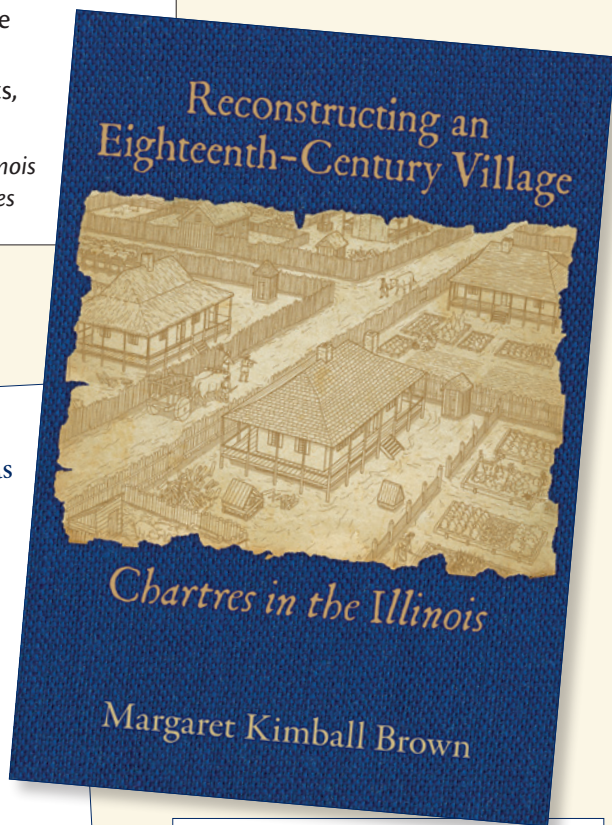


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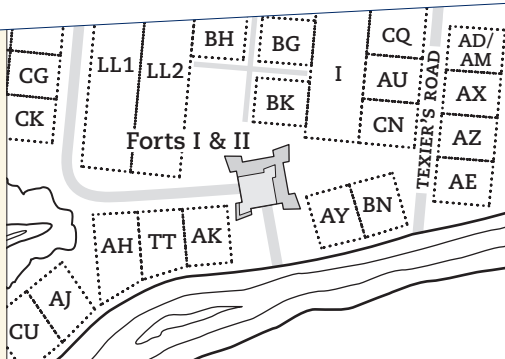
Carl J. Ekberg, author of *French Roots in the Illinois Country: The Mississippi Frontier in Colonial Times*



It is August 1719 in the Illinois Country...

