

New Acquisition: 1794 Letter From Peter DeLabigarre

August 4, 2021

We recently acquired an intriguing letter in our collections written by Peter DeLabigarre in 1794!

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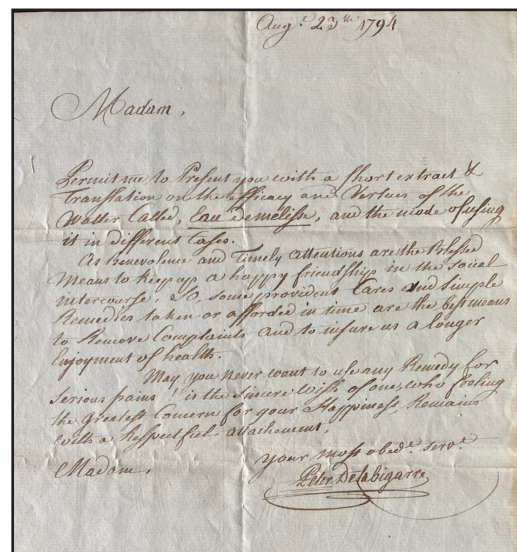
A French merchant who arrived in Tivoli in the late 18th-century, DeLabigarre was by all accounts a character. Town Historian Emily Majer colorfully describes him as “ [an] entrepreneur, snake-oil salesman, mountain climber, social climber, archaeolo-



*Brick wall and postern gate n front of Le Chateau De Tivoli.
Built about 1800 b Peter DeLabigarre. Col. Johnston L. DePeyster,
son of Gen. John Watts DePeyster, lived there
until his death on May 27th, 1903*

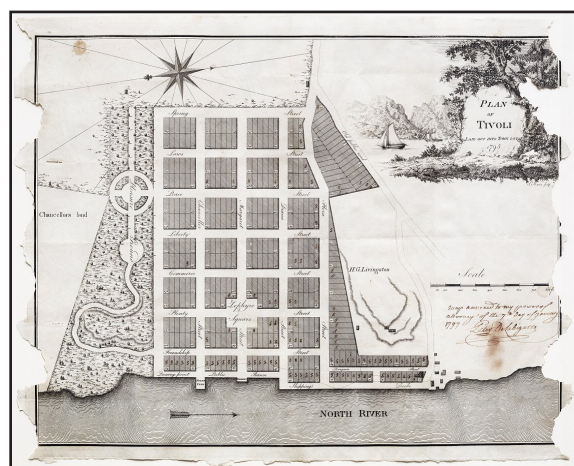
ambitions for Tivoli, envisioning it as a meticulously planned Utopia (see map). Bankrupt in 1800, DeLabigarre ran away to New Orleans with Edward Livingston, who was running from his own scandal involving his time as New York City mayor.

This surviving letter now in our collections is a wonderful example of one of his many schemes. In it, we see DeLabigarre hawking the latest and greatest in medicinal supplements, sure to heal all aches and pains! Interestingly enough, “Eau de Mélisse” is still sold today and claims to be the “oldest product sold in pharmacies” as seen from the following online ad, having been established in 1611!



gist, [and] silkworm-rancher.” In his book *Tivoli, the Making of a Community*, Bernard B. Tieger described this French émigré as “charming, perhaps excessively ingratiating, cultivated, well read and also... enormously ambitious, he moved in New York’s best social circles.”

Locally, he married into the Beekman family and was a protegee of Robert “Cancellor” Livingston. He certainly had large



*DeLabigarre's 1795
commissioned plan of Tivoli.*

Transcript of Letter (with the spellings of the time)

Aug. 23th, 1794

Madam,

May you never want to use any Remedy for serious pains! is the sincere wish of one, who feeling the greatest Concern for your Happiness, Remains with a Respectful attachment

Madam, Your most obed. serv.

Peter Delabigarre

Extract and Translation of the Different Vertues of a Water Called Eau Demelisse with the particulars how to use it.

1) That watter has been known for many years as the best Remedy against Apoplexy. In the fits of such terrible disorder it is necessary to give a spoonfull of it to the patient and if he does not come to in few minutes, to give him more till he recovers his Senses, which must take place very soon, unless he was stroke with Death: it is not to be feared that several Spoonfull could hurt the patient, in that case it would be not amiss to Rub his temples, nostrils and blow some in the nose . half spoon mixed with Broath or wine taken twice a week will prevent or lessen by degrees other attacks of that complaint.

2) Persons subject to fevers, faintings, vapors or head whirlings, may be instantly releived by drinking the fourth part of a spoon of that watter mixed with a spoonfull of common watter or wine.

3) It is an excellent Remedy against all sorts of Venoms or Poisons; it prevents also the fatal impressions of putrid or pestilential Air.

4) It is a powerfull aid to Digestion, four or five Drops poured upon a little bit of Sugar will Releive the stomach and prevent any indigestion: if the person has already a violent pain of Bowels, one fourth of a spoonfull in a spoon of wine will soon take away that pain.

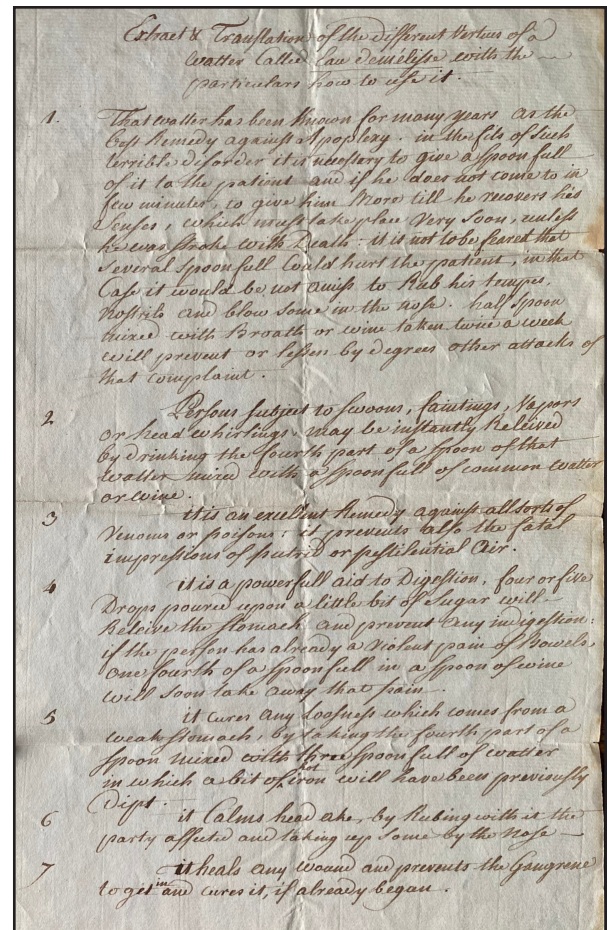
5) It cures any looseness which comes from a weak stomach by taking the fourth part of a spoon mixed with three spoonfull of watter in which a bit of hot iron will have been previously Dipt.

6) It Calms headache by rubing with it the party affected and taking up some by the nose.

7) It heals any wound and prevents the Gangrene to get in and cures it, if already began.

8) It Releives Rhumatism's pains by rubbing with it the party affected from time to time.

9) It is a great help for those who are liable to windy cholicks, by taking a spoonfull of it mixed with as much of sweet almond oil and half an ounce of maiden hair syrop.



Peter DelaBigarre 1794