

## **A0110**

### **Benoist-Charleville Family Papers, 1737-1949**

1 box (0.2 linear feet); 1 volume; 1 oversize folder

Processed by Christopher Gordon, 2004

### **REPOSITORY**

Missouri Historical Society Archives

P.O. Box 11940

St. Louis, MO 63112-0040

314-746-4510

[archives@mohistory.org](mailto:archives@mohistory.org)

### **DONOR INFORMATION**

A portion of the collection was donated by Elizabeth Christy and Agnes Benoist in June 1948. The set of royal commissions and official military record issued to Antoine Gabriel Francois Benoist were donated by Viola Benoist Fisher of St. Louis in April 1948.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

The first member of the Benoist family to settle in St. Louis was Francois Marie Benoit (1767-1819), who moved west from Canada in 1790 seeking a career as an Indian trader and fur merchant. In 1802, he partnered with veteran fur trader Manuel Lisa to form Manuel Lisa-Benoit & Company. Francois married Marie Anne Catherine Sanguinet (1781-1859) in 1798. They had seven children.

Louis Auguste Benoist, the second son of Francois Benoit, was born in 1803 in St. Louis. Louis attended St. Thomas College in Kentucky. He returned to St. Louis and studied law and medicine before becoming interested in the banking business. In 1821, Louis traveled to France to handle the estate of his deceased grandfather. With money he received from his inheritance, Benoist began to invest in banking. He opened his first regular bank in 1832. Its success allowed him to open a branch bank in New Orleans in 1838. Louis Benoist became a very successful banker and upon his death in 1867 his estate was estimated at \$5 million.

The origin of the Charleville family begins with Joseph Chauvin, alias Charleville. Several members of the Chauvin family dropped the name in favor of Charleville. This branch of the family settled first in Kaskaskia. In 1787, Francoise Brazeau Charleville, widow of Joseph Charleville, moved with her children to St. Louis where she lived with her brother Louis Brazeau, Sr.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTES**

The Benoist-Charleville Family Papers are arranged by subject: **Correspondence, Family Records, Property, Receipts/Accounts, Genealogy, and Newspapers.** Each subject series is then arranged chronologically. Two copies of the *Missouri Republican* that were part of the original collection have been transferred to the Missouri Historical Society Library.

The **Correspondence** folder consists of letters written between various family members from 1836 to 1867. Among the correspondence is a letter from Eliza Faris O'Flaherty to Frederic Charleville, March 10, 1864[?], describing a secret wedding between Eliza's sister Suliame and a Confederate soldier and an incident in which Union soldiers forced O'Flaherty's family to fly an American flag on their house to celebrate the fall of Confederate forces at Vicksburg, Mississippi. A series of letters between Louis A. Benoist and Reverend Father F. Daniel of Montreal, Canada, 1864-1865, discusses genealogy information on the Benoist family.

The **Family Records** folder has original Benoist and Charleville family documents such as marriage contracts, wills, and other official records. The majority of the records are written in French. The royal commissions and military record of Antoine Gabriel Francois Benoist are filed in oversize storage (AMD [E], drawer 2).

The **Property** folder contains land deeds for property owned by the Benoist-Charleville families but also deeds and receipts for slaves owned by the Charleville family. Among the items is an inventory of the possessions of Joseph Chauvin Charleville dated May 17, 1770. Upon one receipt written in July 1815 is a later statement of manumission dated 1818 freeing a slave child named Pierre.

The **Receipts/accounts** folder comprises miscellaneous receipts for goods purchased by the families. The series includes statements for accounts held by the family with Thomas O'Flaherty, a successful St. Louis merchant and father of novelist Kate Chopin.

The **Genealogy** folder consists of printed genealogical charts, excerpts from family histories pertaining to the Benoist and Charleville families, heraldry information, and other family information. A Benoist family tree chart is oversized and held in AMD (E), drawer 3.

**INVENTORY****Box 1**

folder 1      Correspondence  
folder 2      Family records  
folder 3      Property  
folder 4      Receipts/accounts  
folder 5      Genealogy

**1 volume**

1793-1892      Abstracts of title deeds of Louis A. and Theodore Benoist

**1 oversize folder**

1745-1761      Royal commissions and military record of Antoine Gabriel Francois  
Benoist

no date      Family tree chart of the Benoist family