

ARE FRANÇOIS LOUIS GRÉMILLON AND JOSEPH LAFLEUR LOUISIANA'S NEWEST REVOLUTIONARY WAR PATRIOTS?

by Cathy Lemoine Sturgell

In late May 2015, I received an email from a genealogy friend, Jordan Grémillion. I “met” Jordan in 2014 while he was serving a tour in Afghanistan when he contacted me about genealogical research he was doing on his surname. Jordan is fairly new to genealogy but had already developed a passion for it. His e-mail in late May was to inquire about the name of “Joseph GRÉMILLON” that appears on two plaques residing in Pointe Coupée and Avoyelles dedicated to our Revolutionary War ancestors.

Admittedly, I had never paid particular attention to the name on the plaques although I, too, am descended from the GRÉMILLION line. I was able to quickly tell him that there was no known person in the Revolutionary War time frame in the Pointe Coupée or Avoyelles area with that name. He was wondering if the name Joseph could have been a mistake and if the correct name could be François Louis GRÉMILLON – our common ancestor. Jordan provided me with a link to Charles Robert Churchill’s 1925 book entitled *SAR Spanish Records, Spanish-English War, 1779-1783 (Men under Gen. Don Bernardo de Gálvez and other records from the Archives of the Indies, Seville, Spain)*, which is provided on the Louisiana Society – Sons of the American Revolution’s (LASSAR) website. He had already confirmed via pages 330-331 of the book that Churchill did indeed list a “joseph gremillon” as #30 on the 30 June 1777 Pointe Coupée Militia list, although François GRÉMILLON’s name had appeared on the 1770 militia list. On the other hand, François’ name was missing from the 1777 list.

Jordan was well aware, however, that the 1777 list was the one that had been traditionally used as certification for acceptance into the SAR and DAR. After a quick check of Winston DeVille’s *Louisiana Soldiers in the American Revolution*, we confirmed that DeVille's book (p. 33) also listed Joseph’s name but not the name of François in the 1777 list. Knowing that Jordan was located in the Baton Rouge area, I suggested that he might want to visit LSU’s Hill Memorial Library since a copy of the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba (General Archives of the Indies, Spain) collection was available if he wanted to view the actual militia list found in Legajos 161.

About a day later, he excitedly posted on our Facebook *Avoyelles Parish Genealogy Research Page* that he had determined that François Louis GRÉMILLION was indeed a Revolutionary War patriot! Jordan explained that he had pulled Legajos 161 and, as plain as could be, François’ name was listed as #31 on page 2 of the actual 1777 Pointe Coupée Militia list. This meant that François had served with GÁLVEZ in September 1779 when Baton Rouge was recaptured from England in a brilliant coup and when Natchez was, subsequently, reclaimed in a capitulation agreement forced upon the British by GÁLVEZ. The Battle of Baton Rouge is often considered to be the only battle of the American

Revolution which occurred outside of the original 13 colonies, and there is great pride in knowing that our ancestors participated in the war in which we gained our freedom from England.

Jordan determined that Churchill appears to have made a transcription error by taking the first name of #30 on the original list (Joseph LAFLEUR) and adding it to the surname of #31 (François GRÉMILLON) to create the name of “joseph gremillon” as #30. Churchill’s typed Pointe Coupée Militia list did not include a #31 but this fact had obviously gone undetected by Churchill. This is how the names appear in the actual Pointe Coupée Militia list found in Legajos 161:

- 29. Baptiste Laffleur
- 30. Joseph lafleur
- 31. françois grémillon
- 32. Baptiste Lacourt

In Churchill's book, those four names appear as follows:

- 29. Baptiste Laffleur
- 30. joseph gremillon
- 31. (not included in Churchill's book)
- 32. Baptiste Lacourt

Based on his exciting discovery of a 90-year-old transcription error, Jordan contacted the LASSAR and provided them with the appropriate documentation that would allow himself and others to join the SAR. SAR officials were initially thrilled to find out that descendants of François Louis GRÉMILLON and Joseph LAFLEUR would now be eligible to join the prestigious organization. Immediately, Jordan gathered the appropriate documentation to complete his application and become the first descendant of François Louis GRÉMILLON – America's newest Revolutionary War patriot – to join the SAR.

One might think that the story would end here, but there was an expected twist to this tale. A few days after submitting his application, Jordan received notification from the Registrar of the Louisiana SAR that the state organization had become aware of recent genealogy policy changes at the national level which would essentially almost eliminate recognition of the Louisiana patriots who served under GÁLVEZ. It appears that acceptance of militia descendants into the organization would no longer be allowed if the militia list on which the patriot appeared was dated prior to the late spring date in 1779 on which Spain declared war on Britain. Unfortunately, there are no known militia lists for the Pointe Coupée Militia dated later than the 30 June 1777 list (with the exception of a 1781 list which lists four officers of this militia and specifically states their involvement in Baton Rouge and Natchez) and, as a result, the militia descendants would no longer qualify for SAR entry.

It was noted, however, that the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) was continuing to accept entries based on patriots found on the the Militia lists dated after 24 December 1776. After all, those mentioned on these earlier militia lists were essentially

serving under the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, General Don Bernardo de GÁLVEZ, as he began shoring the colony's defenses for the war that was sure to come, and it was very likely that these militia groups were part of the large group of militia that fought with GÁLVEZ in the 1779 battle. Prior to this recent SAR policy change, the 24 December 1776 date was the beginning date of accepted military service cited by the SAR's own rules of membership.

At this time, members of the LASSAR continue to examine the possibility of pursuing a reversal of the national policy change which appears to ignore the contribution of the Louisiana militia members who stood with GÁLVEZ to defend the Louisiana colony and gain America's independence. We can only hope that wisdom will prevail and the discovery of a 90-year-old transcription error will have not been in vain.
