

# Levasseur



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## CHARLES LEVASSEUR, (1665-1704) (J)

Charles Levasseur was born, April 7, 1665, in Québec. He was the son of Jean Levasseur dit Lavigne - the first Levasseur to be established in New France - and Marguerite Richard. Charles was attracted at a young age to the military life. He received his assignments from Paris where he was recognized for his abilities. His name was "Charles Le Vasseur, Mister de Bagaret", or, more often, 'Charles Le Vasseur de Boussouelle' or 'Ruessavel' '. Whichever name he was given, Charles was always recognized as a "Canadian officer". His ambitions were to explore the new world and he was fascinated by the Mississippi River. Charles was with Le **Cavelier de La Salle** when the Mississippi was discovered. He was then appointed to accompany **Pierre Le Moyne, Mister D'Iberville**, to establish the first permanent French settlement in Louisiana<sup>2</sup>.

Top photo: preliminary map of the settlement in Fort Louis de Mobile, Louisiana by Charles Levasseur in 1702.

## **Fort Maurepas (or « Vieux Biloxi »)**

The expedition left La Rochelle in September of 1698 and arrived in the Bay of Biloxi, in February 1699. Le Moyne searched at length to find a suitable place to build a fort. The location where they were was marshy and infested with mosquitoes. Drinking water was not easy to find and the expedition was wary of hurricanes. Finally he found an elevated location on the northeast side of the Bay of Biloxi (today: "Ocean Springs", Mississippi State). The present city of "Biloxi" (today: in the State of Mississippi) is located on the West side of the Bay of Biloxi. Biloxi was the name of a group of native peoples in the region, belonging to the Sioux family.

Started in April, the construction of Fort Maurepas was completed, on May 1, 1699. Three days later, Pierre Le Moyne, returned to France after organizing the colony in the following fashion:

- **Commandant:** his cousin, Sauvolle de la Villantray, lieutenant;
- **Second:** his younger brother, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, the King's lieutenant of the maritime guard;
- **Major of the fort :** Charles Levasseur, a Canadian with military experience.

He left a garrison of about 70 men, which he considered to be his best soldiers. Amongst them, there were several Canadian, including Jean-François Levasseur (1654 -), Charles' brother.

Daily life was very difficult: mosquitoes were pervasive, food was rationed, drinking water was scarce and even the fort's well water could have caused disease. On July 2, 1699, following a surprise visit to the Fort Maurepas, M. de Montigny, missionary in the Mississippi Valley, confirmed how difficult the situation was for the occupants of the fort, and he noted that he found amongst them, « two gentlemen Levasseur of which, one was the fort's major, Major Charles Le Vasseur<sup>3</sup>. The second Le Vasseur... was called Jean-François. He commanded the ship « La Précieuse », it was the largest ferryboat of the d'Iberville's flotilla's<sup>4</sup>.

## **The Fort Louis de la Mobile<sup>5</sup> (or Fort Louis in Louisiana)**

In 1700, it was decided that a new fort should be built, a little more to the East, in Mobile Bay. Charles Levasseur, who was at the head of the expedition, was assigned the task of finding a more suitable location. He continued his search in 1701 and he chose the location where Fort Louis of the Mobile would be built: it would be on a promontory about 20 feet in height, on the right bank of the Mobile River, near the mouth of the river that overlooks Mobile Bay. The site was located approximately 120 kilometres east of Fort Maurepas (Biloxi). At the beginning of 1702, Charles Levasseur himself drew the plans for the fort that would dominate the Mobile River and also the plans of the town that surrounded the fort. The fort was square with four bastions, the guns being concentrated in the four corners of the fort. Charles Levasseur also directed the construction of the fort. The new fort impressed everyone, including native Americans, who had been invited to visit the fort. In the course of the year 1702, Fort Maurepas on Biloxi Bay was destroyed to prevent the enemy of occupying the Fort. The command of the Louisiana French colony was transferred to Fort Louis de la Mobile (which is today in the State of Alabama).

Unfortunately, two years later, during an epidemic, Charles Levasseur died of yellow fever, in the fort he had designed and built. It was September 4, 1704: he was only 39 years old. He had been an experienced soldier, a talented military architect and a daring explorer. His death was considered a great loss to the Louisiana colony.

