PARALLEL LIVES:
Philippe de La Renaudière and Philippe (de) Renault
Directors of the Mines, Company of the Indies

By Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG*

Professor Marcel Giraud, in his five-volume masterpiece L’Histoire de la Louisiane Française, mentions an identity problem that has long plagued genealogists and historians of early Louisiana. Two men of strikingly similar names existed in the same corner of the colony at the same time and held virtually the same title. Giraud offers this synopsis of the problem:

Commissioners of the [regime] in 1721 [decided] to provide for all the needs of an ironmaster from Maubeuge who had agreed to prospect for and exploit the mineral resources of the Illinois country. Two men applied themselves to the same task, Philippe de La Renaudière and Philippe Renaut. Sometimes mistakenly treated as one person owing to the similarity of their names, they were in fact two different people. They both settled down in the Illinois country, married there, and engaged in mining, but it was the second, Renaut, who played the more important role and ended by acquiring the title of “director general of the mines,” as mentioned in the parish register of Fort de Chartres. He was the Maubeuge ironmaster just mentioned, and he seemed qualified by his background to take on the work expected of him. Nothing is known about the past of the other man, La Renaudière, who arrived in the same period, 1719 or 1720. Renaut, however, received prompter backing from the Company, which instructed Boisbriant to give him all the help he needed, perhaps because he seemed well placed to succeed owing to his having formed a small company with the eldest of the Dartaguiette brothers and a man named Béranguier.¹

On the larger issue, Giraud is correct. On other points, some clarification and/or correction is needed. A close scrutiny of the records created by each of the men reveals that

- both were at one time or another called a “mining engineer” and both were at one time or another called “Director of Mines”—as well as other variations on the theme.
- their names were indeed similar, and scribes confused the matter by recording numerous phoenetic variants—particularly for the Maubeuge man of the shorter name. However, the latter habitually signed his name in a distinctive way that helps modern researchers distinguish between the two. While Giraud settled on the spelling “Renaut” for the Maubeuge man, his signature in Illinois was consistently “Renault.”

¹1732 Ridgedale Drive; Tuscaloosa, AL 35406-1942. Ms. Mills, who has published widely on Natchitoches for the past two decades, is also the editor of the National Genealogical Society and a past president of the Board for Certification of Genealogists.

1. This quote is extracted from Brian Pearce’s translation of volume 5, published as A History of French Louisiana: The Company of the Indies, 1723–1732 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 441–42. All italics throughout this paper are my own.
• neither man married in Illinois. La Renaudière brought his wife to the colonies when he immigrated. Renault did have a grown son who joined him in Illinois, temporarily; but there is no evidence of a wife or other children.

• something is known about the origins of La Renaudière. As “Clerk and Commissioner of Mines,” he is traceable to a specific ship roll of 1718. Subsequently, after his service ended in Illinois and his family relocated at the South Louisiana frontier outpost of Natchitoches, his survivors created a record that identifies his birthplace as Perigord and that of his wife as Vitré in Bretagne—both in France.

The purpose of the present paper is twofold: First, to assemble the known Louisiana-Illinois records for these two men in an effort to clearly sort their identities and actions. In doing so, I will quote from—and sometimes attempt to correct—the published translations and abstracts. Second, to analyze the records for clues that may help modern genealogists fill existing holes in the known life of Louisiana’s first mining commissioner, Philippe de La Renaudière, and the children he produced here.

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Philippe de La Renaudière
Director of Mines, 1718–c.1722

Arrival in the colony

The emigration date of La Renaudière—the first of the pair to appear in the colony’s records—can be pinpointed better than just “1719 or 1720.” Extant ship rolls show:

15 November 1718
Roll of the Comte de Toulouse—being a list of the employees of the Company of the West, miners, soldiers, tobacco workers, concessionaries and their people, and “others” [embarkation point not stated].

[no. 5 on list]
The Sr. Renaudiere. Clerk of the Company and Conductor of Mines. . . . [also] the wife of Sr. Renaudiere.2

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Philippe Renault
(var. de Renaud, Renaud, Renaut)
Director of Mines, c.1725–c.1729

Arrival in the colony

Various published accounts place Renault’s first appearance in the colony at either 1719 or 1722. The known original records are vague on the point—with 1722 being the earliest date explicitly connected to him. Giraud summarizes the governmental records (which he carefully identifies) as follows:

“After working for some time at La Mothe’s mine, [Renault] prospected for copper, without much success, along the Illinois River. In 1722 he began to open a new mine up the Maramec (now Meramec) River, about thirty miles from Fort de Chartres and west of the Mississippi. . . . To protect himself from Indian attacks . . . he built a small fort made of stakes on the road to the mine, on the east bank of the Mississippi not far from the confluence of its Maramec tributary. Diron described the fort as being horse-shoe-shaped. He put it on his map of 1732, under the name Fort Saint-Philippe. . . . He said he saw within

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Although the passenger roll does not name the wife, documents in both Illinois and Louisiana identify her as Perrine Pivert. The following abstracts from Illinois church records adequately establish not only her identity but also Philippe’s continued authority over the Illinois mines:

10 February 1721
Kaskaskia baptism

1 July 1721
Kaskaskia baptism
Philippe, small slave of five or six years. Godparents: Sieur Philippe de la Renaudière, Director of Mines of the Company of the West, and Catherine Juliette.

