739, G 1, vol. 407, register 1, fols. 63, 29v-30, A.N., Outre-Mer.

when she became pregnant. A resident of the town since 1733, Dumoncel and his wife Genevieve Clermont had six children when they bought Françoise in 1754. Within three years of her arrival, Françoise gave birth to a daughter, Marie Jeanne. As was customary when a slave had a child, the name of the father was not mentioned in the baptismal records. Like Dumoncel, another prominent Louisbourg merchant, Louis LaGroix, and his wife Magdelaine Morin purchased a Panis slave named Marie Anne in the 1750s. Marie Anne helped to look after the three young LaGroix children and had her own child, Jeanne Josephe, out of wedlock in 1758. Again, the father's name was not listed in the records.<sup>58</sup>

Female slaves in Louisbourg, like other women in service, were vulnerable to sexual exploitation by their owners, or those in authority over them. Louisbourg's illegitimacy rate of 4.5 per cent represented 101 children out of a total of 2233 baptisms in the parish records. Twelve slave women gave birth to 20 per cent (20 of 101) of the town's illegitimate babies. In five instances, the women voluntarily identified fathers who were not their owners, but in the remaining 15 cases the fathers were listed as unknown.<sup>59</sup>

The clearest case of sexual exploitation in the Louisbourg records is that of the Panis slave, Louise, who arrived from Quebec during the summer of 1727. Louisbourg innkeeper Jean Seigneur purchased 25-year-old Louise from captain Pierre Dauteuil in order to use her as a servant in his inn. Seigneur gave Dauteuil two barrels of red wine for Louise; he agreed to complete the transaction the following year with two more barrels of wine. By February 1728, however, Seigneur realized that Louise was eight or nine months pregnant and therefore unsuitable as a servant in his establishment. In Louisbourg, as in France, it was customary to discharge servant girls as soon as they became pregnant in order to avoid public scandal.<sup>60</sup> Seigneur now refused to keep Louise, on the grounds that she "gave a poor example to his family, especially his young daughters, and because he could not call on her services which he needed in his inn".<sup>61</sup> He took Dauteuil to court, claiming that he had purchased Louise under false pretenses. A priest, Michel Leduff, was summoned for a private discussion with Louise and learned that, on the voyage from Quebec during the summer of 1727, when "the crew were quiet", Louise had slept in Dauteuil's cabin and was now expecting his child. Even though Louise was pregnant, Dauteuil had sold her to Seigneur, warning her to say nothing, but promising to return for her prior to the birth of the

58 Baptism of Jeanne Josephe, 14 March 1758, G 1, vol. 409, register 2; baptism of Françoise, 4 June 1754, G 1, vol. 409, register 1, fol. 17; baptism of Marie Jeanne, 14 March 1758, G 1, register 2, A.N., Outre-Mer.

59 See A.J.B. Johnston, "Women as Victims in 18th-Century Cape Breton: Violence at Home and in the Street", paper presented at the French Colonial Historical Society Conference, Montreal, McGill University, 21-23 May 1992.

60 Donovan, "Tattered Clothes and Powdered Wigs", p. 10; Jean Louis Flandrin, *Families in Former Times, Kinship, Household, and Sexuality* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 94.

61 Sale of an Indian to LaRiviere by Delamolottiere, 20 August 1727, G 3, 2058, no. 15, A.N., Outre-Mer; Process concerning Louise, Panis Indian, 19 February to 2 March 1728, G 2, vol. 190, no. 3, fol. 74-76v.

baby. Since she was a slave, Louise had little choice but to obey Dauteil and no recourse should he fail to keep his promise. Louise delivered baby Louis on 3 April, and he was baptized, with Seigneur's daughter Angelique acting as godmother. Four months after the birth, Dauteuil and Seigneur appeared before a Louisbourg notary and agreed that Louise and her baby should be sold in Martinique in favour of another slave. One year later, Louise had been sold in Martinique for 600 *livres* and replaced by 14-year-old Etienne, who cost 650 *livres*.<sup>62</sup> Upon his arrival in Louisbourg, Etienne was baptized and put to work in Seigneur's inn.

Slavery depended on racial differences: it served as a model for social subordination since it could only be applied to black and Panis slaves. The status of the slave became the model of what whites could not be.<sup>63</sup> In his work on *The French Encounter With Africans*, Willian Cohen has examined racial attitudes prevalent in France from medieval times to the end of the Enlightenment. Cohen has argued that the African's blackness was unpleasing to the French: black skin was a sign of some "inner depravity".<sup>64</sup> Other European nations reacted in a similar fashion: "the colour bar stood between black and white". Africans were thought to be inferior.<sup>65</sup>

Racism — based upon the theory of the innate differences and permanent inferiority of certain human groups — was more subtle throughout New France because it was displayed in people's attitudes and actions rather than in formal expressions of opinion. In contrast, throughout the British American Colonies, where there was a well established press by the mid-18th century, published references to slavery, including metaphorical references, were common.<sup>66</sup> One correspondent from Cologne, writing in the *Boston Post Boy* in 1748, compared negotiations over the possible return of Cape Breton to France to taming a "rusty negro" without a whip.<sup>67</sup> Although there was no press in New France, Cape Breton's French-regime documentation reveals similar white racist attitudes. Such attitudes were expressed most clearly in written negotiations for the purchase of slaves. Boston merchant Peter Faneuil, who sent slaves to Cape Breton in exchange for French goods, instructed ship captain Peter Buckley, in 1738, to buy him a slave in Antigua that was "a straight negro lad, 12 or 15 years old, having

62 Agreement between Delamolottiere and Seigneur, 28 August 1729, G 3, 2037, no. 58, A.N., Outre-Mer. For the baptism of Louis, see 3 April 1728, G 1, vol. 406, fol. 36v.

