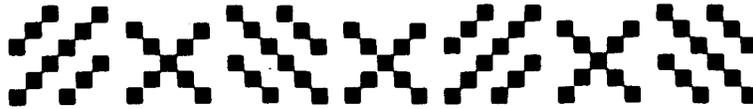


## The Family of Drouet de Richerville: Merchants, Soldiers, and Chiefs of Indiana

*Donald Chaput\**



One aspect of the history of New France that has not attracted sufficient interest from historians is the role of prominent families in the frontier fur trade and military activity. Far from being a narrow exercise in family history, such studies can aid in unravelling the twisted fibers of the frontier social fabric.

During the French regime between ten and fifteen Quebec families exerted their control from Montreal to the Hudson's Bay and southward to the Illinois country. A few of these families had an even broader sweep, with influence and economic power in Acadia, Louisiana, and Santo Domingo. This influence was not exercised only by writing memoranda from Montreal: rather, these key families sent their sons, as officers of marine or as licensed merchants, to posts throughout New France.<sup>1</sup>

The Legardeur de Repentigny family is representative of this élite. Originally of the minor nobility in Normandy, several members of the family moved to New France during the 1630s. By 1700 the Legardeurs had an established military and trade position that spread throughout half the continent. By the end of the French regime in 1760 they had further increased their prestige. Many of them became lieutenants and captains of marines, and several served as officials in Quebec and Montreal. Legardeurs served as commandants or officers in second at Fort Frontenac, Detroit, Mackinac, Sault Ste. Marie, Green Bay, Fort St. Joseph, and the Sea of the West (western Lake Superior). Because of their positions, they could assure

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron Nish, *Les Bourgeois-Gentilshommes de la Nouvelle France, 1729-1749* (Montreal, 1968).

that the Legardeur family received a large share of the licenses necessary to participate in the lucrative fur trade.<sup>2</sup>

A few other families paralleled the Legardeurs in this stranglehold on military and trade affairs. For forty years the Marin de La Malgue family practically owned modern Wisconsin and Minnesota. The Dagneau Douville (De Quindre) family had a military-trade network stretching from Post of the Miamis to Detroit and on to the north shore of Lake Superior. From the 1720s on, the Gaultier de La Vérandrye family exercised a near-monopoly on the trade permits and naming of officers at the posts to the west of Lake Superior.<sup>3</sup>

These families shared two characteristics: they were of the minor nobility of France and among the colonial élite in Canada. Although they were untitled (such as count or baron), they were at least *ecuyers*, the standard term used to identify a noble without a title. In New France, where there were few marquis, counts, or barons, to be an *ecuyer* was a mark of great prestige, a position that usually led to officer commissions in the marines. Furthermore, wealthy merchants married many of their daughters into this colonial élite, thus adding financial power to the military-nobility status.<sup>4</sup>

The Drouet de Richerville family,<sup>5</sup> so prominent in the history of Vincennes, Ouiatanon, and Fort Wayne, was part of this élite. From the 1720s, when several members of the family entered the fur trade, until the death of Jean-Baptiste Richardville in 1841, the Drouets were one of the most significant families of officers-traders in the western Great Lakes region.

The first of the family in the New World was Claude Drouet de Richerville, who arrived in Canada in the late 1680s as a cadet. He had been born in 1665 to Claude Drouet, *ecuyer*, seigneur de Baudricourt and Bajolet; his mother was Appoline

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Chaput, "Jean-Paul Legardeur de St. Pierre," and "Jacques Legardeur de St. Pierre," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (3 vols., Toronto, 1969-1974), II, 386-87, III, 374-76.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Chaput, "Louis-Césaire Dagneau Douville de Quindre," *ibid.*, III, 158-59; Donald Chaput, "Joseph Marin," *ibid.*, forthcoming.

<sup>4</sup> A good analysis of the nobility is in Robert Laroque de Roquebrune, "La Noblesse de France," *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques (Canada)*, LVII (1951), 101-14, 135-63. For the impact of these marriages on French Canadian society, see Cameron Nish, *Les Bourgeois-Gentilshommes de la Nouvelle-France*.

<sup>5</sup> Many variants of the spelling of the name Richerville were used by the family and by the government, including Richarville, Richardville, and Richardville. Earlier uses, in France and Canada, favor Richerville. After 1800, the most commonly used spelling was Richardville.

