Merchants, Landlords, Magistrates

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Notes

Preface

2. Lawrence Stone, “History and the Social Sciences in the 20th Century,” in *Symposium on the Future of History*, ed. Charles Delzell (Vanderbilt, 1975), p. 39. “It may be that the time has come for the historian to reassert the importance of the concrete, the particular, and the circumstantial, as well as the general theoretical model and procedural insight.”
3. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), p. 23. Writing as an anthropologist, Geertz proposes “fine-combed field study in confined contexts” so that the “mega-concepts with which contemporary social science is afflicted . . . can be given the sort of sensible actuality that makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely about them, but what is more important, creatively and imaginatively with them.” Italics in the original text.

Chapter One


8. Archives Départementales, Charente-Maritime (hereafter cited as A.D.), E-483, “Livre concernant les rentes et intérêts des vaisseaux,” 1723-67. The French livre in 1780 was very roughly equivalent to $2.00 (U.S.) in 1980. Of course, the components of the cost-of-living were very different. Food for example was quite “cheap” by our standards, while all manufactured goods seemed very “dear.” An income of 10,000 livres in the provinces would be considered comfortable, while one needed at least 50,000 livres per annum to “cut a good figure” in Paris. Day-labor (male) was paid one livre per day maximum. Comparison of revenues at the lower end of the income scale has little meaning since day-labor was paid partly in bread; moreover, the miserable diet and living conditions of a French day-laborer in 1780 are unimaginable by the standards of a wageearner in the Western world today. The ratio of revenue between a well-to-do provincial landlord and a day-laborer was at least thirty to one, between an overseas merchant and an artisan, perhaps fifty to one, and between a Versailles duke and a provincial magistrate about ten to one.

9. Ibid.


11. A subsequent expedition of indigo was evaluated at 39,873 livres. This probably represents part of this debt. If the balance remained unpaid, which seems likely, there was a net loss on the voyage of about 30,000 livres for the six partners. A.D., E-486.


15. A.D., E-483, 1723-34.

17. Ibid., entries of 20 August 1719, 26 July 1721, 30 Dec. 1722.
27. Ibid., 52-53; Garnault, *Le Commerce rochelais*, 3: 170-72. Garnault presents a list of the ships taken by the English before the formal declaration of war.
29. Tarrade, *Le Commerce colonial*, 1: 143. Italics mine. See also Robert, *Les Trafics coloniaux*, p. 133: "The year 1744 certainly does not mark the last great days of the colonial trade at La Rochelle, but surely in an irrevocable way it marks the end of a period when events had been particularly favorable to the trade." For a general survey of French trade policy during the twenty years before 1743, see Arthur M. C. Wilson, *French Foreign Policy during the Administration of Cardinal Fleury, 1726-1743* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936).
32. Ibid., "Etats," 22 June 1744; 2 Nov. 1746.
34. Ibid., p. 146.
35. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Jean-Samuel Depont, 24 May 1766.
37. See chapter 4 below.
41. Marcel Marion, *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France sous l'Ancien Régime*

42. François Bluche et Pierre Durye, *L'Anoblissement par charges avant 1789* (Paris, Les cahiers nobles, 1962) 1: 9; Charmeil, *Trésoriers*, pp. 72-73. Charmeil claims that by the mid-eighteenth century a father would buy the office just before his death and pass it on to his son, thus assuring the family of hereditary nobility in a little more than twenty years. This explains the advanced age of many *trésoriers* at the end of the Old Regime.


48. A.D., E-487, Paul François to Jean-Samuel Depont, 6 July 1765.


50. Unfortunately, the only glimpse we have of Paul-François’s library is from his correspondence to his son. Of Paul Depont’s reading habits, we know nothing. However, if the libraries of Marseilles merchant families are any indication, an armateur seemed to limit himself to account books and law manuals. Even Jacques Savary’s *Parfait Negociant* (Paris, 1675) was rare in Marseilles. See Charles Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 174).


52. A.D., E-472, Will of 8 Nov. 1712.


54. Ibid., Codicil of 13 Mar. 1743. Paul Depont drew up at least nine codicils to his will, an indication of many changes of mind.

55. Ibid., Codicil of 1 July 1723.


57. In 1714 a Lescure married a Green de Saint-Marsault, one of the most important noble families at La Rochelle. See E. H. E. Beauchet-Filleau, *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des familles de Poitou*, 4 vols. (Poitiers, 1891-1912).


59. A.D., E-487, Paul-François Depont to Madame de Lescure, 24 May 1765. The bride’s mother was a lady-in-waiting of the queen.
60. A.D., E-473, Will of 9 May 1753. In this context “bourgoise” suggests simplicity rather than “non-noble.”


64. Pérouas, Le Diocèse de La Rochelle, pp. 334-36.

65. Ibid., pp. 348, 414, 414n.

66. Ibid., pp. 378, 384.

67. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Jean-Samuel Depont, 17 Apr. 1764.

68. Ibid., 28 Dec. 1765.


71. Pérouas, Le Diocèse de La Rochelle, pp. 169, 169n.

72. A.D., E-474, “Concession de banc,” 16 Dec. 1753. The pew cost 120 livres entrance fee and 10 livres per annum rental. They were apparently leased to the highest bidder.

73. A.D., E-487, Paul-François Depont to Madame la Comtesse de Lescure, 7 Jan. 1766.


Chapter Two


2. The Hôtel Depont on the rue du Palais seems more modest than many of the town houses of the armateurs. The Hôtel Poupet, for example, which serves as the prefecture today, is much more distinguished, at least from the outside. Depont’s town house was a bank in 1962 when the author was there.

3. A.D., E-487. See, for example, Paul-François to Jean-Samuel Depont, 1 Apr. 1758.

4. I have examined sixty-six of these letters in some detail; the remaining letters (about thirty) I found redundant. All of the private letters of Paul-François Depont are found in E-487.


6. See Colin Lucas’s review of Alan Forrest, Society and Politics in Revolutionary

7. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Jean-Samuel, 23 Oct. 1758. Hereafter, all letters can be assumed to have been written by Paul-François to Jean-Samuel unless otherwise noted. Where substantial passages are quoted, the date will be in the text.

8. Paul-François employed the term “tourbillon de Paris” often; he used it almost interchangeably with “continual dissipation.” Psychologists might detect a sexual overtone, especially when paired with another favorite word, “engulfed” (englouti). I do not intend to pursue this, but it is quite clear that, for Depont père, Paris was the maelstrom that consumed, indeed devoured, everyone in its path.


10. See letters of 3 Jan. 1758 and 17 June 1758.

11. See Douglas Dakin, Turgot and the Ancien Régime in France (New York, 1972), pp. 13–19 and passim. Turgot was made maître des requêtes in 1753 (Depont in 1755); he was made intendant in 1761 (Depont in 1765). But after this, Turgot rose rapidly to become controller-general in 1774. Turgot visited La Rochelle in the 1750s on an inspection tour of trade and manufacturers.

12. The phrase voleurs d’argent surely extended beyond thieves in the narrow sense.

13. It is not altogether clear what “raising children” meant for a mother in this social milieu in the eighteenth century. Madame des Granges, Depont’s daughter-in-law at La Rochelle, had a household staff of nine servants, including a governess. See E-489, “Gages de domestiques depuis 1764 à 1792.”

14. This may well have been the Harouard de Beignon family at La Rochelle. Paul-François could only approve of the daughter of Étienne-Henri Harouard de Beignon, secrétaire du roi, wealthy armateur, director of the chamber of commerce, and seigneur de La Jarne, a domain close to Depont’s in Aunis. Here was a family with whom the Deponts could feel comfortable. La Morinérie, La Noblesse d’Aunis, p. 258. See also Erik Dahl, “Le Château de Buzay,” Congrès archéologique de France, CXIVe Session (La Rochelle, 1956), pp. 21–24.

15. Intendant Bégon, like Baville at Toulouse or Tourny at Bordeaux, was La Rochelle’s most well-known intendant, at least before Sévres de Meilhan. He was especially remembered for his pious foundations and charities at the end of the seventeenth century, ably seconding the work of Bishop Champflour. See Michel Bégon, “Mémoire sur la généralité de La Rochelle, 1699” in Archives historiques de Saintonge et de l’Aunis (Paris and Saintes, 1875):2: 17-174.

16. To Madame de Lescure, 8 June 1765; to Madame la Princesse d’Armagnac, 4 June 1765.

17. To Madame des Granges, 15 July 1765; 19 June 1765.


20. Paul-François ended his letter by expressing gratification over his grandson’s recent recovery from smallpox. (To Virson, 26 Aug. 1769. See also Paul-François to Jean-Samuel, May 1769.)

21. 18 June 1765.