63 Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* ([1968] New York, 1977), p. 134.

64 Cohen, *The French Encounter*, p. 14.

65 James A. Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade A History* (New York, 1981), p. 13.

66 See, for example, a poem entitled "On the Clemency shown the French at Louisbourg", *The Boston News Letter*, 4 January 1759. See also a note "concerning the imperious and haughty terms in which the French speak," *ibid.*, 21 August 1760. For background on the press in the British American Colonies, see Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York, 1986), pp. 132-67; Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665-1740* (New York, 1994); William D. Sloan and Julie H. Williams, *The Early American Press, 1690-1783* (Westport, Conn., 1994).

67 *The Boston Weekly Post Boy*, 7 March 1748. The letter from Cologne was dated 1 November 1747.

had the smallpox if possible". Since the slave was for his own household, Faneuil wanted a negro with as "tractable a disposition" as possible.<sup>68</sup>

Slaves without tractable dispositions were usually punished or sold to new owners. Some were sent out of the colonies because owners feared that their independent behaviour would unduly influence fellow slaves. Witness the case of the slave Toussaint, a baker known for his obstinate behaviour in St. Pierre, Martinique. On 20 September 1753, Monsieur Dauberminy, a Martinique merchant, wrote to the Louisbourg merchant firm of Beaubassin and Silvain asking them to sell Toussaint:

I have put aboard the Ste Rose a Negro by the name of Toussaint, to ask you to get rid of him for me at any price. He belongs to one of my friends who wants to get [him] out of these islands because of the excessively strong habits he has here. Please do me the pleasure of rendering him the service of having him remain in Louisbourg, and of selling him to someone who will never bring him back here. He is a baker by trade. As for the price of the sale, you can use it for whatever you think best, whether cod or something else.<sup>69</sup>

Beaubassin and Silvain sold Toussaint at an auction in December 1753. Slaves such as Toussaint had to temper their "strong habits" or face the consequences.

Psychological abuse and physical cruelty were inherent features of chattel slavery in Ile Royale. One example of such abuse comes from the trial record of Jean Landry, a soldier, arrested in 1734 for theft at the home of merchant Michel Daccarette. Two years earlier, Daccarette had purchased two slaves, 15-year-old Blaise Simon and 11-year-old Jean, as household servants. During Landry's trial, Blaise Simon, a native of Grada in Guinée, was called upon to testify. Simon's deposition revealed that slaves were subject to corporal punishment at the slightest provocation. Daccarette returned home at four o'clock on a Saturday morning. Upon discovering his slave asleep in the kitchen, Daccarette gave him "several cracks with his cane" and told him to go out and investigate a noise in the yard. Blaise Simon stated that "his master had not returned for supper" that evening. After a late night, Daccarette's slave bore the brunt of his master's ill temper.<sup>70</sup>

Slaves had to be at the service of their masters even as they slept. Pierre Prévost,

68 William B. Weedon, *Economic and Social History of New England 1620-1789*, 11 (New York, 1963), p. 627. For Peter Faneuil sending slaves to Louisbourg, see Peter Faneuil to Thomas Kilby, Boston, 20 June 1737, Faneuil Letter Book, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston. For background information on Faneuil's trade with Cape Breton, see Donald F. Chard, "The Price and Profits of Accommodation: Massachusetts-Louisbourg Trade, 1713-1744", *Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts* (Boston, 1980), pp. 131-51.

69 Dauberminy to Beaubassin, Silvain and Company, 20 September 1753, G 2, vol. 202, No. 298, A.N., Colonies. For the sale of Toussaint by auction, see 28 December 1753, G 2.

70 Criminal procedure against Jean Manier dit Landry, 1734, G2, vol. 183, fols. 78-91. See 6 July 1732, G 1, vol. 406, register 4, fol. 37, for the baptism of Blaise Simon and Jean, slaves in the household of Michel Daccarette.

a soldier on guard duty, stole 40 silver coins from the home of Lieutenant Jean de Pensens one morning in September 1740. Since he had previously worked as a servant in the house, Prévost knew that the coins were kept in a desk drawer. Marie Charlotte, de Pensens' wife, testified that she had been alerted by her female slave who slept "near her bed".<sup>71</sup>

Slave owners wanted slaves willing to accept their subordinate status without questioning authority. And a few slaves were rewarded for such faithful service with the promise of freedom upon the death of the master. Louisbourg merchant Pierre Augruax freed his slave Moll after his death.<sup>72</sup> Boston merchant Thomas Hancock wrote in his will that he would free his slave Cato "if he behaved well till the age of thirty".<sup>73</sup> No stranger to Louisbourg, Hancock supplied provisions to the New England forces during their occupation of the town from 1745 to 1749 and to the British garrison in the 1760s.