7 July 1721
Kaskaskia baptism

Natchitoches researchers will recognize in these Illinois baptisms the names of Perrine and her son Charles, from whom Louisiana’s La Renaudières (Larnodiers) descend.

**Changes in Status**

The years 1723 and 1724 were critical in the rivalry of the two Philippes for control over the Illinois mines. La Renaudière continues to appear on the official payroll. Renaud does not. Yet, records of these two years do not explicitly refer to La Renaudière as “Commissioner of Mines.”

By contrast, an undocumented narrative of 1982 asserts:

*Renault had come from France in spring 1719, at the head of 200 miners and workers, with the purpose of exploiting the mines of silver and lead that had been discovered in this region. For lodging his men, he had constructed a small village, a mile east of the Mississippi, and baptized it, after his own given name, Saint-Philippe. At the beginning, its civil acts were inscribed at Kaskaskia; but, toward 1762, there was constructed a small chapel there. . . . The first stone house of Illinois was constructed by Philippe Renault on his concession between the years 1722 and 1723.*

The 1719 arrival attributed to Renault is confirmed by no records I have seen to date. “Lost” ship records do continue to surface; possibly one may be discovered for Renault and his 200 miners. Until then, it seems likely that the immigration record of La Renaudière is being assigned here to Renaud—settlers who left France in November 1718 would have arrived in Illinois in the spring of 1719. The Comte de Toulouse roll, however, does not include 200 miners; its “miner” list adds up to only 21 people—14 men, 4 wives, and 3 children.

**Changes in Status**

Renault emerges from his relative obscurity in the years 1723–24. His political and economic rise is said to have begun with a sizable concession of land. According to the previously cited undocumented history:

### Philippe de La Renaudière
**Director of Mines, 1718–c.1722**

1 April 1723
Fort Chartres succession
List of property and debts of LaFrance includes “the sum of sixty livres, remaining from the hundred livres that [the notary] paid to Larenaudiere previously.”

7? September 1723
Kaskaskia baptism
Marie Françoise, daughter of Philippe de la Renaudière and Perrine Pivare. Born 3 September. Godparents: Giradot, officer; Françoise LaVigne Rivart.

The fact that La Renaudière remained on the company payroll is evidenced by the following document—a payroll that does not include Philippe Renaud:

8 March 1724
Employees under Orders from the Council
La Renaudière, salary 600 livres per year.

The list segregates employees into two categories: those of the Company of the Indies and those of the newly formed (1722) Provincial Council. The Company maintained three employees in Illinois at salaries of 600 to 2,000 livres. By contrast, the thirteen employees of the Council were paid 500 to 1,200 livres. La Renaudière’s

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### Philippe Renault
**Director of Mines, c.1725–c.1729**

“In June 1723, M. de Boisbriand and M. des Ursins conceded to Philippe François de Renault, director of Mines of the Company of the Indies, a square league of land situated six miles north of Fort de Chartres.”

An actual record of this concession has proved elusive. Similarly, no document of that year can be found which accords this title to Renault. Giraud, writing of concessions in the Illinois area, concludes:

> “Along the Mississippi were the habitations of commandant Boisbriant and the Company’s senior clerk, La Loire des Ursins, who seem to have been partners in a common enterprise. Near Fort de Chartres was that of the storekeeper Chassin… Renault had begun in 1723 to establish a smaller one under the shelter of Fort Saint Philippe, which he had just erected as a defense for the Maramec mine. . . . This was abandoned as a result of attacks by the Fox Indians, however, and the habitation resumed its activity only after that tribe had been destroyed.”

Chartres’s notarial records of that summer 1723 do attest Renaud’s rising affluence in several ways—the most obvious being the attachment to him of a personal title of respect that was reserved for the upper strata of his society:

20 July 1723
Fort Chartres succession
Inventory of goods in house of Reverend Father Querebin, belonging to the one Lesueur, deceased. Includes a note for 3 livres of powder, owed by one Poudret, to be collected from “Monsieur Renault.”

21 August 1723
Jean Martin of village of Orvrl in Champagne contracts with “Monsieur Renault” to work as a day...
shift from the aegis of the Company to the Council would later have even more serious impact upon his career.

