The House of Saulx-Tavanes

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The House of Saulx-Tavanes: Versailles and Burgundy, 1700-1830.
THE HOUSE OF SAULX-TAVANES

DOCUMENT I: CREATION OF THE DUCHY OF SAULX-TAVANES

ROYAL LETTERS RAISING THE COMTE OF LUX AND THE BARONIE OF BEAUMONT TO THE TITLE OF HEREDITARY DUCHY OF SAULX-TAVANES

Louis, by the Grace of God, King of France and of Navarre: To all, present and future, Our greetings. Our Royal Predecessors have always considered the rank of Duke one of the highest rewards they could bestow on those who, by their brilliant birth, by the illustrious alliances contracted at various times by their family, by the merit of their personal services and those of their ancestors, and by their constant loyalty, have stood out among the rest of their subjects. We have noted with satisfaction that these advantages are united in the person of CHARLES-FRANÇOIS-CASIMIR DE SAULX, COMTE DE TAVANES, marshal of Our camps and armies, chevalier of Our orders, Our first lieutenant-general in Burgundy, governor of the Château du Taureau in Brittany, chevalier d'honneur of the Queen, Our beloved Spouse and Companion, and formerly Menin of the late, beloved Dauphin, Our Father.

The venerable age of the house of Saulx-Tavanes is very well known, as are its alliances with Royal Houses, and with those of Vienne, Beaufremont, de Grammont, de Rye, de Crux, de Vergy, de Joyeuse, de la Baume Montrevel, de Rochehouart, de Chabot, de Gouffier, de Choiseul, de Mailly, de Grimaldy, de Tessé, de Lévis, de Rieux, the distinguished services this house has rendered the state under several of Our Royal Predecessors, the dignities it has enjoyed under various reigns, and the great seigneuries it has owned and still owns in the Duchy of Burgundy, having in very early times held the comté of Langres, which was then part of Burgundy. Already enjoying great renown at the end of the tenth century, the distinction of this house increased during the eleventh century; and Gui de Saulx, at the beginning of the reign of Philip I, bore the title of comte de Saulx and seigneur of Grancy, both of which places are near Dijon. This house has existed ever since, continued from father to son without interruption. In an exchange of the year twelve hundred and ninety-nine, Guillaume de Saulx ceded to King Philipe le Bel the château of Saulx and its dependencies, which to this day are part of the Royal Domains. Jean de Saulx, under the reign of Louis XII married Marguerite de Tavanes, of the ancient Scottish house of that name. Vernier de Tavanes had come to Switzerland with a princess Berthe, daughter of the King of Scotland to whom he was related. Jean de Tavanes, brother of Marguerite, brought the black bands of lansquenets from Switzerland into France, and at their head performed important services to the state under Louis XII. The house of Tavanes having ended with his person, the King, in recognition of his services, permitted his nephew Gaspard de Saulx to add the name of Tavanes to his own. Guillaume de Saulx, invested with a num-
ber of offices under François I, obtained that of lieutenant-general of the

government of Burgundy from Henri II in fifteen hundred and fifty-six,
an office which has remained in the house of Saulx ever since. When
Gaspard de Saulx, who had inherited the valor of his ancestors, had made
the decisive move that gave victory to Henri II at the battle of Rent, the
King took from his own neck the chain of his Orders and decorated
Gaspard with it, also embracing him in front of his army. Gaspard having
also distinguished himself at the battle of Jarnac and Montconcour, King
Charles IX, in the year fifteen hundred and ninety, created in his favor a
fifth place of marshal of France, which was to be only temporary, until
such time when he could be given one of the four that then existed.
Guilleaume de Saulx, son of marshal de Tavanes, was made chevalier of
the Order of Saint Esprit under Henri III in fifteen hundred and eighty-five. In Burgundy, he supported the party of Henri IV with such zeal and
ability that in fifteen hundred and ninety-six the whole Province was en-
tirely pacified. Jacques de Saulx, comte de Tavanes, his son, who held great
offices under Louis XIII, has left useful memoirs on the wars of sixteen
hundred and fifty and sixteen hundred and fifty-three. Charles-Marie de
Saulx-Tavanes was lieutenant-general of the Autunois, the Auxois, and the
Auxerrois under Louis XIV. Under Louis XV, the house of Saulx-Tavanes,
in addition to the military services it rendered and the eminent
ranks it held in the army, was invested with the highest commissions of
the Court. Henri-Charles de Saulx, comte de Tavanes, lieutenant-general
of the armies of the King and chevalier of his Orders, commanded for
thirty years in Burgundy, where he twice held the Assembly of Provin-
cial Estates in the name of the King. Cardinal de Tavanes, his brother, was
Grand Almoner of France, having first been Grand Almoner of the
Queen; he was also commander of the Order of Saint Esprit and presided
times at the Assembly of the Clergy of France. Comte de Saulx, son
of the afore mentioned comte de Tavanes, having first been Menin of
M. le Dauphin, Our late, beloved Father, became chevalier d'honneur of
the Queen, Our late, beloved Grandmother, also chevalier of the King's
Orders, lieutenant-general of his armies, lieutenant-general in Burgundy,
and governor of the Château du Taureau in Brittany. Comtesse de Saulx,
his spouse, was lady-in-waiting to the Queen.