Soissons. The father was a lawyer in the criminal courts at Chartres and was a member of the nobility of the robe.<sup>6</sup>

The nobility and prominence of the Drouet family date from the twelfth century and in the following centuries the family produced many seigneurs, military leaders, lawyers, and judges. The family name was Drouet, but in most cases the men usually added a *nom de lieu* (place-name) to indicate one of the family's many land holdings. This practice carried over into the New World, where various family members were known as Drouet de Baudricourt, Drouet de Mareuil, Drouet de Bajolet, and so forth.<sup>7</sup>

Claude Drouet de Richerville had an undistinguished career in New France. In 1687, at Champlain, he married Marie-Jeanne Desrosiers.<sup>8</sup> They had a large family—ten children—and these descendants, too, were prolific. Claude's position as cadet in the troops was that reserved for young nobles or sons of colonial officers. Most cadets served at least five years before they were commissioned as officers. By 1702, Claude was a second ensign in the marines, the lowest of the commissioned ranks, yet the highest rank he ever attained. Probably because of his large family he always requested garrison duty in the cities of eastern Canada. Thus, he never went to the western posts where wealth and possibilities for promotion were greater but where family living was inconvenient.<sup>9</sup>

The various fitness reports of officers list Claude but, aside from an occasional comment on his age, do not reveal either shortcomings or strengths.<sup>10</sup> This was the price one paid for garrison duty. In 1734 he requested that he be allowed to retire and that his rank of ensign be granted to a son, Michel-Ignace Drouet de Baudricourt. Both requests were granted.<sup>11</sup> In 1736, wishing to assure his family in the good graces of authorities in

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<sup>6</sup> Série E, dossier 138, Archives des Colonies, Public Archives of Canada (Ottawa), states that in 1737 Claude Drouet de Richerville had fifty years service. He probably arrived in Canada in 1686 since he was married the following March. Gabriel Drouin, *Dictionnaire National des Canadiens-français* (3 vols., Montreal, 1958), I, 422.

<sup>7</sup> W. S. Robertson, "A Curious and Important Discovery in Indiana," *Magazine of American History*, XXIV (July, 1890), 45-51.

<sup>8</sup> Drouin, *Dictionnaire National*, I, 422.

<sup>9</sup> For Drouet's position in 1702 see D 2 C, vol. 47, Archives des Colonies.

<sup>10</sup> In 1722 Claude was an ensign, aged 58. C 11 A, vol. 120, *ibid.*, p. 320. He is also listed as a second ensign on the 1729 roster in the "List of Officers Serving in the Companies in Canada, With the Strength of the Troops Composing Them," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, XVII (1906), 71-72.

<sup>11</sup> D 2 C, vol. 47, Archives des Colonies.

Canada and in France, Claude Drouet filed his papers of nobility and other documents with the Superior Council of New France.<sup>12</sup>

By the early 1730s many of the Drouet de Richerville sons were engaged actively in the western trade. In 1731 Louis Drouet de La Gravière was trading at Mackinac; in 1733 Etienne Drouet de Belecart traded at Ouiatanon; a "Drouette, sr de Richarvilie," traded at Detroit in 1736; another "Drouet de Richardville" traded at Kaskaskia in 1738. These notices, a few culled from the extensive trade permits extant, indicate the widespread area in which the Drouet family operated.<sup>13</sup>

The French campaign against the Chickasaw Indians in 1736 significantly affected the Drouet de Richervilles. The Canadian contingent left Montreal in June, 1736, under the Baron de Longueuil, gathering other troops in the Midwest and descending the Mississippi. Another force was to ascend the Mississippi from Louisiana, then ensnare the Chickasaws. In a campaign noted for bad timing and questionable judgments, a portion of the northern arm was smashed by the Chickasaws, resulting in the deaths of François-Marie Bissot de Vincennes, Pierre Groston de St. Ange, and other midwestern Frenchmen.<sup>14</sup> At least four members of the Drouet de Richerville family were serving as officers with the destroyed French wing, all of them sons of Claude Drouet de Richerville. From the many conflicting reports, the following appear to have been killed: Etienne Drouet de Belecart, Louis Drouet de La Gravière, and Denis Drouet de Richerville. Another brother,

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<sup>12</sup> Pierre-Georges Roy, *Inventaire des jugements et deliberations du Conseil Supérieur de la Nouvelle-France de 1717 à 1760* (7 vols., Beauceville, Quebec, 1932-1935), III, 124. According to "Les Drouet de Richerdville," *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, XXXVII (October, 1931), 593-97, these documents were filed with the royal notary in Montreal and have since been lost. In reality the papers were registered in Montreal, but sent to the *procureur général de Roi in Paris*. Robertson's "Curious and Important Discovery," 45-51, contains extracts from these documents. Many Indiana descendants of the Drouet family also have copies. Richard Moore, Anderson Abstract Company, Kokomo, furnished the author a typescript of the family history in 1977.

