

You ~~will~~^{can}, my Reverend Father, send to find them here, where all will be promptly delivered to you. I solicit you also, pursuant to the orders that I have received from my general, to return to your mission and to live among us with the same cordiality as heretofore, promising you supplies and assistance.

"I am, my Reverend Father, the most humble of your servants.

"Blondel."

"At the Natchitoches, December 12, 1719."

Thus closed ~~the story of~~ La Harpe's enterprise of 1719, in connection with the Cadcaquicus, ^{so far as he personally was concerned.} He seems never to have returned to the Post of the Natchitoches to command or reside, notwithstanding his farming and stock-raising plans for that place — which he called "my residence" — and notwithstanding the great expectations that he seems to have had of making it a center of trade.

The services most congenial to him and those chiefly desired from him by Governor Bienville, for the Company of the Indies, seem to have been, to explore new territory, establish new posts, and make new alliances with the frontier tribes, and to open the way for trade with these and if possible with the northern provinces of New Spain; rather than to permanently occupy and develop any single establishment.

Thus, in August of 1721, he was sent to ~~the~~ the Bay of Saint-Bernard (Matagorda Bay), with Simars, Sieur de Belle Isle, to establish a post there and renew the claims of France on the territory of Texas: claims which ~~had been~~^{had been} based originally on La Salle's discoveries and colony of 1685 et sequens. ^{La Harpe} was badly received there by the resident Indians*, and withdrew, and further French enterprise in that

*La Harpe does not mention the name of these Indians; but it is probable that they ~~were~~ or some of them were the Clamcoots, the cannibal tribe that massacred in 1687 the remnant of the French colony left there by La Salle when he started thence on his final and fatal attempt to reach the Mississippi. The name of this tribe is given in the testimony of ~~Jean-Baptiste Talon~~ ^{and two younger brothers (Robert and Luciens) and a sister (Marie-Magdelaine) and one Gustache Bréman, all of whom} were spared their lives through the instrumentality of the Indian women; these five being all that were spared in the butchery of the twenty to twenty-five people that had remained at Fort Saint-Louis. Still another of the Talon family, Pierre Talon, together with a young man named Pierre ~~Moumier~~, also escaped the massacre by having previously taken up their residence with the Cenis nation. All of these young French persons were ultimately ransomed from the Indians by the Spaniards and taken to Mexico; and Pierre and Jean gave their testimony subsequently for D'Iberville at La Rochelle, France, concerning the closing events of La Salle's establishment. ~~They gave as the cause of the massacre, the fact that La Salle, ~~was~~ at the time of founding his establishment, had taken by force some of the canoes for his own use in going up the La Vaca river.~~ ^{of the party that had remained with the Cenis, separating from the party of Jean Cavalier after the death of La Salle, L'Archeveque, ~~and~~ survived and was taken to Mexico by the Spaniards, and with him Groulx, the deserter who had earlier taken up his residence with the Cenis. These two last-named, were taken by the Spaniards in the first of their expeditions to Bay St. Louis, and the others in two following expeditions, the latest of which seems to have been in 1703.}

to note

of the Clamcoots

quarter was abandoned.

At about the close of the same year, La Harpe was sent to explore the Arkansas River, with the idea of establishing alliances with the Indian tribes of its valley, and, if possible, of penetrating to New Mexico and establishing trade with that province. By April 19th, 1722, he had succeeded in advancing up that river only a few leagues beyond a bluff of rock which he had passed on the 9th, and to which he had given the name of "le Rocher Francais" (the French Rock). That the Rocher Francais is the same eminence that has since given name to Little Rock, the capital city of Arkansas, is indicated by La Harpe's estimate of the distance he had ascended the river and of the distance and course from his return point, above the Rocher Francais, to the Great Village of the Nine Nations, or ~~Touacara~~ Touacara-Ousita confederacy, which he had discovered on Canadian River in 1719.*

*See pages 378, 379 of Volume VI of ~~Abraham~~ Margry's Origines Francaises, in connection with page 374 ~~and~~ ~~and~~ intermediate pages.

Just what garrison occupied the Post of the Massonites in years subsequent to 1719, just when that post was abandoned, and what length of time intervened between its abandonment and the founding of Fort St. Louis de Carlorotte, described in our next chapter, are questions which, as yet, the writer can answer only approximately and inferentially.

It is not improbable that Saint-François, the garrison-corporal who descended Red River to Matchitchee with La Harpe in November-December, 1719, soon returned to the Post of the Massonites, and for a short time acted as its commandant.