22. To Virson, 26 Aug. 1769.

23. To Madame de Lescure, 24 May 1765.

24. To Mlle. Virson and Aigrefeuille, 17 Oct. 1763. Paul-François attached the name of
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one of the family properties to each child's proper name; thus Pauline Depont de Virson and Elisabeth Depont d'Aigrefeuille. This seemed common practice even among merchant families who owned land.

25. There are no books listed in the "Inventory of Movable" drawn up by the Republican government in 1797. See A.D., Q-250, "Biens des émigrés, Partages: Depont des Granges." I have not been able to find the inventaire après décès of Paul-François, if there was one.


27. This is not to say that other "literatures" were not available at La Rochelle at this time. Robert Darnton has identified at least one bookseller, Mathieu, who found a market for a whole range of pornographic works smuggled in from the eastern frontiers of the kingdom. Needless to say, Paul-François was not one of his clients. I wish to thank my friend Robert Darnton for this information.


29. 28 June 1766.

30. 23 Oct. 1758.

31. May 1769.

32. Ibid.


35. La Morinérie, La Noblesse de l'Aunis, "Election de La Rochelle."


37. 26 Sept. 1758; 23 Oct. 1758.

38. To Madame de Lescure, 7 Jan. 1766. Depont wrote without further comment, "On a déjà marqué que M. le Duc de Nivernais remplasserait M. le Duc de La Vauguyon près du Nouveau Dauphin, et qu'il aurait seulement les autres princes."

39. To Monseigneur le Duc, 29 Dec. 1768. Although La Vauguyon owned land in Saintonge (near Mirambeau), there is no evidence that Depont had used his office to curry favor with the duke. Depont expressed himself strongly against tax concessions to grands seigneurs. See below.

40. Court histories and contemporary mémoires tell us little about how this network operated. Perhaps a careful reading of Duc de Luynes and Horace Walpole might bring the dévots into better light, but the work has still to be done.

41. To M. le Prince de Talmont, 4 April 1758. "J'ai été charmé que la nouvelle qui s'est répandue sur la nouvelle dignité de Mgr. de La Vauguyon se soit confirmée, ne doutant point que Dieu n'en tire sa Gloire."

42. 26 Sept. 1758.

43. 1 Apr. 1758.

44. Ibid.

45. To Marquis de Durfort, Marquise de Durfort, and Marquise de Lescure, June 1765. This was also the occasion for the purchase of the wedding gift that would be honnête, but costing no more than one thousand livres.

46. To Madame de Lescure, 8 June 1765.

47. To Madame des Granges, 15 July 1765.

48. To Madame la Comtesse de Lescure, 7 Jan. 1766. See chapter 1.

49. To Madame des Granges, 19 June 1765. At this moment did Depont scowl or smile? He was not the sort to smile often.
50. Jean-Samuel’s colleague, Jacques de Flesselles, was to become intendant of Lyon from 1768 to 1784. He was very popular at Lyon; in 1783 the city notables petitioned that he not be transferred to Paris. See Maurice Garden, Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIIIe siécle (Paris, 1974.), p. 494. Flesselles also represented Paul-François Depont at his son’s wedding in Paris. See Chapter 5.


52. The whole notion of an “aristocratic reaction,” fundamental to the classic interpretation of the French Revolution, has recently come into question. It is increasingly difficult to regard the Second Estate as a cohesive social entity with a common mentality or program. Even the notion of a “temporary alliance” in the late 1780s of “Robe” and “Sword” now seems doubtful. Recent articles in the Annales by David Blen, Guy Chausinmad-Nogaret, and François Furet, and by William Doyle and Colin Lucas in Past and Present discuss this issue. See also Bailey Stone “Robe against Sword: The Parlement of Paris and the French Aristocracy, 1774-1789,” French Historical Studies 9, no. 2 (Fall 1975): 278-303. The conception of an “aristocratic reaction” should not be confused with “seigneurial reaction,” however. This is a separate problem in my opinion.

53. 25 Jan. 1766. The pauvre honteux will be discussed below.


56. 16 Apr. 1765.


58. A.D., C-121, 1765.


60. A.D., E-472, Codicil of 1 July 1723.

61. I am referring to those historians like Funck-Brentano who cite the case of Mirabeau’s imprisonment as evidence that the lettre de cachet was relatively innocuous. Young Mirabeau did not think so, nor did many others who were put in prison without “due process.” Paul-François’s grandson would defend the abolition of the lettre de cachet in a letter to Edmund Burke in 1790. See chapter 8.

62. 17 June 1758; 20 July 1758.

63. A Giraud and a Fouchard were both tenants (fermiers) on Depont’s land. Depont may have applied for the “warrants” in his capacity as Trésorier de France.

64. 25 Feb. 1769.

65. A.D., E-472, Codicil of 1 July 1723.

66. A.D., E-489, “Gages de domestiques depuis 1764 à 1792.” The household of Paul-Charles Depont had nine servants. Measured by the length of service, the maître d’hôtel, the innkeeper, the cook, the maids, the valet, the footman, and the gardener were loyal; only the coachmen seemed hard to retain despite a wage of 150 livres per annum plus food, lodging and livery. Richard Cobb might tell us why. The accounts even itemize laundry costs, which were deducted from the servants’ wages. The servants made some of their own clothes from the cloth purchased from the household budget.

67. Robert, Les Trafics coloniaux, p. 192n. In 1767 there were 1,288 domestics in a total population of 15,340 at La Rochelle. The armateurs had between four and six servants per household.

68. A.D., E-487 passim. For endless passages on chronic illnesses see R. M. Myers, ed., Children of Pride (New Haven and London, 1972). Why do families love to discuss their
ailments ad nauseam? Apart from a few medical tips, how much material has the social historian lost because of this digression of self-indulgence? See also R. Forster, “Family Biography” in Biographie und Geschichtswissenschaft: Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit, Band 6 (Vienna, 1979), pp. 111-26.

69. 13 Dec. 1763; 20 July 1758. Perhaps these were silhouettes. This is probably the closest one comes in the eighteenth century to family photographs at Christmas time.

70. 1 Apr. 1758.

71. Why did Paul-François attempt to prevent the nomination of Paul-Charles as mayor of La Rochelle? “That will not suit him from any point of view,” he wrote, 2 Mar. 1765.

72. Father and son always addressed each other, of course, as “vous.” Jean-Samuel addressed his brother as “tu,” at least in 1798 when both men were in their seventies. They had been through a great deal by then.

Chapter Three


2. A.D. E-487, Paul-François to Jean-Samuel, 20 July 1758 (hereafter cited by date only). Italics mine: “mes terres qui sont mon ppa bien . . .” Jean-Samuel sold the domain of La Babotieux for forty-two thousand livres, a price his father considered much too low. See 1 Apr. 1758.

3. 18 June 1765. Italics mine: “mais ne vivant que de mes rentes qui sont tres mal payées . . .”

4. French historians have been slow to integrate the legal aspects of family inheritances into their social history. See Roland Mousnier, Les Institutions de la France sous la monarchie absolue (Paris, 1974), vol. 1, ch. 2; Pierre Bourdieu, “Marriage Strategies as Strategies of Social Reproduction” Selections from the Annales: E.S.C., R. Forster and O. Ranum, eds. (Baltimore, 1976); Robert Forster, The Nobility of Toulouse in the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore, 1960), ch. 6. See also note 6 below.


7. L’Usance de Saintonge entre-mer et Charente par M. Cosme Bechet, avocat au Parlement de Paris et Siège Présidial de Saintes (Bordeaux, 1701), article 57, par. 108. The customary law of La Rochelle (Aunis) provided even less for the eldest son under “successions nobles;” a preference legacy (préciput) consisting of the manor house and park (préclôture) and one-fifth of the noble land (biens nobles). See M. René Josué Valin, Nouveau Commentaire sur la Coutume de La Rochelle et du pays d’Aunis, 3 vols. (La Rochelle, 1756), 3: 119.

8. Ibid. Burgundy also provided two-thirds of the propres for the eldest son. In areas of the Droit Écrit—Toulouse, for example—if there were four children or less, the eldest son had a right to two-thirds; if five or more, one-half of the propres. Mousnier, Les Institutions,
pp. 63 and 47-69, passim. Ralph Giesey concludes that it was contrary to the principles of the customary law to bequeath the disposable part of the réserve to any of the children. “No one can be an heir and a legatee at the same time” was the rule of coütumier succession. However, the propres could be reduced so as to minimize the réserve to be divided, “Rules of Inheritance,” p. 276.

9. That is, in case of two children, the elder could add his share (one-half) of the two-thirds “reserved” for all direct heirs to his own one-third (right of the eldest) and thus accumulate two-thirds of the total propres. Daughters were rarely “advantaged” except in cases where there were no sons or where a large dowry might assure a particularly bonne alliance.