<sup>13</sup> Louis Marcheteau-Denoyers to Louis Drouet de La Gravière, June 23, 1731, Schmidt Collection (Chicago Historical Society); *Archives de la Province de Québec, Rapport, 1929-30* (Quebec, 1930), 303-36; Christopher B. Coleman, "Letters from Eighteenth Century Indiana Merchants," *Indiana Magazine of History*, V (December, 1909), 138.

<sup>14</sup> For this confusing campaign see Caroline and Eleanor Dunn, trans., *Indiana's First War* (*Indiana Historical Society Publications*, Vol. VIII, No. 2; Indianapolis, 1924), 73-143; *Public Archives of Canada, Report, 1905* (Ottawa, 1906), I, 459-60; *Archives de la Province de Québec, Rapport, 1949-51* (Quebec, 1951), 523; D 2 C, vol. 51, Archives des Colonies, p. 143.

most likely Michel-Ignace Drouet de Baudricourt, was captured by the Chickasaws but eventually escaped and wrote the only coherent account of the capture, torture, and death of the French contingent. In one of the most bizarre episodes on the frontier, he witnessed the death of his three brothers.<sup>15</sup>

In 1737 Claude Drouet de Richerville, upon the recommendation of the Marquis de Beauharnois, was awarded a pension of 300 pounds. Among the reasons given were his fifty years' service, the death of his three sons, and the wounding, escape, and valuable report of his son Michel-Ignace in the Chickasaw campaign.<sup>16</sup> Such a family bloodletting did not end, nor even diminish, the interest of the Drouet de Richerville family in western service.

In the Chickasaw campaign of 1739 the Drouet family was given an opportunity for revenge. Young Claude Drouet de Carqueville served as a cadet, and older brother Michel-Ignace Drouet de Baudricourt, a lieutenant, had the honor of carrying the French colors.<sup>17</sup>

Claude Drouet de Carqueville was born in 1715 and by the 1730s was in officer training as cadet of marines.<sup>18</sup> As an ensign in the campaigns of 1746-1747, he led groups of Indians against British posts near Fort St. Frédéric and Saratoga on the New York frontier. According to official reports, his deeds "deserve to be remembered."<sup>19</sup> In 1748 Drouet de Carqueville was appointed commandant at Ouiatanon.<sup>20</sup> This post, which was responsible to the commandant at the post of the Miamis, had been without a commandant while Charles-François-Xavier Tariau de La Pérade commanded at the Miamis.<sup>21</sup>

Various Miami factions, influenced by the English, began to move closer to English traders in modern Ohio. The appointment of a commandant with soldiers at Ouiatanon was a

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<sup>15</sup> *Public Archives of Canada, Report, 1905*, I, 459-60; *Archives de la Province de Québec, Rapport, 1949-51*, p. 523; D 2 C, vol. 51, Archives des Colonies, p. 143. See also Jean Delanglez, "The Journal of Pierre Vitry, S.J.," *Mid-America*, XXVIII (1946), 45-46. Delanglez presents several summaries of reports, but does not adequately identify the Drouet brothers.

<sup>16</sup> "Drouet de Richerville," Dossier Série E, #138, Report of 1737, Archives des Colonies.

<sup>17</sup> D 2 C, vol. 48, "1739," *ibid.*; *New York Colonial Documents* (Albany, 1858), X, 83-88.

<sup>18</sup> Robertson, "Curious and Important Discovery," 51.

<sup>19</sup> *New York Colonial Documents*, X, 34, 51, 79-80.

<sup>20</sup> C 11 A, vol. 119, Archives des Colonies, pp. 336, 400-404.

<sup>21</sup> Frances Krauskopf, trans. and ed., *Ouiatanon Documents* (*Indiana Historical Society Publications*, Vol. 18, No. 2; Indianapolis, 1955), 208-13.