Two months after the employee list was drafted, La Renaudière reappears in the Illinois church records. Once again, there is no reference to his official position:

9 May 1724
Kaskaskia marriage
Pierre Derene and Françoise Robert. After 3 bans.
Groom: son of Pierre Derenne and Louise Fremont of parish and village of St. Bonnet, diocese of Poitiers.
Bride: widow of deceased Pierre Doneleir. Witnesses: Girardot, L. Turpin, La Renaudière, J. Potier.9

Giraud’s reconstruction of events from January to July 1724 is more informative—describing our man, at this point, as Illinois’s mining engineer:

“The only attempt at reconnaissance and exploration of the inland areas [west of the Mississippi] was the one led by Véniard de Bourgmont during 1723 and 1724. . . . [Against daunting odds] Bourgmont was able to start building a new post, to be known as Fort d’Orléans. He chose a site on the north bank of the Missouri, upstream from the confluence of the Grand River, near where the Wakanda River enters, in a region close to where the Missouri tribe lived and where the Indians’ stories gave reason to believe there were deposits of copper. . . .

“Bourgmont left Fort d’Orléans, intending to go to the Paducahs. It was the beginning of summer. A fairly large force had been assembled, divided into two groups. The first contingent, bearing goods, set off along the river in pirogues, under the command of Robert de Saint-Ange.

“The second, consisting of Saint-Ange de Bellervie and the mining engineer La Renaudière, with a troop of a hundred Missouris and sixty Osages, took the landward route at the beginning of July. It traveled beside the river, crossing it after eight days and

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9. Register 1, p. 33, Notre-Dame, Kaskaskias.

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Philippe Renault (var. de Renaud, Renaud, Renaut)
Director of Mines, c.1725–c.1729

laborer for one year, beginning on the first of the next month, to do all he shall require . . . on the condition that [Martin’s] wife will be wet-nurse at the residence where [Martin is placed] and that whenever the said Renault needs to have silks or other things mended, she shall put her hand to it and that the pay for the year shall be the sum of five hundred livres, payable from the Storehouse of the Royal Indies Company.” Signed: “Renault.”

22 August 1723
Andre Chabernon engages himself to “Monsieur Renault for service at his concession in the capacity of laborer . . . on the condition that the said Sieur Renault shall pay [him] four hundred francs from the Storehouse of the Royal Indies Company and that [Chabernon] shall be permitted to harvest for his own account four arpents of prairie which shall be sowed at the expense of the said Sieur Renault.”7

Three details in the above worker contracts warrant special note:

• Mode of payment: Renault’s payment of these workers in cash from the company storehouse reflects the financial backing he had from Company officials. According to Giraud, he repaid part of the debt in 1724 by delivering 20,000 pounds of lead, and the company agreed to let him repay the remainder gradually—an arrangement the Fox raids aborted.8

• Style of signature: Names in this era were often spelled phonetically, but men tended to have a distinctive signature—using one spelling and one style to discourage forgery. Thus, the signature provides an important identifier for this Philippe.

• Female employment: The reference to Martin’s wife as a “wet nurse” and “mending silks” for Renault might imply that he had a wife of childbearing years. However, neither parish registers nor the subsequent censuses reveal any such family. Wet-nurses might also be needed by the wives of other workers. The service was not
merely a convenience for the rich; it could be a necessity for a family of any economic status, in which the mother produced insufficient milk. Similarly, the reference to “silk” does not imply a wife for Renault; silk shirts and stockings were also worn by affluent males of this society.

The year 1725 marks the first known reference to Renault as Illinois’s “Director of Mines:”

1 February 1725
Fort de Chartres sale
Pierre Bourdon and Francois Bibo . . sell to “Mr. Renen, director of the mines, residing at Fort St. Philippe” their team . . one cow and two calves which are actually in the possession of the said Mr. Renan. The said [sellers] warrant their sale . . without intent of ever taking any recourse against the said Mr. Renan for the sale of the said livestock.” The document bears the label “1725 – sale of a cow and two horses by Pierre Bourdon and Francois Bibeault to Monsieur Philippe on the 1st of February.”

Continuing his emphasis on Bourgmont, rather than the engineer, Giraud reports that Bourgmont left for New Orleans almost immediately—accompanied by a delegation of fifteen Indians from the Missouri and Illinois tribes. In January 1725 the Bourgmont party (including the Indians) embarked for France.

The possibility that La Renaudière may have descended to New Orleans with Bourgmont, for business in the capital, is suggested by two pieces of negative evidence: he appears in no Illinois records for the next
Philippe de La Renaudière  
**Director of Mines, 1718–c.1722**

nine months; and his wife failed to produce a child in 1725—as might be expected from the 1721 and 1723 deliveries of record for her. However, La Renaudière clearly did not accompany the cortege to France, as his presence is noted again in Illinois before the Indian delegation returned in 1726:

1 June 1725  
*Fort de Chartres notarial record*  
Nicolas Michel Chassin, councilor and storekeeper for the colony, agreement with Sieur Laplume. Witnessed by *Sieur Renaudière.*

The census of the colony that was ordered to be taken on 1 January 1726 (but was not necessarily taken on that date) eliminates the last vestige of doubt that both a Sieur La Renaudière and a Sieur Renaud existed simultaneously in Illinois. Both men are listed. The data shown below and in Renaud’s corresponding column at right underscore the widening divide in their fortunes.