10. Valin, Nouveau Commentaire. 2: 487; 3: 27, 59-60. Valin (1695-1765) was procureur du roi at the Admiralty Court and a contemporary of Paul-François Depont. In the small world of officiers, they must have known each other and sought each other’s advice on family matters.

11. “Immobables” included rentes and offices as well as land and houses. Giesey, “Rules of Inheritance,” p. 273. Commercial assets, as well as specie and personal possessions, were classified as “movables.”

12. Forster, Nobility of Toulouse, ch. 6. In Roman Law areas such as Toulouse, the head of the family instituted one principal heir, and in his testament charged that heir to distribute legacies to others. Giesey, “Rules of Inheritance,” p. 276.


14. Philippe Ariès in his now classic work on childhood stresses the secular trend toward equal treatment of children. Without denying the century-long development he describes, attention might also be focused on the attitudes of specific social groups, especially such “socially mobile” families as the Depont. One might uncover hesitations and countercurrents especially in the eighteenth century when notions of family “splendor” and noble succession were still strong. The legist Valin wrote in 1756: “Il n’y a pas de splendeur à maintenir dans les families roturières,” which is to say that there was “splendor to maintain” in noble—and would-be noble—families. Valin, Nouveau Commentaire, 3: 106.

15. A.D., E-472, Codicil of 10 June 1733.

16. Ibid., Codicil of 1 July 1723.

17. Ibid., “Substitution” of 5 Sept. 1727. These biens were acquêts over which Paul and Sara Depont had complete control or “free disposition.”

18. Ibid., Codicil of 2 July 1715. The words are taken from the first entail of 1715, but they are equally applicable to the second of 1727.

19. Ibid., Codicil of 1 July 1723.


21. A.D., E-472, Codicil of 12 Jan. 1733, 10 June 1733. The retrait gave the seigneur the right of option to buy land in his seigneurial jurisdiction and attach it to his domain, i.e., land held directly by him. It was one technique of “domain-building.” See Marc Bloch, Les Caractères originaux de l’histoire rurale française (Paris, 1952), 1: 140 and passim.

22. The Cognac country, already an exporter of the famous brandy, was about fifty miles southeast of La Rochelle along the Charente River. The chais with their “serpentine” boilers for distilling the brandy can be visited today (1980s) in the villages east of Saintes and Saint-Jean d’Angély.

23. The “most prestigious” property was not necessarily the most remunerative. In 1733, the return on rentes (5 percent) was higher than on land (3 to 4 percent). This relation would change in the last third of the century, when land values rose dramatically.

24. These later codicils included enforcement clauses, stating that if any of the children
refused to abide by the testamentary wishes of their parents, they could claim their portions (légitimes) under the customary law. That law provided that “in the absence of propres” (the Depont case), the acquêts would be distributed in the same manner, namely, two-thirds of the property divided equally among all (three) children, and the remaining third and all the movables given to the eldest son. Since the “movables” included all the commercial assets and specie, the children would think twice before rejecting the testamentary provisions. And then there were the added legal costs of contesting the will. Valin, Nouveau Commentaire, 2: 334; Mousnier, Les Institutions, 1: 64.

27. Ibid., Codicil of 13 Mar. 1743; “Révocation de Substitution,” 14 Mar. 1743.
29. The Daguesseau Ordinance of 1747 extended the use of entail to “toutes personnes capables de disposer de leurs biens, de quelque état et condition qu’elles soient.” But it also limited the entail to “two degrees,” that is, from grandparents to grandchildren in direct descent. Even before 1747, entails had not been limited to the nobility. The Code Michaud of 1629 had permitted all but labourers and artisans (personnes rustiques) to entail. Mousnier, Les Institutions, 1: 66-67.
32. A.D., E-487, 20 July 1758.
34. A.D., E-487, 6 July 1765. Italics mine.
36. “If Manderoux [Jean-Samuel] insists, I must divide my silver and take some from you. I know this will inconvenience you when you have company.” A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Madame des Granges, 19 June 1765.
37. The rentes averaged 5 percent; the land 3 to 4 percent. However, the capital value of land was often calculated simply by multiplying landed rents (fermages) by a factor of 20 (or 5 percent). Hence, 32,000 livres is a conservative estimate of Depont revenues in 1746.
39. Henri Robert, Les trafics coloniaux du port de la Rochelle au XVIIIe siècle (Poitiers, 1960), pp. 192-96. There is still a need for a published work on the fortunes of the merchants of La Rochelle. Robert’s book was published posthumously before he had completed all his research. See John G. Clark, “La Rochelle and the Atlantic World during the Eighteenth Century” (unpublished manuscript) and chapter 1 above. I hope Clark’s work will soon be published.

41. Robert, Les Trafics coloniaux, p. 192. This is based on inventaires après décès.

42. A.D., E-473, Will of 9 May 1753; E-487, 4 May 1765.

43. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Sieur Chanois, négociant at La Rochelle, May 1769. See also Robert, Les Trafics coloniaux, p. 195, and Clark, "La Rochelle," chs. 6-7, on the difficulties obtaining legal action against the planters.

44. Compare Table 3.1 (fortune in 1746) with Table 3.4 (fortune in 1776) in this chapter.


46. Ibid.; see Table of Rentes (3. 2) and compare Tables 3.1 and 3.4 below.

47. A.D., E-489, "Rentes sur haut et puissant seigneur M. Jacques-Louis-François Gazeau de la Brandanière, chevalier, baron de Champagné près Luçon en Bas-Poitou."

48. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to M. le Marquis de Champagné, 20 May 1758.

49. A.D., E-489, 7 Sept. 1770. Loan of 7,000 livres "payée et delivrée en bon argent et espèces sonnantes ayant cours ...." Paul-François never seemed to lack hard specie.

50. A.D., E-484, fol. 18.

51. Ibid., fol. 21.

52. Ibid., fol. 18.

53. Ibid. Marginal notation: "rente par an (?) ; c'est un aveu." For a definition of the various kinds of retrait, see Marcel Marion, Dictionnaire des Institutions de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Paris 1923, 1969), pp. 488-89.

54. Permission to "repurchase" a cens, even at thirty times the annual charge, was a reform proposal even before 1789. See P. F. Boncerf, Les Inconvenients des droits féodaux (London, 1776); J. Q. C. Mackrell, The Attack on Feudalism in Eighteenth-Century France (London, 1973) ch. 6. The legal confusion between rentes foncières and cens was used by both landlords and tenants to improve their position during and after the Revolution. See Pierre Massé, "Les Amortissements de rentes foncières en l'an III," Annales historiques de la Révolution française 165 (1961): 380 and passim. Massé argues that the tenants gained at the proprietor's expense. For a more pessimistic view, see Albert Soboul, "Persistence of 'Feudalism' in the Rural Society of Nineteenth-Century France," in Rural Society in France: Selections from the Annales, ed. R. Forster and O. Ranum (Baltimore, 1977), pp. 50-71.


57. A.D., E-484, fols. 21, 62.


60. See Table of Rentes (3. 2).


62. Fortunately, Virson survived smallpox. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to M. de Virson, 26 Aug. 1769. Both grandchildren defied the life-expectancy tables: Virson died in 1801, Pauline in 1808. Had the Revolution not intervened, the investment of 1762 would have yielded an accumulated interest of 124,800 livres, almost four times the original capital.

63. A.D., E-484, fol. 26. The *rente* was reduced in 1778 to 2,340 livres, still above 7 percent. The 10 percent reduction probably represented the new *vingtième* taxes prompted by still another war with England.

64. Marion, *Dictionnaire des Institutions*, p. 483.

65. A.D., E-484, fols. 84, 90. To be sure, the *rente* was still being paid in 1780, fifty-five years later. Even at 2 percent, the capital had been completely repaid.


67. Ibid., 17 Apr. 1764. This is the same letter in which Paul-François lamented the loss of the Jesuit tutor and reproached his son for being "parlementaire," a Jansenist sympathizer.

68. Ibid., 2 Mar. 1765.


70. A.D., E-487, 18 June 1765.


72. A.D., E-487, 6 July 1765. Turgot observed that the rate of interest was 6 percent in the principal money markets of the kingdom in the 1760s. A. R. Turgot, "Mémoire sur les prêts d'argent," *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1844), 1: 119.

73. A.D., E-482, fol. 177, 5 Apr., 28 Apr. 1748.


76. A.D., E-484, "Livre de rentes." See Table of Rentes (3. 2).


78. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to M. Charpentreau, 5 Nov. 1768.