French effort to thwart this English intrigue. In early 1749, Charles de Raymond was sent to take command at the Miami post as part of that same effort.<sup>22</sup> Drouet de Carqueville remained in command at Ouiatanon through 1751; he had been promoted to lieutenant in April of that year.<sup>23</sup> Although trade continued at the post, neither he nor Raymond at the Miami post was able to check the British influence, which was only stopped in 1752 by Charles-Michel de Langlade, who led Ottawa warriors from Mackinac to destroy the British trading post at Pickawillany.<sup>24</sup>

Drouet de Carqueville was another frontier casualty for the family. In early July, 1755, he was killed in action during the French ambush of General Edward Braddock's forces. He was buried on the day of battle, July 9, at Fort Duquesne.<sup>25</sup>

Another son of Claude Drouet de Richerville spent more than fifteen years at Vincennes as an officer, second in command to Louis Groston de St. Ange de Bellerive. Although his name was Antoine Drouet de Bajolet, he was usually known as Drouet de Richerville. Antoine was born in 1699. In 1728, he married Marie Lamy.<sup>26</sup> Antoine may have been the Drouet de Richerville mentioned as trading in Kaskaskia in 1738.<sup>27</sup> In any case, by 1749 he is listed as an officer at Vincennes.<sup>28</sup> He received a land grant from St. Ange in 1754 and obtained other lands later.<sup>29</sup>

Antoine went to Kaskaskia in May, 1756, and, by that time a widower, married Françoise Outelas, daughter of an officer. In the marriage document he is listed as an officer at the Vincennes post.<sup>30</sup> Daughters Elisabeth and Marguerite were born to the couple in 1760 and 1762 in Vincennes.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Archives de La Province de Québec, Rapport, 1927-1928* (Quebec, 1928), 317-22.

<sup>23</sup> D 2 C, vol. 61, C 11 A, vol. 119, *Archives des Colonies*, pp. 131, 400-404.

<sup>24</sup> "1752: Langlade Captures Pickawillany," *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, XVIII (1908), 128-31.

<sup>25</sup> D 2 C, vol. 48, vol. 222, *Archives des Colonies*. Drouet de Carqueville had married Marguerite de Couagne in Montreal in 1747. A pension was approved for her in 1756. *Public Archives of Canada, Report, 1905*, I, 224.

<sup>26</sup> Robertson, "Curious and Important Discovery," 51; Drouin, *Dictionnaire National*, I, 422.

<sup>27</sup> Charles B. Lasselle, "The Old Indian Traders of Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, II (March, 1906), 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Records of St. Francis Xavier, Vincennes, in Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, XII (March, 1901), 43.

<sup>29</sup> Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Documents Relating to the French Settlements on the Wabash (Indiana Historical Society Publications, Vol. II, No. 11; Indianapolis, 1884)*, 426.

<sup>30</sup> *Registers of Kaskaskia, Reel c-2899, Public Archives of Canada*, p. 414.

<sup>31</sup> *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, XII, 196, 200.

In May, 1764, with the crumbling of the French regime, St. Ange was directed to leave Vincennes to take command at Fort Chartres and deliver that post peacefully to the English. In a proclamation dated May 18 at Vincennes, St. Ange placed that post in the hands jointly of Antoine Drouet de Richerville and Sieur le Cindre. As militia captains, the two were to control drinking, see that fences were maintained, and in general maintain law and order.<sup>32</sup> Antoine Drouet's leadership was of short duration: he died in Vincennes and was buried on April 15, 1765. His death notice in the parish registers refers to "Messire Antoine Drouet de Richerville."<sup>33</sup> The word *messire* was used only for nobles, as was the word *dame*, which was used to refer to Antoine's wife.

During his life in the West Antoine Drouet de Richerville had acquired large landholdings at Vincennes, become an officer of marines, engaged in the trade, and married well. These intermeshed activities were all indicators of frontier success and would continue to be earmarks of the Drouet family for decades.

By the end of the French regime the Drouet family was scattered throughout central and eastern North America, and more than twenty sons and grandsons of Claude Drouet de Richerville were officers of marines. A Drouet de Surville had led Indian attacks in New York and New Hampshire; a son of Drouet de Carqueville was in several Nova Scotia campaigns in 1758-1759.<sup>34</sup> Michel-Ignace Drouet de Baudricourt, the hero of the Chickasaw campaign, had retired in 1753 as a captain. He moved to France and was granted a pension in 1762.<sup>35</sup>

One member of the family, Drouet de La Colonerie, became an ensign in Canada in 1759, then went to France in 1762. He served as an officer in Paris, then was assigned to Madagascar where he died in 1769. In 1765 he had appealed to the court for financial aid, stating that "he lost 16 relatives in the last war."<sup>36</sup> This very large number of deaths may be accurate, as Drouet may have included the three Drouets lost

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<sup>32</sup> The proclamation is printed in John D. Barnhart and Dorothy L. Riker, *Indiana to 1816: The Colonial Period* (Indianapolis, 1971), 127.