Charles-François-Casimir de Saulx, comte de Tavanes, their son, in whose
favor We wish to create a hereditary duchy, has served Us with the same
zeal as his ancestors and possesses, as they did, the highest military ranks
in Our armies, the highest offices, and the most eminent honors in Our
kingdom and at Our Court. Born on the eleventh day of August, seventeen
hundred and thirty-nine, he entered Our service in seventeen hundred and
fifty-four as musketeer in the first company. From then on, he passed
through the different military ranks in the King's Infantry Regiment as
well as in the Regiment of Vienne and the Cavalry Regiment of M. le
Dauphin. During the Westphalian campaign he was present at the battle
of Hastenbeck, at the seizure of Hameln, at the conquest of the electorate of Hanover, at the capitulation of Closterreven, and at the seizure of Halberstadt in seventeen hundred and fifty-seven; and, in seventeen hundred and fifty-eight at the battle of Crevelen, at the defense of Landvert, and during the retreat to Neurs, where he formed the rear-guard of the army under enemy fire. During this campaign, his father, comte de Saulx, Menin of the Dauphin, Our late, beloved Father, having been named chevalier d'honneur of the Queen, Our late, beloved Grandmother, comte de Tavanes was given the afore mentioned post of Menin, the functions of which he assumed after the campaign in seventeen hundred and fifty-nine. He participated at the battle of Minden and at the retreat to Kassel, having been named colonel in the Grenadiers of France. During the campaign of seventeen hundred and sixty-one, he was colonel second-in-command in the Royal Grenadiers of Cambis, and was present at all the military engagements in which that regiment took part. At the end of that campaign, he was in charge of fortifying and guarding the town of Retz, near Wesel on the Rhine, in order to protect the encampment of the army. In seventeen hundred and sixty-two, he was attached to the corps of the Grenadiers of France, where he commanded a brigade throughout the German campaign. He took part in the engagement at Williamstadt, and in the attack on the Forest, from which he alone, the third of eight colonels attached to that corps, returned; all the others and more than thirty officers, as well as two of four brigadiers, having been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. He and his brigade formed the rear-guard of the reserve of comte de Stainville during the retreat to Kassel under continuous enemy fire. During the retreat from Hesse, he also participated in the attack on the fortified castle which was taken by assault by the same reserve. Subsequently, he went with that same unit to protect the junction of the army of Prince de Soubise with that of Prince de Condé. He and his brigade manned the heights of the salines of Friedberg at the moment when the army of the hereditary Prince of Brunswick advanced to attack the army of Prince de Condé, and he was partly responsible for the victory won in that engagement.