79. Ibid., Paul-François to Madame de Coudraye, 6 Dec. 1768; Paul-François to M. le Baron de la Rochebaron, 2 Dec. 1768.

80. Ibid., Paul-François to M. de Chevalier, 17 Dec. 1768.


82. See Table of Rentes (3. 2).


84. As Ralph Giesey puts it: "If rentes constituées were unsuitable to an individual's wish to get rich quickly, they were well-suited to a family's hope of getting rich eventually." Giesey, "Rules of Inheritance," p. 280.

85. The rate of capital growth by compounding interest is not readily grasped without a mathematical representation. It is doubtful that Paul-François made this kind of precise calculation, but he no doubt took the long view about capital accumulation.

86. A.N., M.C., 11 May 1766, articles 5, 11. It must have pained Jean-Samuel to see sixty
thousand livres, one-fourth of his wife's dowry, pass directly from his father-in-law to his father's creditors. This provision would require consent of the bride's parents of course. A wife's propres could not be "assigned" at her husband's discretion, not before the Code Napoléon at least.

87. The notion of a "threshold figure" of 1,000,000 livres' fortune to attain the style of life of a nobleman has been suggested by Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, "Capital et structure sociale sous l'Ancien Régime," Annales: E.S.C. 25 (1970): 463-76. In 1764, there were seventy-one officiers and fifty-eight nobles on the capitation tax rolls for the Election of La Rochelle. Paul-Charles Depont, eldest son of Paul-François and mayor of the city, was among the five most heavily taxed. True, the capitation was only roughly proportional to income, but it is still a good indication of the Depont family's standing at La Rochelle. Archives historiques de Saintonge et de l'Aunis (Paris and Saintes, 1879), 6: 215-27; "Le Sieur de Pont," p. 223.

88. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Madame de Lescure, 5 May 1764.
89. Ibid., 24 May 1765.

Chapter Four


7. A.D., C-175, "Marais de Voutron." Marquis de Saint-Georges to M. Barentin, 24 Oct. 1739. See also letters of 13 May and 3 July 1739. I wish to thank M. Camille Gabet for drawing my attention to this correspondence.

8. See Table 4.1.


11. A.D., C-175, "Marais de Voutron." A.D., 4-J-1226, "Marais de Rochefort et Cité, 1756-65."
12. A.D., C-198, "Réponse de la Société d'Agriculture de la généralité de La Rochelle ... pour parvenir à former un Tableau d'Agriculture ...," 1764, p. 30.
17. Ibid., 2: 488.
21. Ibid., “Election de Marennes,” 1763. Many French sailors from this area had been in English prisons for eight years.
22. A.D., C-183, “Renseignements statistiques . . . dans 122 paroisses de la Généralité de La Rochelle par les syndics,” 1774.
26. See figure 4 (Wheat Prices at La Rochelle).
29. Ibid., p. 520. Laveau gives a complete inventory of the hôpitaux.
30. See chapter 2 above.
33. Ibid., pp. 105-6, 113, 209-15, 221, 225, 229, and passim.
35. See chapter 3 above.
36. For the holdings of these merchant families, see the centième denier rolls recording property transfers and even leases in A.D., Series 2 C.
37. A.D., E-494, Seigneurie de Manderoux; E-491, Seigneurie de La Brande; A.D., E-492, Seigneurie d’Aigrefeuille.
38. Recall the twofold nature of a seigneur. The domain consisted of land held directly by the seigneur, while the mouvances were semi-independent parcels of land, held usually by peasants, and owing quit-rents (cens, champarts, rentes) and other dues and services to the seigneur. In Aunis the mouvances of a seigneurial jurisdiction frequently covered many times the area of the domain lands. See A.D., Q-287, Q-288, Petitions Relative to Leases, 1790-96.
43. A.D., E-483, -484, -499, -501. See Table 4.2.
44. A.D., E-490, Sales of 30 Nov. 1777, 2 Nov. 1778, 28 Mar. 1781 (Tétaud), 28 Mar. 1781 (Bevin).
46. Ibid., Sale of 28 Feb. 1790.
47. It was seldom necessary. The prospect of paying the legal costs necessitated by the number of local appeal courts usually sufficed. A cahier of the Third Estate from neighboring Saint-Pierre-près-de-Surgères stated: “In our neighborhood there is a jurisdiction called la Gravalle; from la Gravelle one appeals to Cité; from Cité one appeals to Surgères; from Surgères one appeals to Benon; from Benon one appeals finally to the Presidial of La Rochelle.” The cahier asked that royal justice be made more accessible. A.D., C-267, Cahier of Saint-Pierre-près-de-Surgères.
E-492 "Retrait" of 26 Jan. 1778. See R.-J. Valin, *Nouveau commentaire sur la coûte de
La Rochelle et du pays d'Aunis*, 3 vols. (La Rochelle, 1756), 1: 112–3, 2: 201–2 for the legal
provisions regarding the retrait.

1789* (Fontenay-le-Comte, n.d.), pp. 150–51; Marcel Marion, *Dictionnaire des Institutions
de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (1923; reprint ed., Paris, 1969), p. 76. See also
Valin, *Nouveau commentaire*.


53. A.D., E-490, Judgment of 22 Ventôse, Year V (12 Mar. 1797) by the Civil Tribunal
of Charente-Inférieure. This judgment reversed an earlier decision in 1796 awarding the two
cultivateurs 7.2 acres of the land, twenty-two years' income, interest, and damages. In 1800
it was Depont's turn to sue for damages.

54. A.D., E-489, Q-250 (Depont des Granges).

55. See Table 4.1. The terrier of Aigrefeuille gives the precise area. See Laveau, "Monde
rochelais," p. 348.

56. A.D., E-492, Faurie to Paul-François, 7 Aug. 1749.


59. Ibid., p. 324. Laveau has used the matrices or indexes to the terrier which I did not
see during my stay in La Rochelle. Bibliothèque Municipale, La Rochelle, MSS 506–9. This
is very precious documentation.

60. Ibid., pp. 324–25.


63. Ibid., p. 400.

64. See chapter 9.


66. See Robert Forster, *The House of Saulx-Tavares: Versailles and Burgundy,

67. A.D., E-490, Leases of 17 July 1719, 16 Apr. 1725; A.D., E-489, "Métairie de la

68. See Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3.

69. A.D., E-490, Lease of 8 July 1731.


71. See Table 4.1. C.-E. Labrousse, *La Crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien
mouvement des prix et des revenus en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1933), 1: 269–72 and
passim on rents.

sur les avantages de convertir son vin en Eau-de-vie*, 8 pp. (La Rochelle, 1805). Harouard
said that four to one was "extremely rare."

73. Figures 4.1 (by volume) and 2 (ad valorem).

74. Figure 4.3 (rents).

75. Figure 4.4 (grain prices).


78. See Robert Forster, "Obstacles to Agricultural Growth in 18th-Century France," *American Historical Review* 75 (October 1970): 1600–15. In this article I argue for a
rehabilitation of the *gros fermier*, one of the few "capitalist entrepreneurs" in the French
countryside.
79. Harouard writes: “Distillation requires large expenses and considerable advances of capital which oblige the small cultivateurs to sell their wine as soon as it reaches their storage sheds (chais).” Harouard, *Lettre sur l’Eau-de-vie*, p. 2.


81. Harouard alluded to a high population density even in 1808, when *la Grande Armée* must have taken the cream of local youth. “If we diminish farm work, what will become of our numerous population of 1,000 to 1,100 persons per square league?” (about 62 to 69 persons per square kilometer). Harouard, *Différents Modes de cultiver nos domaines dans l’arrondissement de la sous-préfecture de La Rochelle* (La Rochelle, 1808), p. 16.

82. A.D., C-183, “Renseignements statistiques . . . 124 paroisses,” 1774. The comments on each parish are often more informative than the bare statistics. At Saint-Laurent-de-Barrière, for example, the syndics wrote: “The vines have been ruined by the dogs, chickens, and children of the village; only two or three individuals have enough grain to feed themselves; the others live from hand to mouth by selling their ancestral property bit by bit.” This is an extreme case, to be sure, but any fermier who worked stills at Aigrefeuille or Verson would have been aware of such conditions. See C-198, “Réponse,” 1764, on the day laborer.

83. Harouard writes with a certain mixed feeling: “the tonneleurs [coopers] of our countryside are our chemists. They follow a routine that has been handed down to them and have made little progress in their art.” Harouard, *Lettre sur l’Eau-de-vie*. See also Robert Delemaing, *Histoire du Cognac* (Paris, 1935).

84. A.D., E-490, -491, -492, Leases at Les Granges, La Brande, Aigrefeuille.

85. A.D., E-492, Paul-François to Faurie at Aigrefeuille, 28 Apr. 1757.


87. A.D., E-483, fol. 222.

88. Ibid., fol. 196.


90. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Paul-Charles Depont des Granges, 17 May 1769.