During the 1745 and 1758 sieges of Louisbourg, 32 slaves, as well as one free black man, served in the New England and British forces there. One Louisbourg diarist noted on 24 November 1745: "this day were Burid Capt Glovers negro, Peter, and Newport Cofew, a free Negro, of Capt Mountfords company".<sup>74</sup> Since the beginning of the 18th Century, slaves in New England had been required to take militia training, and to serve in the military with whites, even though they were legally excluded from the militia. Theodore Atkinson, a member of the governing council of New Hampshire, sent his slave, John Gloster, to Louisbourg as a private in the New Hampshire forces. Slave recruits such as Gloster were usually forced to give back at least half of any monies received for military service to their owners.<sup>75</sup> Even slaves who worked on the fortifications as labourers or tradesmen would have to give up part of their wages to their owners. During the summer and autumn of 1747, a black labourer, Quash, received the same pay as 43 white co-workers. Two black tradesmen, "Negro Tom" and "Negro Will", were also paid at the same rate as their fellow white masons and bricklayers.<sup>76</sup> It is unlikely, however, that the

71 Criminal Procedure against Pierre Prévost de La Fleur, 23 September 1740, G 2, vol. 197, no. 135, fol. 9, A.N., Outre-Mer.

72 Pierre Augruax frees his slave, 21 August 1751, G 3, 2041-1, pièce 29, A.N., Outre-Mer.

73 W.T. Baxter, *The House of Hancock Business in Boston 1724-1775* (New York, 1965), p. 46; *Dictionary of American Biography*, IV (New York, 1960), pp. 220-1.

74 Louis Effingham de Forest, ed., *Louisbourg Journals 1745* (New York, 1932), p. 163.

75 Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York, 1986), pp. 7-8; Harold E. Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut* (New Haven/London, 1990), p.63; *Roll of New Hampshire Men at Louisbourg, Cape Breton, 1745* (Concord, 1896), pps. 6, 35. The original muster roles for the New England forces in the 1745 expedition have not survived. Three slaves are recorded in Massachusetts regiments. See the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 6th series, X, (Boston, 1899), Pepperrrell papers: Ruben, Negro, served under Daniel Bacon at Louisbourg, 24 May 1745, pp. 515-16; Gambo, Negro, served under Colonel Samuel Moore at Louisbourg, 20 November 1745 p. 553; Cuffey, Negro, served under Captain Samuel Lambert, 20 November 1745, p. 554. See also "Nathan Whiting's List of Soldiers", *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*, XIII (Hartford, 1911), pp. 68-82.

76 "List of New England Artificers, Labourers and others who have been employed in the month of August last on the several works and repairs in this garrison, 1 September 1747", British Colonies,

black men were permitted to keep all of their wages.

Slaves were in demand at Louisbourg during the New England occupation from 1745 to 1749. Many of the military leaders of the New England expedition against Louisbourg owned slaves and participated in the slave trade. William Pepperell usually kept 10 or 12 slaves and “maintained a splendid barge with a black crew dressed in uniform”.<sup>77</sup> One of those slaves, Catto, accompanied Pepperell to Louisbourg and remained in the town throughout the fall and winter of 1745-46.<sup>78</sup> Brigadier General Samuel Waldo invested heavily in the slave trade and sold slaves from his business quarters in Boston.<sup>79</sup> Peter Warren was one of the largest slave owners in New York when the province had “the largest slave force in any English colony north of Maryland”. One of Warren’s slaves, a musician, came to Louisbourg and played for public celebrations in the occupied town. Writing in July 1745, a Louisbourg diarist noted that “for the space of 2 hours the Commodore’s Negro played upon the trumpit Elevatingly”.<sup>80</sup> When Major Israel Newton of Connecticut died at Louisbourg in 1745, his estate included three slaves. Another New England officer, Captain David Donahew, had almost lost his life at the hands of Africans after his ship was wrecked on the River Gambia during a slaving expedition in 1742.<sup>81</sup> Donahew and his fellow New England officers, like their French counterparts, had a slave-owning mentality. Thus, it is not surprising that the government agent, Thomas Hancock, received a number of requests for slaves from Louisbourg officers. Writing to David Rogers, Captain of the Royal Artillery at Louisbourg, Hancock noted, in a 1747 letter from Boston, that “I shall speak for a negro Boy and advise you, they are very scarce here”. Slaves were scarce in Boston because, as Hancock wrote, they “are good for anything”.<sup>82</sup>

Scarce or not, slaves were recruited not only by the New Englanders, but also by the British to meet the operational requirements of their army in North America. Unskilled slaves were mostly involved in manual labour such as digging latrines, opening trenches, constructing batteries and repairing lines in support of the regular

Military Affairs at Louisbourg 1747, Washington, Library of Congress.

