

*How to Decipher
Catholic Church
Records Written in
French*

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General Formats for French Catholic Church Book Entries

Baptismal Entries:

Date, generally written out in longhand; I, the undersigned priest, baptized _____, (child's first, and sometimes middle, name) son/daughter of _____ (father's first and last name, unless a slave or Native American, then only the first name is generally given); father's race and status (slave*/free) and _____ (mother's first and maiden name, unless a slave or Native American, then only the first name is generally given; sometimes the mother's married name is used instead of her maiden name); mother's race and status (slave*/free); the names of the godfather and godmother; followed by the signatures or x's (in the case of illiteracy) of the parents, godparents and priest.

Marriage Entries:

Date, generally written out in longhand; after the publication of ____ (number of) banns; groom's first and last name; groom's race and status (slave*/free); groom's father's first and last name; groom's mother's first and maiden name; place of residence and parish of groom's parents; bride's first and last name; bride's race and status (slave*/free); bride's father's first and last name; bride's mother's first and maiden name; place of residence and parish of bride's parents; no impediment being found to their marriage; I, the undersigned priest, having received their mutual consent, have given them the nuptial benediction in the presence of the witness signed below; signatures of the witnesses and priest.

Burial Entries:

Date, generally written out in longhand; I, the undersigned priest, buried in the cemetery of this parish, the body of _____ (name of the deceased); race and status (slave*/free); age; sacraments administered.

* When the individual concerned is a slave, the name of the master/mistress is also given. For example, Joseph, Negro slave belonging to...

Notes:

1) Occasionally a person's occupation will be mentioned.

How to Decipher Catholic Church Records Written in French

Section 1: Examples of Baptismal Records

- 1) French Creole
- 2) Métis (French Creole and Native American)
- 3) Native American
- 4) Native American Slave
- 5) Free Mulatto
- 6) Mulatto Slave
- 7) Free Negro
- 8) Negro Slave

Section 2: Examples of Marriage Records

- 1) French Creole 1
- 2) French Creole 2
- 3) Métis (French Creole and Native American)
- 4) Native American
- 5) Free Person of Color
- 6) Negro Slave

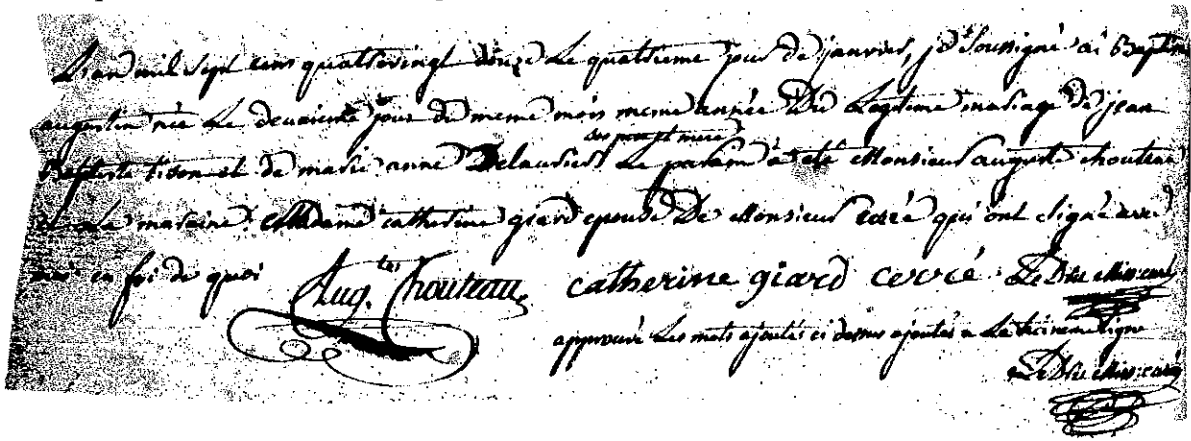
Section 3: Examples of Burial Records

- 1) French Creole 1
- 2) French Creole 2
- 3) Native American
- 4) Native American Slave
- 5) Free Negro
- 6) Negro Slave

*How to Decipher a
Catholic Baptismal
Record Written in
French*

How to decipher a Catholic baptism written in French¹

Example 1: A French Creole² Baptism



Transcription³ with interlinear word-for-word translation where possible:

L'an mil sept cens quatre vingt douze le quatrieme jour de janvier⁴, je soussigné ai
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty twelve the fourth day of January, I undersigned have

Baptisé augstin né le deuxieme jour du meme mois meme année Du Legitime mariage de
baptized Augustin born the second day of the same month same year of the legal marriage of

jean Baptiste tison et de marie anne Delaurier [written between the lines: ses pere et
Jean Baptiste Tison and of Marie Anne Delaurier [written between the lines: his father and

mere] Le parain a été Monsieur auguste Chouteau et La maraine Madame Catherine giard
mother] the godfather was Mr. Auguste Chouteau and the godmother Mrs. Catherine Giard,

epouse de Monsieur cerré qui ont signé avec moi en foi de quoi Aug. te Chouteau
spouse of Mr. Cerré who have signed with me in faith of what Auguste Chouteau

Catherine giard cerré LeDru Miss. Curé
Catherine Giard Cerré LeDru Missionary Curate

Approuvé Les mots ajoutés dessus ajoutés a La [illegible⁵]
Approved the words added above added at the [illegible]

¹ All of the following examples were taken from the records of St. Louis Cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri, SLCL roll 171, item 11 (same as FHL roll 1902829, item 11) and SLCL roll 172, item 2 (same as FHL roll 1902830, item 2).

² The word *Creole* can be used to denote a person of French, Spanish, or African heritage (or any combination of the above) living in the New World.

³ The text is transcribed here as it was written in the church register, including errors in spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

⁴ In early French church records, dates are almost always written out in longhand, rather than being written with numerals.

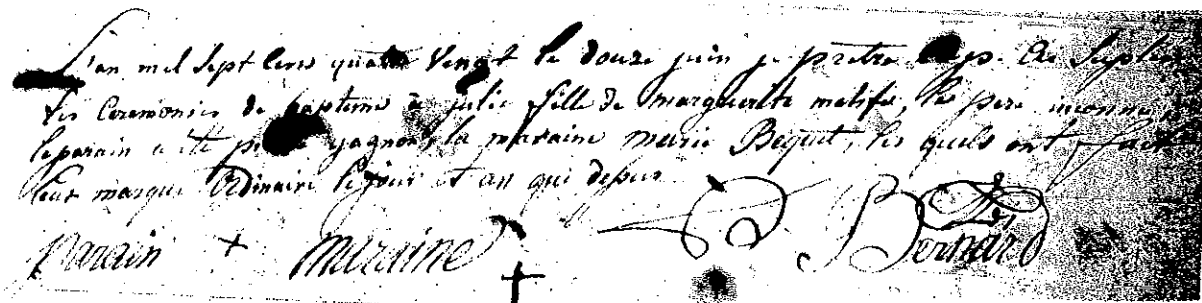
⁵ In cases where I am fairly certain of what a hard-to-read word(s) is/are, I have placed it/them in square brackets; otherwise, I have inserted the word *illegible*.