91. Ibid., Paul-François to Faurie, 31 May 1769.

92. Ibid., Paul-François to Jean-Samuel, April 1769. Jean-Samuel had been pressing his father for money as usual.

93. Ibid., Paul-François to François Questron, 15 Apr. 1769.

94. Ibid., Paul-François to M. Bonneau, 22 September 1769.


96. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Faurie, 28 Apr. 1757.


98. Ibid.


100. A.D., E-487, -499 (Bonnet correspondence).

101. A.D., E-487, Bonnet to M. d’Auzon, 4 May 1788, 2 Mar. 1788.

102. A.D., E-492, Paul-Charles to Bonnet, 1 July 1789.

103. A.D., E-484, fol. 29 (letter between pages of ledger), Mainguet to M. de Pon des Granges, 11 Dec. 1783. Mainguet’s spelling left something to be desired.

104. A.D., E-484, fol. 29, Paul-Charles to Mainguet, 11 Dec. 1783. Curiously, Depont’s private account indicates that the higher rent was paid. A.D., E-484 (Chagnées).

105. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Jean-Samuel, 4 May 1765.

106. Ibid., Paul-François to Jean-Samuel, 3 Dec. 1765.

107. Ibid., Paul-François to M. le Peletier at Paris, 24 Dec. 1765. See the “Terrier
d'Aigrefeuille." Several maps demonstrate how the new royal road to La Rochelle cut a wide path through the vineyard parcels.


109. A.D., C-122, fol. 129. Subdelegate to Intendant, 20 Feb. 1779. "The parish tax collector is always a person dependent on the seigneur of the parish. ... He is his "justiciable;" on a thousand occasions he can be hassled [vexé] by the seigneur, which he will surely be if he is not docile in waiting for tax payment;" C-70, "Taille," 1733. "The country gentilshommes ... are little tyrants. ... They threaten, intimidate, and even mistreat the collectors."

110. A.D., C-122, "Vingtièmes," 1779.

111. A.D., C-121, Intendant of La Rochelle to Necker, 21 Mar. 1779. I wish to thank M. Camille Gabet of Rochefort for drawing this letter to my attention.

112. Selling brandy wholesale did not "derogate." Delemain, *Cognac*, 123-24; See Figures 4.1 and 2. Curiously, the unit price recorded at La Rochelle in 1762 is only 70 livres per cask.

113. A.D., E-492, Inventory of Brandy Sales, 1757-62. These were the very best years for brandy exports since the 1720s. See Figure 4.2 (ad valorem).

114. After 1835, salt-making on the French Atlantic coast went into rapid decline. But between 1780 and 1830 the rise in Western Europe's population increased the demand for salt from all sources—sea water, brine, and rock salt. On the offshore islands of Ré and Oleron, the abolition of the grande gabelle in 1790 gave a special incentive to proprietors like Depont, although a salt tax reappeared in 1805. Alert though Paul-Charles and his brother Jean-Samuel were to new investment opportunities, they probably did not know about the new process of converting sodium chloride into sodium carbonate developed by French chemists in 1792, the year the Depont brothers bought more salt beds on Oleron. See M. Delafosse and C. Laveau, *Le Commerce du sel de Brouage aux XVII* et XVIII* siècles* (Paris, 1960); Robert P. Multhauf, *Neptune's Gift: A History of Common Salt* (Baltimore, 1978).


118. Ibid., p. 35.


122. Forster, "Seigneurs and Their Agents." This is a study of the administration of four estates, those of Choiseul-Beaupré, Choiseul-Gouffier, Rosnyviren de Piré, and Saulx-Tavanes.

**Chapter Five**

1. A.D., E-487, Paul-François to Jean-Samuel Depont, 24 May 1766.

2. Ibid.


6. A.N., M.C., *Etude* 95: 302, "Partage entre Sieur de la Touche et Sieur et Dame Depont, 3 June 1766. This partage contains an observation on the terms of La Touche's marriage to Pierrette Cromot of 24 June 1745, as well as an "Etat des biens de M. de la Touche provenant de la succession de son père."


10. Ibid., "Prêts et mutations des différents effets du magazine en 1769."


15. "Partage" of 3 June 1766, "Observations" after each of the 29 articles.


17. "Partage" of 3 June 1766, article 14.


20. Ibid., article 17.


22. "Partage" of 3 June 1766.


24. Ibid., pp. 86-88.

25. See Vivian A. Gruder, *The Royal Provincial Intendants* (Ithaca, 1968). This is a study of the social and geographic origins of ninety intendants at the end of the Old Regime.


30. A.N., V6-1243, 993. Series V6 contains lawcases of all kinds.


32. A.N., V6-1243. The register listing the cases treated during this period by the Conseil
mentions the name of the rapporteur in the margin. Future intendants such as Taboureau des Réaux, Le Peletier de Cypiere, Perrin de Morfontaine, or Jacques de Flesselles appear somewhat more frequently than Depont. On the other hand, Chaumont de la Galaiziére and Trudaine de Montigny appear less frequently. Depont and Turgot handled about the same number of cases. Without claim to statistical precision, we can say that Depont as maître des requêtes carried an average workload.

35. Ibid., p. 161. Depont served on Bureaux IV, VIII, X, XII, XIV.
41. See Dakin, *Turgot*, p. 122 on the coteries around the Duc d’Orléans, the Prince de Conti, and the Duc de Chartres.
43. Ibid., 9: 313–14.
44. Ibid., 5: 110.
45. *L’Espion dévalisé* (London, 1782), p. 217. This polemical work, political as well as personal, has been attributed by Barbier to Baudoin de Guemanduc. "Depont à Metz est un imbécile à jouer, mais sa femme joue sur le théâtre de M. de Montesson, et Depont a eu une intendance, clef du royaume."
47. Ibid., 2: 168.
48. Reference in note 4 above.
49. Ibid., article 3. Cf. chapter 3 above, Table 3. 2.
54. Chaussinand-Nogaret, *Gens de finance*, p. 86. "The development of an authentic administration, easily seen as despotic, reduced their role [that of the magistrates of the Parliament of Paris]. Hostility to finance was only one aspect of their struggle against the administrative monarchy symbolized by the intendant."

Chapter Six


8. Leguai, Bourbonsais, p. 80. By the 1780s, there were a few wood-fueled iron forges, some mills producing chestnut meal and some stocking-making at Montluçon. But altogether these “industries” employed four hundred workers at most.

9. Hufton, The Poor, ch. 10 passim; Poitrineau, La Vie rurale, p. 370.


11. Leguai, Le Bourbonnais, 73.

12. Poitrineau, La Vie rurale, p. 696 suggests that Chazerat, intendant at Clermont from 1772 to 1789, was one of the few to stay long enough to see his projects through to completion.

13. Young, Travels in France.


16. The Almanach Royal lists a succession of addresses in the Marais quarter; after 1779, it is 11, rue des filles Saint-Thomas, the residence he occupied with his father-in-law until Jean-Samuel died in 1806.


20. Ibid., Depont to Albert, 9 May 1772.

21. Ibid., Depont to Controller-General, 16 Jan. 1777.

22. Ibid., Reverseaux to Controller-General, 23 June 1779.

23. Ibid., Depont to Albert, 12 Dec. 1772, “... faire mes démarches de vive voix.”


27. A.D., Allier, C-244, L’Averdy to Bureau des Finances de Moulins, 5 Mar. 1768, quoted in Camus, “Un Intendant,” p. 36n.


33. Bordes, *L’Administration*, pp. 196-98. Bordes admits that the experience of the intendants on this issue varied greatly from province to province.


36. Dakin, *Turgot*, ch. 6; Kaplan, *Bread, Politics*. Kaplan’s entire two-volume study treats this struggle between Turgot’s new policies and the traditional defenders of grain police. In the massive correspondence of the intendants Kaplan has collected, I have found not one letter from Depont at Moulins. There are of course examples of instructions to Depont and other intendants. See Kaplan, *Bread, Politics*, 2: 495. In 1770 when Terray complained that he was poorly informed about the grain supplies, he rebuked many intendants for their slovenliness. 2: 550.


40. Ibid., pp. 538-47.


44. A.N., H'-1149, Depont to d’Ormesson, 14 Dec. 1770.

45. Ibid., Depont to d’Ormesson, 27 Nov. 1770.

46. Ibid., d’Ormesson to Depont, 20 Dec. 1770.


50. A.N., H'-1149, *Détail des ateliers de charité, 1771*. Turgot at Limoges spent 47,200 livres on poor relief that year (Dakin, *Turgot*, p. 117); 70,000 livres were spent for the same purpose in Auvergne. See Hufton, *The Poor*, pp. 191-93.

