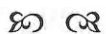


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Etienne Veniard de Bourgmont's  
"Exact Description of Louisiana"

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Edited by MARCEL GIRAUD

Translated by MRS MAX W. MYERS\*

*Etienne Veniard De Bourgmont's*  
*"Exact Description of Louisiana"*

THE "EXACT DESCRIPTION OF LOUISIANA" is an essential document for those who wish to learn about the Missouri at the beginning of the XVIIIth century. The text fixes the location of the indigenous populations which were settled along the river and its principal tributaries, describes for the first time the regions it traverses, and lastly, particularizes the extent of the French penetration. If, as its name indicates, it contains a detailed description of the whole of French Louisiana, only the last part of it being devoted to the Missouri, it is nevertheless this part which has especially engaged the attention of historians, because of its newness and the fact that previously only the sparsest information, and that not based on a scientific foundation, was available.

When the document was drawn up, the Missouri had already been the objective of several attempts at penetration, stimulated by the hope of attaining the mineral wealth which the natives ascribed to the place, and of discovering by way of its tributaries a means of access to the lodes of New Mexico.<sup>1</sup> The results had been rather disappointing. These enter-

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\* Marcel Giraud, a native of Nice, France, has held the chair of North American History at the Institute of Research (College de France) since 1946. He first visited America in 1934-35, when, on a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation, he began his extensive researches into the half-breed problem in Canada; he has twice visited Missouri. He is at present engaged in writing a history of French Louisiana, the second volume of which, dealing with the period 1715-17, was published early this year.

Mrs. Max W. Myer is well known to our readers through her many translations published in earlier issues. She is a graduate of Wellesley College, where she majored in languages, and has since traveled extensively in Europe, Russia, and the Orient. She has been of invaluable assistance to the Society, giving many patients hours to translating material in our archives.

1. Marc de Villiers, *La découverte du Missouri et l'histoire du Fort d'Orléans*, Paris, 1925, 31 ff.; Marcel Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane française*, Paris, 1953, I, 4-5, 330-33.

prises, nevertheless, had aroused much interest in the French colony on the Gulf of Mexico. They spread the feeling that the regions bordering the Missouri River were destined to become a field of mineral exploitation and that the river had been explored over a large part of its course. The missionary, Francois Le Maire, at the beginning of 1714, estimated that, according to some accounts which are apparently erroneous, explorers had already covered it to a distance of 400 leagues.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the first journey that supplies exact information on the extent of the penetration is that carried out by Étienne Véniard de Bourgmont in the spring of 1714. Accounts of it were recorded in two anonymous documents, of which only one, "Route to be followed for ascending the Missouri River" ("Route qu'il faut tenir pour remonter la rivière de Missouri") is dated—March-June, 1714.<sup>3</sup> The second, which we publish below, carries neither date nor signature. But Claude de l'Isle, who transmitted to us the "Route to be followed," revealed that its text was drawn up by "Mr. de Bourgmont," and the reliability of the information about the populations of the Missouri which is furnished by the "Exacte Description de la Louisianne" permits it likewise to be attributed to the same author.

This officer, of Norman origin, in command of Canadian troops, the nephew of a *grand vicaire* of the bishop of Quebec, had for some years adopted the adventurous career of *coureur de bois*. In 1706, he abandoned the post at Detroit, where he had just taken over the command, and had gallantly withstood the aggressions of the Renards, to live first as a nomad in the region of Lake Erie and then in the country of the Illinois, but to reconstitute his movements is not possible. A vague allusion by Controller d'Aigremont represents him in 1708 as sharing his life with an Indian woman whose tribe is unknown.<sup>4</sup> Bourgmont tells us, for his part, in 1724, that the Missouris had known him for twelve years, which leads one to suppose that he had been established among the latter<sup>5</sup> since 1712. But we know only that he was in the Illinois in the course of the year 1713 and at the beginning of 1714. The Jesuit fathers, who directed the mission of the Kaskaskia, at that time drew the attention of the governor of Canada and of the minister of marine to the "scandalous and criminal life" of several *coureurs de bois*, one of whom was Véniard de Bourgmont, amongst the Indians of the region: they accused them of acting in the interest of

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2. Archives nationales, Colonies, C 13 C 2, f. 114-15, Mémoire de La Maire, Pensacola, January 15, 1714.

3. Archives hydrographiques de la Marine, 3 JJ 201, 17 (previously 67<sup>2</sup> 17).

4. Marc de Villiers, *op. cit.*, 42-44.

5. *Id.*, *Ibid.*

England, of fostering the feud of the tribes whom France had wished to reconcile together, and at their demand the minister directed the governor of Louisiana, La Mothe-Cadillac, to have them arrested.<sup>6</sup>

