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Author(s): Gilbert C. Din

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Notes and Documents

FRANÇOIS COULON DE VILLIERS: MORE LIGHT ON AN ILLUSIVE HISTORICAL FIGURE

By GILBERT C. DIN*

Among the last Canadians to arrive in New Orleans during the French period was Capt. François Coulon de Villiers. A colonial army officer, he had served in the Illinois country for much of his adult life. He, five brothers, and their father all pursued army careers in eighteenth-century North America and fought both the English and their Native American allies. Many male members of his family perished in battle.

Despite its military importance, little has been written about the family, and it has long permitted confusion to reign. While early twentieth-century Louisiana historians Stanley Clisby Arthur and Grace King provide some information on the illusive captain, not all of it is correct.¹ In 1777, however, François Coulon de Villiers penned a revealing petition to the Spanish king, and it helps to dispel part of the misinformation and mystery about him and his family.

François Coulon de Villiers was born in 1712, in Verchères, the parental homestead, near Montreal, Canada. Following family tradition, at age eight he entered the French army as a cadet and at eighteen participated on his first military expedition. On that occasion in 1730, he accompanied his father, Louis Nicolas Coulon de Villiers, an army officer. Although it was a victorious outing against the Fox Indians, disaster struck

*The author is professor of History emeritus, Fort Lewis College. He currently lives and writes in Olney, Maryland.

¹Stanley Clisby Arthur, *Old Families of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1971 reprint), 221-29; and Grace King, *Creole Families of New Orleans* (reprint ed., Baton Rouge, 1971), 337-42.

the family three years later in another military venture against the natives. On that expedition, his father, brother Damonville, and brother-in-law François Lefebvre du Plessis Faber, all perished.²

Another brother, whom François identifies only as Coulon, then took charge of the expedition and withdrew. His name was Nicolas Antoine, and he was born on June 25, 1708, the oldest of the seven Coulon de Villiers brothers. He first saw military action in 1725. Nine years later, Coulon became a lieutenant and in 1746 a captain. As François states in the supporting declaration to his petition, Coulon fought the English in Acadia during the winter of 1746-47. He defeated them in a battle in 1747, but suffered a severe injury to an arm. More than two years later, surgeons removed the shattered limb. However, the botched medical procedure, performed in Canada in 1750, caused his death.³

Perhaps the greatest error about François is the claim some historians make that he avenged the death of his brother Jumonville (Joseph Coulon de Villiers, sieur de Jumonville) and defeated Col. George Washington in battle in 1754.⁴ In late May that year, Washington and his Virginia militiamen had needlessly and uncourageously attacked a peaceful small party of French soldiers led by Jumonville. He had orders from his commandant, Claude Pierre Pécaudy de Contrecoeur, to ask the English to withdraw from the Ohio River Valley. Washington acted under instructions of Virginia governor Robert Dinwiddie, who wanted to push the colony's borders westward by seizing lands beyond the Allegheny Mountains that France claimed. The governor and the Ohio Company, to which Washington belonged, sought to benefit from the region's

²Arthur, *Old Families of Louisiana*, 221-22. Arthur writes about Damonville, whose first name he did not know and lists him only as Coulon de Villiers, that he "served as a young cadet under his father's orders and was killed on September 16, 1733, while fighting the Sakis [Sac Indians] at the *Baie des Puants*" (present-day Green Bay, Wisconsin). *Ibid.*, 224. His father had died three days earlier.

³*Ibid.*, 223-24.