51. A.N., H'-1149, Harvoin to d’Ormesson, 1771.

52. Ibid., Depont to d’Ormesson, 29 Mar. 1771.


56. A.N., H1-1149, Controller-General Terray to Depont, 21 Sept. 1771.

57. Ibid., Depont to d’Ormesson, 21 Jan. 1771.

58. Ibid., Albert to Depont, 20 May 1772. Italics mine.

59. Ibid., Depont to d’Ormesson, 12 June 1773; “Ateliers de charité,” 1773.

60. Ibid., “Ateliers de charité,” Moulins, 1774.

61. Ibid., Comtesse de Saint-Georges to d’Ormesson, 16 June 1772.

62. Ibid., Albert to Depont, 3 July 1772.

63. Ibid., Depont to d’Ormesson, 20 Jan. 1771.

64. Hufton, The Poor, pp. 243.


68. Ibid., Depont to d’Ormesson, 30 Oct. 1771. Italics mine.

69. A.D., E-487, Paul-François Depont to Madame des Granges, 19 June 1765: “Although I am convinced that their misery is great, one must not always believe what they say, because there are many lazy individuals [faînésants] who make the hardship look worse than it is.” This is not to say that Paul-François was indifferent to the plight of the poor; but he made distinctions among them. See above, chapter 2.

70. A.N., XI4 8809, fol. 175, 14 Dec. 1774.

71. The tariff barriers counterbalanced the economic benefits of better transportation for the Auvergnats. Poitrineau, La Vie rurale, p. 708.

72. A.D., Allier, “Inventaire sommaire” (Moulins, 1913), 6, “Dons,” MM. Flesselles et Depont, 1764. For the collèges, see Lehoua, Bourbonnais, p. 76.

73. One of them bore his name until the mid-nineteenth century, when it was renamed Boulevard Ledru Rollin. Sic transit . . .


75. Ibid., pp. 104–7.


80. A.N., H1-1140.
82. For example, A.D., Moselle, C-858, October 1780, March 1789.

84. Bordes, L’Administration, pp. 160-70. This institutional setting might account for the scanty documentation of Depont’s intendancy at Metz, even if the Archives of Moselle (the former Hôtel de l’Intendance) had not been destroyed by fire in 1870.


86. Gruder, The Royal Intendants, pp. 38, 128.
89. Ibid., Depont to Bertin, 8 March 1780.
91. Young, Travels in France, passim; Bourde, Agronomes.
93. A.N., H-1141, Blondel to Controller-General, Metz, 10 July 1788.
94. Ibid., “Frais des Etats,” 1787-89.
95. Ibid., “Bureau” of Assembly to Controller-General, 17 Nov. 1788; “Mémoire,” 10 July 1788.
96. Ibid., Depont to Controller-General, 17 May 1788.
97. Parisot, Lorraine. 2: 189. The garrison at Metz numbered thirty thousand at full strength. It was under the command of Marquis de Bouillé, a fervent royalist, in 1789.

88. Hufton, The Poor, pp. 226-44; Gutton, La Société et les pauvres, pp. 173-74, stresses the repressive aspect of the dépôts. See also Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York, 1979) and other works.


100. A.D., Moselle, C-858, Calonne to Controller-General. The number of soldiers infected by venereal disease garrisoned at Metz had fallen from 248 in 1773 to 151 in 1774, and to 143 in 1775; the intendant did not want to see the trend reversed. Cf. also Hufton, The Poor, pp. 306-9.

102. A.D., Moselle, C-858, Bertin to Depont, 26 May 1779.
103. Ibid., La Millière to Depont, 26 Apr. 1789.
104. Ibid., Depont to La Millière, 10 Apr. 1789, 11 May 1789.

106. A.D., Moselle, C-858/2, Depont to La Millière, 5 July 1789, 18 Nov. 1789.
107. Ibid., Depont to La Millière, 10 Apr. 1789. See Gutton, Société. p. 174, on the mounted police and the poor.

108. Ibid., La Millière to Depont, 19 Apr. 1789. In retrospect, we now know that sending poor babies to the countryside was in fact a form of infanticide. Cf. George D. Sussman, “The Wet-Nursing Business in Nineteenth-Century France,” French Historical Studies 9, no. 2 (Fall 1975): 304-28.

109. Parisot, Lorraine. 2: 199, claims that in 1787 this généralité had a greater number of beggars than others.
110. A.D., Moselle, 858/3, La Millière to Depont, 23 June 1790, 4 July 1790.
111. Ibid., 3 Mar. 1790.
113. A.D., Moselle, C-858, Depont to MM. les députés de l'Assemblée Nationale, 29 Mar. 1790.
114. Moniteur Universel no. 54, 23 Feb. 1790.
115. A.D., Moselle, C-858/3, MM. les Administrateurs de la Moselle to La Millière, November 1790.
117. In three cases these were first posts.
118. See Gruder, The Royal Intendants, appendix 4, for a list of intendants with their posts.
119. This is not to suggest that Depont was unique in this respect. Still, most of the intendants did not list Parisian addresses in the Almanach Royal.

Chapter Seven

1. A.D., E-487. Paul-François to Jean-Samuel Depont, 2 Mar. 1765. "Let us do our best ... to prevent your brother [Paul-Charles] from being named mayor. That would not suit us at all."
3. A.D., Q-250. "Biens des Emigrés" (Depont des Granges). John G. Clark's unpublished manuscript on the merchants of La Rochelle indicates that profits in overseas trade were decidedly lower after 1756; the balance sheets he produces suggest that an annual revenue of thirty thousand livres would be exceptional by 1780, except for a handful of merchants such as Garesché, Goguet, Rasteau, and Vivier. See note 1, ch. 1 above.
4. A.D., E-487, Bonnet to M. Rondrale, 7 May 1788; E-487, Bonnet to M. L’Abbé Depont, 6 Dec. 1787.
5. A.D., E-489, "Etat général des payements faits pour la maison" June 1785 to July 1790.
7. These hôtels are still there. The Depont town house is now a bank. It was bought by the bishop of La Rochelle in 1809 for forty-four thousand livres. A.D., E-509, Sale of 5 Aug. 1809. During my stay at La Rochelle I could see the Maison Poupet from the window of the Departemental Archives.
9. A.D., Q-250, "Biens des Emigrés" (Depont des Granges).
11. François Bluche, Les Magistrats du Parlement de Paris au XVIIIe siècle (Paris, 1960), pp. 341-42. "Fifty parlementaires had only four or five Parisian servants." Great families like the Choiseul-Gouffier or the Saulx-Tavanes had closer to twenty, but they were exceptional. French nobles or "bourgeois vivant noblement" did not amass servants like English lords or South Italian princes.
13. Erik Dahl, Le Château de Buzay (La Rochelle, 1956). In 1962 La Rochecourbon was selected for "Son et Lumière" because of its extensive park.
14. Thanks to Père B. Coutant, local curé and historian, I was able to visit many of the manor houses in the region. The scene just described took place on Saint-Michael's Day,
1962. The châtelaine, an imposing woman in tweeds, assured us that the fermiers were always drunk.

15. A.D., Q-250, “Biens des Emigrés” (Depont des Granges).

16. A.D., 2C-3367, “Centième denier—achats.” The centième denier is a transfer tax of 1 percent.


19. See chapter 3 above.


22. Ibid., 4 May 1788.


24. E. Garnault, Le Livre d’Or de la Chambre de Commerce de La Rochelle (La Rochelle, 1902), p. 14; A.D., E-475. Their efforts were in vain, at least through the male line. Of five sons, three died before 1795 without issue. Of the remaining two, Virson died unmarried in 1801 and Charles-Louis-Marie was the last of the Deponts of La Rochelle. We catch a glimpse of him the year before his death in 1841. At seventy-two, “M. Depont, propriétaire,” stood beside the prefect and parish priest, dedicating a charity to one indigent sick person per annum from Aigrefeuille, an old family property. A.D., E-474, Projet ... les hospices de Communauté d’Aigrefeuille. See chapter 1 above.

25. Recall that he must have lived close to his father, probably in the same town house, for the greater part of fifty years, 1723 to 1774.

26. See chapter 2.


28. For the information on the Fontange family in Auvergne, I am deeply indebted to M. Yves Leymarie, local historian at Auriac. See A.D., Cantal, series Q for an estimation of the Fontanges property. Their compensation under the Restoration settlement was 188,370 francs.