The "Exacte Description de la Louisiane" puts us in a position to add some interesting data to the early part of this career of which so little is known. It informs us that Véniard de Bourgmont was directly associated in the enterprise of the lieutenant general of the jurisdiction of Three Rivers, Louis Jucherau de Saint-Denis, on the lower Ohio in 1702: he was present at the building of the fort which was intended to protect the tannery that "Mr. Jucherot" raised not far from the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi, and he achieved a sojourn of eighteen months among the Mascoutins for the purpose of procuring the pelts necessary for the operation of the tannery.<sup>7</sup> It informs us that, before ascending the Missouri, he completed a long journey in Louisiana, which forms the principal subject of the document, and which took place in 1713. His description of Dauphin Island and its garrison, of Mobile, of Ship Island, of the portage of Biloxi (or Bilocchy), of the native populations which succeed one another on the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi, the Red River, is in fact the result of the moves he made in these different sectors in the course of the year which preceded the drawing up of the account. "This," he writes, "is where [these nations] were *last year* when I was there." "I tell you that which I have seen."<sup>8</sup>

Now, the document was drawn up in 1714. It was customary, following the work of Marc de Villiers,<sup>9</sup> to date the work from 1717, and to assign it a decisive part in the revival of interest then shown in regard to the Missouri. But the "Exacte Description," whose facts, especially concerning the natives, are generally accurate,<sup>10</sup> contains numerous indications which weaken the reckoning of Marc de Villiers.

The importance which Bourgmont still attaches to the off-shore anchorage of Dauphin Island and to its entrance channel, passable in spite of its narrowness, the fact that he represents the small settlement of Port Dauphin as completely devoid of defense works, sets forth a state of affairs that goes

6. Archives nationales, Colonies, B 36 (Iles), f. 198 verso, Pontchartrain to P. le Tellier, June 10, 1714. M. Giraud, *op. cit.*, 319, n. 2; 323, n. 3.

7. M. Giraud, *op. cit.*, 47. C 13 c 1 f. 351 verso-352.

8. C 13 c 1, 346 verso, 349 verso.

9. *Op. cit.*, 64.

10. For instance, what he says about the aggressions against the Bayagoulas by the Tonicas allows correction of the ever faulty chronology of Penigaut, C 13 1, f. 347. The point upon which the text leads to confusion is the one about distances, because the leagues of Bourgmont are greatly variable and should be interpreted sometimes as ordinary leagues, sometimes as double leagues, and occasionally as half leagues.

back to at least 1715.<sup>11</sup> In bearing witness to the presence of the Taensas or Thainssas on the Mississippi, in affirming that the French colony has “no trade” with the Creeks (Conchaques and Abicas), he describes a situation prior to 1715, since the Taensas had that year abandoned the river in order to settle near Mobile, and prior to the uprising of the Indians against the English (war of the Yamasees, summer of 1715), to which indeed he makes no allusion, and which was followed by a commercial treaty between France and these tribes.<sup>12</sup> His reference, finally, to the journey of Saint-Denis allows us to place the composition of the document in 1714. By the Red River, writes Bourgmont, “have gone the French whom M. de La Mothe . . . sent there *last year* in the month of July to try to form business connections with the Spaniards.”<sup>13</sup> The month of July does not fit any of the journeys of Saint-Denis: in both cases, his departure took place in autumn (September-October, 1713, October, 1716).<sup>14</sup> But it can refer only to the first journey, because Bourgmont depicts the Natchez then as “allies and friends of the French, very good and industrious people,” a judgment he could not have pronounced in 1716, after the outrages which gave rise to the first war of the Natchez.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the illusions he holds with respect to the regime of Crozat, the hope he expresses that the inhabitants of Mobile, after their first disappointments, “would enjoy the kindness” of the “company which has been formed,” can apply only to the beginning of the monopoly: he would have used other language later on.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of this journey, Bourgmont rejoined the Illinois (end of 1713 or beginning of 1714), where, if one goes by the reiterated complaints of the missionaries and the officers, he persisted in his former conduct.<sup>17</sup> Then, in the spring of 1714, he undertook this survey of the Missouri, the purely topographical findings of which figure in the “Route to be followed for ascending the Missouri River,”<sup>18</sup> and of which the “Exacte Description” summarizes the observations of an ethnic and a geographic order, which he gathered. The two texts, dating from the same year, apparently apply to the same journey. It is doubtful that Bourgmont ascended the Missouri

11. C 13 c 1, f. 347.

12. C 13 c 1, f. 348-348 verso, 349 verso; M. Giraud, *op. cit.*, 302-03.

13. C 13 c 1, f. 350.

14. M. Giraud, *op. cit.*, 334 ff.

15. C 13 c 1, f. 350; M. Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane française*, Paris, 1958, II (Années de transition, 1715-17), 74, 76-79, 150-51.