| Name:    | La Renaudière [no given name] |
| Wife:    | Yes                           |
| Children:| 2                             |
| Domestics:| None                          |
| Slaves:  | None                          |
| Cleared land: | ?                          |

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Philippe Renaudlt  
**(var. de Renaud, Renaud, Renaut)**  
**Director of Mines, c.1725–c.1729**

Renault’s abandonment of his mines, amid Fox hostilities, apparently occurred in 1725. The colony’s census of 1 January 1726 places Renault on the concession owned by Pierre Dugué de Boisbriant (the new commandant-general of the Louisiana colony) and Marc Antoine de La Loire des Ursins (the Company’s chief clerk in Illinois). The context of the entry also suggests that Renault was in charge of the Boisbriant–La Loire operation:

**ILLINOIS**

**First entry:**

“On the farm of M[onsieurs] Boisbriant and Laloire”

| Name:    | M[onsieur] Renaud             |
| Wife:    | None                          |
| Children:| None                          |
| Domestics:| 1                             |
| Slaves:  | 20 negroes                    |
| Cleared land: | 100 arpents                  |

For the next seven years, Philippe Renault remained active in Illinois—and upwardly mobile. However, he would not hold onto the coveted title, *Directeur of Mines,* any longer than La Renaudière had held it (four years in both cases). Extant Illinois records chronicle Renault’s activities in this period, as follows:

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10. Ibid., 9–10, doc. D-9, Ste. Anne’s Church. The “8” used by priests of upper Louisiana in writing Indian names represents a sound for which the French language had no equivalent letter. As a caution against placing too much trust in any published source: Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population des forts français d'Amérique,* 2:134, publishes this same baptismal record, spelling Philippe’s surname as Renaud and omitting the title.

11. Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population des forts français d'Amérique,* 2:209–11, alphabetizes its transcript of the census. Thus, its entry completely detaches “Renaud” from the Boisbriant-Laloire concession and makes it appear that the 1 servant and 20 slaves belonged to “Renaud” himself. The 100 arpents of cleared land is also omitted from the Faribault-Beauregard transcript.
La Renaudière’s census data is also compatible, entirely, with the extant church records that report only two children prior to this time. At least one more child (Agnes Geneviève) and possibly another (Philippe) would follow—as records in Lower Louisiana subsequently reveal. However, no baptismal record has been found for either.

Concurrently, a significant change occurred in the colony’s administration. The Provincial Council, La Renaudière’s employer, was phased out. Thereafter, only one known Illinois record relates to the Sieur La Renaudière:

5 February (?) 1726
Fort de Chartres acknowledgment
Sieur Blot acknowledges “that the remainder of the note for [600] livres, payable in lead, signed by Monsieur Renaut which [Blot] delivered to Gerome, after Gerome is paid what [Blot] owes him [shall] be given to Monsieur de Tonty.”12

9 June 1726
Fort de Chartres agreement
Joseph Adam contracts with “Monsieur Renau, Director-General of Mines in the province of the Illinois . . . to build for him, at [Adam’s] own cost and expense, for [Adam’s] labor and for [Adam’s] maintenance, a barn in the same fashion as the most beautiful in Kaskaskia, twenty-five feet in width by fifty feet in length and (illegible) and fenced, ready to build the stalls, and with the condition that on the side facing the great swamp the crossbeams or posts shall be placed in such a manner that there is the least light possible, and the three other faces shall be made in the ordinary way. The said frame shall be made of walnut, of sassafras or of mulberry, of wood well-squared and cured and the loft of the barn shall be at thirteen feet above the ground and the posts four feet (illegible) and the loft fourteen feet high.” Price: a filly two years old (already received), 200 livres of flour, a year-old pig, 5 minots of maize (due at once), and 200 livres of lead, which “Renaut” should remit that winter to Adam at Kaskaskia. “Renaut” was to have the wood transported to the site and the post-holes dug. Passed at St. Philippe du Grand Marest.13

19 July 1726
Fort de Chartres succession
Inventory of goods belonging to Sieur Pierre Girard, who died at the home of Sieur La Renaudierre and whose goods were in La Renaudiere’s possession.14

The following spring, La Renaudière descended the Mississippi River to the colonial capital. His presence is documented there between 1 May and 9 November 1728:

1 May 1728
New Orleans court action
“Summons to Testify. At the instance of Mr. Claude Herpin, attorney for Mr. Perraut, Sheriff Dargaray notifies Messrs Perillaux, de la Renaudierre, Joseph Milon and Christophe Rozimond to appear tomorrow at 8 A.M. before Mr. Brusle to testify concerning some concealed . . . stolen goods of the Rottot estate.”15

9 November 1728
New Orleans court action
Mr. Rossard, recorder, moves for the citation of the

In 1728 the Boisbriant–La Loire partnership dissolved. Boisbriant had lost his position as commandant-general of the colony, and de La Loire was dismissed as Illinois’s chief clerk. La Loire moved south to Natchez, and the goods of the partnership were auctioned. In the wake of these shifting political winds, Renault’s association with their concession apparently ended and he reactivated his own—Fox troubles notwithstanding. In 1728, after a lapse of five years, the Illinois records again place Renault on the St. Philippe concession.