Peace having been concluded toward the end of that same year seventeen hundred and sixty-two and King Louis XV, Our most honored Lord and Grandfather, wishing to give comte de Tavanes some mark of his satisfaction with his military services, he named him lieutenant-colonel in the Queen's Infantry Regiment. He was made brigadier of the King's Armies on January twenty-second, seventeen hundred and sixty-nine and named chevalier of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis on June twenty-second, seventeen hundred and seventy. In seventeen hundred and seventy-one, on May thirteenth, King Louis XV, our most honored Lord and Grandfather, taking into consideration the services rendered by the family of the afore mentioned comte de Saulx in the various charges it had held at Court, and his personal services as Menin of the Dauphin, Our late, beloved Father, named him chevalier d'honneur of Madame la Dauphine,
subsequently Queen of France, Our beloved Spouse and Companion, en survivance of comte de Saulx, his father, who was given permission to carry out his functions in his absence. He became titulary of this charge in seventeen hundred and seventy-eight, upon the retirement of comte de Saulx. We have also created him marshal of Our camps and armies on March first, seventeen hundred and eighty. Wishing to give him further marks of Our benevolence, We have named him chevalier of Our Order of Pentecost of the year seventeen hundred and eighty-three, and We have received him on the first day of the following year, seventeen hundred and eighty-four. In that same year, as a reward for his military services, We have named him, on February fifth, to the governorship of the Château du Taureau, which had become vacant through the death of comte de Saulx, his father; and, desiring to perpetuate in his house the charge of lieutenant-general of Burgundy in the bailliages of Dijon, the comtés of Auxonne, Châtillon, and Bar-sur-Seine, in which comte de Saulx had succeeded his ancestors, We have granted him the title to it on February seventh, seventeen hundred and eighty-four.

We are informed, furthermore, that the afore mentioned Sr. comte de Tavanes owns in Our Province and Duchy of Burgundy several large and beautiful estates which have long been in his family, and most of which are entailed in favor of males. Outstanding among them are those of Beaumont and Lux, which are considerable by virtue of their great nobility, the number of vassals, and the importance of the rights attached to them. In the last-mentioned domain, there is a magnificent château, perfectly suited to become the seat of a domain of high rank. The comté of Beaumont is composed of five parishes, Beaumont, Champagne, Blagny—all of which carry the right of high, middle, and low justice, the droit d'indire, the taille aux quatre cas, banalities of oven and mill, guet et garde, the right of banvin, and a number of other excellent rights, remunerative and honorific—, Renève-l'Eglise and Renève-le-Châtel, parishes with middle and low justice, and the very extensive seigneurie of Bessey, to which very good seigneurial rights are attached. [We are also informed] that the said comté de Beaumont has been created in favor of Claude de Saulx, direct ancestor of comte de Tavanes four generations ago, by Letters Patent of the month of October, sixteen hundred and eighteen, registered at the Parlement and at the Chambre des Comptes of Dijon on December twenty-first of the same year. [We are informed] that the seigneurie and domain of Lux have borne the title of baronie from time immemorial, and that it has been recognized as such by acts of reprise de fief and by aveux submitted to the Chambres des Comptes in Dijon. [We are informed] that it is composed of the domains, fiefs, seigneuries and parishes of Lux, Spoy, Orville, Fley, and of a fief at Gemanus, all having justice high, middle, and low, called Le Clos de Gemanus. At the said place of Lux, there is a grand and handsome château, flanked by towers and surrounded by a water-filled moat, with extensive and beautiful dependencies, all of them
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carrying rights of high, middle, and low justice, in addition to dîmes, champart, taille seigneuriale, cens, banalités of oven and mill, guet et garde, rights on hunting, fishing, weights, and measures, banvin, droit d'indire, taille aux quatre cas, and other excellent rights, remunerative and honorific. [We are informed] that the afore mentioned comte de Beaumont and baronie of Lux are mouvances directly held from Us as Lords of Our Duchy of Burgundy, and are within the competence of Our Parlement of Dijon, with the exception of some small parts of the said domain of Lux which fall within the competence of Our Parlements of Paris and Besançon, namely about half of the finage of Orville whose jurisdiction falls within the bailiages of Gray in Franche-Comté, and the village and territory of Fley, whose jurisdiction falls within the bailiages of Langres, even though the said territories are mouvances of Our said Duchy of Burgundy in the same manner as the rest of the said domain of Lux. These domains of Beaumont and Lux, united into a single corps de fief would have enough importance and revenue to create and maintain the rank, title, and quality of a duchy. Moved by these reasons, and other considerations, We, in a special act of grace, power, and royal authority, have decided that by the present letters, signed by Our own hand, the said comte de Beaumont and baronie of Lux with all their fiefs, sub-fiefs, domains, seigneuries, and dependent jurisdictions, together with any domains, fiefs, and seigneuries the afore mentioned Sr. comte de Tavanes and his male heirs born in legitimate wedlock may hereafter add or annex, shall be and are herewith given the title and rank of a hereditary DUCHY under the name and designation of SAULX-TAVANES, which We wish and expect them to bear henceforth, instead of those of comte of Beaumont and baronie of Lux. Which two domains We unite and incorporate together, so that in the future they will form but one and the same corps de seigneurie under the title, rank, and name of DUCHY OF SAULX-TAVANES; with the proviso, however, that the afore mentioned Sr. comte de Tavanes and his successors to the duchy will hold it solely and as a full fief from Us as titularies of Our Crown, and that in a single foy et hommage, for which they will swear the oath of fealty in the customary manner.