16. C 13 c 1, f. 347.

17. C 11 to 34, f. 356 verso, Ramezay to Pontchartrain, September 18, 1714. B 36 (Iles), *loc cit.*

18. M. Giraud, *op. cit.*, 333.

in 1713, at the return of his expedition into the southern part of Louisiana. The fact that he had knowledge of the departure of Saint-Denis for the Red River implies that he was still in Lower Louisiana at the beginning of autumn. He would not have had enough time in the last four months of 1713 to rejoin the Illinois and to effect the long ascent of the Missouri, then reappear again near the French settlements of the Illinois at the beginning of 1714. More probably he stopped in this region until the month of March, 1714, and the part of the "Exacte Description" which treats of the Missouri, as well as the "Route to be followed," appertains to the journey which he undertook at this date. As this latter document came to us in an incomplete form, the "Exacte Description" furnishes us the means to reconstitute the whole path of the explorer: it shows that Bourgmont went beyond the River Platte, where the "Route to be followed" ends, and that he attained the country of the Aricaras, at the junction of the Cheyenne River.<sup>19</sup> This verifies Claude de l'Isle's statement that Bourgmont did not enter the Missouri until 1714. De l'Isle adds that Bourgmont remained henceforward on the Missouri until 1719. In fact, Bourgmont did not actually quarter himself in this sector, since his presence "near the Illinois and the Ouabache" is still pointed out in 1715.<sup>20</sup>

If, under these conditions, the Missouri gave rise, from the end of 1717, to memoirs which are particularly important, it is not in the "Exacte Description," a text which was already old at that date, that the reasons for this renewal of interest are to be sought, but rather in the general policies of the Council of Marine, in its anxiety to encourage exploration of the mineral resources of the continent, and especially in the curiosity awakened at the same time by the problem of ways of access to the "Western Sea." The aim of these memoirs is precisely to inspire the Council of Marine with new reasons to interest itself in the Missouri, in order to draw it into supporting more actively the discovery of the river and the exploitation of its resources.

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19. M. de Villiers, *op. cit.*, 63-64, on the basis of the distances given by Bourgmont and of the location of the Aricaras at the time of Lewis and Clark, offers the hypothesis that he perhaps penetrated as far as the Little Missouri. In this case, it would be necessary to identify the Little Missouri with the River *Nidejaudegé*. Now, according to Bourgmont's description and the localization of the white Mahas, this latter river is no other than the Niobrara.

20. 3 JJ 201, manuscript of C. de l'Isle on the "Route to be followed . . ." B. 37, f. 201 verso, Pontchartrain to Ramezay, July 13, 1715.

EXACT DESCRIPTION OF LOUISIANA,  
OF ITS HARBOURS, LANDS AND RIVERS, AND NAMES  
OF THE TRIBES WHICH OCCUPY IT, AND THE COMMERCE  
AND ADVANTAGES TO BE DERIVED THEREFROM FOR THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF A COLONY.

(Archives nationales, Col. C 13 c 1 f. 346-56.)

THE KING OF FRANCE possesses in the whole of Louisiana only two ports where he can harbour his vessels; to wit, Dauphin Island, formerly called Massacre Island on account of the number of Indians who were killed and massacred there a long time ago. . . . This island is only 6 leagues long by a quarter of a league wide at its greatest width. It is situated from east to west at the entrance to Mobile Bay. This island is all sand and is not wooded except for the space of a league. The woods are all of large pine, suitable for making rosin and tar and very full of sap, [and suitable for making] a few yards and little masts of ships in case of need. Although it is only of sand, it nevertheless produces much grass to feed the cattle which maintain themselves there very well, all kinds of meat are better there than in all the French islands.

It is not yet well settled. It has only 20 to 30 frame houses,<sup>21</sup> a part of them rather habitable. Pot-herbs, melons, pumpkins, and root vegetables grow there rather successfully. . . . Figs grow very well there, tobacco does not grow at all badly, from the attempt that has been made. Already European apples, plums and grapes have been eaten there. But I do not know whether these would flourish. *I tell you what I have seen.* There are found on the island several species of china-root [sarsaparilla]. . . . There is also some sassafras. There is also a tree whose bark has the property of curing swellings of the gums, which the Indians use with success. . . . Also found there is a balm on a tree with many properties; I have brought some and it is highly prized in France; it has a very delicate odor and is marvellous for many uses. All the coasts of these regions are very full of fish of all kinds. There are also quantities of oysters which are very good in season. In autumn and winter there is good hunting for game, ducks, teal, geese and bustard.

It is on this island, where the ships of M. Croisat arrive that the harbour is found. To him the King granted the entire trade of all Louisiana for 15 years. It is easy to understand that he had in view the business to be done

21. The "frame" or studwork house, formed of walls of wooden partitions whose openings are filled with mud coated with lime, covered with a roof of shingles, constituted the usual dwelling of the first Louisiana settlements. M. Giraud, *op. cit.*, 262-63.

with Messieurs the Spaniards, because of the nearness of Mexico, which, to my way of thinking, is the most substantial reason. But I do not know whether one can surmount the difficulties it presents, the attempt having come a little late. Thus it is to the interest of the inhabitants of this colony to try for some trade by land with the said Spaniards of Mexico or Kingdom of Léon. Its accomplishment seems easy, and it does not seem that they could oppose it. I shall not speak of the location of the harbour. I will only say that it is good, and can hold 15 or 20 ships easily, well sheltered from every wind. There is still no fort there, there is only a poor battery whose cannons have never been mounted.<sup>22</sup> The entrance to the harbour is very narrow. This harbour is guarded by an officer and detachment of soldiers, who are dissatisfied because of their poverty, and the officers are so destitute that they are to be pitied. Since trade with Spain has fallen off,<sup>23</sup> the settler has seemed to be very discontented and has complained loudly against the Company which has been formed. But I believe that they will turn from their errors and that they will enjoy its kindness in the future if they are willing to work. It is my opinion that it would be very timely to put some livestock of every kind there, as all these vast continents are full of pastures and prairies suitable for livestock. It would also be necessary to place people there if one wished to settle this country.