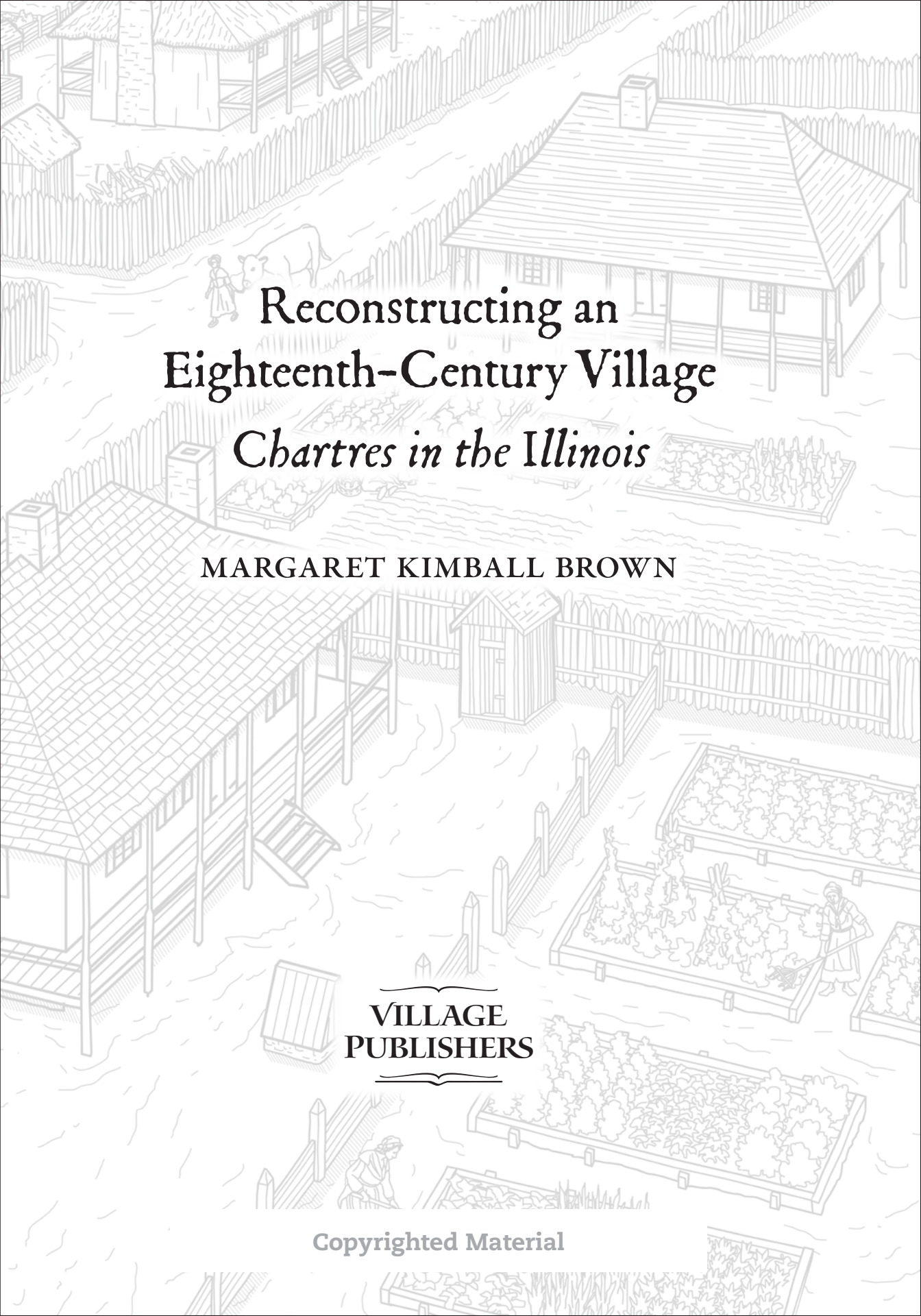
Commandant Pierre Dugue de Boisbriant lands his troops on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River seven leagues above Kaskaskia. Here, the commandant will build the first Fort de Chartres. And here, Margaret Kimball Brown begins to reconstruct the village of Chartres, lot by lot.

Not only does Dr. Brown map Chartres—the four forts, the church, the residential and agricultural lots—but she populates the village with vivid, authentic portrayals of its residents—the *habitants* and soldiers, the slaves and voyageurs, the tradesmen and government officials. People with whom you would enjoy *une pinte d'eau de vie* (brandy) on a mild summer evening.



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Reconstructing an
Eighteenth-Century Village
Chartres in the Illinois

MARGARET KIMBALL BROWN

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Peopling the Illinois Country

THE GREATEST PROBLEM in developing the Louisiana colony was lack of immigrants. The charters of Crozat, Law, and the Company of the Indies had all stipulated that they import settlers, but none of them was able to meet this requirement. Attempts in France to develop interest in emigration to the New World met with little success. "During the 150 years between the outbreak of the Wars of Religion and the death of Louis XIV, France alternated between periods of prolonged crisis and eras of recovery and expansion."¹ In spite of wars, taxation, and unemployment, few people were interested in leaving familiar surroundings to travel two or three months across the ocean to a distant wilderness—better the troubles you know than to risk new ones.

Nouvelle France (New France, as Canada was known before 1763) had been settled for two or three generations before the Canadians began to move south and west to the Illinois Country. The government, seeking to increase population and production in Canada, opposed the migration of families. Despite this opposition, many relatives of Canadian traders followed them to the Illinois. Most were descended from French emigrants, but some of the traders who plied the rivers had married or cohabited with Indian women. By the time traders settled in the Illinois, there were numerous offspring, and many Frenchmen married daughters of these unions. The majority of these mixed couples lived at Kaskaskia, but there were a few at Chartres. A number of the prominent men in the Chartres community were Canadian, including brothers Jean Etienne and Ignace Hebert, Francois Cecire *dit* Bontemps, Toussaint Loisel, and Joseph Baron.