Translation in a more intelligible form:

In the year 1792, on the 4th day of January, I, the undersigned, baptized Augustin, born the 2nd day of the same month of the same year of the legal marriage of Jean Baptiste Tison and Marie Anne Delaurier, his father and mother. The godfather was Mr. Auguste Chouteau and the godmother, Mrs. Catherine Giard, wife of Mr. Cerré, who have signed with me in witness thereof. Auguste Chouteau, Catherine Giard Cerré, LeDru⁶, missionary curate.

Approved the words added here above [which were] added at the [illegible]. LeDru, missionary curate

Example 2: A *métis(-se)* (mixed "French"⁷ and Native American) baptism



Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

L'an mil sept cens quatre vingt le douze juin je pretre caps.⁸ ai suplié les ceremonies de
 The year thousand seven hundred four twenty the twelve June I priest Capuchin have supplied the ceremonies of

bapteme à Julie fille de marguerite metisse, le pere inconnu, le parain a été [Pierre?]
 baptism to Julie daughter of Marguerite Metisse, the father unknown, the godfather was [Pierre ?]

Gagnon, la maraine marie Bequet, les quels ont fait leur marque ordinaire le jour et an qui
 Gagnon, the godmother Marie Bequet, who have made their mark ordinary the day and year which.

dessus
 above.

Parain + Maraine +
 Godfather + Godmother +

[F?] Bernard
 [F?] Bernard

⁶ Note the original signatures in the church register.

⁷ Marriages between "French" men and Native American women were quite common. The word *French* is in quotation marks because many of these men and their ancestors were born in America and may or may not have considered themselves French; however, they were still French speaking and of French heritage.

⁸ Priests will sometimes indicate the order to which they belonged, i.e., Capuchin, Jesuit, Franciscan, etc.

Translation in a more intelligible form:

In the year 1780, on the 12th of June, I, a Capuchin Priest, supplied the ceremonies of baptism to Julie, the daughter of Marguerite, a Métisse, and an unknown father. The godfather was [Pierre?] Gagnon and the godmother was Marie Bequet, who have made their ordinary marks⁹ on the day and year [indicated] above.

Godfather + Godmother +

[F?] Bernard

Example 3: A Native American Baptism

Le huit de fevrier mil huit cent un a été par mois soussigné Baptisé ignace âgé de deux ans né de la nation ausage dans le missouri, ont été parain le sieur jean Bte Belier, et maraine angelique saucier tous de cette paroisse qui signent avec nous. M. Bellier
janvier 1801

Transcription with interlinear word-for-translation, where possible:

Le huit de fevrier mil huit cent un a été par mois soussigné Baptisé ignace âgé de deux ans né
The eight of February thousand eight hundred one has been by me undersigned baptized Ignace aged of two years born
de la nation ausage dans le Missouri, ont été parain le sieur jean Bte Belier et maraine angelique
of the nation Osage in the Missouri, have been godfather the mister Jean Baptiste Belier and godmother Angelique
saucier tous de cette paroisse qui signent avec nous.
Saucier all of this parish who sign with us.

Translation in a more intelligible form:

On the 8th of February 1801, I, the undersigned, baptized Ignace, age 2. [He was] born of the Osage Nation in Missouri. The godfather was Jean Baptiste Bellier and the godmother was Angélique Saucier, both of this parish, who have signed with me.

⁹ Those who were illiterate made their "ordinary mark" (an x) next to their name in the church register.

Example 4: A Native American slave¹⁰ baptism

L'An mil sept cent quatre vingt quinze le quatorze d'Aoust ont été supplées
les ceremonies a charle né le dix de juin de charlotte Sauvagesse appartenante a
françois Saucier par moi soussigné le parain a été le Sr Charles Saucier la marraine
Emilie le Fèvre les quels ont signés avec nous le jour et an qui Dessus.

Ch. Saucier

Emilie le Faivres

[illegible] Didier

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

L' An mil sept cent quatre vingt quinze le quatorze d'Aoust ont été supplée les ceremonie
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty fifteen the fourteen of August have been supplied the ceremony

a charle né le dix de juin de charlotte Sauvagesse¹¹ appartenante a françois Saucier par
to Charles born the ten of June to Charlotte savage woman belonging to Francois Saucier by

moi soussigné le parain a ete Le Sr Charles Saucier la marraine Emilie le Fèvre lesquels
undersigned the godfather was Mr. Charles Saucier the godmother Emilie le Fèvre who

ont signés avec nous les jour et an qui Dessus.
have signed with us the day and year which above.

Ch. Saucier Emélie le Faivres [illegible] Didier

Translation in a more intelligible form:

In the year 1795 on the 14th of August, I the undersigned, supplied the ceremonies [of baptism] to
Charles, born the 10th of June to Charlotte, Native American woman belonging to François
Saucier. The godfather was Mr. Charles Saucier and the godmother was Emilie le Fèvre who
signed with me on the day and year [indicated] above.

Ch. Saucier Emélie le Faivres [illegible] Didier

¹⁰ Native Americans, as well as Africans, were commonly held in slavery.

¹¹ The French word *sauvagesse* and its English translation *savage woman* are not really equivalent. The French term implies more the sense of *indigenous inhabitant*.

Example 5: A Free Mulatto¹¹ Baptism

L'An mil Sept cent quatre vingt Dix Sept le vingt trois mai a été baptisé
 la susdite mulâtresse nommée la buche libre le Parain a été le Sr
 Dame Pélagie Besale labbadie les quels ont signes avec nous les
 L'abbadie pelagie Labbadiez
 1797

Transcription with word-for-word translation, where possible:

L'An mil Sept cent quatre vingt Dix Sept le vingt trois mai a été Baptise marie né le
 The year thousand seven hundred four twenty ten seven the twenty three may has been baptized Marie born the

quatorze dudit mois de Genevieve mulatresse nommé la buche libre le Parain a été le Sr
 fourteen of said month of Genevieve mulatta named La Buche free the godfather has been the Mr.

[illegible] labbadie la Maraine Dame Pélagie [Besale?] labbadie les quels ont signes avec nous les
 [illegible] Labbadie the godmother Mrs. Pélagie [Besale?] Labbadie who have signed with us the

jour et an que dessus.
 day and year as above.

Translation in a more intelligible form:

In the year 1797 on the 23rd of May [I] baptized Marie, born the 14th of the said month of
 Genevieve, free mulatta, called La Buche. The godfather was Mr. [illegible] Labbadie. The
 godmother was Mrs. Pélagie [Besale?] Labbadie. [They] signed with us on the day and year
 mentioned above.

Example 6: A Mulatto Slave Baptism

L'An mil sept cent quatre vingt dix sept le vingt trois mai j'ai baptisé
 un mulâtre esclave appartenant à M. Thérèse Lami le dit mois de Genevieve
 le parain a été Henry Duchouquet et la maraine Thérèse Lami dont le
 parain a été Henry Duchouquet et la maraine Thérèse Lami

¹¹ A mulatto is half black, half white.

