

**JOURNAL OF  
PONTIAC'S  
CONSPIRACY, 1763**

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Journal of Pontiac's conspiracy, 1763 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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PONTIAC'S  
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Journal or Narrative of a Conspiracy  
Journal ou Dictation d'une Conspiration

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Pontiac's Conspiracy  
1763



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## Preface

The Pontiac Manuscript, or journal, has for years been considered the most important document in existence containing an account of the conspiracy of the Ottawa chief. It has twice been translated and is the foundation of various novels and dramas picturing the times of the French and Indian war. It is the document upon which Francis Parkman so cleverly built his history of the events of 1763. Its history so far as known has been related by Parkman and by others, and many conjectures have been made regarding its authorship. That it was originally the work of a Frenchman is evident throughout. The apparent anxiety to place the French in a favorable light, to explain their difficult position and justify their actions could only have been expressed by a Frenchman. His knowledge of the happenings within and without the fort, his familiarity with the motives and actions of Pontiac, is sufficient proof that he was a Frenchman of influence both with the Indians and the English. His description of the minute details attending Pontiac's councils makes it impossible to doubt the author's presence on those occasions.

The manuscript was thought to have been written by the assistant priest of Ste. Anne's Church, and the fact that the manuscript was at one time owned by Father Gabriel Richard, the priest who was in charge of the same church from 1798-1832, adds color to this conjecture. A comparison, however, with the writing of that priest still preserved in St. Anne's records, destroys that theory. Prof. Ford thinks that it was written by some one within the fort, and suggests Robert Navarre. Following this suggestion, a comparison of this document with many of the extant records in the hand of Navarre seems to point to a satisfactory solution. Specimens of the journal, a page from Ste. Anne's Records and a deed by Navarre are given herewith for the purposes of comparison. A close examination of each shows similarity between the journal and the Navarre deed. The writer is not as neat and painstaking in his journal as in his public papers, but the



same style and form of writing is found in every line. He has evidently kept an accurate chronology of daily events, but has from day to day turned back and filled in with more minute details, as for example the description of the conduct of Luneau on pp. 140-142, and many similar passages.

Although Navarre did not reside within the fort, his easy access in the performance of his duties gave him the complete knowledge of affairs within.

He was a man of some education, had been the Royal Notary of the place under French rule and hoped to continue in a similar office after the British came. He was recommended by the British Commandant as worthy of confidence and was retained to conduct many of the duties of the post where both the English and the French were concerned. His long career in active service, begun in 1734, had made him thoroughly familiar with the languages of the Indians, for whom he frequently acted as interpreter. At the time of the siege he was living on his farm on the southwest side of the village. This farm is now within the limits of the city of Detroit and bears the name of Navarre or Brevoort farm, about two miles below the centre of the city. The land was formerly occupied by the Pottawattami Indians and was given by that tribe to their friend, Robert Navarre, whom they affectionately called "Robiche." Jean Marie Alexis Navarre, a son of Robert Navarre, was born and baptized at the house of his parents, and not in the church, on Sept. 22, 1763. The child was born on the night of his baptism, and the church entry was made the following day. This appears from the record and indicates the freedom the members of the Navarre family had in entering the besieged town. Therefore it seems quite plausible to attribute the journal to Robert Navarre.

Before leaving the subject the editor wishes to add a word concerning Sir Robert Davers. In the *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial Series, Vol. 1745-1766*, under the date of Aug. 31, 1763, there is a petition of Sir Robert Davers to the Board of Trade for a grant of Grosse Isle and several other little islands surrounding it, Isle Aux Dinde and lands on the eastern shore of the Detroit river from Lake Erie on the south to the River Aux Canards

on the north. Sir Robert was killed before the petition was referred to the Board, as recorded in the diary, and the Indians made use of some of these islands during the siege.

C. M. BURTON.

Detroit, Nov., 1912.

## Translator's Preface

The so-called Pontiac Manuscript is an intensely illuminating document for its gossip, information and folk-lore, and the various side-lights which it throws on the memorable siege of Detroit by the Indians in 1763, but it is historical rather than literary, as even the most hasty reader will perceive. As translator I have been concerned to reproduce the original in an intelligible, if not elegant English, and at the same time to leave untouched as much as possible the verbosity, discursiveness, and repetitions, which are so characteristic of the early work. However, what Pope called the "illiteracies" will not appear, though interwoven all through with the rhetorical peculiarities: the unknown writer displays such an utter indifference to matters of punctuation, spelling, composition, and grammar that it would be hazardous to attempt to perpetuate any of his vagaries. Still, it is certain that they have added greatly to the task of translation. Through the fact that capital letters are used so indiscriminately, and punctuation so neglected and capricious, it is frequently difficult to tell where phrases or sentences end or begin; and then, outside of the traditional combinations the spelling is surprisingly phonetic, which helps to make the reading of many passages and parts quite a *tour de force*.

The question of the authorship of the manuscript has been a subject of speculation at different times, but nothing definite has ever been established. Parkman in his *Conspiracy of Pontiac* draws upon the facts of the manuscript which he knew through a copy loaned him by Gen. Lewis Cass, and he makes the statement that it is "conjectured to be the work of a French priest." Since he makes general acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Gen. Cass for materials dealing with the war and Detroit, one may infer, I think, that he was merely indorsing a tradition which was current in the French family who were in possession of the document in Gen. Cass' time.

It is well known that there were only two priests at Detroit during the period of the siege: Father Potier, Jesuit missionary to the Hurons, whose mission was on what