The French government vacillated with regard to French-Indian marriages. The missionaries generally felt it was best to regularize by marriage already existing liaisons. Several French officials, however, commented disapprovingly about the mixed blood and its effect on the

Ursins. Immigrants who arrived in Louisiana on the ship *Comte de Toulouse* in 1718 probably were with Boisbriant's group, since they appear shortly afterwards in Illinois records. Many of these were identified only by their *dits* (nicknames), but can be recognized by comparison with later documents. Clarification is given in parentheses.¹⁰

Philippe Renaudiere and his wife (Perrine Pivert)
 Marc Francois Clement, sergeant, 22 yrs.
 Olivier, *pere*
 La Plume, corporal (Antoine Ple, pit sawyer)
 Va de Bon Coeur, 20 yrs. (Francois Frenil or Louis Baudrau)
 La Branche, 22 yrs. (Jean Chaille)
 Le Pine, 24 yrs.
 St. Jean, 25 yrs. (possibly Jean Hubert *dit* St. Jean)
 La Sonde, 22 yrs. (possibly Nicolas Pierrot)
 Chevalier, 23 yrs.
 Cagneral, 25–26 yrs. (Nicolas Francois)
 St. Martin (Charles Geral)
 Jean Martin and wife
 Le Pensee (Joseph Roy)
 Oliver (Ollivier) Daniel, 23 yrs.
 St. Louis and wife
 4 wives of miners
 3 children

In June 1723, the population at Chartres was 126 (Table 2.1); a census in 1726 recorded 206 residents (Table 2.2).

TABLE 2.1
1723 Census of Chartres

Habitants (farmers)	39
Workers	42
Women	28
Children	17
TOTAL	126 ¹¹

TABLE 2.2
1726 Census of Chartres

Men	62
Women	30
Engagés	6
Children	34
Black slaves	59
Indian slaves	17
Free black	1
TOTAL	209 ¹²

Convicts and Deporteés

The Kaskaskia Manuscripts provide quite a few details about many of the convicts, both men and women, who were brought to America and the Illinois Country in 1719 and the years that followed.

Marie Marguerite Moule

Marie Marguerite Moule came to America on the ship *La Mutinee* in 1719; she was among the girls “sent from Paris by order of the King.”²⁴ In the Illinois, Marie Marguerite married Joseph Catherine, who was recruited as a worker for Philippe Renault’s concession and arrived in 1719. Joseph was a master carpenter at Fort de Chartres. The two were married by 1728, when they sold a house to Charles Joseph Gossiaux, but no more information is available about Marie Marguerite.²⁵

Mariame Tabouret

Marianne (or Marie) Tabouret came on the ship *La Mutinee* in 1719 as part of a group sent from Paris by order of the king. She married Joseph Gardon *dit* La Jeunesse. In January 1725, the couple leased land from Lieutenant Pierre Melique; an inventory of tools lent to the tenant farmer by Melique was included. Later, the couple sold a house and large lot to Claude Chetivau. According to the 1726 census, they had one child. Possibly in the same year, they moved to Mobile, Alabama, where Marianne became a midwife at Fort Condé and died in 1735.²⁶

Marie Jeanne Gaudie

Marie Jeanne Gaudie (or Goguet) was taken in fraud and deported on the ship *Les Deux Freres* in 1719. She married Pierre Texier. In the census of 1726, they were listed as having one child. Texier died in 1731, leaving behind his wife and three children—Pierre, Jacques, and Marie Joseph. Marie Jeanne then married Claude Benetot *dit* du Chemin, who had been Texier’s business partner under the name Antoine Cousot. After Marie Jeanne herself died on January 1, 1741, an inventory of their property was made. Although they had a 1 by 50-*arpent* tract in the Prairie Chassin, their material goods were meager. *A poteaux en*