There is also another harbour, of which I have spoken before, which is Ship Island,<sup>24</sup> 10 leagues west of Dauphin Island. This harbour is great and vast, and ships of eighty cannon capacity can enter there. The channel has 30 feet of water. The island is about 2 leagues long, partly in meadow and the other part wooded in great pines like Dauphin Island, the anchorage is good, but the ships there are not the best sheltered. On the north side there is good off-shore anchorage, numerous other islands are found there which I shall not mention.

Let us return to the Bay of Mobile. From Dauphin Island to Fort Louis is reckoned at 8 leagues. This bay is 3 or 4 leagues wide at its greatest breadth. . . . On the west side there are 3 small rivers, the first is Rivière aux Poulles, the second Rivière aux Chevreuils, and the third Rivière aux Chiens where the Chaquetaux are established, a tribe friendly to the French, very good and industrious people, partly Christians, they are very

22. A first enclosure of "cedar stakes" was begun around the little settlement of Port Dauphin at the end of 1715. C 13 A 4, f. 389-91, 597-99, Observations of Crozat and of La Mothe-Cadillac to the Council of Marine, July 1, June 22, 1716.

23. An allusion to the reduction of transactions with the Spanish garrison of Pensacola at the beginning of Crozat's regime.

24. Ship Island, where the ships of d'Iberville landed, and which formed the outer port of the first French settlement (the first Biloxi, protected by Fort Maurepas, 1699).



few in number, they live on hunting, fishing, fruits, roots, Indian corn, beans, melons, pumpkins and sweet potatoes, and raise some tobacco for their habitual use.<sup>25</sup> On the other side of the bay to the east there is only Rivière aux Poissons and a few streamlets. The country there is high, and there is to be found there the nearest stone to Dauphin Island, only 4 leagues away. All these lands are piney, china-root is found in quantities . . . on which the Indians live in time of famine. One can make as much rosin and tar as one pleases. Fort Louis is on the left as one enters the Mobile River, on sandy ground. A league up the river, to the left as one ascends, is Rivière St. Martin, where the Appalach are settled, a tribe which is friendly to the French, very good and industrious people and almost all Christians, and they are very few in number. 1 and 1/2 leagues higher is Rivière à Boutin, at which entrance are settled the Taouachas, Indian tribes, small in number, just like the others, great hunters and fishers and all industrious. 10 leagues higher, following the same river, the Mobiliens are settled on both sides; [they are] tribes who are friendly to the French, all in dwellings. . . . They are all heathen. They are about 50 cabins. At this place the river forks,<sup>26</sup> the right branch goes to the Hallibamons, their enemies, about 60 leagues away from their homes. On the left fork, 3 leagues above the Mobiliens, are settled the Tommez, tribes who are friendly to the French, similar to the others, . . . small in number. 4 leagues higher up is a little village called Chaqueta, composed of 15 or 20 cabins, allies and friends of the French, very industrious. . . . There are also in the said lands, [but] not on the shore of the river, 30 Chaqueta villages of the same tribe as the latter, allies and friends of the French, very good people, [and] . . . a tribe called Chiquacha with whom we trade. There are also other tribes there, called Conchaque and Habica,<sup>27</sup> with whom we have no trade. All these countries are very beautiful and abound in wild animals for the hunt. . . . I forgot to say that there is a saltpeter mine about 25 or 30 leagues from Fort Louis.

Let us descend the river again and return to Fort Louis, to get to the Missisipi by skirting the mainland in order to enter Lake Pontchartrain, make the portage of Bilocchy,<sup>28</sup> which is 1 league long and leads down into

25. The Chaquetaux or Chattaux, distinct from the Chactas: first settled in Spanish territory, on Bay Saint-Joseph, they were moved to near Fort Louis in 1703, at the demand of Bienville, C 13 l c, 3. 369 verso-370, Memoir of Bienville on the Indians of Louisiana.

26. This refers to the junction of the Tombigbee and the Alabama (rivière des Alibamons).

27. Creek tribes settled on the Cousa and Talapousa rivers, which unite in the Alabama River.

28. Portage from Bayou Saint-Jean to the Mississippi, situated today in the district of New Orleans. Its name is due to the presence on Lake Pontchartrain of a group

the Missicipi. The distance from these places to Fort Louis is reckoned at 40 leagues, and to gain the mouth of the Missicipi by way of the off-shore islands and to ascend the river as far as the portage of Bilocchy is 60 leagues. . . . The lower part of the Missicipi is the most confounded place in the world, full of drowned meadows, . . . crocodiles, snakes and other insects. It empties itself by 3 channels, in the deepest [of which] there is not more than 10 feet of depth. 15 leagues up the Missicipi are settled the Chaouachas and Ouachas, tribes which are allies and friends of the French; [they] have homes on both sides of the Missicipi. They are all industrious, all heathen.