29. See note 27, article 4.

30. See note 27, articles 6 and 7.

31. A.N., M.C., Etude 21: 607, “Pacte de Famille,” 12 pluvôse, An II (31 Jan. 1794). The pacte states that “at the death of Madame Depont in 1787 no inventory of the property belonging respectively to her estate and to the common property has been made in view of the perfect union and mutual attachment between the father and the two children who are the mother’s heirs.” One must be skeptical about such formulas, especially given the age of the children in 1787, still legal minors. In fact, only Jean-Samuel knew exactly the dimensions of his wife’s fortune.


33. J. Seznec and J. Adhémar, eds., Diderot Salons (Oxford, 1960), 2: 165-171 [1765]. Diderot was enthusiastic about Loutherbourg at the Salon of 1765, comparing him favorably to Vernet. I wish to thank my friend Michael Fried for indicating this reference and for identifying Loutherbourg’s place in the history of French art in the eighteenth century.


37. See chapter 5 above. Madame de Montesson was the aunt of Madame (later countess) de Genlis.


41. Burke Correspondence, 5: 236. Richard Burke, Sr., to Edmund Burke, 10 Nov. 1785.

42. Ibid., p. 237.


44. Charles-François preferred to be known as "DePont" rather than "Depont." I have kept his spelling since it helps distinguish him from other members of the Depont family.

Chapter Eight


4. Sallier, Annales françaises, p. 151, quoted in Egret, Prerévolution, p. 148. On 3 May 1788 the Parlement of Paris refused to register the royal edict establishing the new Plenary Court intended to reduce the competence of the Parlement and prepare the way for tax reform from above. See Marcel Marion, Le Garde de Sceaux Lamoignon et la réforme judiciaire de 1788 (Paris, 1905).

5. For the age of the councilors, see Egret, Prerévolution. p. 90; for conflict over legal fees, see B. Stone, "The Old Regime in Decay," p. 245-59.


10. Sallier, Annales françaises, p. 94.


12. Sallier, Annales françaises, pp. 94-95.
17. Sallier, Annales françaises, p. 95, ca. August 1787.
23. Elizabeth Eisenstein, "Who Intervened in 1788? A Comment on Georges Lefebvre's Coming of the French Revolution," American Historical Review 71 (October 1965): 102, italics added. Eisenstein calls for "some sort of collective biography of these men" as indispensable to any understanding of how the Revolution came about (p. 99). In a small way, this chapter contributes to a collective biography of the Committee of Thirty.
24. See Egret, Prerevolution, passim.
29. Mémoires of the duke of Montmorency-Luxembourg, one of the charter members and a very close friend of Duport's. Quoted in Egret, Prerevolution, pp. 191, 327.
34. Except the duc d'Aiguillon, the duc de Broglie, and the vicomte de Noailles.
35. Aulard, Jacobins, 1: xiv.
36. Ibid., p. 437.
37. Ibid., 2: 416.
40. Burke Correspondence, 6: 105-6, 109-15.
41. Ibid., pp. 163-64, François de Menonville to Burke, 17 Nov. 1790. The description of the Jacobin Club was especially unfortunate, given its moderate complexion in 1790. The translation also leaves something to be desired.
42. Ibid., p. 166.
43. Ibid., p. 167.
44. Burke, Réflexions sur la Révolution française (French ed. of 1791), p. 547, quoted in


51. Ibid., p. 109n; see also Burke Correspondence, 6: 33n.


57. Ibid., p. 365 (4 Nov. 1789).

58. Ibid., p. 366.

59. Ibid., pp. 365-66.

60. Lally-Tollendal, a Monarchien, emigrated after the October Days. Burke gives the false impression that he was forced to flee. The *Times* (27 Oct. 1789) mentioned Lally's "flight."

61. Burke Correspondence, 6: 33, Edmund to Richard Burke, 11 Nov. 1789. Italics mine.


"Thus the rights of the human race, the fundamental principles of Society, the most enlightened reason, the most cherished interest of legitimate power, and the most elemental notions of morality and legality all unanimously condemn the use of lettres de cachet." ibid., p. 381.

66. Burke Correspondence, 6: 189n.4.
68. Procès-Verbal de l'Assemblée Nationale (cited in note 31.)
69. 9 Dec. 1789. Published in Annales historiques de la Révolution française (1951): 360-73.
72. Cone, Burke, 2: 296-313.
73. See also Adrien Duport's disappointment, Burke Correspondence, 6: 104-5 (29 Mar. 1790).
74. Annales historiques de la Révolution française (1951): 369. It is not clear how "involuntary." Burke's support was; after all, he was a close friend of Lally-Tollendal and the Monarchiens, many of whom had emigrated. He was also a friend of Calonne, the first emigré and chief minister for the émigré court at Koblenz. Cf. Godechot, the Counterrevolution, pp. 12-13, 149-51, 156-57.
75. The English translation of 1791 reads, "progress of that enlightened spirit." I think the French words "le progrès des lumières" are better translated as "the Enlightenment."
76. For some reason the last half of this passage was omitted from the English translation of 1791.
77. Burke Correspondence, 6: 451, Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 21 Nov. 1791. ("They" appears to be the English reform societies and their sympathizers in the Whig Party).
79. Cone, Burke, 2: 304.
80. Harold Laski, The Rise of European Liberalism (London, 1936) pp. 231-36, especially p. 231. See also Emanuel Chill, Power, Property and History: Barnave's "Introduction to the French Revolution" and Other Writings (New York, 1971). Chill sees Barnave as the "classic embodiment of bourgeois political culture in its heroic period," (p. 64) and a kind of pre-Marxian thinker. Recent historians of the French Revolution have, in retrospect, disparaged such "moderates," considering them captives, as it were, of their own progressive view of history. An exception to this view is R. R. Palmer, The Age of Democratic Revolution: The Challenge (Princeton, 1959). After all, Barnave was also a "democrat" in 1789.
81. Cone, Burke, 2: 345.
82. Schmitt and Weston, "Ten Letters," cited in n. 47, p. 411. See also Burke Correspondence, 6: 189.
84. Duquesnoy, the deputy from Bar-le-Duc, made this entry in his journal in November 1789: "So the 25th of November has passed and no revolution. Who would believe it? No one, not even my lackey, who told me yesterday that the 'isocrates' are not strong enough to fight back. He is right." For Duquesnoy and his lackey, the "isocrates" were a political frac-
tion in the National Assembly who opposed the legislative changes of the summer and fall of 1789. In this context they hardly appear as a social class, but rather a group of like-minded (or wrong-headed) people, Duquesnoy, Journal, 2: 90.


86. The last of the ten letters from Dupont to Burke is dated 11 August 1791. Correspondence with Adrien Dupont and Baron Cloots had ended in mid-1790.


88. Michon, Histoire du parti feuillant, p. 326, quoting from the correspondence among Marie Antoinette, Joseph II, and Leopold II. In this text Duport and Barnave seem to be using the word “class” as a political category, with social overtones perhaps, but primarily signifying those who support constitutional monarchy.


90. Aulard, La Société des Jacobins, 2: 281. Montmorin shocked his audience when he replied: “This is not the moment to send those who have declared themselves in favor of the Revolution to foreign embassies.”

91. Charles-François-Duperier Dumouriez, Mémoires du général Dumouriez. 4 vols. (Paris, 1822), 2: 159-61. “These promotions,” wrote Dumouriez in an effort to minimize his own radicalism, “were wise. Most of these men were former diplomats. They were all known to the king. There was only one Jacobin among them, and he was a man of intelligence, wisdom, and prudence.”


95. Ibid., p. 161; Mathiez, The French Revolution, p. 147.


98. See Dumouriez’s instructions to DePont and the ministers to other German courts of 28 April 1792 in Sorel, L’Europe et la Révolution française, 2: 416-17, 417n.


105. Gottschalk and Maddox, Lafayette . . . Through the October Days, chs. 11-12.

Chapter Nine


5. Marquis de Bouillé, Mémoires quoted in Harsany, "Metz," ch. 2, pp. 18n.


8. Ibid., p. 24.


10. See chapter 8 above.


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20. Ibid., pp. 31-32.


22. Harsany, “Metz,” ch. 1, pp. 13-14; See also Emmanuel Michel, Biographie du Parlement de Metz (Metz, 1855); René Paquet, Bibliographie analytique de l’histoire de Metz pendant la Révolution, 2 vols. (Paris, 1926).


24. Ibid., p. 226. See chapter 7 above.

25. Bouillé, Souvenirs, 1: 111-12. In June 1791, Bouillé helped to organize the famous Flight to Varennes which earned him “suspension” of his command from the Commune of Metz. He emigrated the same month. Depont’s other “colleague,” Montmorency-Laval, bishop of Metz, refused to take the oath to the new Constitution of the Clergy in February 1791. The Commune requested of Paris that he be removed as well. See Harsany, “Metz,” Mémoires, ser. 5, vol. 7 (1962), ch. 3 pp. 112-14.