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

L'an mil Sept cens quatre vingt douze Le quatrieme jour du mois de mars je soussigne ai
The year seven hundred four twenty twelve the fourth day of the month of March I undersigned have

Baptise antoine mulatre esclave appartenant à Mde therese Barois de Lami ne le vingt
Baptized Antoine mulatto slave belonging to Mrs. Therese Barois de Lami born the twenty

cinquieme jour de fevrier precedent meme anne de helene native esclave a la susdite
fifth day of February preceding same year of Helene native slave of the above-mentioned

dame et d'un pere inconnu. Le parain a ete henry duchouket, et La maraine, therese Lami
lady and of a father unknown. The godfather was Henry Duchouket, and the godmother, Therese Lami

dont le parain a signé en foi de quoi
of which the godfather has signed in faith of what

henri Duchouquet	LeDru miss. curé
Henry Duchouquet	LeDru, missionary curate

Translation in a more intelligible form:

In the year 1792 on the 4th day of the month of March, I the undersigned baptized Antoine, mulatto slave belonging to Mrs. Therese Barois de Lami. [He was] born the twenty-fifth day of February of this year, [the child of] Helene, native [probably Native American] slave of the above-mentioned lady and of an unknown father. The godfather was Henry Duchouket, and the godmother, Therese Lami. [Of these two] the godfather has signed in witness thereof.

Henry Duchouquet	LeDru, missionary curate
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Example 7: A Free Negro baptism:

Le quatorze de Juin mil huit cent trente, je soussigné ai baptisé
George, fils de George Edward Brown, et de Nancy Brown, Negres
libres, né le dix huit de Mars mil huit cent vingt sept.
Parrain a été moi même Et marraine Victoire Robert.
Marque de la marraine + Jos. B. City Pretre Miss.

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

Le quatorze de Juin mil huit cent trente, je soussigné ai baptisé George, fils de George Edward
The fourteenth of June thousand eight hundred thirty, I undersigned have baptized George, son of George Edward

Brown, et de Nancy Brown, Negres libres, né le dix huit de Mars mil huit cent vingt Sept. Parrain
Brown, and of Nancy Brown, free Negroes, born the 18th of March 1827. Godfather

a été mois même & Maraine Victoire Robert.
has been me same & Victoire Robert.

Marque de la Mairaine +

Jos. A. Lutz, Prêtre Miss.

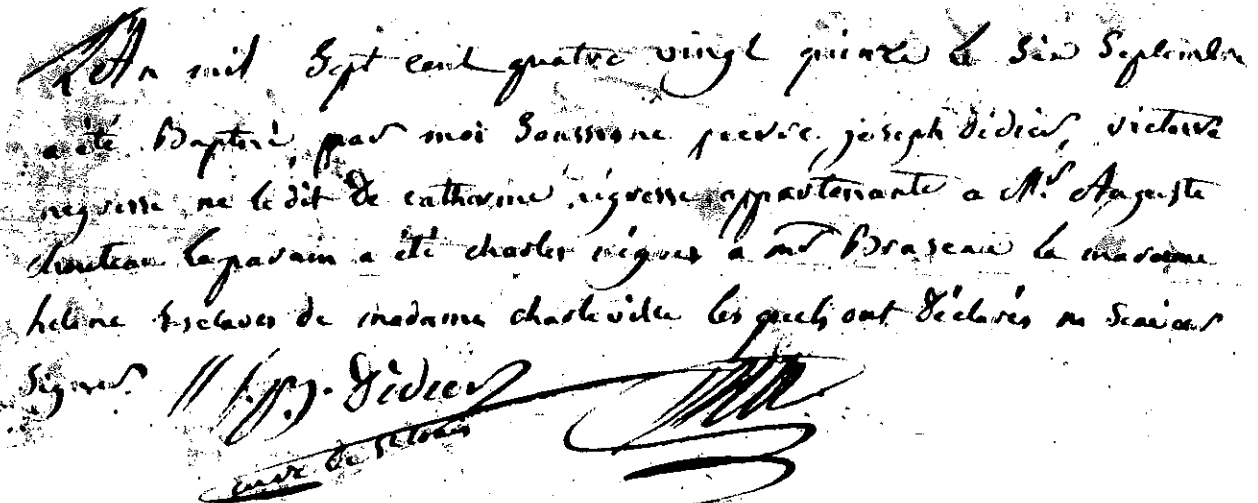
Translation in a more intelligible form:

On the 14th of June 1830, I, the undersigned baptized George, son of George Edward Brown and of Nancy Brown, free Negroes, born the 18th of March 1827. I was the godfather and the godmother was Victoire Robert.

Sign of the godmother +

Jos. A. Lutz, missionary priest

Example 8: A Negro slave baptism



L'an mil sept cent quatre vingt quinze le six Septembre
a été baptisé par moi soussigné prêtre Joseph Didier, victoire
negresse ne le dit de catharine negresse appartenante a M^r Auguste
Chouteau le parain a été charles nègre a mr Braseau la maraine
helene esclave de madame charleville les quels ont déclaré ne scavoir
signer // J. Didier
cure de St. Louis

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible

L'an mil sept cent quatre vingt quinze le six Septembre a été baptize par moi soussigné
The year seven hundred four twenty fifteen the six September was baptized by me undersigned

pretre joseph didier, victoire negresse ne le dit de Catharine negresse appartenant a Mr.
priest joseph didier, victoire negress born the [10th?] of Catharine negress belonging to Mr.

Auguste Chouteau Le parain a été charles nègre a mr Braseau la maraine helene esclave
Auguste Chouteau The godfather was charles negro of mr Braseau the godmother helene slave

de madame charleville lesquels on declares ne scavoir signer.
of mrs charleville who have declared not to know to sign.

[illegible] Didier, cure de St. Louis [and another illegible
signature]

Translation in a more intelligible form:

In the year 1795 on the 6th of September, I, the undersigned priest, Joseph Didier, baptized
Victoire, [a] Negress, born the [10th?] to Catharine, [a] Negress belonging to Mr. Auguste

Chouteau. The godfather was Charles, [a] Negro belonging to Mr. Braseau. The godmother was Helene, slave of Mrs. Charleville, who have declared that they don't know how to write.

[illegible] Didier, cure de St. Louis [and another illegible signature]

Note: For additional help translating French vocabulary not found in these examples, please see the French Genealogical Word List in the binder on the counter at the head of the Special Collections staircase.

*How to Decipher a
Catholic Marriage
Record Written in
French*

How to decipher a Catholic marriage record written in French¹

Example 1: A French Creole² Marriage

L'an mil sept cens quatre vingt onze le vingt et unieme jour de juin
après la publication de trois banes par trois dimanches consecutifs entre antoine
vachar fils de feu Louis vachar et d'elizabeth Bizet ses pere et mere de cette
paroisse de St. Louis aux Illinois divorce de St. Jacques de ceves de son part
et de Joseph fariseau veuve de Jean Richard, filles de Baptiste fariseau de
Joseph Richard ses pere et mere tous deux defunts, d'autre part, et n'ayant
trouvé audit mariage aucun empchement, je soussigné, ai reçu leur consentement
mutuel et leur ai donné la benediction en vertu de la loi en presence des temoins
ci après savoir: Francois Savard, Julien Chouket, J. B. Ste. Croix, Robert Portier
qui ont déclaré au savoir signés, mais qui ont fait leur marque ordinaire.
en foi desquels

Le P. Ste. Croix

Francois sa Savard temoin
Julien sa Chouket temoin
J. B. Ste. Croix sa temoin
Robert sa Portier temoin
marque

Transcription³ with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

L' an mil sept cens quatre vingt onze le vingt et unieme jour de juin⁴ après la publication
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty eleven and first day of June after the publication

de trois banes par trois dimanches consecutifs entre antoine vachar fils de feu Louis
of three banns for three Sundays consecutive between antoine vachar son of late Louis

vachar et d'elizabeth Bizet ses pere et mere de cette paroisse de St. Louis aux Illinois
vachar and of Elizabeth Bizet his father and mother of this parish of St. Louis of the Illinois

¹ All of the following examples were taken from the records of St. Louis Cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri, SLCL roll 173, items 5 and 6 (same as FHL roll 1902831).