From Fort Louis, going towards the portage of Bilocchy along the mainland one finds the River of the Pascagousla, who are settled at the entrance of the river whose name they bear. They are allies and friends of the French and they are very good and very industrious people, they constitute about 30 cabins. Higher up on the same river are settled the Capinan, . . . allies and friends of the French and completely like the latter [tribe], they constitute about 12 or 15 cabins. That is all the settlements there are on this river.

Continuing along the mainland there are next found the Bilocchy, other tribes, opposite the Isle aux Chevreuils, they are allies and friends of the French, they constitute about 10 to 12 cabins and are like the other tribes I have previously named. They are all heathen and have, so to say, each their own God. Farther or, continuing on the way towards Lake Pontchartain, on the north shore, are settled the Colapissa, . . . allies and friends of the French, across from the portage of Bilocchy, which is on the south shore of said lake. This tribe consists of about 300 men bearing arms, rather rogues and rascals, they are great hunters and fishers and raise quantities of Indian corn, of beans, and of tobacco for their habitual use. Further along than the portage of Bilocchy is another place where one can get into the Missicipi called Manchac, where one goes to avoid the portage of Bilocchy, and which leads you into the Missicipi 40 leagues higher up than the portage of Bilocchi.

Let us now ascend the Missicipi. . . . Leaving from the portage of Bilocchy . . . , at the right as you go up, about 4 leagues away, is a little village of Homas called Chopitoulas, whose chief is named Chanstabé, tribes which are allies and friends of the French. They are about 30 or 40 cabins in number, very good and very industrious people. 8 leagues higher up, on the left as you go up, are the Thainssas, . . . allies and friends of

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of Bilocchy or Biloxi, whom Saint-Denis had settled there. They belonged to the "nation" of the same name which is treated of in f. 349.

the French, very good and very industrious people, they constitute 30 or 40 cabins. 15 or 20 leagues higher were formerly the Bayagoulas, who were treacherously destroyed 8 years ago by the said Thainssas . . ., who were their neighbors. All these tribes are itinerant and change their villages very often on account of their wars. . . . *This is where they were last year when I was there.* 40 leagues higher up or thereabout are the Tonikas, tribes which occupy the old village of the Homas, who abandoned it on account of their war. The said Tonikas are allies and friends of the French, very good and very industrious people, they may be about 40 or 50 cabins.

Continuing to ascend the said Missisipi, on the left, is the Red River, formerly called the River of the Marne, by which trade intercourse can be had with the Spanish. It is by this river that the French who were sent by M. de la Mothe, Governor of Fort Louis, went last year in the month of July to try to form business connections with the Spanish. Along the river are found a number of tribes, of which a part are known, like the Natechitauche, the Cenisses, the Yatassé, and the Cadodaquious. Those are the ones that are known to me. The lands are very beautiful when the waters are low, and at high water everything is almost drowned. Hunting is very good here.

20 leagues higher up, on the right, are the Natché, on a steep rise, of very fine appearance, all in dwellings, allies and friends of the French, very good and industrious people, and consisting of about 3 to 400 men bearing arms, beautiful country, good land and fine prairies, good hunting in autumn and winter for game. The rivers are full of fish, a fine climate. In all these parts are found quantities of mulberry trees and . . . reeds 15 to 20 feet high, also quantities of trees which yield the balm of which I have spoken before, called styrax by apothecaries. From this village to Fort Louis is reckoned at 140 leagues and by the lower Missisipi 160. This place appears to me to be well suited by its situation to make a fine colony, one where everything will grow for their habitual use. In this place they eat rather good peaches. They grow quantities of melons, of pumpkins. The women customarily make quantities of pottery. They are very clever at spinning and at making pieces to cover themselves, which are ordinarily made of the bark of the mulberry. They also have some dyes which they use on their yarn, and there are many useful things to be gotten from this tribe if one inspired them to work at useful things. . . . More order is found there than in the other villages. Their sun, which is their King, whom they call Ouachill, is absolute like the King. They have a temple where they maintain a perpetual fire, their Religion and their customs and manners

would furnish material for an interesting account. I believe that all the trees and fruits of France would grow there.

There are other tribes in the lands on both sides of the river of whom I shall not speak. I shall speak precisely of only those who are settled on the banks of the Missicipi and on the bank of the rivers which we shall enter. Higher up on the same side on ascending is the river of the Tonicas, where was formerly the tribe of the same name, who abandoned their villages on account of the wars, and went to settle where the Homas had formerly been. On this river are settled the Yazous and the Corroys, two small tribes with whom we have some trade. They do not amount to much and are not to be much trusted, having before now killed some French and missionaries.<sup>29</sup> There are some other tribes higher up on this river, called Chaquechousmant. This is all there is on this river as far as I know.