8 December 1728
Fort Chartres auction of property belonging to the Messrs. de Boisbriant and Delaloere includes a yoke of oxen purchased for 500 livres by "the Concession of Renault."

Father and Son

In 1729, there emerges in Illinois the first evidence of kin for Philippe Renault—a son and namesake who was obviously an adult. Several documents created by Renault over the next dozen years reveal an efforts to establish this son in the Illinois country. Curiously, considering that Renault is credited with owning a very large tract of land, he did not set up that son on that concession. Rather, he purchased a separate tract, on credit, that he said would be paid for by the son, though he would stand as security for the debt:

20 February 1729
Fort Chartres sale
Pinguenet dit St. Roch, resident of Fort de Chartres, sells to "Mr. Renault, Director of the Mines in Illinois, acting for Philippe Renault his son," land “in the prairie of Fort de Chartres, two arpents front on the Mississippi; bounded by Jean Baptiste Becquet, [Jean Baptiste] Place and the hills, with the buildings, cultivated lands, and generally all the

Widow and Children

Nearly six years elapsed before further trace is found of this family. Perhaps they returned to France; one can only say they have not been found in the records of any post from Canada to the Gulf. In the summer of 1734, Perrine and their children surfaced at the southern outpost of Natchitoches, where she was called a “widow.” What drew the remnants of Philippe’s family to Natchitoches remains unknown. The likeliest explanations are (a) they had relatives there, yet unidentified; or (b) they migrated with another family.

(Perrine)

All the records created on the family at Natchitoches illustrates one striking point: the ease with which colonial circumstances could reduce to virtual poverty even those who arrived in “privileged” circumstances.

Perrine was clearly poor—if not totally impoverished. She lacked funds to buy a homestead or a lot on which to build shelter for herself and her children. She did have at

least one slave woman to help her labor. Within three years she would have a small family of slaves. But it would be nearly a dozen years before she had a home to call her own. Because Perrine (like most French females of her era) was not literate, her fatherless children also grew up untutored, as shown by the records below:

18 June 1734
Natchitoches baptism
Marie Anne, small negro girl belonging to Widow la Renaudière, habitant. Godparents: Charles La Renaudière (marked with an “x”) and Marie Anne Rousseau (x).\(^1\)

6 January 1737
Natchitoches baptism
François, small negro boy belonging to Mde. La Renaudière. Godparents; François Chaniau (x) and Marie François La Renaudière (x).\(^1\)

26 December 1737
Natchitoches marriage
Remy dit Joli Coeur, negro man belonging to Mde. de la Renaudière. Godparents: Remy Poissot (s) and Angélique Charles (x) . . . and . . . Angélique, negro woman, belonging to Mde. de la Renaudière. Godparents: [illegible] and Martine Bonnet (x).\(^1\)

26 December 1737
Natchitoches baptism
Remy and Angélique, negroes of Dame La Renaudière. Witnesses: their godparents.\(^1\)

1740
Natchitoches notarial record
Perine Pivert and Robert Avarre, Exchange of Slaves, Perine Pivert and Robert Avarre, Exchange of Slaves,

18. Mills, Natchitoches, 1729–1803, 9, no. 52.
19. Ibid., 13, nos. 93–94.
20. Ibid., 21, no. 164.

In 1732, after the dissolution of the Company of the Indies, a new census was taken of the post of Illinois. Its structure clearly equates Renault’s concession with the village of St. Philippe and attest its economic progress:\(^1\)

Four Southern Illinois communities are enumerated: Kaskaskia, Cahokia Mission, Fort de Chartres, and “Concession of Renault, North of Fort de Chartres.” The latter settlement, which by elimination has to be St. Philippe, is described as follows:

18. Belting, Kaskaskia, 38, citing Colonies G\(^1\): 464, Archives Nationales.
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Perrine’s reason for swapping slaves with Robert Avarre remains unknown, as do the identities of the slaves she acquired. What is known is that her new acquisition did not continue to increase; no further slaves attached to her household were baptized, married, or buried. The evidence suggests that Perrine was in debt and downsizing; the second set of slaves was sold within a year:

1741
Natchitoches notarial record:

The last record of Perrine, ironically, is the one in which she at last acquired her own home:

1745
Natchitoches notarial record

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(Marie Françoise)

In her decade at Natchitoches, Perrine married off two daughters, both as young teens. The first daughter, in fact, was already a widow when she first surfaced in the Natchitoches registers as a sixteen-year-old bride. No record of her first marriage has been found in any extant post or church register in Louisiana or Canada. Nor has there been found a record of military service or death for the soldier identified below as her first spouse:

19 March 1739
Natchitoches marriage
"After 3 bans. Marriage of George Avenal (x) soldier"

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21. Index to French Archives, Clerk of Court, Natchitoches.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

*The census totals for Illinois reveal that only 159 white men and 39 white women resided in all four settlements combined.