² The word *Creole* can be used to denote a person of French, Spanish, or African heritage (or any combination thereof) living in the New World.

³ The text is transcribed here as it was written in the church register, including errors in spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

⁴ In the early French church records, dates are almost always written out in longhand, rather than being written using numerals.

diocese de St. Jacques de Cube d'un part et de josephe favreau veuve de jean Richard,
diocese of St. James of Cuba of one part and of josephe favreau widow of jean Richard,

fille de Bazile favreau et de josephe Richard ses pere et mere tous deux defunts, d'autre
daughter of Bazille favreau and of joseph Richard her father and mother all two deceased, of other

part, et n'ayant trouvé aucun empéchement, je soussigné ai reçu Leur consentement
part, and not having found any impediment, I undersigned have received their consent

mutuel et Leur ai donné La Benediction nuptial en presence des temoins ci après scavoir.
mutual and their have given the benediction nuptial in presence of witnesses here after to know.

Francois savard, julien chouket, j Bte [Lesnore?]⁵ Robert [poitevin?] qui ont declare ne
Francois savard, julien chouket, j Bte [Lesnore?] Robert [poitevin?] who have declared not

scavoir signer mais qui ont fait Leur marque ordinaire. en foi de quoi
to know to sign but who have made their mark ordinary. In faith of what

LeDru, miss. curé

sa
francois + Savard temoin
marque

sa
julien + Chouket temoin
marque

sa
j. Bte + Lenore temoin
marque

sa
Robert + [poitevin?] temoin
marque

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

In the year 1791 on the 21st day of June after the publication of three banns on three consecutive Sundays between Antoine Vachar, son of the late Louis Vachar and Elizabeth Bizet, his father and mother of this parish of St. Louis of the Illinois, diocese of St. James of Cuba on the one part and of Josephe Favreau, widow of Jean Richard, daughter of Bazile Favreau and of Josephe Richard, her father and mother, both deceased, on the other part, and not having found any impediment [to their marriage], I, the undersigned, have received their mutual consent and have given them the nuptial benediction in the presence of the witnesses [noted] hereafter. To wit: François Savard, Julien Chouket, Jean Baptiste [Lesnore?], Robert [Poitevin?] who have declared that they don't know how to sign, but have made their ordinary mark. In witness of. . .

LeDru, missionary curate

his
François + Savard, witness
mark

his
Julien + Chouket, witness
mark

⁵ In cases where I am fairly certain of what a hard-to-read word(s) is/are, I have placed it/them in square brackets; otherwise, I have inserted the word *illegible* in square brackets.

his
Jean Baptiste + Lenore, witness
mark

his
Robert + [Poitevin?], witness
mark

Example 2: Another French Creole Marriage

The image shows a handwritten document in French Creole script. The text is written in a cursive hand and is somewhat faded. It appears to be a marriage record or a banns publication. The text is written on a piece of paper that has some dark spots and is slightly wrinkled. At the bottom of the page, there are several signatures and witness marks. The signatures are written in a similar cursive hand to the main text. There are also some circular marks that look like witness marks or seals. The overall appearance is that of an old, handwritten document.

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

L'an mil sept cens quatre vingt douze le dix huitieme jour du mois de septembre sans
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty twelve the ten eighth day of the month of September without

publication de banns de mariage pour raisons à nous connues, entre Mr. Antoine Roy fils
publication of banns of marriage for reasons to us known, between Mr. Antoine Roy, Jr.

Legitime de feu Jean Baptiste Roy et de Marie Josette Paradis ses pere et mere de la
Legitimate of late Jean Baptiste Roy and of Marie Josette Paradis his father and mother of the

paroisse de St. Louis gouvernement et eveché de Quebec en Canada d'une part, et
parish of St. Louis government and bishopric of Quebec in Canada of one part, and

Demoiselle félicité Vasquez fille Legitime de Monsieur Benito Vasquez et de dame marie
Miss félicité Vasquez daughter legitimate of Mr. Benito Vasquez and of lady marie

papin ses pere et mere de cette paroisse de St. Louis aux Illinois dioceze de St. Jacques de
papin her father and mother of this parish of St. Louis of the Illinois diocese of St. James of

Cubes domination d'Espagne d'autre part; je soussigné pretre Missionnaire apostolique
Cuba domination of Spain of other part; I undersigned priest missionary apostolic

cure de la susdite paroisse, a reçu Leur consentement mutuel et Leur ai donné La
priest of the above-mentioned parish, have received their consent mutual and them have given the

Benediction nuptial en presence de dom zenon trudeau capitaine au regiment fixe de la
Benediction nuptial in presence of dom zenon trudeau captain of the regiment fixed of the

louisiane, Lieutenant gouverneur et commandant en chef en sa poste de St. Louis et
louisiana, Lieutenant governor and commandant in chief in his post of St. Louis and

dependences, et en presence des quatre témoins soussignés scavoit Mrs. Jacques
dependencies, and in presence of the four witnesses undersigned to know Mrs. Jacques

clamorgan, pierre charles dubois, jean Baptiste Lavallé, jean Baptiste Dufeu qui ont tous
clamorgan, Pierre charles dubois, jean Baptiste Lavallé, jean Baptiste Dufeu who have all

signés⁶ excepté Le dernier qui ne sachant écrire a fait sa marque ordinaire en foi de
signed excepted the last who not knowing to write has made his mark ordinary in faith of

quoi.
what.

Zenon Trudeau

Pierre Char. Dubois Temoin
Jean Baptiste Lavallée Temoin

Sa

[illegible signature]

Jean Baptiste + Dufeu temoin
M de jean bte la Vallée et de Jeanne
chauvin

Temoin

LeDru miss. curé

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

In the year 1792, on the 18th day of the month of September without publication of marriage banns for reasons known to us, between Mr. Antoine Roy, Jr. legitimate son of the late Jean Baptiste Roy and of Marie Josette Paradis, his father and mother of the parish of St. Louis, government and bishopric of Québec in Canada on the one part, and Miss Félicité Vasquez, legitimate daughter of Mr. Benito Vasquez and of Lady Marie Papin, her father and mother of this parish of St. Louis of the Illinois, diocese of St. James of Cuba, domination of Spain of the second part; I, the undersigned apostolic missionary priest, curate of the above-mentioned parish, received their mutual consent and gave them the nuptial benediction in the presence of Mr. Zenon Trudeau, Captain of the Fixed Regiment of Louisiana, Lieutenant Governor and Commandant-in-chief in his post of St. Louis and dependencies, and in the presence of the four undersigned

⁶ Note the original signatures in the church register.