⁴See "Coulon de Villiers, François," in *A Dictionary of Louisiana Biography*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad, 2 vols. (Lafayette, La., 1980), 1:197; and King, *Creole Families of New Orleans*, 338-40, which has a very confused account. Although King does not identify the "Coulon de Villiers" who defeated Washington, she states that he subsequently settled in Louisiana, served the Spaniards, and left descendants in the province and state, all of which applies only to François.

economic resources, particularly furs. Washington's unexpected attack on the small French detachment killed Jumonville and nine of his soldiers. François states clearly in his memoir that it was his brother Villiers (Louis Coulon de Villiers), who avenged Jumonville's death and defeated Washington at hastily constructed Fort Necessity on July 3, 1754. Louis permitted the vanquished militiamen to withdraw to Virginia. He won further honors in the Seven Years' War, capturing Fort William Henry in 1757. He, however, soon contracted smallpox and succumbed to it on November 2, 1757.⁵

A fifth Coulon de Villiers brother, Lepinay or Lespiney, died fighting the English. Born on May 4, 1720, his baptismal name was Pierre. Similar to his brothers, he became an army cadet. He served in the Illinois country in 1742, later joined his brother Coulon in Acadia, and perished there in combat on January 2, 1747.⁶

The only Coulon de Villiers brother who did not enter the army was Charles-François. Born on June 14, 1721, he died in childhood. François does not mention this sibling or his six sisters. These family members appear to have spent their lives in Canada.⁷

Because of his brothers' early deaths, François became the longest living Coulon de Villiers. His appearance in New Orleans, near the end of the Seven Years' War, was accidental. In 1759 Indian allies of the English captured him when his military unit in Illinois rushed to the aid of Fort Niagara. He spent eighteen months as a prisoner of war in New York before

⁵Arthur, *Old Families of Louisiana*, 224. Louis Coulon de Villiers was born at Verchères, on August 10, 1710. Arthur states that Louis defeated Washington at Fort Necessity. But on 226, Arthur claims that François sought to avenge Jumonville's death in 1756. It was not Neyon de Villiers, to my knowledge unrelated to the Coulon de Villiers family, who avenged the death of Jumonville as Marc Villiers du Terrage claims, in *The Last Years of French Louisiana*, eds. Carl A. Brasseaux and Glenn R. Conrad, trans. Hosea Phillips, and annot. Carl A. Brasseaux (Lafayette, La., 1982), 69n. Washington surrendered on July 3, not July 4, as some U.S. historians claim. See, for example, Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic*, 6th ed. (Lexington, Mass., 1979), 51.

⁶Arthur, *Old Families of Louisiana*, 224-25.

⁷*Ibid.*, 223-26. The six Coulon de Villiers sisters are the twins Marie and Magdeleine, Marguerite, Marie Anne, Madeleine Angélique, and Thérèse. Magdeleine's first husband was François Lefebvre du Plessis Faber, seigneur de l'Isle Ronde, who died in 1733 with his father-in-law while fighting the Sac Indians.

being exchanged and sent to France. The French government then dispatched him and other released colonial officers to Louisiana inasmuch as Canada had already fallen to the English. These army officers included Capt. Charles-Philippe Aubry, who within a few years became the acting military governor of Louisiana. He had fallen prisoner to the English in 1759, at the same time that the Indians apprehended François.

Upon arriving in New Orleans in 1762, François never left it again. Then fifty years of age, he continued in the army until the king "reformed" it again in Louisiana, cutting its size and depriving many officers of employment. With the arrival of the Spaniards in 1766, François hoped to revive his military career. Indeed, he impressed the first Spanish governor of Louisiana, Antonio de Ulloa,⁸ who named him interim commandant at Natchitoches.⁹ Ulloa intended to appoint him a company commander in the battalion of soldiers that the Spanish government began forming in 1767. Before these troops arrived from Havana, however, the French Creole rebellion occurred. François, like most if not all the French army officers in the colony, did not support the rebels. Instead, he planned to work for the Spaniards. But an unfortunate error by Lt. Gen. Alejandro O'Reilly in 1769 deprived him of a captaincy in the battalion. Nor did the general correct his blunder upon returning to Spain as he had pledged Coulon de Villiers he would do. Despite this setback, François continued to cooperate with the Spaniards. He served as a New Orleans municipal judge in 1771 and again in 1777. In the latter year, he petitioned the Spanish king for a post as a retired army captain attached to the Fixed Louisiana Infantry Battalion's headquarters staff. He seems not to have attained the appointment because his name is absent on rosters that identify persons belonging to the *estado mayor* (headquarters staff). By this time, he was an elderly man. He appears to have spent his remaining years living quietly in New Orleans. There, on May 22, 1794, at age eighty-

⁸On Ulloa as governor of Louisiana, see John Preston Moore's two works, *Revolt in Louisiana: The Spanish Occupation, 1766-1770* (Baton Rouge, 1976), and "Antonio de Ulloa," *Louisiana History*, 8 (1967): 189-218; and Arthur Preston Whitaker, "Antonio de Ulloa," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 15 (1935): 155-94.