We also wish the duchy of Saulx-Tavanes to be henceforth and in perpetuity within the immediate competence of Our parlementary court of Dijon, under the sole and immediate jurisdiction of which We wish to place all the appeals of the officers of the said duchy. To that effect We have separated and exempted, hereby separate and exempt, the said domains of Beaumont and Lux, their appurtenances and dependencies, from the mouvances of Our Duchy of Burgundy, so that they will henceforth be held directly from Our Crown. We similarly separate the jurisdictions of the said domains from the competence of the bailiages of Dijon, before which the appeals of the judges of these domains used to come in the past; except, however, for royal cases, which Our baili in Dijon will continue to
recognize. It is understood, however, that no changes will be made with respect to the right of competence of the bailliages of Langres over the jurisdiction in the village of Fley, nor with respect to that of the bailliage of Gray over the part of the finage of Orville within its competence; which competences will remain unchanged and be exercised in the said jurisdictions as in the past, given the small size of these jurisdictions and the difficulties that might arise when separating them from the competence of Our Parlements of Paris and Besançon and incorporating them into the competence of Our Parlement of Dijon, and given, furthermore, the assurance that the rest of the domains of Lux which remain comprised in the creation of a duchy is sufficient to assume that title. We have excepted and do except from the creation of a duchy as established by the present Letters those portions of the domain of Lux which are comprised in the said jurisdictions under the competence of the said bailliages of Langres and Gray. We wish the said portions of the said domain of Lux to be held directly from Us as Titularies of Our Duchy of Burgundy as in the past, and We wish to be furnished the aveux and dénombrements for them in Our Chambre des Comptes in Dijon. We also wish the jurisdictions of the said excepted places to be exercised henceforth by special officers, separate from those of the said duchy, which officers will render justice subject to appeal to the Royal bailliages of Langres and Gray.

Regarding the jurisdictions of the rest of the said domain and baronie of Lux, We have united them and do unite them by these Letters, so that they will henceforth be exercised in one and the same seat, under the title and name of Ducal Bailliage of the Duchy of Saulx-Tavané. Before this court, which We wish to be established at Lux, since the château of that place is to be the seat of the duchy, before which all cases and contentions hereafter arising among the vassals and censitaires of the said duchy shall henceforth come in the first instance, except for royal cases; and appeals shall be made to Our said Parlement of Dijon, within whose direct competence the ducal bailliage of the said Sr. comte de Tavané shall come, as has been said above. For the operation of this said ducal bailliage the said Sr. comte de Tavané shall have a bailli général, a lieutenant, an advocate, a ducal fiscal procureur, a registrar, procureurs, postulants, huissiers, sergeants, notaries, scriveners, and, in general, all the officers needed for the functioning of the said ducal bailliage.

It is Our express wish that henceforth all the vassals and censitaires of the said domains and seignuries which have been transformed into a duchy recognize the afore mentioned Sr. comte de Tavané and his successors to the said duchy as dukes and render them the duties that are owed them in that quality, without, however, any augmentation in the said duties; and also that they take and render to the said château of Lux as the seat of the said duchy the fois et hommages, aveux et dénombrements, déclarations et reconnaissances they owe the said comté of Beaumont and
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baronie of Lux and their annexes under the title and rank of Duchy of Saulx-Tavanes. It is Our wish that the afore mentioned Sr. comte de Tavanes and his heirs and male descendants born in legitimate wedlock enjoy and use the title, rank, prerogatives, and all the privileges in general appertaining to a hereditary duchy in the same manner they have been and are being enjoyed by the other dukes of Our realm; but that those among his children and male descendants born in legitimate wedlock who might be engaged in Holy Orders or in any religious order can not succeed to the said duchy. In such a case the duchy will rightfully belong to him who follows in the order of primogeniture in each line and branch. It is Our wish, however, that if the only and last male descendant of the afore mentioned Sr. comte de Tavanes should be engaged in Holy Orders, he be able to succeed to the said duchy and have the right to take and bear in his arms and escutcheons the symbols, marks, and titles of ducal rank; but only on condition that in the absence of any direct male descendants born in legitimate wedlock, the domains comprising the said duchy return to their original nature, rank, and quality. However, in the absence of male heirs, neither We nor Our successors will have any rightful claim arising from reunion of property, reversion, or ownership of the said duchy, as stated in the edicts of fifteen hundred and seventy, fifteen hundred and seventy-nine, and the declarations of December, fifteen hundred and eighty-one, March, fifteen hundred and eighty-two, and fifteen hundred and eighty-seven on the creation of duchies, marquisats, and comtes, the strict provisos of which We herewith modify by virtue of Our full power and royal authority, since it is Our wish that the domains composing the said duchy shall, in the said case, be in no way considered joined with Our domain and Crown, especially since otherwise comte de Tavanes would have refused to accept and permit the gift and favor of the present creation of a duchy.

