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# Gov. Charles deGrandpre: Avoyelles colonia

Served as Lt. Governor of Louisiana in 1790s, and based government of Red River district at Avoyelles

The following text was prepared by a descendant: Charles Louis Boucher deGrandpre, an early Louisiana Governor who lived at Avoyelles in the 1790s, and used Avoyelles as the headquarters for the Red River district. Mrs. Smith presented a program about Gov. deGrandpre at two meetings recently in Avoyelles: DAR and La Commission des Avoyelles.

**CHARLES LOUIS BOUCHER DE GRANDPRE**  
By Mrs. Edwin A. Smith, Jr.  
Charles Louis Boucher deGrandpre (known in Spanish Colonial Louisiana as "Don Carlos de Grandpre") was born in Louisiana around 1746-49 to a French family prominent in New France from its foundation. His father, Louis Antoine Boucher deGrandpre, was born in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, in 1693 and died in New Orleans in 1763. His mother was a New Orleans native, Thérèse Galland de Chamilly. Louis Boucher deGrandpre came to Louisiana in 1731, and served at different times as commandant of Fort St. Louis of the Arkansas, of Tombichou, and of Mobile. In 1751, he received the Cross of St. Louis from the king of France for his years of effort in subduing hostile Louisiana Indians. His daughter, Charlotte Costantini, was the grandmother of the famous Louisiana historian, Charles Gayarre.

## Prominent Canadian

Boucher family figures prominently in Canadian history.  
Charles' grandfather was Lambert Boucher, the first to carry the title "Seigneur de Grandpre." Born at Trois-Rivières in 1656, he married Marguerite Vauvill de Blazois in 1693 and died at Trois-Rivières in 1699, leaving two children. He was the son of a miller and was mayor of his native town, holding vast land grants in Quebec.

Charles' great-grandfather, Pierre Boucher, was a luminary in early Canadian history. Born in 1622 in Montargis, Province of France, (about 80 miles east of Paris), he arrived at Quebec in 1634, from Normandy with his parents, Gaspard Boucher and Nicole Lemire. Pierre was Governor of Trois-Rivières for 13 years, founder of Beauport in 1673, the first Canadian ennobled (with all his sons) by Louis XIV (1661), and author of the first book on how to live in the wilderness, "Le Nouveau Voyageur," which was used by all who came to the New World.

Pierre Boucher and Bishop Lavallée helped create in 1663 the French administration that allowed for the stable settlement of New France. Pierre was sent to France several times to report to the king, and was a successful recruiter there for many new settlers. As Raymond Douville tells in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Pierre Boucher "had become a dominant figure in the colony, and successive governors and military leaders as soon as they arrived, sought his opinions and his advice."

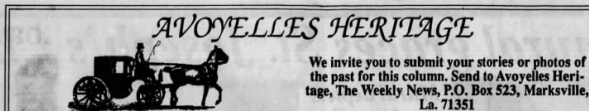
Pierre married Jeanne Gervin in 1652 and became the father of 16 children. He died in his village of Beauport, across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal, in 1717. He is buried in the church which he gave and of which the first pastor was Pierre Marquette. Families descended from Pierre Boucher include such prominent families as Le Pelletier de la Houssaye, Gay Arré, de Bore, Allan, Drov, Gauthier de Varennes, de Vallée, le Gardeur de Tilly, Dagueau de May (Nicolas Dagueau de May, husband of Marguerite Boucher, was appointed Governor of the Province of Louisiana, but died on the voyage to take up his post), and many others.

## Public Service

Charles deGrandpre devoted his life to public service.  
Charles deGrandpre had a most illustrious career. His entire adult life was spent in public service in both the military and in government administration. The records are full of his activities and exploits during the French regime, yet we know very little of his life under the French. Charles spent some time in New Orleans, but most of the time he was at other posts. He was, at various times, commandant of the posts at Avoyelles, Rapides, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Baton Rouge, Natchez, Pointe Coupee, and Opelousas. Under the French, his posts were Opelousas and Pointe Coupee. He was commissioned captain by the French on October 1, 1741.

Charles was studying law in France when his father died in 1763. His mother had a great deal of trouble collecting debts owed her deceased husband. Several times she had to resort to petitioning the Superior Council for aid. On one occasion (August 30, 1763), as the tutor of her minor children, she used for the payment of a specific debt in order to educate her children in France. Her son, Charles, at that time, represented a very expensive of 3000 "livres."

After his return from France, Charles immediately resumed his military career. This time under the



We invite you to submit your stories or photos of the past for this column. Send to Avoyelles Heritage, The Weekly News, P.O. Box 523, Marksville, La. 71351



Age 19  
Charles Louis Boucher deGrandpre, Lt. Gov. of Red River territory of Louisiana in 1790s. He led the troops from Pointe Coupee, including the Borelles, Janssens, DeCuir, Duval, Joffroy and other Avoyelles families in the American Revolution battle of Baton Rouge. Pictured here at about age 19, crinchead. From a miniature in possession of Mrs. Edwin A. Smith, Jr., Baton Rouge.