⁹Several 1767 letters from "Le Ch[evalier] DeVilliers" (François Coulon de Villiers), who was then in Natchitoches, to the governor are in the Papeles Procedentes de la Isla de Cuba, legajo 187, at the Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

one he died and was buried in New Orleans's St. Louis Cemetery.¹⁰

Among his descendants, two of Coulon de Villiers's sons¹¹ followed in their father's footsteps and pursued military careers in the Spanish army. According to Arthur, from François' second marriage to Madeleine Marin in Illinois, he had one child, a son who reportedly bore the same name as his father.¹² New Orleans church records, however, list his given name as Jacobo Francisco Antonio, with "Marcos" placed in parentheses, in one document, and Juan Marcos, with "Francisco" in parentheses, in another document. Spanish army service sheets, however, invariably list him as "Marcos DeVilliers," and he signed his name in this manner. He had become an army cadet in 1776, served meritoriously in the war against Great Britain in West Florida, and rose to the rank of captain by 1797. Like many French Creole army officers, he learned Spanish and, as a post commandant, generally wrote his letters to the governor in that idiom. He remained in the Spanish army after 1803, following the Fixed Louisiana Infantry Regiment to Pensacola, where he served for many years. He died in Havana, quite possibly still in the Spanish army or retired from it.¹³

¹⁰Arthur, *Old Families of Louisiana*, 229.

¹¹The oldest of François Coulon de Villiers's sons was Louis, born in 1751, a child from François's first marriage to Elizabeth Groston de Saint Ange de Bellerive in Illinois. At an unknown time, Louis left Illinois and resettled in the Attakapas area of lower Louisiana, where he left descendants. Besides Louis, François's other three children from his first marriage were two daughters, Isabelle and Joachime, who were born in Illinois and married there, and a son, Joseph, who perhaps died in childhood. Arthur, *Old Families in Louisiana*, 227.

¹²*Ibid.*, 227-28.

¹³Jack D. L. Holmes, ed., *Honor and Fidelity: The Louisiana Infantry Regiment and the Louisiana Militia Companies, 1766-1821* (Birmingham, Ala., 1965), 111-12. Holmes states, on page 111, that Marcos was fifty-one years of age at the end of 1812, which places his birth in 1761, or during his father's lengthy absence from Illinois. However, Marcos's 1782 service sheet in the Archivo General de Indias, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (hereafter abbreviated as AGI, SD, leg. 2662), gives his age as 24 at the end of 1782, which means that he was born in 1758. Marcos DeVilliers served as commandant at Galveztown from May 1787 to December 1794. Gilbert C. Din, "The Canary Islander Settlements of Spanish Louisiana: An Overview," *Louisiana History*, 27 (1986): 163n; see also, Gilbert C. Din, *The Canary Islanders of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1988), 39-42. Marcos married Maria Josefa Catalina Grifon Danneville at New Orleans's St. Louis Church on August 1, 1784. Earl C. Woods and Charles E. Nolan, *Sacramental Records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Vol. 4, 1784-1790* (New Orleans, 1989), 66. Of his ten children, the older offspring

François's other son who pursued a military career was Carlos (Charles-Philippe) Coulon de Villiers. He was born on July 31, 1764, the sole offspring of his father's third marriage to Marie Geneviève Enoul Livaudais in 1762 in New Orleans. He entered the Spanish army as a cadet in 1777, and became a lieutenant in 1788. He remained in the army after 1803, serving in West Florida and probably in Cuba.¹⁴

In the documents reproduced here, Spanish Gov. Bernardo de Gálvez sent François Coulon de Villiers's 1777 petition to his uncle, José de Gálvez, the Minister of the Indies, for approval. In the petition addressed to the king, François sought a post on the headquarters staff of the Louisiana battalion.¹⁵ Governor Gálvez endorsed the request in his cover letter. This document is then followed by François's petition and supporting memorial.