Notarial documents of 1733 reflect other services Renault performed for the fledgling settlements of Illinois—functions common to engineers and metallurgists of his era: surveyor and mill-site appraiser:

17 May 1732 [1733]
Fort de Chartres affidavit
"Renault” certifies that he was “called upon by the Council of Illinois, several years since, for the survey of a tract of land conceded by the Royal Company of India to Messrs. Chassin and Delisle.” [The year should be 1733. See 18 May and 11 June 1733 documents, below.]

18 May 1733
Fort de Chartres affidavit
The Clerk of Court further treats the Chassin-Delisle

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Philippe de La Renaudière
Director of Mines, 1718–c.1722

in the company of Mr. Macarty, who gives his permission, son of George Avenel and Catherine Fasecoche of the kingdom of ‘Hongrie’... and... Marie Françoise la Renaudière (x), widow of deceased Pierre Benoist, soldier, legitimate daughter of deceased Philippe la Renaudière and Perrine Piver. Witnesses: de Corbier (s), René du Bos, and Alorge (s).”

Marie Françoise quickly bore two children at Natchitoches, before she and her second husband dropped from the records of all the colonial posts. Perrine served as godmother to these first two of her grandchildren.

3 August 1741
Natchitoches baptism
Perine Avenel, “legitimate daughter of Georges Avenel, soldier, and Marie Françoise Larnoidier. Godparents: Charles La Regnaudiere (x) and Perine La Regnaudiere (x).”

26 June 1744
Natchitoches baptism

Considering that Avenal was a soldier, he may have returned to Europe at the end of his service, taking Marie Françoise with him.

(Agnes Geneviève)
The second La Renaudière daughter—the one for whom no baptismal record has been found—could have been only twelve to fourteen at her first marriage. The record of this union also provides the only known reference to the origins of Philippe and Perrine:

25. Ibid., 26, no. 200, leaves blank the name of the godmother as unreadable; closer scrutiny convinces me it is Perrine.
26. Ibid., 31, no. 246.

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land matter and refers to the affidavit made by “Mr. Renaut” the day before.20

11 June 1733
Fort de Chartres affidavit
Mr. Delessart, Antoine Bienvenu and Charles Gossiaux, partners, agree to build a mill on the property previously discussed on 17–18 May 1733. Mr. de St. Ange, Commandant of Illinois is to “prevail upon Mr. Renaut, exercising the functions of engineer in Illinois, to help them with good advice.”

Affidavit of Philippe Renault, same day, certifies that he examined the property, found the stream sufficient for a mill, and surveyed it.

The year 1733 was also the last one that Renault seems to have been active in St. Philippe affairs. The following three documents were his last of record there for seven years:

2 July 1733
Fort de Chartres sale
Jean Baptiste Beauvais and Louise Lacroix his wife had previously sold land in the prairie of Fort St. Philippe, to one Guereumont, who sold to Louis Poisson (var. Poisset), whose heirs now seek a new title for their 3 arpents of land that run from the Mississippi to the hills, bounded on one side by Mr. Renaut.22

2 September 1733
Fort de Chartres sale
Germain Boule and wife Jeanne Maturel to Louis Robbillard, acting for Charles Rogue, sale of land in village of St. Philippe, “with the charges conforming to the contact of donation made by Mr. Renaut.”23

3 December 1733
Fort de Chartres sale

Philippe de La Renaudière
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15° May [poor legibility] 1740
Natchitoches marriage
Two bans and dispensation from the third. Marriage
"of Guillaume Bergereau dit St. Onge, native of
Jeannai in St. Onge, Parish of Sulpice, son of Nicolas
Bergereau, native of Jeannai, and Jeanne Vigere of
Saintaur, parish of St. Brie of the same province . . .
and . . . Agnes Regnaudiere, native of Illinois, post of
Kascatia, daughter of Philippe Regnaudiere, native of
Perigord, and Perine Pivert, native of Vitré in Bretagne.
Witnesses: Etienne Chaniot, Jean Lage
(x), Remi Poisot, Pierre Bernardin. [Illegible signa-
tures.]"

By 1744, Agnes and her husband had relocated downriver
at the post of Pointe Coupée, where their family would
remain for decades. After Bergeron’s burial on 6 September
1762, Agnes married yet another Pointe Coupée
soldier-settler, Hiacinte Ferret. The church record of that
marriage tells nothing more of her parentage or origins.28
The civil marriage contract states only that she was
"widow of the deceased Guillaume Bergeron called
Saintonge, when living a resident of False River" (a
district within the jurisdiction of the Pointe Coupée post).
The contract also states that, in lieu of parents, she was
represented by "Sieur Louis Arnaud Ducret and Baptiste
Carmouche, her friends and friends of her deceased par-
tents."29 No connection has been found thus far between
these men and Agnes’s parents.