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation where possible:

L'An mil sept cent quatre vingt dix sept le vingt huit Aoust après la publication des trois
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty ten seven the August after the publication of the three

banes du futur mariage entre pierre nicolas Berger et de Therese hebert natif de cette
banns of the future marriage between pierre nicolas Berger and of Therese hebert native of this

paroisse [illegible] De la Louisiane d'un part et josette maillet fille de jean Baptiste
parish [illegible] of Louisiana of one part and josette maillet daughter of jean Baptiste

et de josette de la nation des mahas natif de la riviere des Illinois d'autre part sans qu'il se
and of josette of the nation of the mahas native of the river of the Illinois of other part without that it itself

soit trouve aucun Empêchement ou opposition je soussigne Pierre joseph Didier
be found any impediment or opposition I undersigned Pierre joseph Didier

Religieux prêtre Bénédictin curé de St. Louis ai reçu en(?) cette Eglise le mutuel
Religious priest Benedictine curate of St. Louis have received in(?) this Church the mutual

consentement des parties et leur ay donne la benediction nuptial suivant les cérémonies
consent of the parties and them have given the benediction nuptial following the ceremonies

usiliés dans le sein de notre Ste mere Eglise [two illegible words] acceptant Sr pierre
used in the breast of our Holy mother Church [two illegible words] accepting Mr pierre

Berger et la ditte josette maillet Et Encore En presence des sieurs pierre provost, joseph
Berger and the said josette maillet And Still In presence of the mssrs pierre provost, joseph

Brazeau, jean Baptiste touteau, hyacinthe St. cyr les quois nous ont [certifies?] ce que
Brazeau, jean Baptiste touteau, hyacinthe St. cyr who have us have signed that which

dessus sur le domicile la liberte et qualitee des dittes parties et ont signes avec nous les
above on the residence the liberty and quality of the said parties and signed with us the

jour Et an qui Dessus
day and year who Above

Sa
pierre + Berger
marque

Sa
josette + maillet
marque

Jh Brazeaux

J Bte truteau

Prevost

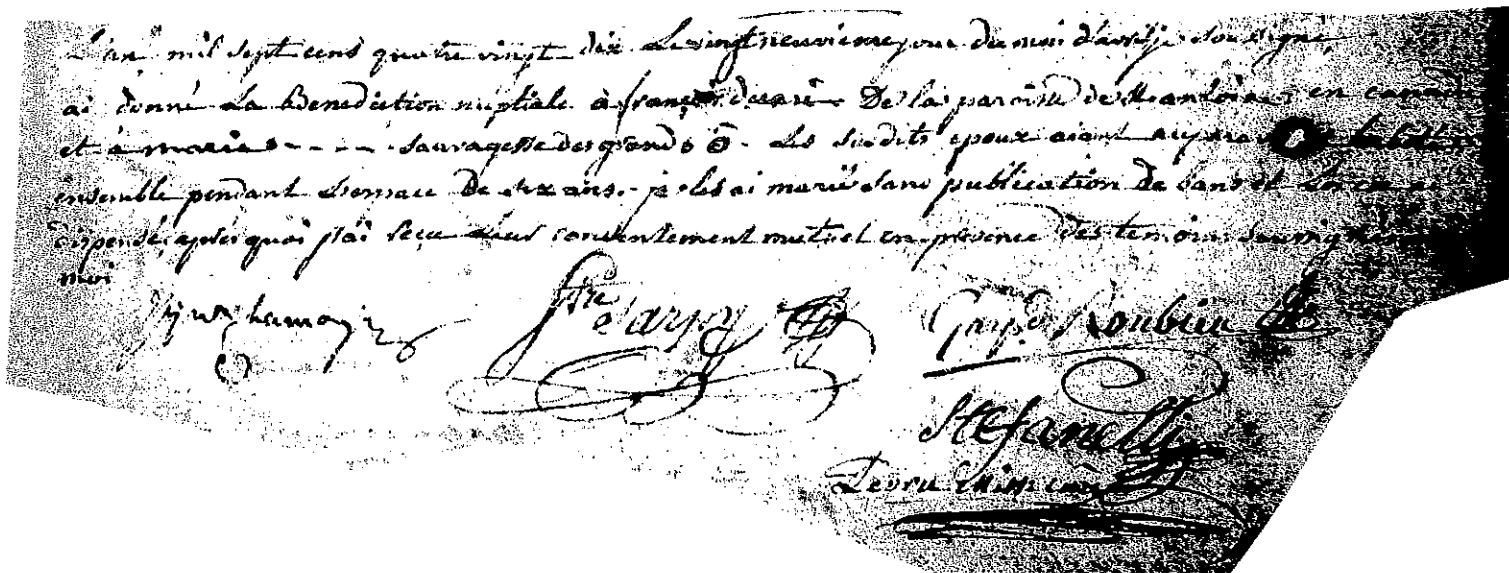
Sa
Hyacinthe + St Cyr
Marque

[illegible] didier

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

In the year 1797 on the 28th of August, after the publication of three banns concerning the future marriage of Pierre Nicolas Berger and Therese Hebert, native of this parish [illegible] of Louisiana on the one part and Josette Maillet, daughter of Jean Baptiste and Josette of the nation of the Omahas, native of the Illinois River of the second part, no impediment having been found [to the marriage], I, the undersigned Pierre Joseph Didier, Benedictine priest of St. Louis, have received in this church, the mutual consent of the parties and have given them the nuptial benediction following the usual ceremonies of the Holy Mother Church [two illegible words] in accepting Mr. Pierre Berger and the said Josette Maillet and in the presence of Mssrs. Pierre Provost, Joseph Brazeau, Jean Baptiste Touteau, [and] Hyacinthe St. Cyr, who have certified that which [is written] above on the residence, the freedom and the quality of the said parties and signed with us the day and year above.

Example 4: A French and Native American marriage



Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation where possible:

L'an mil sept cens quatre vingt dix Le vingt neuvieme jour du mois d'avril, je soussigné
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty ten the twenty ninth day of the month of April, I undersigned

ai donné La Benediction nuptiale à François [duarin?] De la paroisse de [Mandoise?] en
have given the benediction nuptial to François duarin of the parish of Mandoise in

canada et à Marie ... sauvagesse⁸ des grands O. Les susdites epoux aiant auparavant
Canada and to Marie ... savage woman of the Grand Osage. The above spouses having beforehand

habité ensemble pendant L'espace de six ans, je les ai marié sans publication de bans et
lived together during the space of six years, I them have married without publication of banns and

⁸ The French word *sauvagesse* and its English translation *savage woman* are not really equivalent. The French term implies more the sense of *indigenous inhabitant*.

Les en ai dispensé après quoi j'ai reçu leur consentement mutuel en
To them of them have dispensed after what I have received their consent mutual in

presence des temoins soussignés avec moi.
presence of the witnesses undersigned with me.