We have seen that during the Franco-Spanish war of 1719 a strong reinforcement was sent from Pensacola by Bienville for the garrison at the Massonites. It is probable that this garrison was sensibly reduced at the close of that war in 1720, and that, thereafter, its size and importance were ~~ordinarily~~ ordinarily insignificant.

On the 1st of July, 1720, Sieur de Saint-Denis was commissioned by the Company of the Indies as "Commandant sur le haut de la Riviere aux Cannes"; that is, Commandant over the upper part of Red River. His headquarters was were at Matchitchee, of which town he had been the founder a few years earlier.

The recorded proceedings of the Council of Louisiana, of the 2nd of December, 1721, signed by Bienville, Duvergier, and Delorme, state that "In consequence of the letter written by the Company on the 4th of April last that it would be necessary to place M. de Saint-Denis

at the Nessonites or in that vicinity and to extend his command over the latter (to flatter him more), as far as and including in it the Natchitoches, added to the perfect acquaintance which we know that he has of that river and of the Indians of those quarters, we have appointed him commandant of the said post of the Natchitoches and of the Nessonites, to follow there the orders and the instructions which will be sent to him."

In 1721, also, the Post of the Nessonites played a part in the formal protest which, ~~Bienville~~ on the 10th of December, Bienville made to the Spanish authorities, against their action in having ~~sent~~ brought ~~down~~ to the Village of the Adayes, a large force of troops, which was beginning to fortify itself; for he wrote, "I do not see how anything can authorize you to fortify that post, since it is between that of ~~the~~ the Natchitoches and that of the Cadodaquious, of which we have possession."

Because the Cadodaquious were much more widely known and were a much more important part of the Four Nations than were the Nessonites, La Harpe's Post of the Nessonites was very often referred to as the "Post of the Cadodaquious."

In the journal of his Arkansas River reconnaissance, La Harpe wrote of the advisability of establishing a post at his farthest point — location of April 19, 1722 — on the Arkansas River, and another on the latter's "Southwestern" or Canadian branch at the Village of the Touacara Confederacy, and of sending to the latter place, by way of the Natchitoches or of the Cadodaquious, a detachment of troops with presents, etc. Hence we infer the probability that in 1722 a garrison was still maintained at the Caddo villages, or, in other words, at the Post of the Nessonites.

Bienville was retired from the governorship of Louisiana in 1724, for a considerable period of years. He was succeeded by Périér in 1726; Boisbriant, Commandant of the Illinois, having been ~~also~~ acting governor of Louisiana in the two years intervening.

In a "Memoir on the Natchitoches", which seems to have accompanied the letter of instructions given to Périér on his accession to the governorship in 1726, we read, "The French have a post at the Cadodaquious or Nessonites of six men, more detrimental than profitable to the nation by the contempt which the savages have for their small number." And in the letter of instructions itself, the Company shows its intention to discontinue, if possible, the Post of the Nessonites, ~~which~~ in the following words: "There is in the Fort saint-John of the

Natchitoches a detachment of twenty-five men from the garrison of New Orleans, and this detachment furnishes from it another of six men to the Indian Village of the Cadodaguious, who are 150 leagues more remote than the Natchitoches. M. de Saint-Denis, who commands at Fort Saint John, asks for a stronger garrison, but, as he is master of the Indians of that quarter, so that he has nothing at all to fear there from the Spaniards in that direction, and as de Bienville has admitted that this officer has need only of a detachment of fifteen to twenty men, including that which he should make to the Cadodaguious, of which the Company is still unacquainted with the necessity, that is a matter upon which M. Périer will speak plainly with the said Sieur de Saint-Denis, in order to have the six men who have been placed there return, if they are useless there;....."

While the above statements indicate that the Post of the Massonites may have been abolished in or about 1726, I have found no positive record of its abandonment. That there was an interval, however, about this time, in which the French had no garrisoned post at the Four Nations, appears from the circumstance that, something like a decade subsequent to the letter of instructions to Périer, a French officer was sent with a squad of soldiers to build a fort, christened "Fort St. Louis de Carlorette" at the towns of the Caddoes, as we shall relate more fully in another chapter.*

Footnote

*The quotations given above without references to their source, and relating to the history of the Post of the Massonites, are found in the sixth volume of Margry's Origines Francaises.

The Caddo villages themselves remained in the district described by Joutel and La Harpe, for more than a century after the visit of the Cavalier party there in 1687. When, toward the close of the eighteenth century, they were finally abandoned by the aborigines, their deserted sites were, for many years afterward, known to the people of Natchitoches, ~~and Louisiana~~ etc., as "the Caddo Old Towns".

(Continued ^{page} on page 32.)