Higher on the Missicipi, as you ascend, is the river of the Torima. Some leagues higher, on the same side, are the Acanssa, forming 3 small villages, the ones are called Acanssa, the others Caps and the last Torima. They may consist of about 300 men, . . . allies and friends of the French, very good and friendly people. The Indians of this region, as you ascend the Missicipi, are all idle and lazy and do not like to work. These are the most beautiful lands in the world, [with] a quantity of fruits, roots to live on. There is also a quantity of nuts, on 200 leagues of land, called by the Indians Akançapaccana, from which they make oil to grease their hair and their fire-arms.<sup>30</sup> But these nuts are found only in certain regions. There are a great many of them on the Ouabache. All of these tribes are almost all armed with guns and use them very skilfully.

. . . Higher up is Margot River on which there are no tribes. But these are the most beautiful lands in the world and have wild beasts in abundance. This Missicipi River is very rapid when the waters are high, which is usually in the months of January, February, March, April and May, which are [the months] used for descending, and one ascends in autumn during the low waters. . . . The descent is made in large conveyances and the ascent in small ones.

On the right as one ascends higher is the Ouabache River where, 2 leagues up, at the left as you ascend, was Fort Jucherot, built in 1702 upon a great height. I was there when it was built. From the said Ouabache to Fort Louis is reckoned at 350 leagues. Into the Ouabache empty 5 rivers, the first of which is about 10 leagues along on the right as you go

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29. Bourgmont alludes here to the murder of the missionary Nicholas Foucault by the Coroas.

30. The "pecan" nuts gave rise to trade between the zone of the Ouabache and the colonies of the lower Mississippi and the coast.

up. The fork comes from the direction of Carolina, the Chaoüasnonns are settled there, which gives the river its name. The Caskinaupau are also settled there, other tribes, who killed 6 of our Frenchmen in 1702. On the same side higher up is the river of the Caskinaupau who formerly lived there.<sup>31</sup> There are to our knowledge 2 tribes, of whom the one is called Taumgaria and the other Charaki.<sup>32</sup> Those are all we know of on this river. It goes also in the direction of the English. Higher up on the same side is the river of the Accanssa, who formerly lived there and who have abandoned their village. This river also goes in the direction of the English. These are the most charming lands of the world. There are prairies 15 and 20 leagues long, quantities of apples and wild plums and similar fruits . . . , full of wild beasts. On the left as you go up is the river of the Maskoutins, where I settled with them for 18 months to trade in skins and furs, but they have abandoned it, having been destroyed by the French two years ago.<sup>33</sup> Higher up on the right as you go up is White River, named by the Miami or Amigami. Higher up on the same side is another river, which we named, when we passed there, rivièrè aux dindes (i.e. turkey river), [which], in Miami, is Pilesouessipi. Near this place is a quantity of slate. There is also a great rock near this place on the same side where we noticed some verdigris . . . across the rock. It is near this place that a Miami chief named Scipion Quiapita told us that he had found the piece of copper that he gave to M. de Juchau<sup>34</sup> that year. On the left side higher up is the Red River, called Aur Monicipi by the Miami. There are not tribes at all on these small rivers. Higher up is the river called Kueteplikono, where in my time were settled the Miamis, with whom I traded in furs. They constituted 5 villages, the first [was] Ouyatanon, the 2d Pianguichia, the 3d Pepikokia, the 4th Chatechakangoya, and the 5th Miamia. From this place to Fort Jucherot is reckoned at 130 to 140 leagues. These are all the tribes that occupied this river in my time. But it would be impossible to speak too highly of this river with respect to its abundance of beasts, game, fruits, roots, and pot-herbs.

Continuing up the Missicipi for 40 leagues higher to the right as you go up, 2 leagues up a little river, the tribe of the Kaskassia are settled, a tribe who are friends and allies of the French. This village is composed of about 400 men, very good people. There are 2 Jesuit missionaries who

31. This refers respectively to the Tennessee and the Cumberland. The term "Ouabache" designates both the Wabash River and the lower part of the Ohio.

32. Taogaria and Cherokee.

33. The Mascoutins were at that time found along the lower part of the Ohio, below its junction with the Ouabache.

34. M. de Juchereau [Louis Juchereau de St. Denis].

settled there a long time ago. The greatest part are Christians and married in the face of the Church. They have a very pretty church, there are about 20 French *voyageurs* who settled there and married Indian women. They built a windmill there, they grow wheat and have inspired the Indians to grow some, from which they find much pleasure in eating French bread. This country is like [that of] the Ouabache in its beauty. The Indians also grow some tobacco which they twist into cylinders, according to their habit. This little mission and colony has a very fine appearance, on the edge of a prairie. They have some lead mines from which they take more than they need for their customary use. There are found also in all these regions from the Ouabache to Kaskassia some bits from copper mines, almost all pure, although without locating the mine exactly. This always gives reason to believe that there are some copper mines there. There is also to be found along the course of the Missicipi some rock crystal, but I do not know the exact spot. From the Kaskassias to Fort Louis is reckoned at 400 leagues.