77 Joseph Williamson, “Slavery in Maine”, *Maine Historical Society Collections*, 7, Series 1, 1876, pp. 213-14; Byron Fairchild, “William Pepperrell”, *DCB*, III, pp. 505-8; Chard, “The Price and Profits of Accommodation”, pp. 144-6; Byron Fairchild, *Messrs. William Pepperrell: Merchants at Piscataqua* (Ithaca, 1954), p. 118.

78 William Pepperrell to his wife, Louisbourg, 11 September 1745, in *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 19 (1865), p. 229; Thomas Waldron to Richard Waldron, Canso, 22 April 1745, Louisbourg, 1745 Siege Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

79 Donald F. Chard, “The Impact of Ile Royale on New England 1713-1763”, Ph.D. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1976, p. 88; Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, X (New York, 1964), p. 333.

80 “Journal of private George Mygate of Springfield, Massachusetts”, in de Forest, ed., *Louisbourg Journals 1745*, p. 103; Julian Gwyn, *The Enterprising Admiral. The Personal Fortune of Sir Peter Warren* (Montreal/London, 1974), pp. 72-3; Chard, “The Price and Profits of Accommodation”, p. 148.

81 See de Forest, ed., *Louisbourg Journals, 1745*, p. 33; Howard M. Chapin, “New England Vessels in the Expedition Against Louisbourg, 1745” (Boston, 1923), p. 24; Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, p. 87.

82 Thomas Hancock to J.H. Bastide, 24 September 1745, and Hancock to Captain David Rogers 23 July and 13 August 1747, Hancock Papers, Harvard University.

troops. By the end of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), thousands of blacks were serving in the British military in North America.<sup>83</sup> At Louisbourg, slaves in the British Army and the New England militia were paid one quarter of the money due them for their labour. On 13 September 1759 Gibson Clough, a stonemason from Salem, Massachusetts, and a member of Colonel Jonathan Bagley's Essex Regiment, noted:

The Capt or Commanding offrs of Companys that have any Negroes in their Companys who are not allowed to do Duty in the Ranks are hereby Directed to Receive all mony that is or Shall be Due for their Works and when Received to Give one Quarter part of Such money to ye Negroe or negroes Who Wrought and the other three parts to mr Commessary Sheaff director of ye Horsptal takeing his Receite for ye Same and By him to be Converted to ye use of ye Sick in the horsptal and are also Directed to take care that the Negroes are kept to work for ye use above menchend.<sup>84</sup>

Fourteen days later, Jonathan Proctor, another member of Bagley's Regiment, wrote: "Died Last Night a Negrow felow Belonging to Capt Parkers Compt". The owners of slaves who died in the service of Massachusetts and the other New England Colonies were usually compensated for their loss of property. Slaves in the New England militia had no say in how or where they would serve; their masters usually sent them off to war while they stayed at home. Other slaves accompanied their masters to Cape Breton. Edward Sheaffe, commissary in Bagley's Regiment, brought his slave Catto to Louisbourg in 1760. Slaves such as Catto Sheaffe, a private in the same regiment as his master, had little incentive to fight since Massachusetts' slaves were not offered freedom for battlefield heroism.<sup>85</sup>

At least one Louisbourg slave, however, was freed for meritorious service. Louisbourg port captain Pierre Morpain had his seven-year-old slave Georges Sauzy baptized on 17 June 1732. When he left for France in October of the following year, Morpain left his young slave with Hyppolite Lespaines, superior of the Recollet priests at Louisbourg. Father Lespaines was instructed to keep Sauzy for "Morpain until he returns from France or sends orders to sell him". Morpain eventually returned and reclaimed young Sauzy, who remained a slave in his household for the next 12 years. As port captain, Morpain was one of the key

83 Roger Norman Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815* (New Haven/London, 1979), pp. 1-3; Sylvia R. Frey, *The British Soldier in America: A Social History of Military Life in the Revolutionary Period* (Austin, 1981), pp. 17-20; Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, 1991).

84 "A Journal of Mr. Gibson Clough until he arrived at Louisbourg and what happened there from the First of June until the End of the Year", unpublished diary, 1759-1761, 13 September 1759, in Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site library.

85 Nalty, *Strength For the Fight*, pp. 6-9. For Edward Sheaffe's slave Catto, see vol. 98, pps. 482, 494, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston; Captain Newhall's Company, Treasury -1, 398, p. 33, Public Record Office, London. For the death of the slave belonging to Captain Parker's Company, see "Diary Kept at Louisbourg, 1759-1760 by Jonathan Proctor", *The Essex Institute Historical Collections* (Salem, 1934) p. 49.



defenders of Louisbourg during the siege of 1745, leading a detachment of 80 men to Gabarus Bay to prevent a landing by the New Englanders. Faced with overwhelming odds, Morpain ordered his men to continue the assault. Only after his recruits were threatened with certain defeat, did he order them to retreat. Although wounded during the fray, Morpain was saved by his slave. According to Antoine de la Boularderie, co-leader of the expedition, "His negro carried him, dragged him, hid him under some leaves and saved him. In recognition of his services, he gave him his liberty and they only returned to the town three days later, under great personal risk".<sup>86</sup>

Morpain's emancipation of his slave was in keeping with French colonial policy, since the Council of the Marine had proposed as early as 1722 that "freedom be granted only to those slaves who, by acts of devotion, had saved the lives of their masters, mistresses, or the children of their owners". Moreover, war often increased the number of freedmen since local authorities recruited slaves with the promise of freedom for those who distinguished themselves in military action.<sup>87</sup> Judging by the diary of a New England officer in the 1745 capture of Cape Breton, other slaves besides Georges Sauzy participated in the defence of Louisbourg. "Our men took one french man and one negro man", wrote Benjamin Stearns on 5 May 1745.<sup>88</sup> Georges Sauzy, however, was the only slave known to be freed because of his heroic efforts during the siege. After the French reoccupation of Cape Breton in 1749, Sauzy, only 24-years old, returned to Louisbourg and settled on the Mira River, a free man.

