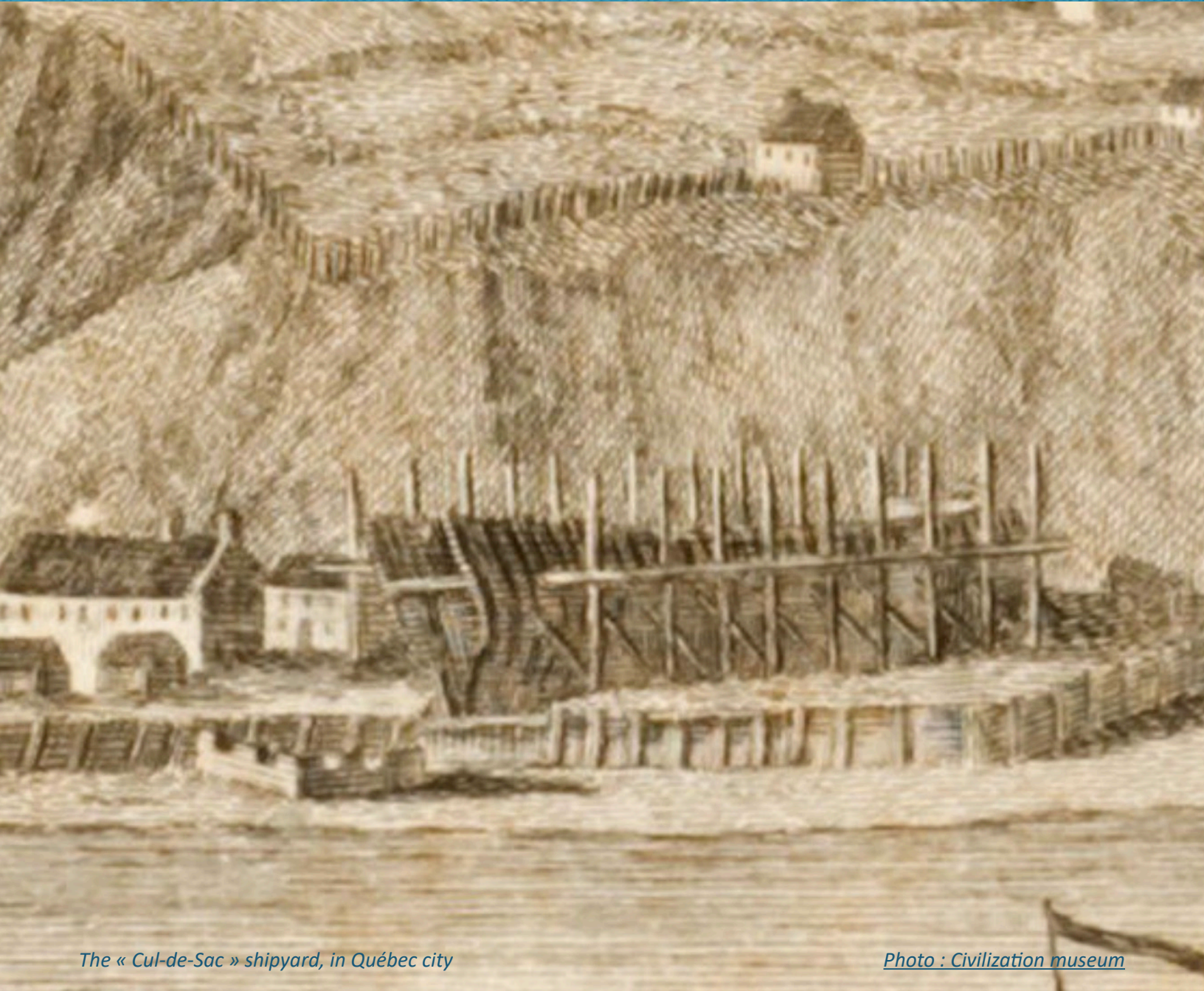


Levasseur



Article #20200701 <https://www.levasseur.org>

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The « Cul-de-Sac » shipyard, in Québec city

Photo : [Civilization museum](#)

René-Nicolas LEVASSEUR,
Master Ship Builder of Her Majesty's Ships
1707 - 1784

by: [Alex Levasseur](#)

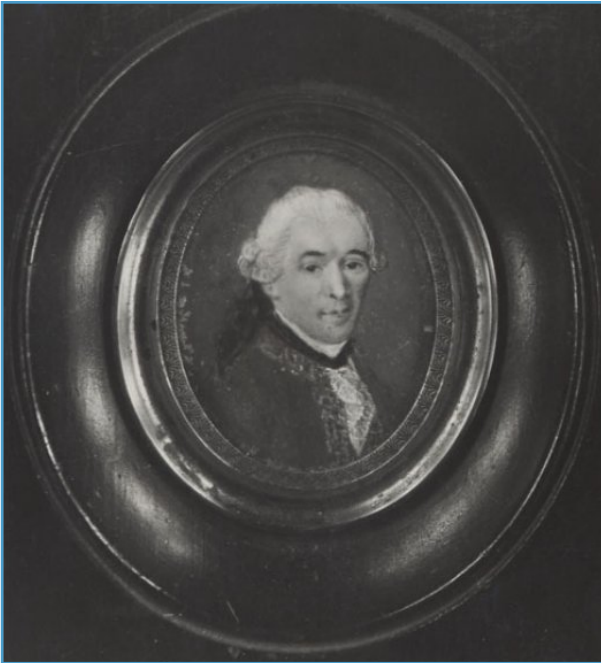
René-Nicolas was born (probably) in [Dunkerque](#), in the Pas-de-Calais (now the Hauts de France) on February 14, 1707. He is the son of a shipbuilder. In fact:

