



The Levasseur and Carmel Families

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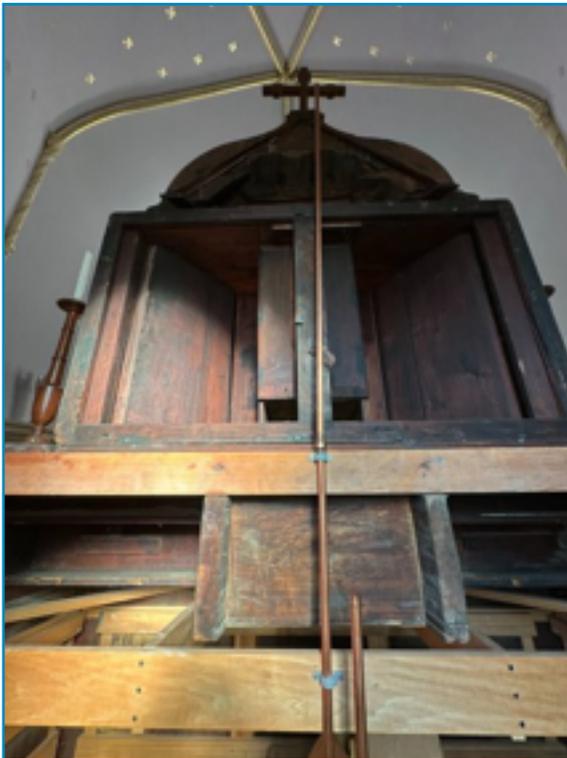
THE ALTAR MAKER

*A Master Sculptor, the Revolutionary War,
and the French Families Who Built Arkansas*

Author: Cheryl Lea Vassaur

About the Author

Cheryl Lea Vassaur is a descendant of the LeVasseur craftsmen of Québec City and the Vassaur families of Logan County and Jefferson County, Arkansas. She serves as the American Vice-President of the Association des Levasseur d'Amérique. Her research began in June 2022 with an email to the Association's genealogist in Québec City and has since encompassed two extended research trips through Arkansas, the 350th anniversary celebration of the Kaskaskia Church, research pilgrimages to Québec City and Normandy, and the French Heritage Corridor Conference at Washington University in St. Louis. She lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, with her husband Daniel Bertch.



Around 1592, a man named **Noël LeVasseur** was baptized at the Église de la Sainte-Trinité in Bois-Guillaume, outside Rouen. His grandson **Pierre** sailed to Québec City in 1651 and became a master carpenter. Pierre's son, Pierre-Noël, became the most celebrated sculptor in New France — carving the gilded altarpiece of the Ursuline Chapel, a Canadian national historic site. Of all Pierre-Noël's sons, only Stanislas carried the craft to the United States.

Stanislas LeVasseur arrived at Kaskaskia, Illinois around 1771, carrying what his travel contract called "various tools principal to the profession." He built the high altar of the Church of the Immaculate Conception — the oldest Catholic parish in the Mississippi Valley — from black walnut and linden, joined with wooden



Her name in stone — University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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pegs. He was elected magistrate. He signed a contract with **Father Pierre Gibault**, the “Patriot Priest” who had delivered the western territories to the American cause without firing a shot. In April 1783, Stanislas fought at Arkansas Post in the last Revolutionary War battle west of the Mississippi. He died there on March 23, 1804 — the day the Louisiana Purchase transferred the land to the United States. His grandson Jean Duval Vassaur, born at Arkansas Post in 1802, carried the family’s French name down the Arkansas River and into the hills of Logan County, where his descendants still live, still farm, and still observe Decoration Day at the cemeteries where their ancestors are buried.

The altar Stanislas built has survived six floods and more than 250 years. It is still used for worship every Saturday at 3:30 p.m. The Association des Levasseur d’Amérique dedicated its entire May 2025 newsletter to the American Vassaur family. In November 2025, the National Park Service located **Etienne Victor LeVasseur’s** forty-five-arpent Spanish land grant for the first time. That same month, the author held the Vassaur family Bible — recording births, deaths, and marriages in the hand of ancestors — in the Arkansas Post State Park Museum.

The Altar Maker tells this story through four recorded family interviews, original archival documents, land grants, church contracts, and the author’s research journeys through Arkansas, Québec City, and Normandy. It is the first full account of the American chapter of the LeVasseur dynasty — and of the woman who, five centuries later, followed the trail back to where it began.

At a Glance

- Genre: Narrative Family History / French Colonial Heritage / Oral History
- Length: Approximately 40,000 words, 12 chapters, plus appendices
- Time span: 1533–2025 — five centuries, two continents
- Illustrations: Photographs, original maps, six-generation family tree (Paris to Arkansas, 1627–1880)
- French connection: Origins in Bois-Guillaume, Seine-Maritime, Normandie
- Status: Complete manuscript, forthcoming 2026; French-language edition under discussion

The LeVasseur tabernacles can still be visited in seventeen churches — sixteen in Québec and one in Illinois, still in active worship.

The Vassaur family in Arkansas

A line of descendants of Pierre Levasseur emigrated to Arkansas In the 18th century.

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The “LeVasseur” name was subjected to various changes. For the most part, the “Le” prefix was dropped and in most cases the “Vasseur” was retained. However, with the poor spellings and pronunciations of the name, many descendants acquired a variational form such as, Vassar, Vassaur, Vasseau, Vassau, Vassaw. Most descendants retained the Vasseur, Vasseau, or Vassaur form.

The Vassaur families, formerly known as LeVasseur, played a role in the colonization of the area called “The Cradle of the Mississippi”, a key area of European colonization in North America. Stanislas LeVasseur, a notable member of this lineage, was the first of his family to leave Quebec to immigrate to the United States.

The database of Stanislas Levasseur’s descendants is derived from the records of the Levasseur Association of America Inc. and is regularly updated by Cheryl Vassaur. If you have experience in genealogy and would like to help expand this database, please contact Cheryl. She can create an administrator account for you to contribute to its editing.

*** NEW: Cheryl Vassaur recounts her discovery of her French-Canadian roots through Pierre Levasseur dit l’Espérance. Her travels and findings are shared in photos and documents now available at: <https://levasseur.org/en/vassaur-trip-to-shoal-creek/> [Click here](#)

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Jean Duval Vassaur (Louisa Jane Linn/Lynn) descended from a long line of French Canadian ancestry dating back to the mid-fifteen hundreds in Paris, Île de France.

*** NEW: New Podcast : [Levasseur in Arkansas](#)

Follow this link for the latest newsletter on the history of the Vassaur families in Arkansas: [May 2025 Newsletter](#)