Cover Letter of Governor Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez

I pass to Your Excellency the following memorial of Don Francisco Coulon de Villiers, who petitions from His Majesty's charity the rank of captain with assignment to this city [New Orleans] and the salary that persons of this class enjoy. I consider him deserving of this favor, not only because of the merit he has earned in the service of France, according to what he explains in the accompanying declaration, but because my predecessor, Don Antonio de Ulloa, found him in the province

appear to have remained in Louisiana while the younger children followed their father to Havana. One of the latter children married in Spain and possibly remained there.

¹⁴Earl C. Woods and Charles E. Nolan, eds., *Sacramental Records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Vol. 2, 1751-1771* (New Orleans, 1988), 61-62. Carlos married twice. His first wife, María Luisa Clara de Acosta, was the daughter of a Spanish army officer, Capt. Tomás de Acosta. See Acosta's service sheet in Holmes, ed., *Honor and Fidelity*, 89. Carlos had three children from his first marriage, including two sons who used the surname Coulon de Jumonville de Villiers. It was, however, from the children of his second marriage to Marie Françoise Aimée Esnould Beaumont de Livaudais that two sons adopted the surname Jumonville de Villiers, probably in memory of their great uncle.

¹⁵The Spanish military unit in Louisiana was called the Fixed Louisiana Infantry Battalion from its creation in 1769 until the king authorized a second battalion for Louisiana in 1777, at which time officials began using the word regiment. The second battalion's creation, however, did not take place until after the war with Great Britain had ended in 1783.

when he arrived and had proposed him for captain in the battalion he intended to create. [He, however,] was not included for the reasons he states in his memorial.¹⁶

DeVilliers's¹⁷ Petition to the Spanish King

Don Francisco Coulon DeVilliers, present *alcalde ordinario*¹⁸ of this city of New Orleans in the province of Louisiana, Knight of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis, and infantry captain, which I have been with the troops assigned by His Most Christian Majesty [the French monarch] in this same colony, to the royal feet of Your Majesty with the greatest submission, state: that in recognition of the merits of my services that are included in the accompanying memoir, the first Spanish governor of this province, Don Antonio de Ulloa, had proposed me to Your Majesty as a captain in the battalion that he tried to form for garrison duty at this capital and its dependent posts. He assigned me, meanwhile, to command the district of Natchitoches, which borders the Presidio of Los Adaes in the Province of Texas. There I remained until His Excellency, Count O'Reilly, took possession [of the colony] in the name of Your Majesty. I was unable to go [to New Orleans] immediately upon [O'Reilly's] arrival because of low waters in the Red River. During this time, he created the present Battalion of Louisiana. To it, by error or because of the similarity in surnames, he appointed Don Balthazar de Villiers,¹⁹ who had been a lieutenant in the French army, as

¹⁶The petition of François DeVilliers, which was how he signed his name, and his supporting memorial are attached to Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez, No. 28, New Orleans, March 21, 1777, AGI, SD, leg. 2547.

¹⁷The Spanish government often trimmed surnames and used only one in official documentation. At the end of his petition, François signed his name as "F. Ch^{er} DeVilliers."

¹⁸Municipal judge.