Charles Louis Boucher deGrandpre, Lt. Gov. of Red River territory of Louisiana in 1790s, lived at Avoyelles Post. He led the troops from Pointe Coupee, including the Borelles, Janssens, DeCuir, Duval, Joffroy and other Avoyelles families in the American Revolution battle of Baton Rouge. Pictured here at about age 19, crinchead. From a miniature in possession of Mrs. Edwin A. Smith, Jr., Baton Rouge.

which officially traces its beginning to this event. In this list of appointments, only three officers received regular salaries. In October, a directive came from the Spanish king to the effect that Grandpre be given 40 "pesos fuertes" per month, as of December 1769. Seven years later, as the Commandant at Pointe Coupee, he was receiving pay for himself and his detachment directly from Governor Bernardo Galvez. In a report on government employees in Spanish Louisiana, 1780-1802 the salary of civil commissions is listed as 40 "pesos fuertes" per annum.

In August of 1779, Charles, "Don Carlos," was informed by Galvez that Spain officially recognized the United States. Previous to that, the Spanish had been actively helping the United States' cause; witness the proclamation that was widely distributed from New Orleans that denounced Aaron Burr and the constant vigilance of his militia in the United States to limit English activity in the area. When Spain joined France and the United States in the war against England, Grandpre campaigned effectively on the West Florida frontier. On September 21, 1779, with area Frenchmen from Pointe Coupee, he crossed the Mississippi River and captured British posts on Thompson's Creek and the Amite River. Many of these men from Pointe Coupee were the ancestors of families who later came to Avoyelles: Borelles, DeCuir, DuCote, DuFour, Grenville, Joffroy, Janssens, LaCaze, Mayoux, Rabalais, and Roy. This movement by these troops effectively cut communication between Natchez and Baton Rouge, allowing Galvez to take Baton Rouge with ease. As a result, Natchez was occupied by Spanish troops without resistance. Rewarding Grandpre for his foresight, Galvez placed him in command of the newly won territory.

All was quiet at Natchez until Galvez was engaged in his campaign against Pensacola. Then, in April of 1781, a group of English loyalists organized a rebellion and forced the Spanish garrison to surrender. In the absence of Galvez, responsibility for recovering Natchez rested upon Grandpre. Commandant of the district. On May 7, 1781, when he was at Pointe Coupee, he learned of the uprising and sent a report to the Spanish governor. Fort Panmure had been allowed to leave for New Orleans. Fierro de la Morcuera was sent with local militia units, mainly from Avoyelles, to retake Natchez. Before any action there, he learned of Galvez's victory at Pensacola, and they scheme collapsed. When Grandpre arrived, he

## Spanish Control

When the Spanish took possession of Louisiana in 1763, as France's officers of Grandpre's stamp, including the French Attorney General Neufville, who eased the transition, so that there was only the aborted rebellion in New Orleans and not a general uprising by the French colonies. On February 12, 1770, General Alexander O'Reilly reported to Grandpre: First Adjutant Major of Louisiana & this appointment made him the acknowledged "father" of the Louisiana National Guard.

elimination of these unlicensed traders as the key to the solution of the Indian problems. He proposed that the waters be patrolled by a militia of sorts, which he had at his disposal. Grandpre wrote: "For guarding the river there is the crew of the small galley named 'La Fleche' with the regular compliment of crew carpenters and sailors. In addition, there are four frigates with two pieces of ordnance. They are five feet wide on the bottom and capable of carrying rowers and soldiers up to the number of 16. Each frigate is supplied with six long guns and the necessary ammunition. These boats will be very serviceable in following the bayous and in eliminating any strangers who may have entered. This water patrol, however, proved ineffective in controlling either Indian intruders or unlicensed traders.

In order to prepare for the evacuation of Natchez, Grandpre proposed to the governor that various buildings be established at Avoyelles, such as a blacksmith shop, a new fort, and a barracks hospital. He stated, "If you find it convenient, the interior for the King & Natchez could be sent here. He could also serve as blacksmith for other types of work. If the items in the inventory at Natchez were brought here, they would be very useful for anything that might occur." Although his plans were logical, they were never realized.

Soon after his establishment at Avoyelles, Grandpre made an inspection trip up the Red River as far as Natchitoches. There he found a tranquil situation, although in the past there had been some dissension among the inhabitants. He learned that a shortage of gunpowder made the settlement virtually defenseless.

When his assignment at Avoyelles was completed, Grandpre moved his family to Baton Rouge, where he resumed his duties as Governor of West Florida. His final title was "Colonel of the Royal Armies and Subdelegated Governor of the Intendency General of the Post of Baton Rouge and Governor of West Florida."

Grandpre was considered by many to be a generous, understanding official. Dr. John Shibley of Natchitoches, who visited with the governor in July and August of 1802 during his trip along the Mississippi, wrote: "Twice six miles to the Port at Baton Rouge, I kept on and arrived there on foot before the Barge, waited on the French extraction, was born in Louisiana, was educated in France to the profession of the Law & is universally esteemed 'd'un bon homme, bon sens et d'une grande intégrité, he is a widower about fifty years of age, his wife was a French woman, born at the Isle d'Orléans (Illinois); he speaks English, has several children. Daughters almost grown, he received me politely, and directed me to the English speaking English to go with me and to wait upon wherever I chose till my wages came up."