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Philippe Renault
(var. de Renaud, Renaud, Renaut)
Director of Mines, c.1725–c.1729

Louis Robilliard and wife Madelaine Cordier to
Guillaume Kerquerum. Witnessed by "Renaut."24

The September document, with its reference to land that
Renault had previously conveyed by "donation," does not
refer to a charitable act on his part. As subsequent doc-
uments make clearer, in his capacity as director of the
concession at St. Philippe, one of his obligations was to
dispense plots to settlers—a duty that he seems to have
performed somewhat haphazardly, judging by the titles
that had to be tidied retrospectively.

Renault’s continued presence in the colony, at least until
1740, is implied by the following trio of notarial acts:

22 August 1734
New Orleans slave sale.
Nicolas Henry, Court Clerk, sells a negro boy named
Pierre to Sieur Philippe Renaud, Junior, whose fa-
thor accepts for him. Terms, 500 francs Tournois,
paid cash.

18 May 1740
Fort de Chartres sale
Louis Robilliard of Kaskaskia, acting for self and
wife Madelaine Cordier, sell to Jean Baptiste Becquet,
a lot in Fort de Chartres, bounded by Pierre Benetto
dit Duchemin. Witness: Philippe Renault.26

4 December 1740
Fort de Chartres sale
"Renaut" (signed Renaut) acknowledges that he
sells and presently delivers to Nicolas Prevot "a lot of
ground belonging to my son, for whom I am acting;
which lot measuring about one arpent and three-
fourths, more or less, bounded by defunct Bosset, by
the main street, by the street of the Grand Marais, and

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Louisiana Historical Quarterly 5 (April 1922): 257.
120.

27. Ibid., 27, no. 206, gives the date as “[not given] 17,
1740.” A closer study of the blurred record suggests the date is
16 May.
1 1707–1769 (Baton Rouge, The Diocese, 1978), 144, citing
Pointe Coupée Parish register 1:54 and 2: pt. 1, 35. Agnes also
appears in these Pointe Coupée records as Geneviève, wife of
Bergeron.
2, 1728–1769 (New Orleans: Genealogical Research Society of
New Orleans, 1989), 63.
Philippe de La Renaudière
Director of Mines, 1718–c.1722

(Philippe)

One record created by Agnes brings into the family fold a likely brother:

4 November 1744
Pointe Coupée baptism
“Marie Elisabeth Berjeron (Guillaume, native of the parish of St. Sulpice & Agnes Renadier) bn. not given, bt. 4 Nov. 1744, spo[nsor] Philippe Renadier and Marie Therese Chalin.”

As previously noted, the Natchitoches records of the 1730s repeatedly identify Perrine as a widow. Thus, the above Philippe cannot be her husband; and no other record of a Philippe Renadier or La Renaudiére has been found in the colonies.

As previously shown, the births of Charles and Marie Françoise in 1721 and 1723 should have been followed by a child in 1725. None was baptized and none was tallied on the 1 January 1726 census. Philippe Sr.’s absence during the latter half of 1724 (and possibly until mid-1725) disrupted the natural pattern of child spacing. His return home by summer 1725 suggests the birth of another child in early-to-mid 1726—presumably Agnes who married in 1740. Since Philippe’s death did not occur until after the summer of 1728, Perrine should have produced at least one more child.

The appearance of another Philippe in 1744, as godfather to Agnes’s daughter, suggests that he may have been that last child born to Philippe and Perrine. No further trace of this Philippe has been found in the colony.

(Charles)

The first child born to Philippe and Perrine—Charles—was the last known child to marry. He was also the progenitor of all Louisianians who carried on the family

Philippe Renault
(var. de Renaud, Renaud, Renaut)
Director of Mines, c.1725–c.1729

by the high street . . . with its buildings, with the reserve of a beer kettle, and a distiller’s pot, which belong to my son . . . on condition that he [the buyer] shall give back two iron bars which support the furnace of the brewery, that he shall haul at his own expense all the barrels which are in said brewery and one of Banbara’s, negro of the concession [i.e., one of the negroes of the concession that are from the Banbara nation in Africa]. . . . Renault [requires him to bring back] all the doors and windows which have been taken away” without Renault’s knowledge.

Price: 225 livres “in good current bills or in flour good and fair, as it is received in the King’s storehouse.”

Renault’s son—a brewer and distiller—appears to have left the colony. The following document of 22 April 1743 implies that the elder Renault was himself recalled to France scarcely two years later.