Jean-Marie Levasseur

1. 'Ruessavel' is obtained by reading "Levasseur" from right to left: Charles may have given himself this nickname in his youth, for fun or to make fun of the titles of nobility. The nickname would have then been distorted into Russouelle, Roussouelle, etc.
2. See the documents collected by **Pierre Margry** in *Discoveries and Settlements of the French in the West and in the South of North America (1614-1754)*, volume 4, *Discovery by sea of the mouths of Mississippi and Lemoyne D'Iberville's establishment of institutions on the Gulf of Mexico (1694-1703)*, Paris, Maisonneuve et Cie, 1880. <https://archive.org/> (accessed January 4, 2016). On the appointment of Charles Levasseur, see p.63, the letter of the Minister of the Navy (Jérôme Pontchartrain) to the Mister d'Iberville, on June 25, 1698: «Mister Levasseur, who formerly served under late Mr. de la Salle and accomplished different jobs in the Canada, offered his services. I thought that he would be the right person to assist you for this campaign and able to serve usefully. It is necessary that you have him embark with you to command a group of Canadians that will be accompanying you. I leave it to you to employ him for tasks that you deem appropriate. »
3. *Autographed letter of father François de Montigny to Mgr de Saint-Vallier, from his mission of the Taensas, dated August 25, 1699*, in **Noël Baillargeon**, *Les Missions du Séminaire de Québec in the Mississippi valley 1698-1699*, Québec, Musée de la civilisation, 2002 (online), p. 81. (The notebooks of the Musée de la civilisation), <http://collections.banq.qc.ca> (consulted January 5, 2016).
4. *ibid.*, p. 91, note 25 by **Noël Baillargeon**, with a reference to **Marcel Giraud**, *History of French Louisiana*, Paris, 1953, 1, p. 21, n. 4 and references to the *Roll of the officers, majors, etc. left in garrison by M. D'Iberville at the Maurepas Fort*, AC, C13A, vol. I, f. 209 f. 219.
5. **HIGGINBOTHAM, Jay**, *Old Mobile. Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711*, Mobile, Museum of the city of Mobile, 1977 (New issues: Tuscaloosa and London. The University of Alabama Press, 1991, 587p.), <https://books.google.ca> (accessed January 11, 2016). Note online, on pages 40-52, the beginnings of the establishment. See also **Gilles-Antoine Langlois** writings, *Des villes pour la Louisiane Francophonee*. He writes about the theory and practice of the urban colonization in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2003, <https://books.Google.ca> (accessed January 11, 2016).

Editor's Note: Wikipedia online encyclopedia is a good starting point to learn about the history of Louisiana and the forts mentioned in this article.

« **Fort Louis de la Mobile (Old Mobile Site)**, also called *Fort Louis de la Louisiane*, because it is located in Louisiana, was built in 1702 near the mouth Mobile River in Alabama. The fort was built to provide, political, military and religious services. The fort was the residence of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville and his officers. It also served as the chapel and had a variety of structures. This Colonial site has been recorded in the National Register of historic sites on May 6, 1976 and as a National historic site on January 3, 2001. This fort was built following the construction of two French forts that had been previously built and were located to the South of the vast territory of French Louisiana. ». [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_Mobile\\_Site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Mobile_Site)

«**Fort Maurepas** was a French fort built in 1699 to protect the French Louisiana coast overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. In 1699, the two brothers, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville and Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville founded a first colony at fort Maurepas (now Ocean Springs, near Biloxi). (From 1699 to 1702, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville was Governor of French Louisiana. His brother succeeded him in this post from 1702 to 1713. He was also Governor from 1716 to 1724 and again from 1733 to 1743). » [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort\\_Maurepas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Maurepas)



# L'ASSOCIATION DES LEVASSEUR



The Association, Levasseur d'Amérique Inc. is a non-profit organization, founded in 1988, in accordance to a federal charter. Its goals are:

- To join together and unite a large number of Levasseur and other descendants who have adopted the patronymic Borgia, Carmel, Carmell, Vasseur, Vassor, Vasser.
- To promote, develop and diffuse historical genealogical knowledge about the Levasseur families with Internet, an electronic Newsletter published three times per year also the publication of genealogical dictionaries.
- To maintain and update, on an ongoing basis, the genealogical data base available to members at all times on the Internet.
- To make available to members a family photo album and the Newsletters that the Association has published since 1988.
- To honor the memory of our forefathers and their descendants by way of monuments, plaques or symbolic gestures that commemorate historic events that are chronicle the Levasseur family.
- To gather all documents related to the Levasseur family for the purpose of constructing archives that will constitute the heritage of our Association and that will provide a source of information for historians and genealogists.

*We would appreciate if you could send us family related documents that would add to our data base of archives and also enable us to continue the publication of the Levasseur Newsletter three times per year. The participation of the Levasseurs and members of their families is essential to allow us to pursue our mission. Send us your photos and texts for the next publication of the Newsletter. You can download them very easily with this new tool and by providing a brief description of the photo or text that is being sent. Following receipt of your documents, a copy of all information to be published in the Newsletter will be sent to you for approval prior to final publication.*

Join our team of volunteers, contact us !!

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Other Levasseur Association Web sites:

[irma.levasseur.org](http://irma.levasseur.org)  
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