Of all the slaves in Cape Breton during the first occupation (1713-1745), Georges Sauzy was the only person recorded as being emancipated. As the 18th century progressed, it had become increasingly difficult, especially in the French West Indies, for slaves to gain their freedom legally by manumission. Judging by the experiences of slaves in Ile Royale and Canada, New France was little different. By 1721 an ordinance in the West Indies restricted the right of slave owners to free their slaves, and eventually imposed high fees for the right to free a slave.<sup>89</sup> An ordinance restricting the right of slave owners to free their slaves was also issued for Ile Royale in 1721. The new law stipulated that minors could not sell slaves from their inherited estates until they reached the age of 25.<sup>90</sup> The intent of the edict

86 Gaston Du Boscq De Beaumont, ed., *Les derniers jours de l'Acadie (1748-1758): Correspondances et mémoires; extraits du portefeuille de M. le Courteois de Surlaville* (Paris, 1899), p. 290. For the baptism of Sauzy, see 17 June 1732, G 1, vol. 406, register 4, fol. 36v., A.N., Outre-mer. For Morpain leaving his slave with Lespaines, see Acknowledgement by Hyppolite Lespaines that he is keeping a negro for Pierre Morpain until he returns from France, 21 October 1733, B, 274, A.C.M.

87 Leo Elizabeth, "The French Antilles", in David W. Cohen and Jack P. Greene, *Neither Slave Nor Free: The Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World* (Baltimore/London, 1972), pp. 136, 140-1.

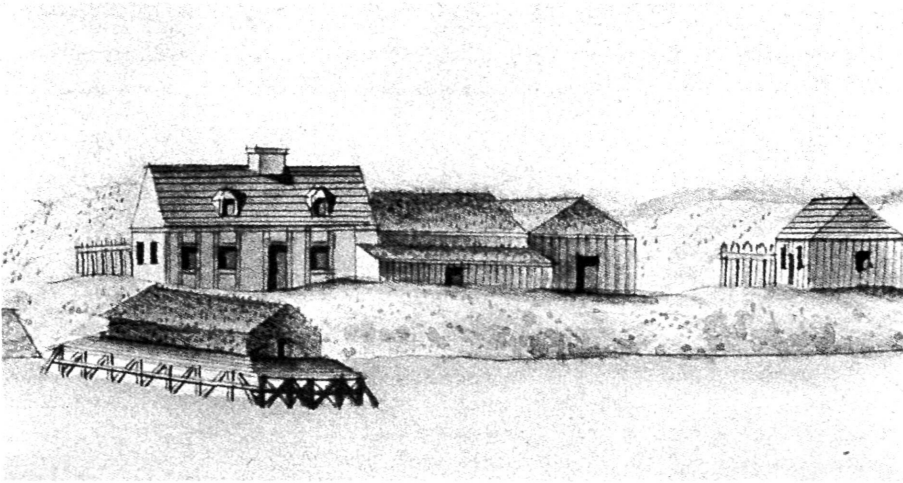
88 "Benjamin Stearn's Diary, Journal -1745", *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* (1909), p. 139. See also de Forest, ed., *Louisbourg Journals, 1745*, p. 12.

89 Cohen, *The French Encounter*, pp. 55-6, 101; Gabriel Debien, *Les Esclaves aux antilles françaises, XVII - XVIII siècles* (Basse Terre, Guadeloupe, 1974), p. 374.

90 Declaration of the King concerning the manner of appointing tutors and guardians, 14 December 1721, G 2, vol. 178, fols. 256-62, A.N., Outre-Mer.

was to restrict the manumission of slaves. In Ile Royale there were few manumissions: of the 35 illegitimate children born to slave mothers in Louisbourg, none was freed.

There were, however, a few free blacks in Ile Royale. George, “the Black”, a fisherman, was one of only two black men, slave or free, who worked in the Ile Royale fishery.<sup>91</sup> The only other black man known to work in the fishery was 25-year-old François Xavier, a free black, born and raised in France. Recruited to come to Louisbourg in 1751, François was to serve as an indentured servant in the fishery for three years.<sup>92</sup> There were also a few blacks employed in other endeavours. In 1752, Vincent Vinette, a free black, became an apprentice baker to master baker Gerome Larrieux. Vinette was to be paid 72 *livres* per year during the first two years of his five-year apprenticeship and 144 *livres* per year during the last three years of his contract. Larrieux also agreed to provide room and board as well as laundry services.<sup>93</sup>



Georges, “the Black”, a free man, worked for fishing proprietor Marie Anne Peré in 1735. Georges would have lived in one of the fisherman’s sheds, seen on the right, in this 1730 view of the Peré property. Paris, Archives du Génie, article 14, Louisbourg tablette, no. 9, 1730.