¹⁹Balthazar de Villiers was a career army officer who first served the French king and, from 1769 until his death in 1782, the Spanish government. His most significant assignment was as commandant of Arkansas Post, which he held from September 7, 1776, to June 1782. He was then desperately ill and taken to New Orleans, where surgeons operated on him. He did not survive the operation and died on June 19, 1782. See Gilbert C. Din, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Indian Trade in Spanish Arkansas," in *Cultural Encounters in the Early South: Indians and Europeans in Arkansas*, comp. Jeannie Whayne (Fayetteville, Ark., 1995), 117, 183; and Morris S. Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804: A Social and*

company captain, [a post] which Your Majesty had deigned to confer on me. Despite the many representations I made upon my arrival here, he [O'Reilly] merely replied that it was not now time to act because he had already sent to Your Majesty the names of the officers for the corps. But upon his arrival in Spain, he would mend his error, a promise that to date has not been kept. In recognition of this:

At the royal feet of Your Majesty, I humbly seek that you deign to concede to me in compensation the rank of retired army captain with the salary assigned to that office in the same manner that all retired captains who are attached to the headquarters staff of this city enjoy. By this grace and those I hope to receive from Your Majesty's royal benignity, I shall live eternally grateful.

Attachment to the Petition

Declaration of the services of Don Fran^{co} Coulon DeVilliers, Knight of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis, retired captain of French infantry and present *alcalde* of the city of New Orleans, capital of the Province of Louisiana.

In the year 1720, in Montreal I entered as a cadet in the service of His Most Christian Majesty. In 1730 I made my first campaign with my father, who had an order to march against the Fox Indians. In this expedition, we killed 800 men.²⁰

In 1733 I returned with my father against the same Indians who had taken refuge in the Sacs's fort. In this action, my father was killed when he advanced to set fire to the fort's gate. My brother Damonville and my brother-in-law Duplessis experienced the same fate there. My other brother, Coulon, then took command and, for three days, we continued fighting, until the Indians abandoned the fort and fled. So we chased them from two in the afternoon until dawn the next day, when we were forced to abandon the pursuit so as not to fall into an ambush. In the chase, another brother of mine named Villiers was wounded.

Cultural History (Fayetteville, Ark., 1991), passim, where he is mentioned many times and described, on page 17, as the most able commandant of Arkansas Post.

²⁰The figures that François cites in his memoir, particularly persons killed, are often inflated.

In the year 1736, I was appointed sublieutenant in Louisiana. In 1740, under the command of Chevalier St. Laurent,²¹ I participated in a campaign against the Chickasaw Indians, in which we fought them for two days within sight of their fort. We killed many people and finally forced them to sue for peace and cease their incursions for some time.²²

In 1746, I was promoted to lieutenant [and] spent eight years in this rank at various garrisons and detachments in the Illinois District. During this time, my brother Coulon spent a winter on the snow in Acadia at the head of three hundred men. He attacked six hundred Englishmen entrenched at the same place, killing three hundred twenty of them and taking many more prisoner. In the battle, he was gravely wounded and died from his injury after a short time. My other brother, Lepinay, also died in the same fight.

On another occasion against the Iroquois, the Indians captured my uncle named Duverger Daubusson. They burned him while spread-eagled for five consecutive days, after which he expired from the torment.

At the start of the [Seven Years' War], Jumonville, another of my brothers, was assassinated by the English while he was informing them of his commandant's orders. The commandant had commissioned [Jumonville] to ask the English commander to withdraw from French territory, where [the English] had tried to form a settlement in the name of His Britannic Majesty.²³ Shortly thereafter my other brother,

²¹Lieutenant St. Laurent is mentioned in François-Xavier Martin, *The History of Louisiana, from the Earliest Period* (Gretna, La., 1975), 177 and 178, in association with Governor Bienville's first campaign against the Chickasaw Indians in 1735-36.

²²For an account of Governor Bienville's second campaign against the Chickasaw Indians in which François participated, see Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier, 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor, 1980), 136-44.

²³Controversy has long surrounded Washington's attack on Jumonville's party. U.S. historians generally defend the future general and president while French historians denounce him. See, for example, Willard Sterne Randall, *George Washington: A Life* (New York, 1997), 94-105; and Régine Hubert-Robert, *L'histoire merveilleuse de la Louisiana française* (New York, 1941), 272, and Villiers du Terrage, *Last Years of French Louisiana*, 66-69. Ray Allen Billington, in *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 4th ed. (New York, 1974), 131, admits that twenty-two-year-old Washington lacked good sense when he attacked the small French party coming to ask the British to withdraw. Among the many works on Washington, his 1753 and 1754 journeys to the Ohio Valley are discussed in Bernhard Knollenberg, *George Washington: The Virginia Period*,