We, then, therefore, enjoin our good and faithful councillors in our court of Parlement and at the Chambre des Comptes of Dijon, the bailli of that city or his lieutenant, and all of Our other officers of justice, each in his appointed function, to have the present Letters read, published, and registered, and to grant the afore mentioned Sr. comte de Tavanes and his said heirs and successors born in legitimate wedlock the full, peaceful, and perpetual enjoyment of its contents; without, in so doing, placing before them, or permitting to be placed before them, any difficulty or obstacle whatsoever; and, in case any such obstacle should arise, to remove, lift, and restore it to its proper order, notwithstanding any ordinances given by Us or Our predecessors, nor any customs and other things apt to interfere which, to that end, we have expressly modified and do so modify by these present Letters.

For such is our pleasure, and so that it might be firm and stable forever, We have caused Our seal to be attached to the present Letters. Given
ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS

at Versailles in the month of August in the Year of Our Lord seventeen hundred and eighty-six, and the thirteenth of Our reign.

Signed: Louis


COMMENT:

The Letters Patent making Charles-François-Casimir a duke are a clear example of what crown and court considered significant in the history of an “illustrious family.” They demonstrate what had become the goal or self-image of the French court nobility, the epitome of aristocracy at the end of the Ancien Régime. Notice the attention given to the age and venerability of the house of Tavanes, its “alliances” with other old noble families. Significantly, the robe alliances—Brulart, Daguesseau, Amelot—are discreetly passed by; wealth, administrative talent, and family discipline could not quite compensate for newness of blood. Distinguished service to the crown “under several reigns” is closely associated with this venerability. Gaspard de Saulx receives his deserved recognition, but his descendants are not less praised. Even Jacques de Saulx is commended for his Mémoires, although his activities in the Fronde are not mentioned. Service at court is as meritorious as service on the field of battle. In fact, the cascades of honor attain a merit of their own and serve as justification for more rewards and titles. The closer a Tavanes came to the person of the king—as companion of royal grandmother, father, or wife—the more deserving he was. In this, Louis XVI seemed little different from Louis XIV, though knowing something about the two royal personalities, one wonders who was the object of manipulation.

From this document, what appears important about the land? “Grandes et belles terres” are not made into a duché because they are productive or even extensive in acreage. They are distinguished by their beaux droits, their number of “vassals,” their entails, their justice, high, middle, and low. The revenues are also sufficiently important to sustain the new rank; the jurisdictions—not the domains—from a corps de seigneurie with claims to foy et hommages, aveux et dénombrements over many villages. The new duché could justify and provide its own corps of officers and replace a bailliage court. It was called a fief with a “magnificent château,” flanked by towers and surrounded by a moat.
Little wonder the first duke had maps drawn up, showing geometric lines radiating out from his château at Lux to all of his nine villages and 480 households. Little wonder he made plans for an extended formal garden, laid out on an axis perpendicular to the *perron* at Lux. The duke did not have to live there to sense its symbolic value. Indeed, distance improved the impression of "magnificence." Lux was no Chambord after all; it was a modest manor house confined between the village and the meandering river Tille (*A. N., T–109*).

In all of this there was an aspect of unreality, of play-acting. Yet the wording of such a document would encourage pretention, even self-delusion; clearly, it would not encourage the more mundane processes of land improvement. *Beaux droits* and numerous "vassals" counted for more than well-tilled fields and prosperous peasants: for the rank of hereditary duke was earned at Versailles, not in the apparently sleepy villages of the Dijonnais.