Le dit entrepreneur la Chaux nécessaire pour ledit ouvrage
 qui lui sera fourni par charrois pour le transport de
 ledit Chaux et de manouvriers pour le faire

A l'et mis a prix pour morcau	500 ^l "
Par Gossiau	495
Par Gaboury	490
Par Larose	480
Par Courtois	475
Par Gossiau	470
Par Moreau	466
Par Gossiau	462

Et ne s'étant trouvée personne qui ait mis au rabai
 pour ledit ouvrage et depuis nos lettres adjugées et
 adjugées eût Gossiau a la somme de quatre cent
 soixante deux livres, aux conditions et depuis fait au for
 de Chartres ledit jour vingt sept septembre l'an sept cent
 trent neuf

Signe de la Loere Flaucour
 La Buissonniere

5.7 The bottom of the bidding document for repairs at Fort de Chartres III, showing the bids (including Gossiaux's low bid of 462 livres), written by de la Loere Flaucour and certified by La Buissonniere. Note that the highest of the eight bids is only 8 percent higher than the lowest bid. (Courtesy of the Missouri Historical Society; photograph by the author)

tions of Fort de Chartres III, a fragment of plaster was found. Its face shows smoothing marks and possibly whitewash; the reverse was impressed with marks made by the logs over which the clay was applied.⁴⁶

Clues to the method of the stone well's construction are provided by the payments that La Buissonniere listed and by contemporaneous accounts. A round framework of wood with an opening at the center (*roue*) was assembled to the desired diameter of the well. The commandant's year-end report noted that Andre Henrion was paid for the wood to make this framework and that Guillaume Maillie *dit* Toulouse did the framing (six *pieds* in diameter). Set in place at the selected spot, it would form the base of the well. As earth was removed beneath the

Interpretive Maps of Fort de Chartres Village

The interpretive maps on the following pages represent the outline and layout of the village during four discrete periods under the French régime.