[Villiers,] went there with a detachment of five hundred men to take vengeance for [Jumonville's] death. He attacked and seized Fort Necessity, defended by a garrison of seven hundred men and twelve cannons. He killed more than three hundred of them and obliged the remainder to surrender and sign a document in which they admitted killing Jumonville treacherously.²⁴

In 1754 I received a patent as captain. Two years later, I was sent with a detachment to reinforce Fort Duquesne at more than five hundred leagues upriver.²⁵ A month after my arrival, the commandant assigned me to a party of fifty men, half of them French and the rest Indians, to attack Fort Cumberland, sixty leagues farther to the north.²⁶ Before that fort, I fell ill, and I was forced to entrust command to a subaltern officer and retire to Fort Duquesne.

After a month, I left again to seize Fort Granville, defended by four bastions, a 200-man garrison, and artillery. On the eve of my arrival, 150 soldiers [at the fort] deserted, and only fifty remained to endure twenty-four hours of combat. Finally, I succeeded in setting fire to the fort, killing the commandant

1732-1775 (Durham, 1964); James T. Flexner, *George Washington: The Forge of Experience (1732-1775)* (Boston, 1965); and Thomas A. Lewis, *For King and Country: George Washington, the Early Years* (New York, 1993). Washington's own accounts are in Hugh Cleland, ed., *George Washington in the Ohio Valley* (Pittsburgh, 1955).

²⁴The number of men on each side at the battle of Fort Necessity has varied, with U.S. historians giving the French more and Washington less. See, for example, Robert Leckie, *George Washington's War: The Saga of the American Revolution* (New York, 1972), 134. U.S. historians often claim that Washington did not understand the French document by which he surrendered and admitted attacking Jumonville's party treacherously (*ibid.*, 135; Randall, *George Washington*, 105-7). On learning of Washington's defeat, Governor Dinwiddie demoted him from colonel, which prompted Washington's resignation from the Virginia militia. Louis Coulon de Villiers wrote an account of Washington's surrender at Fort Necessity, which declared that the latter admitted "assassinating" Jumonville. Villier's account was published in France during the Seven Years' War. It was later translated into English and published first in England and in Philadelphia in 1775. In time the onus for admitting the "assassination" of Jumonville shifted from Washington to his poorly qualified interpreter, Jacob Van Braam.

²⁵Fort Duquesne was at the "forks" or junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. The two rivers come together to form the Ohio River, where Pittsburgh sits today.

²⁶Fort Cumberland was not to the north, as François states. It was to the southeast of Fort Duquesne, in present-day West Virginia, on an upper tributary of the Potomac River.

and fifteen men, capturing the remaining thirty-five, and spiking the cannons.²⁷

In 1757, I again left Illinois with two hundred Indians to travel four hundred and fifty leagues to the Virginia territory to attack an English fort.²⁸ During the siege, I made several raids and took many prisoners. But I was unable to force the fort's surrender due to the bad will of the Indian allies caused by poor weather and my lack of food and munitions.

In 1758, under orders from Chevalier Aubry,²⁹ I went out again from Illinois with a detachment to reinforce Fort Duquesne. Major Crane was marching against it at the head of 900 troops, whom we shattered, killing the larger part of them and taking the rest prisoner.³⁰ A few days later, we marched against Royal Fort Annon, whose garrison came out to fight us. The combat lasted six hours. We killed many people and forced the others to shut themselves up again in the fort. But we were unable to seize it because of our lack of artillery to combat their cannons. After those two operations ended, we returned to Illinois.

In 1759, we again went out with another detachment to reinforce Canada, and, in passing, the settlement of Niagara, which the English had besieged.³¹ I was wounded in this action and taken prisoner by the Indians, who disrobed me from head to foot. They took me to their encampment, pouring blows and insults of all kinds on me. When, due to weariness or because of my wounds and ailments, I fell to the ground, they rained kicks and blows from their firearms upon me. Their only relief was to tell me that they intended to burn me on arrival [at their village]. Indeed, they would have done so had not the English had the humanity to rescue me from their hands and

²⁷Fort Granville was on the Juniata River, a tributary of the Susquehanna River, in southern Pennsylvania. That stream flows into Chesapeake Bay. François is correct here in the English casualties he cites.