<sup>33</sup> "Records of the Parish of St. Francis Xavier at Post Vincennes, 1749-1773," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, XII (September, 1901), 325.

<sup>34</sup> *New York Colonial Documents*, X, 150, 155; *Public Archives of Canada, Report, 1905*, I, 499.

<sup>35</sup> D 2 C, vol. 61, Archives des Colonies, pp. 149-50; Série E, dossier 138, *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> This appeal and service records of five other members of the family are in Série E, dossier 138, *ibid.*

in the Chickasaw campaign. Even so, it is doubtful that any other family in New France gave so many sons to a losing cause.

Françoise Outelas, widow of Antoine Drouet de Richerville, remained in Vincennes. In January, 1773, she married Ambroise Dageney, a Vincennes merchant. A daughter was born to them early in 1775. By her remarriage and by finding appropriate mates for the Drouet children, she became a leading member of the Vincennes community.<sup>37</sup>

Vincennes was a small but important settlement at this time, and most political and military power devolved on three or four families, all allied with the Drouets. The leading personality during the Revolutionary War was François Rider de Bosseron, a merchant, trader, and banker who in 1777, while mayor of Vincennes, was elected captain of the local militia. In 1778, with the coming of the American forces under George Rogers Clark, he gave his full support to the expedition, furnished arms and supplies, and actively fought against the British. Later he became a territorial judge. Bosseron died in Vincennes in 1791.<sup>38</sup>

Bosseron had long been associated with the Drouet family; in 1775 he was the godfather of the child of the Dageney-Outelas marriage. Around this time Bosseron married Françoise, a daughter of the Drouet-Outelas marriage.<sup>39</sup> To cement tighter his relationship to that family, he took into his home the sister and brother of his wife, Marguerite and Antoine Drouet de Richerville. In 1785 Marguerite was married in Vincennes to Paul Gamelin, local merchant of the influential Gamelin family of Detroit.<sup>40</sup>

Even after the Revolution Bosseron was usually known as "major of militia." His influence can be further inferred from a statement Father Pierre Gilbault entered in the Vincennes reg-

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<sup>37</sup> Vincennes Register, Reel c-2896, Public Archives of Canada, p. 317. Marie-Joseph was baptized on March 15, 1775. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-29.

<sup>38</sup> Janet P. Shaw, "Francis Bosseron," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXV (September, 1929), 204-11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 205. A marriage date could not be found though there are several baptisms of their children in the Vincennes register.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 205. The marriage took place on June 6, 1785. Vincennes Register, Reel c-2896, Public Archives of Canada, p. 344. Marguerite was born on June 4, 1762. *Ibid.*, p. 23. Maurice Thompson's *Alice of Old Vincennes* (Indianapolis, 1900), was based on the Bosseron-Drouet families. "Alice" was actually Marguerite Drouet. This novel presents a condescending, biased account of the French. For example, because "Alice" was so good, the author converted her into an adopted child from an aristocratic Virginia family.

ister of 1785, commenting on the blessing of the parish bell, "through the kindness of Bosseron who had it delivered from Philadelphia."<sup>41</sup> The point is not simply that Bosseron was important, but that he was a link in the closely knit Vincennes socioeconomic structure that hinged on the Drouet de Richerville family. In militia appointments, business affairs, and positions of influence in the church, the names Drouet, Bosseron, and Gamelin predominate, all with a Drouet-by-marriage connection.

At least one, and possibly two, boys were born to the Drouet-Outelas marriage. Joseph-Antoine Drouet de Richerville was born in Vincennes on January 8, 1759.<sup>42</sup> He was known throughout his life as Antoine Drouet. He and another Richerville, probably a brother, were militia lieutenants in 1779.<sup>43</sup> In that same year Antoine Drouet married Marie Vaudrie of Vincennes, with witnesses Dame Françoise Outelas, François Bosseron, and other local notables.<sup>44</sup> Antoine Drouet had at least three sons by 1784, Antoine, Jean-Baptiste, and Pierre, and the younger Antoine may have figured in some of the land claims after the turn of the century.<sup>45</sup>

It is impossible to calculate the extent of the Drouet lands in and around Vincennes. As mentioned earlier, St. Ange in 1754 made a land grant to Antoine Drouet de Richerville. In 1760 St. Ange granted two city lots to Antoine, one on Calvary Street, the other on Street of the Lost.<sup>46</sup> Although St. Ange had all grants notarized, he kept no master register.