26. Harsany, “Metz,” ch. 3, pp. 21-26. Metz had 20,035 males in 1790, 3,260 of whom were “electors.” If half the males were “adults,” then 32.6 percent of them could vote. Given the age structure in 1790, I suspect the percentage of voters was higher than one-third of adult males.

27. See chapter 6.


29. A.N., AD SVI, carton 53. “Exposé de ce qui s’est passé à Metz le 4 août 1790”; Paquet, Bibliographie de Metz, p. 1355.

30. “M. Depont était encore tellement effrayé et même anéanti, qu’on eût été presque tenté d’en rire.” Bouillé, Souvenirs, 1: 151. For the entire episode from Bouillé’s perspective, see pp. 148-52. The young marquis was indignant that Depont forgot to mention the rescue in an article in the Gazette de Nancy, vaunting his own courage and gloire instead.


33. Ibid., pp. 235-36. For the Varaize affair, see pp. 66-67.

34. Ibid., 39: pp. 31-32, 8 June 1792.

35. Ibid., p. 93, 19 July, 1792.

36. Ibid., pp. 94-96. There are examples of similar protests in the parishes of Loiré (p. 29), Chanières, Fontcouverte, La Chapelle (pp. 66-67), and Mosnac (p. 97).


38. “Procès-Verbaux,” 39: p. 142, 1 Nov. 1792. Donald Greer estimates that there were 1,335 émigrés from the department, although he found no information on their social composition. D. Greer, The Incidence of the Emigration during the French Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), pp. 109ff. A large number of the émigrés whose land was sequestered
were military nobles from the hinterland. See A.D., Q-248-50, "Partages des Biens des
Emigrés, Years III-VIII."
40. For the budgets of 1791 and 1792, See "Procès-Verbaux," 36: pp. 356-63; 39:
pp. 57-59. The "frais d'impression" represented between 10 and 18 percent of the annual
budget for the department, roughly equal to public expense for welfare (bienfaisance).
45. Ibid., pp. 189ff. In May 1793 the department was spending thirty thousand francs
daily to procure supplies for General Marcé's army of fifteen thousand men who were
preparing to march on the Vendée. Ibid., pp. 241-43.
46. Donald Greer, The Incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution (Cam-
bridge, Mass., 1935), pp. 145ff. Over half of the death sentences during 1793-94 were pro-
nounced in four departments: Rhône (Lyon), 1,880; the three that touch the Vendée, 7,050.
Moselle (Metz), incidentally, had 45 death sentences.
47. Georges Lefebvre, The Directory, trans. Robert Baldick (New York, 1964), pp. 6-8,
14, 106-7.
49. A.D., C-267, Cahiers of Aigrefeuille, Virson, La Jarne, Thairé.
50. Ibid., Cahier of Saint-Pierre-près-de Surgères. See Olwen Hutton, The Poor of
52. A.D., E-501, Chauvet to Bonnet, 15 May 1789.
53. A.D., E-479, Phillotine de Fougère to MM. at Saint-Georges, Ile d'Oleron, 5 Nov.
1789.
54. A.D., E-501, Chauvet to Bonnet, 29 Jan. 1791.
56. D. Massiou, Histoire politique, civile et religieuse de la Saintonge et de l'Aunis depuis
57. Ibid., p. 41.
58. Journal Patriotique ... de Saintonge et d'Angoumois (1792), p. 126 quoted in
Massiou, Saintonge. 5: 160. This history was published in 1840. The passage reflects the
"philosophy" of many "notables" of the July Monarchy, especially the need to educate the
"poor and ignorant" before giving them the vote.
59. A.D., E-475, Paul-Charles to District of Rochefort, Year III.
60. Recall that the Clisson-Lescure branch of the Depont family came from the heart of
the Vendée. See chapter 1.
62. A.D., E-484, "Livre concernant mes rentes." See the account for La Brande and
Manderoux for 1791. The history of the French public debt during the French Revolution
has not been written. Jacques Godechot, Les Institutions de la France sous la Révolution et
l'Empire (Paris, 1951), pp. 329-33, 329n; Leo Gershoy, The French Revolution and
64. See chapter 4.
65. A.D., E-491, Claims of Mainguet, Year VI (1798); E-492, Claims of Mainguet, un-
dated; E-479, Paul-Charles to Administration of Ciré, 27 Sept. 1796.
66. A.D., E-475, Declaration for the Forced Loan, 17 Dec. 1793; E-501, Chauvet to Bon-
et, 11 June 1793.
67. A.D., E-487, Bonnet to M. l’Abbé, 6 Dec. 1787; E-489, Expenses, 1790-93.
68. A.D., E-488, Income 1790-91 (on slip of paper); E-489, “Contribution foncière,
Commune de Forges,” 1791-93; E-501, Chauvet Accounts, 1796; E-475, Receipt of 7 Apr.
1792; Declaration for the Forced Loan; Receipt of 25 Feb. 1794.
69. A.D., E-475, Certificate of Residence; Extract of the Declaration of the Committee
of Revolutionary Surveillance of La Rochelle, 11 Fructidor, Year II (27 Aug. 1794). Massiou,
Saintonge, 5: 282-83.
70. Massiou, Saintonge, 5: 322, 331; Laveau, Monde rochelais, pp. 559-62.
71. A.D., E-475, Paul-Charles to District of Rochefort, Year III.
72. This is no doubt true. The assignat of a hundred livres in 1790, still worth forty in
August 1794, fell to twenty-five in January 1795 and to four in August 1795! R.
Mousnier and C.-E. Labrousse, Le XVIIIe siécle (1715-1815), Histoire générale des
1930).
73. A.D., E-475, Paul-Charles to District of Rochefort, 15 Fructidor, Year III (1 Sept.
1795).
74. Ibid., Session of 4 Sept. 1795; Receipt of 4,315 pounds of beans, 21 Mar. 1796;
Tribunal of Marennes, 25 July 1796; E-501, Chauvet to Bonnet, 17 Aug. 1796. See M.
Delafosse and C. Laveau, Le Commerce du sel de Brouage aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles
Emigrés.” See “Ferme des Chaumes”; E-481, Jean-Samuel Depont to Canton of Ciré, 20
Nov. 1796.
76. A.D., E-475, Receipt of 26 Mar. 1795; Liquidation of the Public Debt, 1 June 1795.
441-44.
77. A.D., E-501, Survey by Chauvet, 30 May 1795; Q-250, “Biens des Emigrés,” 28
Mar. 1797; Delafosse, Commerce du sel, pp. 14, 28-29. The livre varied from 0.5 to 0.9 hect-
tares or 1.2 to 2.2 acres; E-501, Chauvet to Bonnet, 12 Mar. 1792.
78. L. de la Morinérie, La Noblesse d’Aunis et de Saintonge. 1789 (Paris, 1861), see
“Froger d’Equille”: Capitaine de Vaisseau, chevalier de St.-Louis, émigré, père avec son
frère, Michel-Henri, 1795, à la descente de Quiberon.”
79. A.D., Q-250, Depont des Granges.
80. A.D., Q-301, Restitution of Unsold Land, 1814-1825; Marcel Garraud, Histoire
81. Bibliothèque Municipale, La Rochelle, P. C. Martin de Chassiron, Lettres sur
l’agriculture du district de La Rochelle par un cultivateur. 124 pp. (La Rochelle, 1795); René
Porak, Un Village de France (Paris, 1943), a eulogy to Chassiron at Beauregard; A.M., La
Rochelle, MS 312. P. Harouard, Différents modes de cultiver nos domaines dans l’arron-
dissement de la sous-préfecture de La Rochelle (La Rochelle, 1808). For Depont, see note 73
above.
82. A.N., F7-4670. The exact date of the arrest is not given. The report refers to the “Law
of 4 frimaire” (October 1793?).
83. For information on the Fontanges family during the Revolution, I am deeply indebted
to M. Michel Leymarie of Auriac (Cantal).
84. A.N., F7-4670. The release is dated 11 Vendémiaire, Year III, September 1795.
88. A.N., AFIV-1422 (Depont, Jean-Samuel), Nivôse, Year XI (January 1803). I wish to thank Joseph Mandel of Columbia University for sending me this reference.

89. Baron de Frénilly, Souvenirs, 1768–1828 (Paris, 1908), pp. 211, 211n, Frénilly refers to the salon of "la brillante Madame de Fontanges, fille de M. de Pont," but that is all.

90. A.D., E-479, Jean-Samuel to Paul-Charles, 15 Mar. 1798. Is "Veith" really "Weis," the well-known Swiss banker of the Directory? Jean-Samuel was not very quick to grasp foreign names.

91. A.D., E-479, Jean-Samuel to Paul-Charles, 18 Brumaire.

Epilogue