Map A	1718-1730
Map B	1731-1752
Map C	1753-1760
Map D	After 1760

Interpretive Map of Fort de Chartres Village 1731-1752

Chartres Commons Fields

A B C D E F G H I
Grand Ligne

Location
of future
Fort IV



Ste. Anne
Church &
Cemetery



◀ to Metchigamia Village

C1

C2

AT

C3

THE KING'S ROAD

G1 AC XX MM

G2

LL3

AV

YY AO

CF CE CG

CK

LL1

LL2

BI

BJ

BH

BG

BK

Forts I & II

F1

Coulee of the Ash Grove

AH

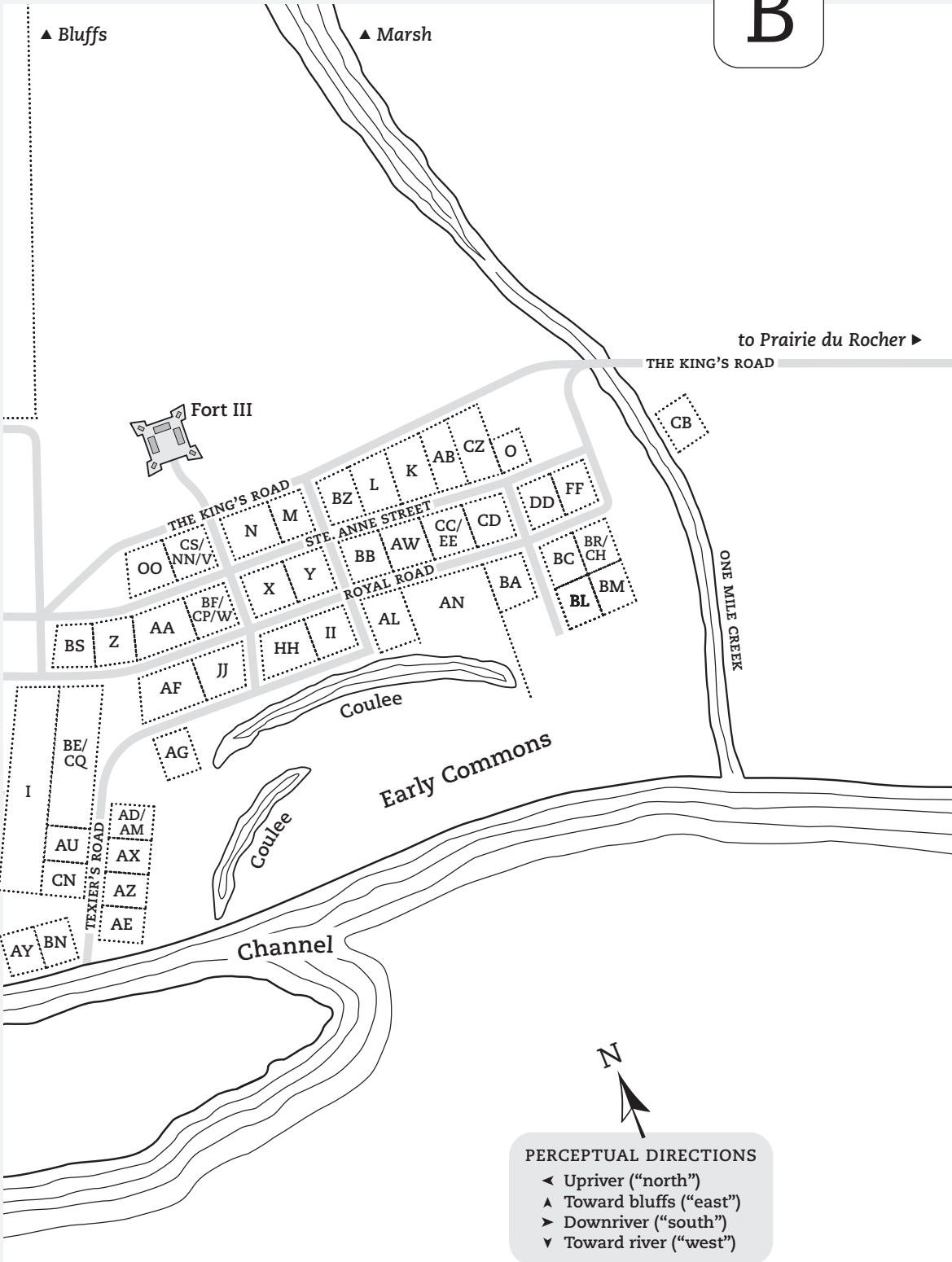
TT

AK

CU

AJ

Island



LOTS BETWEEN THE KING'S ROAD AND
STE. ANNE STREET (INTERPRETIVE MAP B)

The first lot for which there is information is lot **O**, which had several owners between 1743 and 1762. In July 1761, Ignace Legrain, merchant and billiard table keeper, sold the property to Paul Lemoine Martigny and Philippe Dujour de Louviere. The house on the lot had one room, with two bed closets and a double stone chimney; both the attic and the main level were floored. There was an attached shed (also floored above and below) with a billiard table, eleven sets of balls (large and small), and all the accessories. According to the sales contract, the house and lot would be available on September 1, but the billiard room could be used from the day of the sale. The cost was 4,500 *livres*, and the sale was made in the form of IOUs: The buyers assumed a note to M. Saisy for 1,452 *livres*; a note to La Grande for 1,631 *livres*; and a note to Pichon, subsequently conveyed to Jean Girardin, for 1,000 *livres*. Martigny and Louviere promised to pay the remaining 417 *livres*, on Legrain's behalf, to Commandant Pierre Joseph Neyon de Villiers, on request.

In November 1762, Martigny and Louviere sold the property at auction to settle the debts of their partnership. Philibert Gaignon, a private, purchased it for 4,410 *livres*. At 30 *toises* square, the lot was called "an ordinary lot" in the contract. Further details of the lot and its improvements were provided in the transaction:

One house built of pickets, covered with shingles, consisting of two apartments of which there is a billiard table with its cloth, balls and cues and two small rooms near the other apartment and a shed at the end covered with shingles, together with a double stone chimney, and the lot belonging to it, on which stands a small stable, said lot is enclosed with posts on all sides.¹³

Ignace Hebert definitely owned land north of lot **O**, but the extent of his property (**CZ**) can't be determined. When a portion of lot **AB** was sold to Cadet Daniel Fagot de la Garceniere, lot **CZ** was referenced as a neighbor to lot **K**—the only lot of which even a portion has survived the cutting of the river and the construction of the levee.