91 1735, G 2, vol. 194, dossier 80, A.N., Outre-Mer. George worked for Marie Peré, a widow of fishing proprietor Antoine Peré. Included among the debts owed to Madame Peré was a list of her fishermen who owed for supplies. Georges, “the Black”, owed 70 *livres*.

92 M. Gaucher, M. Delafosse, G. Debien, “Les Engagés Pour Le Canada au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle”, *Revue d’Histoire de l’Amérique Française*, XIV, 3 (December 1960), p. 439.

93 Apprenticeship of Vincent Vinette, 5 December 1752, G 3, 2047-suite, pièce 29, A.N., Outre-Mer.

At least three enslaved black women were eventually freed and married in Louisbourg. One of the freed women, Marie Marguerite Rose, was a native of Guinée and a slave of Louisbourg officer Jean Chrysostome Loppinot. Purchased in 1736, Marguerite was baptized on 27 September and was described as being “around 19 years old”. Two years later, she gave birth to a son, Jean François, who automatically became a slave, the father being listed as “unknown”.<sup>94</sup> In 1745, Marguerite Rose, then 28, lived with ensign Loppinot, his wife Magadeline and their eight young children. She was kept busy looking after the Loppinot household, but she had some assistance from a domestic, her son Jean. After the capture of Louisbourg in 1745, Marguerite Rose and her son went to Rochefort with the Loppinots, returning with the family to Ile Royale in 1749.<sup>95</sup> Two years after their return to Cape Breton, Marguerite’s son, Jean François, described as a slave “in the service of Mr. Loppinot”, died, just 11 days after his 13th birthday. After having devoted her adult life (19 years) to helping to raise the 12 Loppinot children, Marguerite obtained her freedom sometime before her wedding in 1755. On 27 November 1755, Marguerite Rose was married to Jean Baptiste Laurent, who was described as an “Indian” on his marriage certificate.<sup>96</sup>

In the spring of 1756 the newly married couple rented part of the house next door to Marguerite’s former owners, the Loppinots. The rental agreement stated: “We the undersigned J. Bte Indian and Marguerite negress, husband and wife, both free, have rented a house located on St. Louis street from Bernard Paris to commence the 10 April of the present year and finish the last of September of the following” at 50 *livres* per month. Located on Block 16, the half-timbered house had been divided into two apartments. Jean Baptiste and Marguerite’s apartment had two rooms downstairs, one with a brick fireplace and four windows. There was also an area upstairs which could be used as bedrooms or storage. The couple had access to the yard, which had a well and a garden. With her new freedom, Marguerite had improved her living conditions. She and Jean Baptiste established a tavern in their Block 16 house and appear to have been equal partners in the business. Whether purchasing liquor or foodstuffs for the business, or taking in sailors for room and board, “Madame Rose negress” appeared on many of the receipts. Marguerite also had a significant account, amounting to 226 *livres* with her former owner, Jean Loppinot, who supplied the tavern with meat and rum.<sup>97</sup> Although a slave for most

94 Baptism of Jean François, 7 October 1738, G 1, vol 407, register 1, fol. 14, A.N. Outre-Mer.

95 Baptism of Marguerite Rose, 27 September 1736, G 1, vol. 406, register 4, fol. 63, A.N., Outre-Mer; Census of 1749-1750, pièce 76, G 1, vol. 466. For Loppinot at Rochefort, see 17 September 1747, B, vol. 86-1, p. 184, and 13 May 1748, B, vol. 88-2, p. 301, A.N., Colonies.

96 Act of marriage between Jean Baptiste Laurent, Indian, and Marguerite Rose of Guinée, 27 November 1755, G 1, vol. 409, register 1, fol 77v., A.N., Outre-Mer. For the death of Marguerite’s son, Jean, see 18 October 1751, G 1, vol. 408, register 1, fol. 160v. Marguerite’s husband was likely a Mi’kmaq since there are still Mi’kmaqs living in Nova Scotia with the surname Laurent. See, for example, Micheline Johnson “Paul Laurent”, in *DCB*, III, pp. 358-9.

97 For information on Marguerite’s business, see 10 November 1755, G 2, vol. 212, dossier 552, pièce 9, A.N., Outre-Mer; 17 September 1755, pièce 5; 19 May 1756; 1755-1756, pièces 1 to 4. For the rental agreement, see pièce 22.

of her life, Marguerite had acquired considerable business and management skills.

The marital bliss of Marguerite and Jean Baptiste was to be short lived, since Marguerite died in 1757, less than two years after her marriage.<sup>98</sup> Forty years old, Marguerite had lived nearly all of her life in bondage, yet she accumulated possessions in her few years of freedom. On the day of her death, Louisbourg authorities conducted an inventory of Marguerite's estate. The tavern was simply furnished, with a buffet, a dresser, a long wooden table with two benches and various earthen ware and faience dishes. The inventory also listed Marguerite's clothes, most of which were described as being worn or used. The value of the estate amounted to 274 *livres* when sold to the highest bidders at the estate sale.