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

In the year 1790, on the 29th day of the month of April, I, the undersigned gave the nuptial benediction to François [Duarin?] of the parish of [Mandoise?] in Canada and to Marie, Native American Grand Osage woman. The above-mentioned spouses having lived together beforehand for six years, I married them without the publication of banns and dispensed with them after receiving their mutual consent in the presence of the witnesses who signed below with me. [followed by signatures]

Example 5: A Free Person of Color marriage

The image shows a snippet of a handwritten document in French. The text is written in cursive and includes a date, a description of a marriage, and several signatures. The text is as follows:
Le seize fevrier mil huit cent trente six je
soussigné ai donné la benediction nuptiale à
Charles sanssouci fils de francoise coton d'une part
et à Marie Louisa Lacombe fille de Marie Louise
d'autre part, tous deux personnes de couleur libres
dispense accordée d'une publication des témoins ont signé
avec moi ainsi que les époux.
Charles & sanssouci Jean Baptiste & Brazeau
Marie Louise & Lacombe Coupaud & a p. chortan
Antoine Jacques & id.
M. Condamin

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation where possible:

Le seize fevrier mil huit cent trente six je soussigné ai donné la benediction nuptial a
The sixteen February thousand eight hundred thirty six I undersigned have given the benediction nuptial to

charles sanssouci fils de francoise coton d'une part; et a Marie Louisa Lacombe fille de
charles sanssouci son of francoise coton of one part; and to Marie Louisa Lacombe daughter of

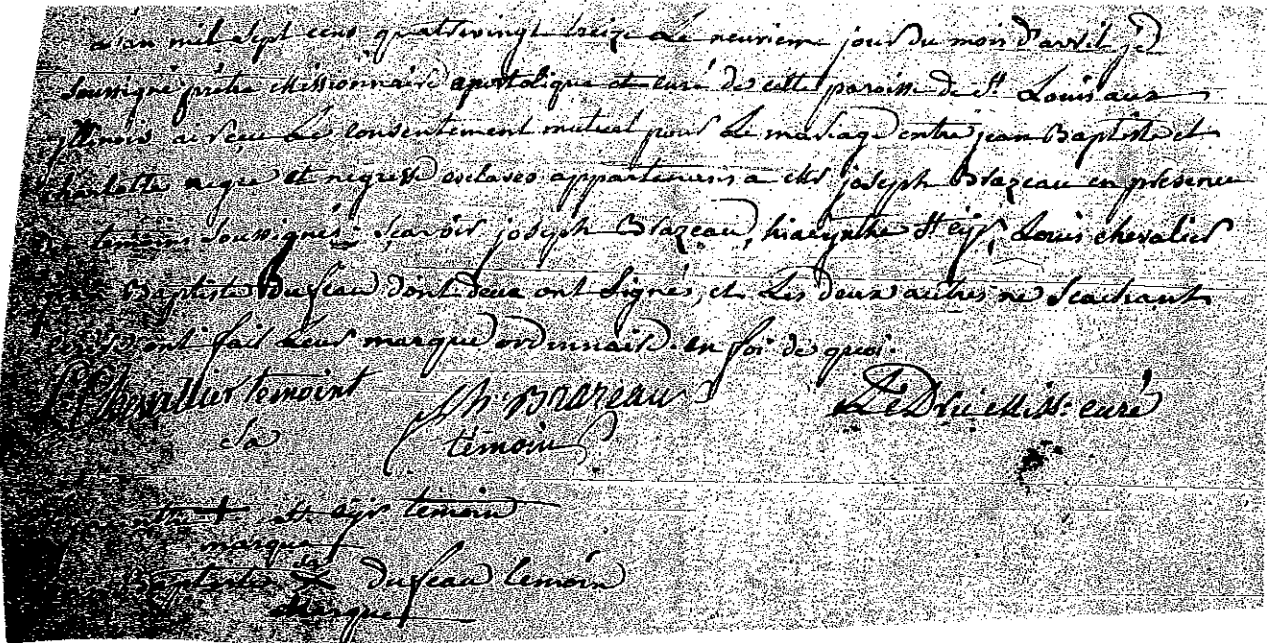
Marie Louisa d'autre part, tous deux personnes de couleur libres dispense accordée d'une
Marie Louisa of other part, all two persons of color free dispensation granted of one

publication. Les temoins ont signé avec moi ainsi que les epoux.
publication. The witnesses have signed with me as well as the spouses.

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

On the 16th of February 1836, I, the undersigned, gave the nuptial benediction to Charles Sanssouci, son of Françoise Coton of the first part and to Marie Louisa Lacombe, daughter of Marie Louisa of the second part, both free persons of color. Dispensation granted after one publication [of banns]. The witnesses have signed with me as have the spouses.

Example 6: A Negro slave marriage



Transcription with interlinear translation:

L'an mil sept cens quatre vingt treize Le neuvieme jour du mois d'avril je soussigné
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty thirteen the ninth day of the month of April I undersigned

prêtre missionnaire apostolique et curé de cette paroisse de St. Louis aux Illinois ai reçu
priest missionary apostolic and curate of this parish of St. Louis of the Illinois have received

Le consentement mutuel pour Le mariage entre Jean Baptiste et Charlotte negre et
the consent mutual for the marriage between Jean Baptiste and Charlotte negro and

negresse esclaves appartenans a Mr. joseph Brazeau en presence des temoins soussignés
negress slaves belonging to Mr. Joseph Brazeau in presence of the witnesses undersigned

scavoir joseph Brazeau, hiacynthe St cyr, Louis chevalier jean Baptiste Du feau dont
to know joseph Brazeau, hiacynthe St cyr, Louis Chevalier jean Baptiste Du feau of whom

deux ont signés, et Les deux autres ne seachant ecrire ont fait Leur marque ordinaire en
two have signed, and the two others not knowing to write have made their mark ordinary

foi de quoi.
in faith of what.

L. Chevallier temoint

JH Brazeau témoin

LeDru miss. Cure

sa

hyacinthe + St Cyr temoin

marque

sa

Jean Baptiste + dufeau temoin

marque

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

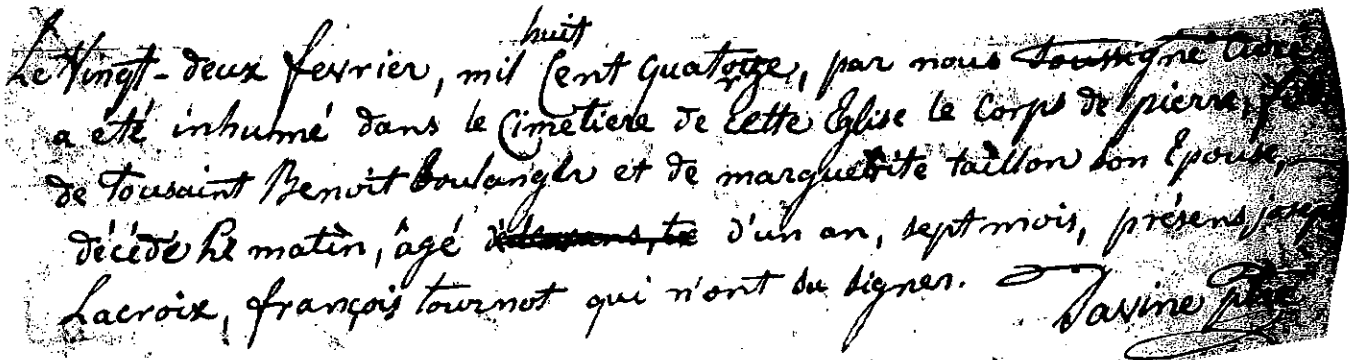
In the year 1793, on the 9th day of the month of April, I, the undersigned apostolic missionary priest and curate of this parish of St. Louis of the Illinois, received the mutual consent for the marriage of Jean Baptiste and Charlotte, Negro and Negress slaves belonging to Mr. Joseph Brazeau in the presence of the undersigned witnesses, to wit, Joseph Brazeau, Hiacynthe St. Cyr, Louis Chevalier, Jean Baptiste Du Feau, of whom two have signed, and the other two, not knowing how to sign, have made their ordinary mark. In witness of. . .