The owners of lot **K** were among the more prosperous residents of the community. The lot appears first on a notarial list when Charlotte Marchand, wife of Jean Baptiste Lalande, sold it to Francois Coulon de

the said Sieur de Macarty on his side will end them so far as he can by the method of accommodation. . . .

An essential point of the [policy] which directly concerns M. de Macarty solely is to prevent the marriages which the French have hitherto contracted with Indian women. Such alliances are shameful and of dangerous consequence for the familiarity to which they accustom the Indians with the French, and for the ill breed which they produce.¹⁴

Fort de Chartres IV

The need for a new fort to protect the valuable Illinois Country from English incursions was well understood by officials in New Orleans and France. Fort III was simply not capable of billeting all the new soldiers in Macarty's 1751 convoy. Vaudreuil had written to Antoine-Louis Rouillé, minister of the Marine, in May: "Fort de Chartres can contain at most two companies in its barracks, and its situation has no advantage over the others to warrant continuing to make it the chief post."¹⁵ Vaudreuil directed Macarty to

take the lodging occupied by the commandant of Kaskaskia and . . . quarter part of the garrison with the officers on the inhabitants, and the rest at Fort de Chartres; the latter detachment he will take care to make as large as he can, in order to incommode the inhabitants less at Kaskaskia."¹⁶

Within a week of his arrival at Kaskaskia, Macarty traveled northward to inspect Fort de Chartres III. In his January 1752 report to Vaudreuil, he wrote,

I visited the buildings of the fort. Their frames are good. They need to be reinforced by a wall or loft [?], which would always be a place to start work anew. I do not see how the king can dispense with maintaining this fort which as it is can lodge two companies, and a third if the necessary buildings were constructed. The enceinte [walls] of the fort can be built without it costing the king anything. Every year the inhabitants and *voyageurs* furnish a certain quantity of pickets, enough to replace one curtain each year. The king would only have the buildings to provide for, one of which threatens to fall down.¹⁷



8.3 Stone showing a mason's mark from a wall at Fort de Chartres IV. Perhaps the "M" was incised by Jean Manuel of Prairie du Rocher or Eustache Moreau of Kaskaskia. (Courtesy of Fort de Chartres State Historic Site museum; photograph by the author)

The majority of the construction work was probably done by soldiers; stone cutting, which required more skill, was performed by professional masons from the village, as well as others imported for the work. Documents list several inhabitants of Chartres as masons: Jean Prunet *dit* La Giroflee, Joseph Roubeau, and Ignace Legrain; mason Jean Manuel lived in nearby Prairie du Rocher. The registration of the will of deceased Mathieu Galles indicated that he had been sent from New Orleans to work on "the King's constructions in the Illinois" and was still owed 800 *livres*. Several stones discovered from the walls of the fort bear chiseled initials or symbols by particular masons (Figure 8.3).⁴⁸

Not only is there doubt about the beginning date for construction of Fort de Chartres IV, but there is also uncertainty about when—and even if—it was completed. In August 1759, Macarty stated that work was continuing on the "large gate," which he hoped would be finished within a couple of months. Since the stone for the corner towers had to be cut in winter, wooden lookout towers were going to be constructed in the meantime. Macarty also commented about building a latrine over a stone drain that led to the moat around the fort. Such a latrine was found in archaeological work at the fort in 1974.⁴⁹

Nouvelle Chartres

The fourth fort was constructed in an area that had been part of long lots **A**, **B**, and **C**; its glacis extended into long lot **D** (see Interpretive Map C). Then, as now, the government appropriated land for its projects. Below the fort was a new commons, probably bottomland woods and marsh located between the settled lands and the river. Some owners of the long lots had built houses on the river ends of the lots, but construction of the new fort increased movement into the area and delineation of new residential lots. Unfortunately, many of the late land records have been lost, so information on the settlement near the fort is scanty.