In the early nineteenth century the federal government tried to untangle the many land ownership problems in and around Vincennes. The general policy was to allow ownership to those who could prove possession prior to 1783. Antoine Drouet de Richerville proved ownership of a four hundred acre tract, several smaller unsurveyed tracts, and various city lots.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Entry of December 3, 1785, Vincennes Register, Reel c-2896, Public Archives of Canada.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Indiana, A Redemption from Slavery* (Boston, 1900), 157.

<sup>44</sup> Marriage of July 12, 1779, Vincennes Register, Reel c-2896, Public Archives of Canada, p. 330.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 181, 219.

<sup>46</sup> *History of Knox and Daviess Counties, Indiana* (Chicago, 1886), 27.

<sup>47</sup> "Land Claims in the District of Vincennes," *American State Papers: Public Lands* (8 vols., Washington, 1832), I, 291, 566; Clarence E. Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States: Northwest Territory* (2 vols., Washington, 1934), II, 285-86.

The arrival of large numbers of American settlers quickly diminished the role of the French in the social and economic life of Vincennes. The Drouet de Richerville family remained but did not prosper. To the present day there are hundreds of direct descendants of Antoine Drouet de Richerville in greater Vincennes.<sup>48</sup>

The other Indiana branch of the Drouet de Richerville family is associated with the history of greater Fort Wayne. From about 1750 to 1770 Joseph Drouet de Richerville traded at what was then the village of Kekionga, also known as Miamitown.<sup>49</sup> His full name was Antoine-Joseph Drouet de Richerville, born in 1723, the son of Denis Drouet de Richerville, killed in the Chickasaw campaign of 1736.<sup>50</sup>

English officials in Canada were suspicious of those Frenchmen still trading in the West after the Treaty of 1763. Sir Guy Carleton in 1767 listed "Richarville" trading among the Miamis as one who needed watching, as he was trading without the proper license.<sup>51</sup>

Joseph's relationship with Tecumwah, a sister of Miami Chief Little Turtle, led to the birth of a son, Jean-Baptiste, probably in 1761.<sup>52</sup> By the late 1780s Joseph seems to have left Indiana permanently to settle in Three Rivers, Quebec. Tecumwah continued to rear Jean-Baptiste after marrying Charles Beaubien, a prominent local French trader.<sup>53</sup>

In 1789-1790 Henry Hay, an English merchant, left Detroit to travel to the Mississippi. His journal recorded many Miami

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<sup>48</sup> For the impact of the American arrival see Leonard Lux, *The Vincennes Donation Lands (Indiana Historical Society Publications, Vol. XV, No. 4; Indianapolis, 1949)*, 470-71. Julie, a daughter of the Bosseron-Drouet marriage, later married Hyacinthe Laselle, prominent local fur trader whose family preserved one of the richest collections of early merchant papers, now housed at the Indiana State Library, Indianapolis. For the Drouet-Laselle link see E. Fabre-Surveyer, "From Montreal to Michigan and Indiana," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd series, XXXIX (1945), II, 75-81.

<sup>49</sup> Laselle, "Old Indian Traders," 4.

<sup>50</sup> Robertson, "Curious and Important Discovery," 51.

<sup>51</sup> Sir Guy Carleton to Sir William Johnson, March 27, 1767, *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, XII, 23-27.

<sup>52</sup> Nellie Armstrong Robertson and Dorothy Riker, eds., *The John Tipton Papers* (3 vols., *Indiana Historical Collections*, Vols. XXIV-XXVI; Indianapolis, 1942), XXIV, 323. Four children of Joseph Richarville and a Miami woman were baptized in the Illinois Country by Pierre Gibault on May 14, 1773; one child was named Jean-Baptiste. For some reason, yet unexplained, this was placed in the Detroit Baptismal Register. *Registre de Fort Pontchartrain (Detroit)*, Reel c-2844, Public Archives of Canada, p. 597.