Note: For additional help translating French vocabulary not found in these examples, please see the French Genealogical Word List in the binder on the counter at the head of the Special Collections staircase.

*How to Decipher a
Catholic Burial
Record Written in
French*

How to decipher a Catholic burial record written in French¹

Example 1: A French Creole² Burial



Le Vingt-deux fevrier, mil huit cent quatorze, par nous soussigné cure
a été inhumé dans le cimetiere de cette Eglise le Corps de pierre, fils
de Tousaint Benoit boulanger et de marguerite taillon son Epouse,
décédé le matin, âgé d'un an, sept mois, présens Joseph
Lacroix, François tournot qui n'ont su signer. Savine ptre

Transcription³ with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

Le Vingt-deux fevrier, mil huit cent quatorze⁴, par nous soussigné cure, a été inhumé dans
The twenty-two February, thousand eight hundred fourteen, by us undersigned priest has been buried in

le cimetiere de cette Eglise le corps de pierre, fils de Tousaint Benoit boulanger et de
the cemetery of this church the body of Pierre, son of Tousaint Benoit baker and of

marguerite taillon son Epouse, décédé Le matin, âgé d'un an, sept mois. Présens
Marguerite Taillon his wife, deceased the morning, aged one year, seven months. Present

joseph Lacroix, François tournot qui n'ont su signer.
joseph Lacroix, François tournot who didn't know to write.

Savine ptre
Savine, priest

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

On the 22nd of February, 1814, by me, the undersigned priest, was buried in the cemetery of this church, the body of Pierre, the son of Tousaint Benoit, baker, and of Marguerite Taillon, his wife. [He] died this morning at the age of one year and seven months. [Those] present were Joseph Lacroix and François Tournot, who don't know how to write.

Savine, priest

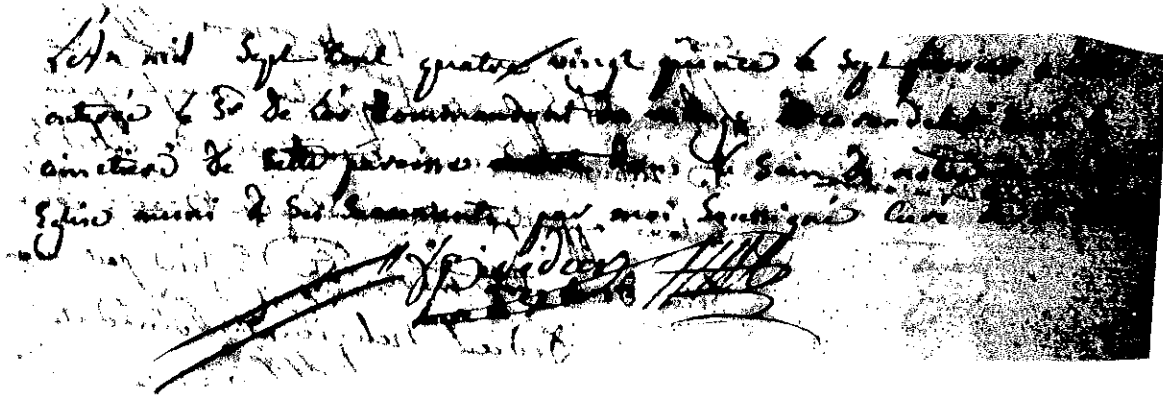
¹ All of the examples were taken from the records of St. Louis Cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri, SLCL roll 175, item 8 (same as FHL roll 1902833).

² The word *Creole* can be used to denote a person of French, Spanish or African heritage (or any combination of the above) living in the New World.

³ The text is transcribed here as it was written in the church register, including errors in spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

⁴ In early French church records, dates are almost always written out in longhand, rather than being written with numerals.

Example 2: Another French Creole Burial



Transcription with interlinear translation, where possible:

L'an mil sept cent quatre vingt quinze le sept fevrier a été enterré le Sr De Lor
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty fifteen the seven February has been buried the Mr. De Lor

Commandant du village de Carondelet dans le cimetiére de cette paroisse mort dans le
Commandant of the village of Carondelet in the cemetery of this parish dead in the

sein de notre mere Ste Eglise muni de ses sacraments par moi soussigné curé de St.
breast of our mother Holy Church fortified of her sacraments by me undersigned priest of St.

Louis.
Louis.

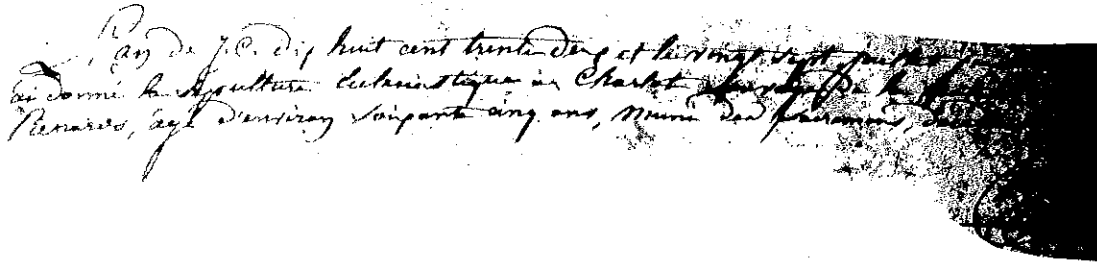
Didier

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

In the year 1795 on the 7th of February, Mr. Delor, commandant of the village of Carondelet, was buried in the cemetery of this parish. [He] died in the breast of our Holy Mother Church, fortified with her sacraments by me, the undersigned priest of St. Louis.

Didier

Example 3: Burial of a Native American man



L'an de J. C. dix huit cent trente deux et le vingt sept juillet je soussigné ai donné la sépulture Ecclesiastique à Charlot Sauvage⁵ de la nation des Renards, âgé d'environ soixante cinq ans, muni des sacramens, décédé hier.

Transcription with interlinear transcription, where possible:

L'an de J. C. dix huit cent trente deux et le vingt sept juillet je soussigné ai donné la
The year of J. C. ten eight hundred thirty two and the twenty seven July I undersigned have given the

sépulture Ecclesiastique à Charlot Sauvage⁵ de la nation des Renards, âgé d'environ
burial Ecclesiastical to Charlot savage of the nation of the Foxes, aged about

soixante cinq ans, muni des sacramens, décédé hier.
sixty five years, fortified of the sacraments, died yesterday.

Roux

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

In the year of our Lord 1832, on the 27th of July, I, the undersigned, gave church burial to Charlot, a member of the Fox [Native American tribe] nation, about 65 years old, fortified with the sacraments. [He] died yesterday.

Roux

⁵ The French word *sauvage* and its English translation *savage* woman are not really equivalent. The French term implies more the sense of *indigenous inhabitant*.