Marguerite's ability to open a business, establish credit, and gain acceptance in the community suggests a certain degree of "limited opportunity" in Louisbourg society. This "limited opportunity" reflected current mores in the French West Indies since "tavernkeeping was one of the most important occupations of the free-coloured people" as early as 1713. There, a number of enterprising free-coloured women had established taverns, one of the few avenues to commercial success.<sup>99</sup> Thus, when newly freed Marguerite opened a tavern in Louisbourg, she was following a precedent that had long been established in the French-plantation colonies.

There is no evidence about how or why Marguerite Rose was freed from slavery. She may have purchased her own freedom, but it is more likely that Jean Baptiste Laurent bought her, in order to marry her. Such was the case with Jean Baptiste Cupidon, a former slave of Louis Delort, who bought a slave named Catherine from Blaisse Cassaignoles for 500 *livres* and married her in 1753. A long-time Louisbourg merchant, Blaisse Cassaignoles was active in the cod fishery, shipping and supply trade and had been a slave owner in Louisbourg over a 20-year-period. Following his marriage in 1735, Cassaignoles and his wife Marie Jeanne Seaux had four children, and his slave, Catherine Françoise, had doubtless helped to raise the family.<sup>100</sup>

Cupidon, a native of Dakar, Senegal, had planned for his marriage by buying a small house near the Royal Battery, in November 1752, for 200 *livres*, which he agreed to pay over the following year. On 1 March 1753, Cupidon and Cassaignoles signed a contract for the purchase of Catherine; Cupidon agreed to pay Cassaignoles 120 *livres* immediately and 80 *livres* in September. The remaining 300 *livres* was to be paid in 100 *livres* installments over the next three years. As security for payment of the balance owing, Cupidon and Catherine agreed to present, as mortgage, themselves as well as all of their present and future estate, including moveable and immovable goods. For his part, Cassaignoles agreed to

98 Act of Burial of Marguerite Rose, 28 August 1757, G 1, vol. 409, register 2, fol. 25v., A.N., Outre-Mer. For a description of the house and its interior, see Morgan, "A History of Block 16", pp. 18-23.

99 Elizabeth, "The French Antilles", pp. 160-1.

100 For information on Cassaignoles, see MacLean, "A History of Block 4", pp. 45-50. For the purchase of Catherine by Jean Baptiste Cupidon, see 1 March 1753, G 3, 2041-1, A.N., Outre-Mer.

“give liberty and emancipate by this agreement the forementioned Catherine negress his slave and this day and for always without any restrictions, the said Catherine to be independent and free of his will and servitude as if she had never been in slavery”.<sup>101</sup> An experienced merchant, 63-year old Cassaignolles was protecting his investment by insisting on a mortgage. Catherine Françoise was his property, a piece of chattel to be bought and sold. For Jean Baptiste Cupidon, Catherine Françoise was his bride to be, and buying her freedom was the equivalent of a significant dowry. Purchasing a wife was not necessarily an alien experience for Africans such as Cupidon, since they were familiar with the custom of making bridewealth payments as part of the commitment to marriage.<sup>102</sup>

The third enslaved woman to be freed and married was Marie Louise, who had been a slave of merchant Louis Jouet for 18 years by the time of her marriage. Marie Louise married 25-year-old Louis Coustard on 21 January 1754. Recruited in La Rochelle in 1751, Coustard was an indentured servant who was described as having no profession. He was the only white man to marry a black slave in Ile Royale. Since her arrival in Louisbourg in 1736, Marie Louise had given birth to seven illegitimate children, all of whom became slaves. Pregnant at the time of her marriage, she delivered a son, Michael, on 25 May. Within three years, she gave birth to a daughter, Thérèse, born 6 January 1757.<sup>103</sup> Since Marie Louise had been freed upon her marriage to a caucasian, her two children by Louis Coustard were born free.

Although slaves such as Marie Louise lived in the homes of their owners, there is little evidence of emotional attachment between master and slave. Marie Louise, for example, did not receive any compensation, nor was she protected from further sexual exploitation after she identified the white fathers of two of her illegitimate children. And two of the three women freed in Louisbourg during the 1750s were only freed near the end of their lives, thereby absolving the owners from the responsibility of caring for the women in their old age. The owner of the third freed woman was fully compensated for the freedom of his slave.

On at least one occasion, in January 1758, a young enslaved couple, Joseph *dit* Hector and Victoire, were permitted to marry. The wedding appears to have been a social gathering for some members of the Louisbourg slave community; four of the six participants at the ceremony were slaves. The owners of the married couple, Jean Baptiste Morin and Marie Charlotte Saint Martin, were well-to-do. An aspiring member of the bureaucracy, Morin was a royal notary and clerk of the Superior Council. With the naval blockade of Louisbourg and the impending siege of the town, the Morins' willingness to allow their slaves to marry could be

101 Sale of Catharine to Cupidon, 1 March 1753, G 3, 2041-1, A.N., Outre-Mer; Purchase of house from Jean Marcadet by Cupidon, 2 November, 1752, G 3, vol. 2041-1, no. 161.