<sup>53</sup> Wallace A. Brice, *History of Fort Wayne: From the Earliest Known Accounts of This Point to the Present Period* (Ft. Wayne, 1868), 105.

activities and personalities and demonstrated the influence of Tecumwah. A trader in her own right, she guided young Jean-Baptiste in the intricacies of frontier economics and politics. Jean-Baptiste had a trading post at Miamitown; his mother's post was about twenty-five miles away. Hay noted that "the young man is so very bashful that he never speaks in council, his mother who is very clever is obliged to do it for him." Hay added that "she has been a handsome woman."<sup>54</sup> Hay also observed that Jean-Baptiste's father "has wrote for him to go to him which he means [to do] next Spring."<sup>55</sup> In other words, Joseph had left the wilderness for Quebec but kept his interest in his son. Young Jean-Baptiste grew up reserved and shy, but he spoke excellent Miami, French, and English. His parents were indeed of the aristocracy of the frontier. His father was of the Drouet de Richerville family, members of the nobility, officers, and traders in New France. Through his mother, Tecumwah, he was nephew of two great Miami chiefs, Little Turtle and Paccan. His shyness would be overcome and within thirty years Jean-Baptiste Richardville was head chief of the Miamis and one of the richest men in the United States.

Most early accounts attribute Jean-Baptiste's rise to power to an incident in his youth that was stage-managed by Tecumwah. Jean-Baptiste enjoyed telling the tale in later years, though he may have exaggerated. Apparently the Miamis were about to burn a prisoner at the stake. Tecumwah gave her son a knife and told him to "assert his chieftanship by the rescue of the prisoner." The warriors were astonished as Richardville slashed the bonds, but apparently this heroic deed was enough to gain Jean-Baptiste status of chief.<sup>56</sup>

As early as 1795, when he signed the Treaty of Greenville, Jean B. Richardville (as he was then known), was a man to be noticed. Secretary of War Timothy Pickering, in writing of the treaty, mentioned that the accompanying speeches were not interesting: "I may except the speech of Richarville, a Miami chief."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Milo Milton Quaife, ed., "A Narrative of Life on the Old Frontier: Henry Hay's Journal from Detroit to the Miami River," *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, LXII (1914), 223-24, 230, 246.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 223-24.

<sup>56</sup> The tale is carried in many publications. See, for example, *Biographical Memoirs of Huntington County, Ind.* (Chicago, 1901), 224-25. The quotation is from Brice, *History of Fort Wayne*, 314.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy Pickering to Bartholemew Dandrige, February 28, 1795, Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers: Northwest*, II, 507. For the treaty see "Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Indiana," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections*, XX (1892), 410-19.

Until Little Turtle's death in 1812, Jean Richardville was almost always at his uncle's side. In 1813 he was elected head chief of the Miamis, a position he held until his death in 1841.<sup>58</sup> In the first half of the nineteenth century he was the leading figure in most Indian treaties in Indiana. He was often referred to by his Miami name of Peskawah, "the lynx."

Richardville became so wealthy that Henry Schoolcraft referred to him as "the most wealthy man of the native race in America." At his death he had more than \$200,000 in cash and owned thousands of choice Indiana acres.<sup>59</sup> One account mentions his "land and trading posts from Fort Wayne to Kokomo," and notes that "The United States government built for him a brick house on his large estates south of Fort Wayne on the St. Mary's River."<sup>60</sup>

The treaty at the "Forks of the Wabash" on November 28, 1840, is illustrative of how Richardville operated. By article four, he received \$25,000; by article ten, seven sections of land "at such point or points as he may elect . . . ."<sup>61</sup> In the treaties after that of Greenville in 1795, Richardville had been able to obtain similar generous terms.<sup>62</sup>

Sometime around 1800 Jean Richardville married in Fort Wayne a Miami woman named Natoequeah. They had several daughters and at least one son, Joseph. A daughter, Catherine, married Francis Lafontaine, who became chief of the Miamis after Richardville's death. Another daughter, LaBlonde, married James Godfroy, son of Francis Godfroy, last chief of the Miamis.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Otho Winger, *The Last of the Miamis* (North Manchester, Ind., 1935), 13, 15.

<sup>59</sup> Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (6 vols., Philadelphia, 1853-1856), V, 527-30.

<sup>60</sup> Winger, *Last of the Miamis*, 14.

<sup>61</sup> "Estimate-Treaty with the Miami Indians," November 28, 1840, U.S., *House Executive Documents No. 43*, 27 Cong., 1 Sess. (Washington, 1841), pp. 2-4. As another example, on October 23, 1834, the United States ceded ten sections of land at the forks of the Wabash to Richardville. Charles C. Royce, comp., "Indian Land Cessions in the United States," in J. W. Powell, *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, 1896-97* (2 parts, Washington, 1899), II, 752.