« René-Nicolas Levasseur belonged to a family closely linked to the French navy. Two of his brothers have made a career there. In 1748, one was an engineer, the other a commissioner at the port of Rochefort. The sub-shipbuilder moved to Canada with his wife and two children in 1738. He set up his family on Champlain Street, near the future Cul-de-Sac construction site. When Levasseur arrived in Canada, he was 33 years old. He is not a new-comer in the navy. He's been in the King's service for 12 years. He served in engineering. In 1733, a sub ship-builder in Toulon, he had led the construction of the [Aquilon](#) : a 40-gun ship. »¹

When he arrived in Quebec City, René-Nicolas was married to Angélique Juste. Together they will have 7 children, one of whom, Pierre Levasseur, will also be a shipbuilder

It should be noted that he has no kinship with the ancestors Laurent, Pierre and Jean Levasseur.

Naval shipyard problems



René-Nicolas Levasseur
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

It was in 1738 that the Minister of the Navy under Louis XV, Maurepas, ordered the creation of a shipyard for the construction of the royal ships. He appointed René-Nicolas Levasseur as a sub-shipbuilder. The shipyard was first installed in the St. Charles River, near the Palace of intendant Hocquart. But soon difficulties appeared, including the shallow depth for the construction of 500 to 700 ton ships, as requested by the King.

Two other sites are being considered: Orleans Island and the so-called "Cul-de-sac" site, i.e. about where the current crossing of Quebec-Lévis is located. Intendant Hocquart and Levasseur favor the "Cul-de-sac" site, and their recommendation is chosen.

« The organization of the work left Levasseur with virtually no free time. Once the cutting areas were delineated, he returned to Quebec City to prepare for the summer season, draw up plans for future buildings and ensure the supply of supplies to the shipyards. Despite this, he often had to return to the forest before the end of winter to monitor the logging, to ensure that he had all the parts he needed, and to organize the flotation of wood from Lake Champlain to Quebec City. From April to November or December, he would also coordinate and monitor the work of all workers in the shipyards. »²

It was around 1748, during his travels in the forest, in search of wood for his ships, that René-Nicolas Levasseur was given a large concession east of Lake Champlain. He named it the lordship domain of Saint-Armand.

*« Around 1784 Dutch-American families settled in Philipsburg, northeast of Lake Champlain, the first village of this lordship and the oldest settlement in the area. In 1999 Saint-Armand merged Philipsburg. Today, there are nearly 1250 inhabitants ».*³

"L'Original" sinks

In October 1748, René-Nicolas Levasseur began the construction of a first ship on the "Cul-de-sac" site:

*«This ship can carry up to 72 guns. It was the most important ship commissioned by the King at Quebec. Levasseur himself chose the oaks, red pines and cypresses needed for the building. The launch took place on September 2, 1750 in the presence of several hundred people. The celebrations were short-lived because the ship was immediately wrecked. »*⁴

*« he anchors were placed in the water before the launch. Boats were holding the cables. In 1750, these arrangements had been taken prior to the launch of the "Original". The ship broke its moorings. It slid too quickly into the water. Carried away by its momentum and by the current, the boats could not restrain the ship. Without any possibility of maneuvering, without anchor, the boat drifted and ran aground resulting in a total loss »*⁵

Between 1738 and 1758, Nicolas-René Levasseur supervised the launch of a dozen warships and a few small service vessels.

The Seven Year War

Royal shipbuilding in Quebec City will face several challenges related to the site of the shipyard, and other obstacles related to the quality of Canadian wood for the construction of large ships, the harshness of winters, the lack of skilled craftsmen available in shipbuilding and the lack of supplies, etc.

But there is also the war between France and England raging in the colonies. With the naval blockade on the St. Lawrence in 1759 and the surrender of Quebec a few weeks later, the royal naval adventure was over. In 1760 René-Nicolas Levasseur returned to France with his family.

*« (He) leads a group of workers in charge of fighting the fires started by the English, who eventually took control of the colony. Ruined, Nicolas-René Levasseur returned to France in 1760. Raised to the rank of naval commissioner in 1764, he retired two years later and died in Aubagne on 2 August 1784. »*⁶

A memorial building in his honor



Located at [94 Dalhousie Street](#), this federal building houses the offices of the Canada School of Public Service.

Historically, this place also witnesses the commercial activities of the late 18th century and part of the 19th century. There are also in the basement remnants associated with this periodization.

¹ [La construction navale royale 1739 – 1759](#), par Jacques Mathieu. Thèse présentée à l'École des gradués pour obtenir le diplôme d'études supérieures en histoire, octobre 1967

² Dictionnaire biographique du Canada – volume IV – par Jacques Mathieu, historien. http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/levasseur_rene_nicolas_4F.html

³ <https://tourismebrome-missisquoi.ca/attraits/saint-armand/>

⁴ Histoire populaire du Québec: Des origines à 1791 de Jacques Lacoursière, Page 236

⁵ [La construction navale royale 1739 – 1759](#), par Jacques Mathieu. Thèse présentée à l'École des gradués pour obtenir le diplôme d'études supérieures en histoire, octobre 1967

⁶ Dunkerque Magazine - N°203 - Janvier 2010

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 !!

Web site : www.levasseur.org - webmaster@levasseur.org

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/associationlevasseur>

Other Levasseur Association Web sites:

irma.levasseur.org
militaires.levasseur.org
carmel.levasseur.org
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