20 leagues higher up, on the same side, the Thamaroys are settled on a height. They constitute about 50 cabins, they are allies and friends of the French and are similar in everything to the Kaskassias, their allies, being both Illinois. All these countries are very fertile, and [have] a very good climate.<sup>35</sup>

Some leagues further up, on the left side as you ascend, is the great Missouri River, so famed for its swiftness. Its water is always muddy, and especially in spring, making the Missicipi turbid for 400 leagues, and 20 leagues more towards the sea in spring at the time of the flood waters.

The first river is 30 leagues along on the left side as you go up, called the Ausages River on account of the tribe which lives there, who bear the same name. This river leads to about 40 leagues from the Cadaudakious, a tribe of almost the same sort. This Missouri River runs to the north and the northwest. I shall not give a description of this river. I will only tell which tribes occupy its banks, to my knowledge. There are the Missouri . . . , who are allies of the French. All their trade is in furs. They are not very numerous, they are of very good blood and are more alert than any other tribe. From all the Missouri River can be gotten furs of every kind, very fine and good, as the climate there is very cold. Higher up is found another river which flows into the Missouri, called the Ecanzé River,<sup>36</sup> on which there is a tribe of the same name, allies and friends of

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35. For the origin of these two missions of the Kaskaskias and the Tamarois, property of the Jesuits and of the Foreign Missions respectively, cf. M. Giraud, *op. cit.*, 24-28, 48 ff., 310 ff.

36. Kansas River.

the French. Their trade is in furs. These are the most beautiful countries and the most beautiful pieces of land in the world. The prairies there are like seas and full of wild beasts, especially buffalo, cows, hinds and stags, which are there in numbers that stagger the imagination. They almost always hunt with bow and arrow. They have very fine horses and are very good horsemen.

Higher up is found the wide river called by the French and by the Indians the Nibraskier, which branch runs to the northwest and to the westnorthwest. 10 leagues further along it are the Maquetantata,<sup>37</sup> a tribe allied with and friendly to the French. They are on the bank of a small

*Margin.* By way of the Missouri one can also find opportunity to trade with the Spanish, who are very rich in mines in this region. By all the information one can get, they are not far removed from those rivers on account of the Indians who go to them and who trade with them.

river whose water is salty and from which they make salt. All the trade of these Indians is in furs. There follow, as you go up the salt river, 25 leagues farther up the Panis, well populated, alert, and good horsemen. The French know them and see them sometimes. They all use the bow and arrow.

20 leagues higher are the Panimahas, whom the French also see sometimes. They comprise 9 villages, and are numerous, handsome and well-built. They are on the left as you ascend, and worship the Sun. Nothing but furs is to be gotten from all these places. This tribe has trade relations with the Spanish, who, they say, are very rich in mines in these regions, a fact which they make known in their talk. The Padoucas are also in these regions, another tribe who are their allies. This is all the information I have been able to get about this river.

Let us continue to ascend the Missouri. 100 leagues higher up, on the left, is a tribe called Ayowest or Rakodé<sup>38</sup> by their neighbors and the French. All their trade is in furs. 100 leagues further up the Missouri divides into two forks, that on the right as well as that on the left is called by the Indians Nidejaudegé, which the French translate as Smoky River, because the sand blows like smoke and makes the water of the river all white and muddy.<sup>39</sup> It is very rapid and dreadful at the time of the flood waters. . . . At the separation of this river is a villege called the Mahas, [who are] white and blonde, like Europeans. It is the most beautiful tribe

37. The Otos, on the Saline River.

38. The Iowas.

39. The Niobrara.

of all these continents. They live without warring on their neighbors. They are rovers, sometimes on one side of the river, and sometimes on the other. 80 leagues along the said river are the Padoccas, a tribe with whom the French have as yet no acquaintance. Higher up on the left are found 2 villages called Aricaras.<sup>40</sup> Their trade is in furs, like the other Indians. They have seen the French and know them. Higher up on the said river are 40 Caricara villages, which are ranged on both sides of the river. They are very numerous and are in the most beautiful countries to be seen for their fertility. This is all I can say about this river.

Let us redescend all these rivers, to rejoin the Missisipi. On the right as you go up is the river of the Illinois, going to the Peauria. . . . Their trade is in furs. They are Illinois, allies and friends of the French. They have among them some Jesuit missionaries. Following the Missisipi, on the left, higher up, is the river of the Wisconsinns, by which one goes to the Outagamis and Miskouakis, allies of the French. One can go by this route to Canada. Their trade is in furs. They are rather evil and it is not too good to trust them. At this point one reaches Lake Michigan which communicates with all the other lakes.<sup>41</sup>

Let us descend again to follow the Missisipi to its source, a stretch in which there are no tribes except the Scyouis, who are very numerous, allies and in trade with the French. They trade in beaver and all sorts of furs, which are beautiful and good and great in numbers. These are the most beautiful of all the countries of which we have been speaking. This tribe is rather difficult to manage. . . . There are falls at this place, called the Falls of St. Anthony, of prodigious height, into which a number of lakes discharge, which is the source and origin of the Missisipi. From this place to Fort Louis on the Mobile is reckoned at 900 leagues without falls or rapids, navigable throughout. . . .