102 Pierson, *Black Yankees*, p. 93.

103 Baptism of Thérèse Coustard, 8 January 1757, G 1, vol. 409, 2nd register, fol. 13, A.N., Colonies; Baptism of Michael Coustard, 25 May 1754, G 1, vol. 409, register 1; Marriage of Louis Coustard and Marie Louise, 21 January 1754, G 1, vol. 408, register 2, fol. 62v.; Recruitment of Louis Coustard, see M. Gaucher, M. Delafosse, et G. Debien, “Les engagés pour le Canada au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Revue D'Histoire De L'Amérique Française*, XIV, 4 (mars 1961), p. 584.

interpreted as a magnanimous gesture, especially since Joseph and Victoire were the only enslaved couple permitted to marry in Louisbourg. The marriage did not last long though; 17-year-old Victoire died on 15 February, just five weeks after her wedding.<sup>104</sup>

A few other occasions in the records hint at some semblance of slave social life in Louisbourg. In December 1734, the slave, Magdelaine Acheury, delivered a boy. Six months later the child was baptized and given the name Philippe in a ceremony that included the mother, the father, Jacques, as well as two slave godparents, Philippe and Marie Jeanne. This was one of just two, out of a total of 58 slave baptisms in the Ile Royale records, in which five slaves were permitted to gather together at a baptismal ceremony. The only other baptism with slaves as godparents occurred seven years later, in March 1742, when 20-year-old Jean Baptiste Estienne was baptized, with two slaves, Estienne and Marie, serving as godparents. Jean Baptiste belonged to the Brothers of Charity.<sup>105</sup>

Such social occasions suggest that at least some slaves were accorded a measure of independence. The month before Jean Baptiste's baptism, Jean La Vielle, another slave owned by the Brothers of Charity, was present at the auction of the estate of the deceased Philibert Genier. La Vielle had considerable responsibility, since he bid six *livres* five *sols* for two pairs of mittens, two pairs of wool pants, and four caps.<sup>106</sup> The only other references to slaves in Louisbourg acting independently occurred in the 1750s. On 26 March 1750 a mulatto named Antoine departed Louisbourg on a schooner bound for France. Antoine was listed as a "voluntary passenger". Similarly, in the summer of 1752, the slave, Louis, left Louisbourg on the ship the *St. Augustin de Cherbourg*, arriving in France on 20 October.<sup>107</sup>

The relatively independent actions by Louis, Antoine and Jean La Vielle were rare in Cape Breton because slavery perpetuated a culture of oppression. Owners might be cruel or kind, but whatever the treatment accorded them, the shared experience of slaves was usually oppressive and humiliating. Nonetheless, an analysis of the individual experiences of slaves at Louisbourg suggests that the nature of that experience defies easy generalization. Some, like Charles, Asar, Marie Marguerite Rose and Catharine Françoise, helped to maintain households, growing the food and raising the children. A rare few, like Marie Marguerite Rose, managed to achieve a modest level of literacy, a rare accomplishment for someone of her sex at this time. Others, like Tom and Will, were skilled tradesmen, helping

104 Death of Victoire, 15 February 1758, G 1, vol. 409, register 2, fol. 37v, A.N., Outre-Mer; Marriage of Joseph dit Hector and Victoire, 7 January 1758, G 1, vol. 409, register 2, fol. 34. For biographical information on Jean Baptiste Morin and Marie Charlotte, see H. Paul Thibault, "L'Ilot 17 de Louisbourg 1713-1768", *Travail Inédit Numéro 99* (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 137-41.

105 Baptism of Jean Baptiste Estienne, 24 March 1742, G 1, vol. 407, register 1, fol. 82, A.N., Outre-Mer. For the baptism of Philippe, see 2 June 1735, G 1, vol. 406, register 4, fol. 57.

106 Papers concerning the estate of Philibert Genier, 8 February 1742, G 2, vol. 198, dossier 158, A. N., Outre-mer.

107 Arrival of the "negre Louis" on the *St. Augustin de Cherbourg*, 20 October 1752, Series F 5B, fol. 102, A.N.; Departure of the mulatto Antoine from Louisbourg, 26 March 1750, F 5B.

to build and repair Louisbourg's fortifications. The experience of Blaise Simon, who was subject to regular beatings at the hands of his master, was surely far different from that of George Sauzy, who developed a bond of loyalty so strong he was prepared to risk his own life to save his master. Some, like Jean Baptiste, refused to accept their fate, while others, like Jean la Vielle, were prepared to make compromises in order to gain a measure of independence and responsibility. Yet, no matter what their particular situation, slaves in Ile Royale were forced to adapt to a life they did not choose and could rarely control. Nevertheless, in spite of the indignities they suffered, the spirit of people such as George Sauzy, Louise, Touissant, Blaise Simon, Marie Marguerite Rose, Jean Baptiste Cupidon, Catharine François and Marie Louise remained undaunted. Ile Royale, like most of the Western Hemisphere, was a multiracial society. And although the remaining records can provide only a glimpse of the world of the slaves in 18th-century Louisbourg, they do demonstrate that black and Panis slaves were neither invisible nor peripheral to Ile Royale society.