Notes good for promotion, demonstrated valor, good application, capacity and conduct.

## Spanish Town

The Baton Rouge State Times (October 18, 1980, p. 1-B) detailed another incident: "When Galvez, Town, twenty miles southeast of Baton Rouge, was ceded in the Louisiana Purchase to the United States in 1803, the Casco Islands who lived there asked to come to Baton Rouge in order to continue living on Spanish soil. In 1803, Don Manuel de Grandpre, governor of West Florida, drew up the layout of an area east of the fort 'out of cannon shot' that became known as Spanish Town."

The Baton Rouge home of the Grandpre family was what is now the northeast corner of the plot occupied by the Old State Capitol. At present, two large oaks stand on the site along with the Mercier car from France. The house consisted of six rooms and two galleries on two levels, about 60x200 feet. Across the street (present North Boulevard) was the Casco house. French "General Alexandre Couesne had come to America with the Marquis de Lafayette and had married Marie Françoise Paget, Madame Grandpre's sister."

It will be remembered that though France in 1763 had ceded to England all territory east of the Mississippi River, except New Orleans, the Spanish continued to occupy the east bank as far as Memphis. Even the cession of 1803 did not eliminate Spain from the Mississippi Valley, for Spanish officials remained in possession of the long-disputed Baton Rouge district of West Florida. One can say that the Spanish were determined to retain West Florida, but made little effort to fortify it. Carlos de Grandpre was in command at Baton Rouge and his mildness preserved order and Spanish rule for a few more years. The Anglo-American, who resented being excluded from the transfer of Louisiana, suppressed Grandpre at Manchac and Baton Rouge. In the face of ever increasing pressure, he maintained Spanish rule in the district. Late in 1808, he ended his term of service by permitting subjects of the Spanish monarchy to form a sort of delegated town meeting, somewhat in the free American fashion.

Continued next week

## Gov. deGrandpre

Charles Louis Boucher deGrandpre. Probably shortly before his death, which occurred in 1802 during his trip along the Mississippi, wrote: "Twice six miles to the Port at Baton Rouge, I kept on and arrived there on foot before the Barge, waited on the French extraction, was born in Louisiana, was educated in France to the profession of the Law & is universally esteemed 'd'un bon homme, bon sens et d'une grande intégrité, he is a widower about fifty years of age, his wife was a French woman, born at the Isle d'Orléans (Illinois); he speaks English, has several children. Daughters almost grown, he received me politely, and directed me to the English speaking English to go with me and to wait upon wherever I chose till my wages came up."

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There is no part of Charles deGrandpre's public career that is more carefully documented than that included in the Spanish colonial records in the Bancroft Library in California. We are fortunate in having Lawrence Kinnard of the University of California who has edited and published this large body of official Spanish correspondence. It has written a concise study of Don Carlos in the Red River Valley in 1766 (Louisiana Historical Association, Louisiana History, XXIV, no. 2, Spring 1983, New Orleans).

**Avoyelles**  
As the result of the Treaty of San Lorenzo (1763), Spain ceded all of its territory north of the 31st parallel east of the Mississippi River to the United States. In order to offset the loss of Natchez, Governor Carondelet planned to create a new administrative center in the Red River Valley. It was to be located at Avoyelles and Charles Louis Boucher deGrandpre was selected to serve as lieutenant governor. Governor Carondelet selected Avoyelles because he regarded it as the best location for administration of the district. Grandpre confirmed his judgment, and later sent the governor a report on the speed of communication with various posts under his command.

Kinnard describes the post at Avoyelles as a "hardship post" and very primitive. Grandpre had only a small cabin for his residence which he described as being in the worst of the center of the village close to the river. The inhabitants, however, volunteered to repair the cabin and construct a small lodging for the troops, but Grandpre had to feed them while they worked.

In 1766, Grandpre sent the governor a report on the conditions in the Red River Valley as they pertained to the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians posed a great threat to both white and Indian settlements. He stated from whom they stole horses, cattle, and provisions. Unlicensed traders also supplied arms, ammunition, as liquor to these Indians in exchange for their peltries. According to Kinnard, Grandpre rewarded the

elimination of these unlicensed traders as the key to the solution of the Indian problems. He proposed that the waters be patrolled by a militia of sorts, which he had at his disposal. Grandpre wrote: "For guarding the river there is the crew of the small galley named 'La Fleche' with the regular compliment of crew carpenters and sailors. In addition, there are four frigates with two pieces of ordnance. They are five feet wide on the bottom and capable of carrying rowers and soldiers up to the number of 16. Each frigate is supplied with six long guns and the necessary ammunition. These boats will be very serviceable in following the bayous and in eliminating any strangers who may have entered. This water patrol, however, proved ineffective in controlling either Indian intruders or unlicensed traders.

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