Here is what can be gotten from each particular place, in my opinion:

At Mobile, Dauphin Island and its environs, some rosins, some tar, boards, cask wood, building timber, china-root, which is a sudorific . . . , sassafras, other drugs for medicines, some small masts and yards for ships.

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40. Marc de Villiers, *op. cit.*, alters Bourgmont's text, reproducing it as follows: "Higher up along the Missouri on the left are found 3 villages called Aricaras." Now, Bourgmont's text does not mention the Missouri. It has only: "Higher up on the left are found . . .," and, comparing it with what precedes, it is evident that the passage is to be applied to "the left" of the "smoky river" (Niobrara). But as there can be found no trace of the presence on the Niobrara of these Aricaras, whose habitat was localized to the Missouri and the lower course of the Cheyenne, there is reason to infer an error in Bourgmont's writing.

41. Here the text loses interest and precision. It seems that Bourgmont did not know personally the region of the upper Mississippi. The Wisconsin River, contrary to what he says, is on the right as one ascends.



Tobacco can be grown there, and, in my opinion, two cuttings of indigo a year. I believe that one could grow rice and silk as in Carolina. . . . I assure that there is no lack of mulberry trees, the only question is whether they are of a good species. One can get there quantities of deer skins, some buffalo skins and some bear skins. In these regions is also found some saltpeter, from which powder is made . . . , I have seen it tried. I do not know precisely where it is mined.

Here is what I think can be gotten from the colony of the Natteche,<sup>42</sup> a quantity of tobacco, of silk, as there are many mulberry trees there, of boards if they are suitable, I believe that wheat will grow well there, as the soil is good, at least one would think so, quantities of deer skins, some buffalo skins and bear skins. Rice can also be grown there, since it can be grown in Carolina.

Here is what can be gotten from the Ouabache, from the upper Missouri, from the Illinois River and from the upper Mississippi, to wit, buffalo skins and cow skins, their wool, if it is good for anything, and their hair, stag skins, skins of hinds, skins of roebuck, skins of bears, beaver, otter, marten, wild cat, lynx, wood otter, fox of all kinds, wild cats. Also to be had are tallow, nuts, if they are good for anything, copper if one can find the mine, since there is certainly some there. There are also a number of lead mines, which are very numerous in the neighborhood of the Caskassias. . . . Many people claim that much silver is to be found there. The Indians also have a number of dyes which could be of some use. One will also be able to find there some plants and drugs for medicine, which the Indians use very successfully. All Ouabache, the country of the Caskassia, will furnish as much wheat as is wished, and a great business can be made of it, by inspiring all the Indians to grow it to meet their needs.

This is all I can tell about all these countries, and I do not believe that I have been led astray from the truth in anything, and if any one disputes it, it is from lack of knowledge. . . . If one wants to settle these countries, it is necessary to place plenty of people there, without which it is impossible to succeed.

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VENIARD DE BOURGMONT did not stop, as is known, with this exploration of the Missouri. Several years later he proceeded to take effective possession of the river.

In 1719 he returned again to Lower Louisiana, where he took part in the operations against the Spanish position at Pensacola. Then he returned to France. The directors of the *Compagnie des Indes* [Company of the

42. Natchez.

Indies] gave him a favorable reception; he had the distinction of receiving the Cross of St. Louis, the dignity of "Commandant on the Missouri River." He then apparently would have settled down in France, where he had just married, if the attempt of the Spanish to establish themselves on the Missouri, in 1720, had not demonstrated the necessity of asserting possession of the river by means of a fortified post. So he went to sea again in 1722, and in February of the succeeding year he left New Orleans for the Missouri. When he arrived at the settlements in the Illinois, he found there an escort of Missouris who were well disposed to a meeting with him. As the beginning of November, 1723, he at last reached the village of this latter tribe, and he began the building of Fort d'Orleans on the north bank of the river, not far from its junction with the River Wakenda.

His purpose was to put an end to the wars which divided the "nations" of the Missouri and the Padoucas: a general pacification would ensure a guaranty of duration to the French control, and, by giving France a chance to get closer to the Padoucas, it would open the road to New Mexico and would secure it beforehand against the eventual aggressions of the Spanish. So Bourgmont, after having striven to allay the warlike inclinations of the river tribes, penetrated into the territory of the Padoucas and concluded with them a desired alliance. This was the greatest success of his career: at Fort d'Orleans the missionary Mercier celebrated the return of Bourgmont (October, 1724) with a solemn *Te Deum*.

But Bourgmont soon abandoned the Missouri, and his work did not survive his departure. The step he took of conducting several Indians of the region and an Illinois chief to France, and the reception tendered them in Paris in 1725, would have admirably seconded his policy if Fort d'Orleans had become an important military position and a trade center capable of satisfying the needs of the natives. Unfortunately, Bourgmont retired from the service of the King, and his return to civil life caused the post on the Missouri to be gradually forgotten. Fort d'Orleans was evacuated at the beginning of 1729. From then on every trace of the man who was its founder disappeared, while France, renouncing its projects for New Mexico, limited its zone of military occupation to the region of Fort de Chartres.