The area around the fort became known as Nouvelle Chartres (New Chartres). Occasionally, this name was extended to include the entire Fort de Chartres community, but “the Establishment” continued to appear in the records, too. The layout of the area around Fort IV cannot be positively defined. Besides the King’s Road, few streets are mentioned. It doesn’t appear that Commandant Macarty attempted to lay out a regular grid of streets and lots. Still, Nouvelle Chartres was different from the Subdivision; the land here was considered to be part of the long lot system and so was under individual ownership. A number of additional lots were said to be in Nouvelle Chartres, but the land descriptions are so vague that it has been impossible to include them on Interpretive Map C.

Up to the time of the construction of Fort IV, there appears to have been only one major road in the area: the old Indian trail, which led to the Metchigamia Indian village and then to St. Philippe. Broutin’s 1734 map (see Figure 5.4 on page 139) shows faint dashes for this road and its branches beyond the long lots. A 25-*toise*-square lot with a house in long lot **F** (**FI**) was donated by Antoine Sorel *dit* Dauphine to Toussaint Vodry in 1744. One boundary of the lot ran “on the square line from a cherry tree which lies on a footpath to the Indian village.” In 1755, the same lot was described as running “from . . . a stump of wild cherry . . . the depth from the King’s road to the coulee.” When the decision was made to construct the stone fort in this area, the Indian trail continued in use.⁵⁰

Lots **A1** and **A2** were part of the long lot **A** sequence, which ran from the bluffs to the river; they were owned by sons of the original grantee, Francois Hennet *dit* Sanschagrin. In May 1758, Jacques Hennet

The French Exodus

Challenged by the British presence and the encroachment of the river onto village land, most inhabitants of Chartres departed for the Spanish side. As Tanis Thorne asserts, “The French-speaking people of the Mississippi valley were a population without a country after the Treaty of Paris in 1763.”²⁸ Stirling reported to Gage in December 1765,

I have not been able to get an Exact Account of the Number of the Inhabitants, as there is always many of them at N Orleans, trading with the Indians, or Hunting, . . . the Village of Caskaskias has about Fifty Familys, and at Caho[kia], about Forty, those of Prairie du Rocher, Fort Chartres, & S^t Philip are almost totally Abandoned; This Settlement, has been declining Since the Commencement of the War, and when it was Ceded to us, many Familys went away for fear of the English, and want of Troops to protect them from the Indians, they have formed a Settlement Since the Peace Opposite to Caho called S^t Louis where there is now About Fifty Familys, and they have another opposite to Caskaskias, which has been Settled Thirty Years ago, Called S^t Genevieve about the same number of Familys, to these two Places they have retired.²⁹

Flooding of the village of Chartres continued unabated. In his 1763 journal, a traveler in the Illinois Country named Hamburg noted that the fort was “Situating not 400 Yards from the Mississippi with a Dry Ditch About; there is about 100 french families Living near it.”³⁰ Three years later, Pittman reported,

In the year 1764 there were about forty families in the village near the fort, and a parish church, served by a Franciscan friar, dedicated to St. Anne. In the following year, when the English took possession of the country, they abandoned their houses, except three or four poor families, and settled at the villages on the west side of the Mississippi, chusing to continue under the French government.³¹

In October 1765, one week after Fort de Chartres was ceded to the British, Stirling wrote,

the Village of this Place is quite depopulated, the River having run away with half of it, and every one is of the Opinion that it will

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About the Author

Margaret Kimball Brown received her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Anthropology from Michigan State University. Between 1974 and 1984, she served as staff archaeologist and chief staff archaeologist for the state of Illinois. She was site manager of Cahokia Mounds Historic Site from 1984 to 1998.

Dr. Brown's numerous publications include *The Kaskaskia Manuscripts, 1708–1816: A Calendar of Civil Documents in Colonial Illinois*, coedited with Lawrie Cena Dean; *The French Colony in the Mid-Mississippi Valley*, coauthored with Lawrie Cena Dean; and *History As They Lived It: A Social History of Prairie du Rocher, Illinois*.

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