

Chronological History of the Life of Jean-Pierre Lesourd to 1801

(The source called “Les Combattants” refers to *Les Combattants Francais De La Guerre Americaine, 1778-1783*, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France with English translation in 1905. The source called “Genealogy” is that prepared by E. B. LeSourd in 1925.)

1725 The Genealogy states, “From the record of the Maryland Historical Society of Baltimore, Maryland, we learn that Jean Pierre Le Sourd and Hannah Provost were married about the year 1725 in France and that they had two children—Jean and Mary.” (pg. 3.) However, that memoir does not identify the specific record containing that information, and on a visit to that Historical Society, I was unable to find any such document. Since the son “Jean”, if our ancestor, was born in 1760, it seems highly unlikely that his parents were married 35 years earlier. Even if his mother were only 15 years old when wedded, she would have been 50 years old at his birth.

This raises the threshold question: was our ancestor’s original given name “Jean-Pierre Lesourd”, and if so, where did he come from and what brought him to North America? “Sketches of an Itinerant’s Career”, a memoir manuscript by David G. LeSourd dictated in 1917-18, states that his grandfather was “John Peter LeSourd”, a corporal in a French regiment that fought at Yorktown, who remained in the United States and married Mary Curtis. David LeSourd was born in 1841 in Ohio, and his grandmother Mary died in 1851 in Maryland. David’s father, Benjamin, not only lived into adulthood on his parents’ farm in Maryland, but lived with his wife and Mary on that farm until 1835. It is therefore highly likely that David’s memoir states these facts accurately. (Both the University of Puget Sound and I hold typed copies of David’s memoir.) In addition, the genealogy and all existing family memoirs agree that our French ancestor’s given name originally was “Jean Pierre” or “John Peter”.

Les Combattants lists eleven members, among all the French army and naval forces sent to aid the American revolutionists, whose family name was spelled “Le Sourd” or “Lesourd”. One is for a “Le Sourd (Jean)”, who was a “Premier Pilote.” However, if the reader continues in the index beyond the “Le Sourd” listings, one then immediately finds the listing “Lesourd (Jean-Pierre)”, a member of a different unit than that of “Jean Le Sourd.”

1760 Jean-Pierre Lesourd was born in Cerny, France (per *Les Combattants*).

3/19/1777 He enlisted in the “Regiment De Bourbonnais” of the French army (per *Les Combattants*). (“Bourbonnais” is an ancient French provincial area in the central French uplands. Its historic capital was Moulins, center of the House of Bourbons.) He was either an infantryman or in some other non-officer position in direct support of the infantry.

1779 France recognized the independence of the United States and declared war on England (per *Les Combattants*).

4/7/1780 The Regiment De Bourbonnais embarked on a ship for America, arriving at Newport, R.I. in July (per *Les Combattants*).

2/20/1781 Jean-Pierre Lesourd was promoted to Corporal (per *Les Combattants*).

9/28/1781 This regiment, along with other French regiments and an approximately equal number of the American Continental Army, began the siege of Lord Cornwallis' English army at Yorktown, Virginia. "The French were charged with the attack on the left, and it was the Bourbons which opened the *tranchée* on the 7th October, 1781. The 15th of the same month it was the Bourbons which vigorously repelled a sortie of the enemy, and the 19th Cornwallis capitulated. The regiment occupied all the posts attacked and inscribed thus on its colors a new victory." (per *Les Combattants*).

11/14/1781 This regiment went into quarters at Williamsburg, Virginia, which remained its quarters through 1782 (per *Les Combattants*). Sometime during the regiment's stay in Virginia, either before or after the siege of Yorktown, Jean-Pierre met Mary Curtis, the daughter of English immigrants. According to one LeSourd family oral history, transcribed before 1925, "during a march one time they halted at the house of a Mr. Curtis... to get water to quench their thirst. He had a daughter, Mary, who showed her sympathy for the soldiers by assisting with pitcher and cup to allay their thirst. She noticed one young man in particular [Jean-Pierre]..." They corresponded during the remainder of the war. (Genealogy, pg. 3.)

March 1783 The Regiment De Bourbons returned to Rhode Island, and embarked for France. Whereas the information presented for many of its personnel shows promotions, retirements, etc., during and following 1783, no entry exists for Jean-Pierre after his 1781 promotion (per *Les Combattants*). This implies that he did not return to France with his regiment.

11/23/1783 The Treaty of Paris formally ends the Revolutionary War.

1783 I have found no record of the wedding of Jean-Pierre and Mary Curtis. However, one descendant's memoir states that "Her father was an Englishman and his sympathies were with England. They had to elope to get married, and he [Jean], liking America, and marrying here, deserted the army, that is he would not go back to France" (Genealogy, pg. 5). In addition, "Sketches of an Itinerant's Career" says that they married.

Several family memoirs say that Jean-Pierre knew the tailor trade. One states that he "continued to work at his trade for a number of years" after settling in Baltimore County, Maryland (Genealogy, pg. 4-5).

7/31/1784 Jean-Pierre and Mary's first child, Daniel, was born (per Genealogy). Conception must have occurred in October or November of 1783.

10/27/1796 Unpatented certificate #1016 was issued by Baltimore County to "John Lesourd" for a 5 3/4 acre parcel called "Metz", lying adjacent to the "Mount Joy" tract. Driving directions from Baltimore: north on I-83, take exit 33 (Parkton), right on Maryland route 45, left onto Stablersville Rd, continue to Graystone Rd., cross it and continue east on Vernon Rd. The LeSourd farm is less than 1 mile east and laying on both sides of the road.

Dec. 1801 Deed issued by Anne Johnson, widow of Dr. Edward Johnson, to "John Lesourd" for approximately 107 acres located in the Mount Joy tract and abutting the Metz acreage owned by John. Dr. Johnson's will indicates that Jean-Pierre had already paid about half

of the purchase price before Dr. Johnson died. The 1798 tax rolls describe a log dwelling on the property (per Wayne McGinnis). Thus, it is highly likely that Jean-Pierre and his family were already living on and farming these two parcels when he received the certificate for the Metz tract in 1796. Local historians report that settlers delayed getting the final land patent for a number of years to avoid paying the final fees. Together these parcels of land total about 115 acres, which is the current size of the property, with the same described boundaries, that has been transferred down through the generations to its current owner (the Wayne McGinnis family; 19524 Graystone Rd., White Hall MD 21161; waynemcginnis@comcast.net)

8/10/1822 Jean-Pierre died. One descendant's memoir states that both Jean and his wife "were buried in the family cemetery"; another memoir says they were buried "near Stablersville, Baltimore County, Maryland." (Genealogy, pg. 3-4.)

4/12/1851 Mary died. (Genealogy, pg. 3-4.)

By Peter LeSourd
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