<sup>62</sup> 1826, Journal of the Treaty of Wabash, Microcopy T-494, roll 1, frame 87-90, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75 (National Archives); Schoolcraft, *Information Respecting the History and Prospects of the Indian Tribes*, V, 527-30.

<sup>63</sup> For Godfroy, see Robertson and Riker, eds., *John Tipton Papers*, XXIV, 446-47. For Lafontaine see John Askin, *The John Askin Papers*, ed. by Milo Milton Quaife (2 vols., Detroit, 1928), I, 269.

A full biography of Richardville has yet to be written. It is clear that he was a powerful force among Indians and whites in the Midwest, where he was admired, disparaged, mocked, admonished, and beloved. Such disparate assessments of the man doubtless arose because Richardville presided at the disintegration of Miami culture.

Contemporary assessments of Richardville vary greatly, even among white chroniclers. Wallace Brice's 1868 account is filled with laudatory phrases: "a most patient listener," "the needy never called in vain," "beloved and esteemed," "prudent and deliberate."<sup>64</sup>

The most vicious attack in print on Richardville is by William H. Keating, who interviewed him in the early 1820s. Keating lists his "craft and worthlessness," "so much cunning and subtility." Keating's greatest condemnation, though, must be read to witness a character assassination that yet compels in the modern reader a respect for Richardville:

The man who gave this account is a half-breed Miami, his father having been a Frenchman; he speaks very good French. At the time we saw him, he was dressed like a trader, and from his appearance, manners and language, we should never have suspected him to be any other than a Canadian fur-dealer. He is said, however, to possess considerable influence with his tribe. He sometimes assumes the Indian costume, with the exception of the blanket, for which he always substitutes the *capote*. In the conversation which we had with him, we had reason to consider him as well entitled to the reputation which he has acquired, of being one of the most artful and deceitful of his nation. He declined meeting the party in conference, stating that the other chiefs of his tribe were absent, and that the circumstance of his holding a conference with white men might expose him to suspicion, which would the more readily attach to him on account of his being himself but a half-breed. This reason was too plausible to allow of our objecting to it; and we regretted that we could not test the sincerity of his offer, to answer all our questions, in a few days, when the other men of his nation would have arrived.<sup>65</sup>

A reasonable, modern interpretation would reaffirm historian Bert Anson's position in his recent study of the Miamis. Richardville lined his pockets and took good care of his family and friends. Yet, because he was such a sharp negotiator he was able to arrange good terms for other Miami chiefs and bands. Furthermore, due to Richardville's ability as diplomat and intriguer *par excellence*, he was able to stave off for decades the removal of the Miamis.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Brice, *History of Fort Wayne*, 314-16.

<sup>65</sup> William H. Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1824), I, 107.

<sup>66</sup> Bert Anson, *The Miami Indians* (Norman, Okla., 1970), 188-90, 208-09.

Jean B. Richardville died on August 13, 1841, and was buried in the Catholic cemetery in Fort Wayne. A few years later his daughters erected a large monument to him there.<sup>67</sup> With his passing, chieftanship lost its importance and Miami disintegration dramatically accelerated. Some of his descendants settled in Kansas and Indian Territory, while hundreds of other descendants live today in Indiana.<sup>68</sup>

The family of Drouet de Richerville exercised considerable economic and political power in Indiana under the French regime and continued in positions of influence through the British and American periods. Their background and training as military men especially equipped them for the frontier. Marriages and family ties enabled them to augment their power and prestige. In Vincennes the family's significance declined in the early nineteenth century when American farmers and merchants culturally overcame the small French population. In greater Fort Wayne the family influence disappeared with the death of Jean Richardville in 1841.

The Richardvilles were a link, a connection with a past that began with French fur traders in the wilderness. They remained in Indiana, adjusted to successive regimes, and provided a class of educated, well-known figures who played key roles prior to the modern development of Indiana.

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<sup>67</sup> Brice, *History of Fort Wayne*, 316.

<sup>68</sup> One descendant was the Reverend Thomas Richardville, born in 1830 and reared on the Wabash, who migrated to the Indian Territory in 1860 and became a Baptist preacher, dying in Oklahoma in 1910. Some of his papers are in the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. He served as a consultant on Miami dialects to historian Jacob Piatt Dunn. See Caroline Dunn, "Jacob Piatt Dunn: His Miami Language Studies and Indian Manuscript Collection," *Indiana Historical Society: Prehistory Research Series*, I (December, 1937), 39.