²⁸François did not go to the present-day state of Virginia, but to what is now West Virginia. There the English had erected a number of forts. François did not identify which fort he attacked.

²⁹Capt. Charles-Philippe Aubry.

³⁰François Coulon de Villiers gives a poor description of events in 1758. In the fall of that year, English general John Forbes marched at the head of 6,000 troops toward Fort Duquesne. Before he arrived, the Indian allies deserted the French. Bereft of support and with few soldiers, the French blew up the fort on November 24, 1758, and left.

³¹The English captured Fort Niagara on July 15, 1759. Billington, *Westward Expansion*, 135.

take me to New York. There I remained a prisoner for eighteen months, until the first of 1761. I was exchanged and finally went to France, where upon arrival I received the Cross of St. Louis as a reward. Soon I was sent to New Orleans to take charge of my company and continue my merits. I remained in service until the general discharge of 1763, when His Most Christian Majesty found it convenient to reduce this colony to the status of economic outpost, retaining in it only four companies of troops for the maintenance of law and order.

That small number of troops was insufficient for the indispensable garrisons necessary in the city and at its dependent posts. Mr. D'Abbadie,³² then the colony's director-general and commandant, decided to create two more companies. He conferred one of them on me, and I continued my service until some months after the arrival of the Spanish governor, Don Antonio de Ulloa. He, in light of favorable recommendations given to him regarding my conduct and seniority of forty-six years of service, of the various actions and campaigns in which I had participated and the unfortunate events in which I lost the greater part of my family, gave me command of the Natchitoches post, bordering the presidio of Los Adaes. That was until the court dispatched my patent as captain, which, he told me, he had solicited from His Catholic Majesty in the regiment that was being formed to garrison this colony. I remained serving at the Natchitoches post to the satisfaction of the governor until several months after His Excellency, Count O'Reilly, took possession. He did not find me in the city because I could not get to it in time due to low and unnavigable waters in the Red River. He, possibly induced into error by the similarity of names, gave Don Baltazar de Villiers, a retired French army lieutenant and, consequently, my junior by at least twenty years of service, the company authorized to me in the Louisiana Battalion. This fatal error resulted in my losing, after forty-six years of service, the honor of entering His Catholic Majesty's service and reaping the rewards that I would have earned. Count O'Reilly pledged me his word that he would indemnify me upon his return to Madrid. It is a promise that no doubt has escaped his memory since until now it has not had an effect. Since that time, I twice have been named to the post of

³²Jean-Jacques-Blaise D'Abbadie was director-general of Louisiana from February 10, 1763, until his death on February 4, 1765.

alcalde, an employment I hold in the current year to [the public's] general approval and applause.

Summary of the services and merits of the interested party³³ in the preceding statement.

Forty-nine-and-a-half years of service without interruption, having begun in the year 1720 and continuing to the end of 1769.

Twenty campaigns and detachments in which I received several wounds and many times commanded as head of the expeditions.

My father dead with four of my brothers, a brother-in-law, and an uncle; two other brothers wounded and crippled;³⁴ all without counting several of my nephews who also perished in [royal] service. For all of which, I hope that Your Majesty, in consideration of my zeal and that of my entire family, will concede me a reward appropriate to my seigniority and services.

New Orleans, March 18, 1777. [signed] F. Ch^{er} DeVilliers

³³François Coulon de Villiers.

³⁴François appears to count his brother Coulon twice, once among his brothers who were severely wounded (with Villiers) and again among his brothers killed in action (with Damonville, Jumonville, and Lepinay). There were only seven brothers, among whom Charles-François died in childhood; Villiers was wounded but died from smallpox; and François, of course, survived the eighteenth-century wars in which he participated.