22 April 1743
Fort de Chartres letter
To Mr. Delaloere Flancour, principal clerk of the Marine and judge in Illinois, from Nicolas Noise of St. Philippe. Because Delaloere’s position gave him “charge of the inspection of the mines of St. Philippe,” and authority to “regulate the affairs of that concession,” he requests that Delaloere grant him an official title to the land that Mr. Renault, formerly director of said concession, had “long before granted” Noise. Describing it as a small parcel of land situated beyond “the last land conceded to Pierre and Louis Bateau to the woods,” Noise said that Renault had often promised “to have a regular title issued [but] several impediments, and at last his recall, have not allowed him to keep his word; and now after a long residence and much work [Noise has] no security as to [his] property.” Delaloere responded the same day, officially granting “the land and lot that Mr. Renault has conceded verbally, in the village of St. Philippe.”

30. Diocese of Baton Rouge, 1:170


name. No trace of a wife or children is found for him until, at the age of 26, he presented a child at the font of the Natchitoches church in November 1747. On 1 February 1751, he was discharged from regular military service in Louisiana. The 1766 census credits him with a wife, 2 boys, 3 girls, no slaves, 3 firearms, 6 horned cattle, 3 horses, 10 hogs, no sheep, 600 twists of tobacco, 25 measures of unshelled corn, and 2 measures of beans. He obviously lived within the post of Natchitoches, as his neighbors were the blacksmith Jacques Naigle (his son-in-law) and the merchant Étienne Pavie. At some point between 26 September 1773 and 19 March 1774, Charles died at the Natchitoches post, leaving a large family, little estate, and a widow (Maria Juana del Rio, apparently from the nearby Spanish post of Los Adayes), who soon remarried on that date in 1774.

Although the Natchitoches La Renaudières were reduced in both rank and fortune over the next several generations, vestiges of their origins amid the colony’s earliest officials and employees are evident at Natchitoches. Particularly so, in the identities of those who served Charles as godparents to his children: Louis, Marie, and Des Neiges de St. Denis, adult children of the post founder, Chevalier Louis Juchereau de St. Denis; Commandant Caesar deBlanc; the chevalier de la Ronde; the notary Guillaume Chever; and Louise Derbanne, daughter of the post’s first subdélegué.

The wilderness frontier that Louisiana was throughout all this period was a land that enriched some men and impoverished others. Especially outside the capital city, noble

33. 27 January 1766 French Census of Natchitoches, Misc. Collection 3, Northwestern State University Archives, Natchitoches.
34. Docs. 841, 874, and 1255, French Archives, Natchitoches; Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, 126, no. 1015.

A date for Renault’s recall to France is provided by Giraud, who reports that “S[ieur] Renaud” deposited in the Council’s registry on 18 July 1743 a statement of his activities in Illinois.

Subsequent documents for Renault in Illinois are mere references to the property he once occupied there. None suggest that, before or after his departure, he sold any land at the post—aside from the one tract that he had actually purchased for his son. Together with the foregoing reference to Renault as the director of the concession at St. Philippe, rather than its owner, the question remains as to whether Renault was ever the actual owner of the mine site or whether he merely managed it for the Company.

2 February 1756
New Chartres sale
Jean Pierre Girardot, officer, residing in Kaskaskia, for himself and his brother Pierre Girardo, heirs of deceased Mr. Girardot, sell a parcel of land in village of St. Philippe, which had been conceded by Mr. Philippe Renault, director for the company for the discovery of mines, believed to exist in this country.

21 March 1758
New Chartres sale
Bailiff for New Chartres announces before the door of the parish church that he has been ordered to sell a lot and mill, bounded on one side by Baptiste Mercier, on another by “the street between the church and St. Pierre, and on another by “the street of Mr. Renaud.”

24 November 1756
New Chartres sale
Pierre Lupien dit Baron to Jaques Hennet dit Sans
families frequently lost their lustre, while the offspring of peasants became plantation lords.

As for the origins of Philippe’s family’s in France, nothing yet is known. Colonial resources suggest only that Philippe was sufficiently educated to hold a clerkship, somewhat knowledgeable about metallurgy and surveying, and sufficiently well-connected to be dispatched to the colony by the Company of the Indies as its first mining commissioner.

The particle de that prefaced his surname, *if used properly*, would suggest noble origins for the family at some past point; but the *de* was too frequently misused to be accorded much weight in and of itself. The inclusion of *de* in his name could have been an affectation on Philippe’s part, an erroneous assumption by others, or a significant clue to his past. Perhaps that uncertainty will be settled as research on this family now shifts to Perigord in France.

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Philippe Renault was clearly the victor in the contest for hegemony over Illinois mines under the Company of the Indies. Yet, in retrospect, he was but a blip in the course of Louisiana history. He was a man of ideas, a man of drive, a man who achieved the post he wanted—and lived ostentatiously—but failed to find the riches he sought. As the likelihood of productive mines grew slimmer, the colonial government lost interest in financing Renault’s endeavors. He and the one son who followed him saw no further opportunity in the colony and abandoned it. Neither left lasting marks. Neither left offspring—at least not any that were acknowledged.

32. Ibid., 617–18, doc. K-222.