Example 4: Burial of a Native American slave⁶ woman

*L'an mil sept cens quatre vingt deux vingt huitieme jour de decembre, je soussigné
pp. & inhumé dans le cimetiére de cette paroisse Le corps de Suzanne Sauvagesse esclave à
Mr Lecomte decedée du jour precedent. âgée de vingt neuf ans en foi de quoi
Lectu Miss: curé*

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

L'an mil sept cens quatre vingt deux vingt huitieme jour de decembre, je soussigné ai
The year seven hundred four two twenty eighth day of December, I undersigned have

inhumé dans le cimetiére de cette paroisse Le corps de Suzanne Sauvagesse esclave à Mr
buried in the cemetery of this parish the body of Suzanne savage woman slave of Mr

Lecomte decedée du jour precedent. Agée de vingt neuf ans en foi de quoi
Lecomte deceased of the day preceding. Aged of twenty-nine years in faith of what

Ledru Miss: curé
Ledru Missionary curate

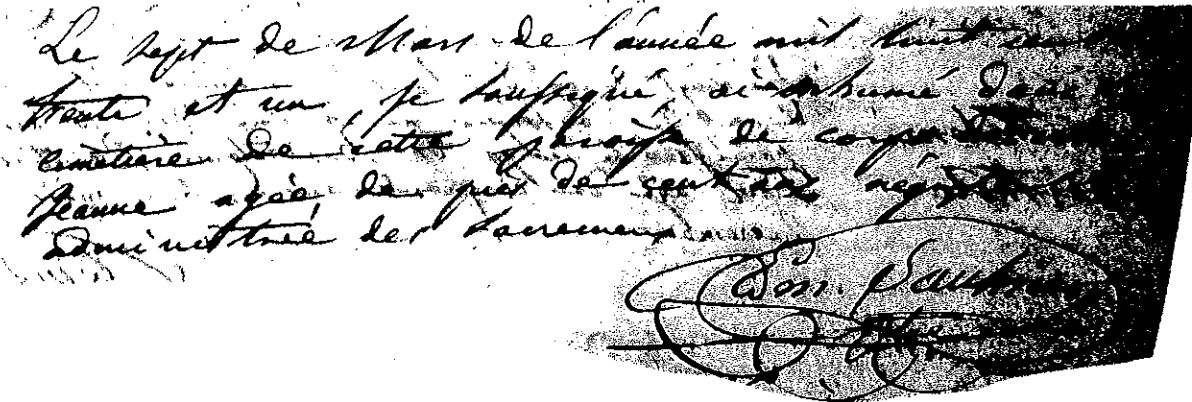
Translation in a more comprehensible form:

In the year 1782, on the 28th day of December, I, the undersigned [priest] buried in the cemetery
of this parish, the body of Suzanne, Native American slave woman of Mr. Lecomte. [She] died
the day before [burial]. [She was] twenty-nine years old. In witness of, [I have signed.]

Ledru, missionary curate

⁶ Native Americans, as well as Africans, were commonly held in slavery.

Example 5: Burial of a Free Negro Woman



Le sept de Mars de l'année mil huit cent
trente et un je soussigné ai inhumé dans le
cimetière de cette paroisse le corps de
Marie Jeanne âgée de près de cent ans negresse
libre administrée des sacrements.

Em. Saulnier

Transcription with interlinear translation, where possible:

Le sept de Mars de l'année mil huit cent trente et un, je soussigné ai inhumé dans le
The seven of March of the year thousand eight hundred thirty and one, I undersigned have buried in the

cimetière de cette paroisse le corps de Marie Jeanne âgée de près de cent ans negresse
cemetery of this parish the body of Marie Jeanne aged of near of hundred years negress

libre administrée des sacrements.
free administered with the sacraments.

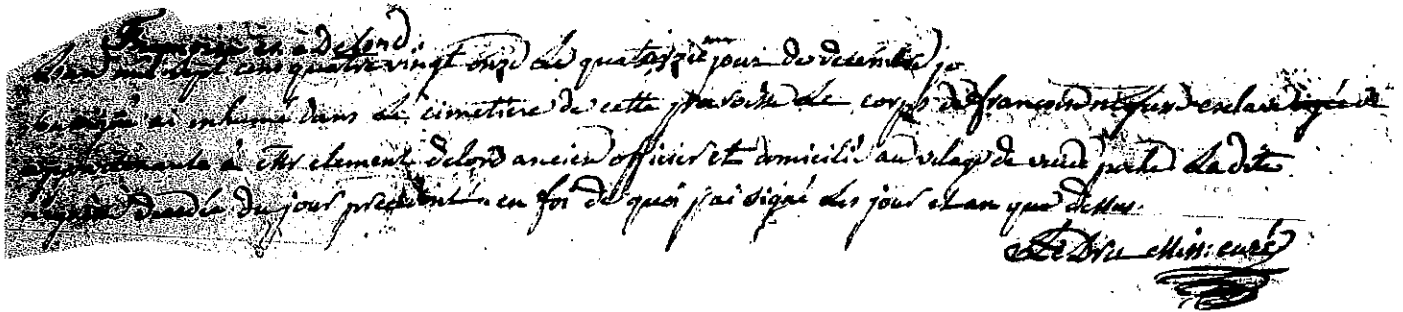
Em Saulnier

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

On the 7th of March 1831, I, the undersigned, buried in the cemetery of this parish, the body of Marie Jeanne, around 100 years old. [She was] a free Negress [and] administered with the sacraments.

Em Saulnier

Example 6: Burial of a Negro Slave



*Françoise es. à Delord.
L'an mil sept cent quatre vingt onze le quatorzième jour de decembre je
ai signé et inhumé dans le cimetiere de cette paroisse le corps de françoise negress esclave
appartenante à Mr. clement delord ancien officier et domicilié au village de vide poche de la dite
paroisse de ce jour precedent en foi de quoi j'ai signé les jour et an que
dessus.*

Le Dru mission. curé

Transcription with interlinear word-for-word translation, where possible:

Françoise es. à Delord.
Françoise slave to Delord.

L'an mil Sept cens quatre vingt onze Le quatorzième jour de decembre je soussigné ai
The year thousand seven hundred four twenty eleven the fourteenth day of December I undersigned have

inhumé dans Le cimetiere de cette paroisse Le corps de Françoise negress esclave
buried in the cemetery of this parish the body of Françoise Negress slave

appartenante à Mr. clement delord ancien officier et domicilié au village de vide poche
belonging to Mr. Clement DeLord, former officer and living in the village of Empty Pocket

La dite negress decedée du jour precedent en foi de quoi j'ai signé Les jour et an que
The said Negress died of the day preceding in faith of which I have signed the day and year as

dessus.
above.

LeDru, miss. Cure
LeDru, Missionary curate

Translation in a more comprehensible form:

In the year 1791 on the 14th day of December, I, the undersigned, buried in the cemetery of this parish, the body of Françoise, Negress slave belonging to Mr. Clement DeLord, former officer and living in the village of Empty Pocket⁷. The said Negress died the preceding day: In witness of, I have signed on the day and year [mentioned] above.

Note: For additional help translating French vocabulary not found in these examples, please see the French Genealogical Word List in the binder on the counter at the head of the Special Collections staircase.

⁷ *Empty Pocket* was the derogatory term for the city of Carondelet.