

**Marriage contract between Jean de Jarrie and Jeanne de Lachenal
In French, manuscript on parchment
Central France, (Auvergne, Bellegarde-en-Forez), September 18, 1564**

A parchment scroll composed of three membranes sewn together end to end, no visible ruling, written in brown ink in a cursive notarial script on 168 lines, designed to be read vertically from top to bottom, opening initial "A" decorated with strapwork extending into the margin (cadell initial), some small stains, but in overall very good condition. Dimensions c. 1600 mm. x 500 mm.; membrane one, c. 500 mm., membrane two, c. 520 mm., membrane three, c. 580 mm.

A fascinating window into the practicalities of marriage in early modern France, this roll records in considerable detail the exchange of property – dresses and clothes, jewelry and silvery, and land – that took place to enable the marriage of a French noble couple. Such documents are rare, scarcely digitized, and infrequently studied. This one specifies details of the contract between the “gentilhomme de la maison du Roy” Jean de Jarrie and Jeanne de Lachenal providing a wealth of information about the history of these two noble families and the seigneuries of Aubière and Lachenal in Auvergne. The well-preserved document is written in a fine notarial hand by Jean Picot, a royal legal representative in the area. Five feet long, this document in scroll form, is a physical manifestation of the wealth and importance of these families.

PROVENANCE

1. This document was written on 18 September 1564 by the *garde-châtelain* Jean Picot; he identifies himself in the introduction to the text (see below). Picot dated and signed the document at the end: “dixhuitieme jour de septembre mil Cinq centz Soixante quatre,” “Picot [notarial signature, followed by the signature of a witness].” The marriage contract was written for the families of Jean de Jarrie (1545-1600), knight, and lord of Aubière and of Clervaux, and Jeanne de Lachenal (c. 1545-1600), dame d’Etroussat and de Lachenal. The contract was written in Bellegarde-en-Forez, the seat of the *prévôté*, some 115 km east of Aubière (see below).

TEXT

Incipit, “A TOUS ceulx qui ces presantes lettres verront et orront Jehan Picot ... dixhuitieme jour de septembre mil Cinq centz Soixante quatre / Picot.”

A marriage contract prepared by Jean Picot ahead of the union of Jean de Jarrie and Jeanne de Lachenal. The document begins with the notary identifying himself, “A TOUS ceulx qui ces presantes lettres verront et orront Jehan Picot, Bachellier en loy, garde des sceaulx establie aux contraict en la prevoste de bellegarde en la seneschaulee d’auvergne pour le Roy notre seigneur” (To all whom will see and hear these letters, Jean Picot, *bachelier* in law, *garde des sceaux* established by contract in the *prévôté* of Bellegarde in the *sénéchaussée* of Auvergne for the King [Charles IX], our lord). Picot was *garde-châtelain*, royal notary, at Bellegarde, which, since the fifteenth century, was a seat of a royal *prévôté* (courthouse) depending on the seneschalty of

Auvergne. After this introduction, Picot presents the noble parents of the bride-groom: the father, Gilbert de Jarrie, and the mother, Claude de Montmorin, and the bride-groom himself, Jean de Jarrie ("Jehan de Jarrys"), their lawful son ("leur fiz naturel & legitime"). Then is introduced the bride, "Jehanne de la chanard" and his father, "Francoyt (i.e. François) de lachenard" (the spelling of this place name varies throughout the document), whom the document identifies as now deceased and having been a knight, lord of Lachenal, and *guidon de la compagnie* for "monsieur le duc destampes." Jeanne's father had therefore carried the flag, "guidon", in front of the troops commanded by Jean IV de Brosse (1505-1564), who had been created duke d'Étampes in 1536, following his marriage to Anne de Pisseleu, the mistress of King Francis I. The contract also specifies that the marriage between Jean de Jarrie and Jeanne de Lachenal will be Catholic.

The contract carefully details the extent of the considerable dowry ("dot") that Jeanne's parents have given her to bring to the marriage: all her dresses and clothes ("toutes ses robes et habillements"), rings and jewelry ("bagues & joyaultz"), silver, furniture ("meubles"), lands and estates, including notably the fiefdom of Lachenal, situated near Pionsat, between Montluçon and Clermont-Ferrand in Auvergne. In her dowry is included the property of her deceased paternal grand-father, Jacques de Lachenal (c. 1465-1522), including his house of the "somme de quatre mil livres." The careful details of the dowry are followed by various clauses determining how the property is to be divided in case one of the spouses dies.

Jean's father, Gilbert de Jarrie (1515-1560), knight, lord of Clervaux, and captain to fifty soldiers as an officer in the household of the king, had brought the lordship of Aubière (near Clermont-Ferrand) to the family by his marriage to Claude de Montmorin in 1542. The family thereafter used the name and arms of Aubière (Nadaud 1863-1872, II, p. 547). A very fine view of the small town of Aubière dominated by its castle was drawn by Guillaume Revel around 1450 in his *Armorial d'Auvergne*, prepared for Charles I, duke of Bourbon, now Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Fr. 22297 (Online Resources).

Jean de Jarrie and Jeanne Lachenal had five children, among whom Gilbert d'Aubière (d. 1622), a member of the Order of Malta and knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Gilbert d'Aubière's daughter Isabeau d'Aubière was an important personality in the local history (cf. "Ysabeau de Jarrie..." in Online Resources). Other original documents concerning the d'Aubière family are held in the departmental archives of Puy-de-Dôme (5 E 44 39), the communal archives in Aubière and the parish records in Aubière.

Marriage contracts in the sixteenth century were mandated by law, and in France it was obligatory to have them written by notaries. These documents reveal a great deal about social, economic, cultural, legal and gender-specific contexts in history. Marriage contracts are often the only opportunity to gain access to the personal life of people who have left no written record (Borello, Online Resources). Significant amounts of property, wealth and land were transferred on the occasion of marriages, and the marriage contracts, in which the notary has detailed these transmissions, are essential for anyone studying the history of a place. Marriage contracts are usually kept in notarial archives and are rarely digitized; they are therefore rarely accessible for study. Our document would be an excellent support for teaching various aspects of history, including social (e.g. marriage as an ordering structure of society), economic (e.g.

transfer of wealth), legal (e.g. marital property law), and gender studies (e.g. how women and men accessed property).

This is a lengthy document (a bit more than five feet in length), and interesting as an example of the scroll format being used to record a marriage contract. This format was a practical solution to recording its lengthy content, reflecting the wealth and status of the families involved. The richer the families, the lengthier the marriage contract.

LITERATURE

Bouillet, J.-B. *Nobiliaire d'Auvergne*, III, Clermont-Ferrand, 1848, p. 287.

Laffont, J.-L., ed. *Problème et méthodes d'analyse historique de l'activité notariale (XVe-XIXe siècles)*, Toulouse, 1991.

Nadaud, J. *Nobiliaire du diocèse et généralité de Limoges*, II, Limoges, 1863-1872.

Online: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k307146>

ONLINE RESOURCES

Aubièrre in *Armorial d'Auvergne*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Fr. 22297, f. 353
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8470455b/f353.image>

Borello, C. "Testaments et contrats de mariage: des sources essentielles dans l'appréhension d'une identité religieuse: Les exemples des Baux et de Lourmarin de 1598 à 1629," *Rives méditerranéennes* (online) Varia: <https://journals.openedition.org/rives/108>

French marriage contracts between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries transcribed and analyzed (over 400 in total) by Odile Halbert:

<http://www.odile-halbert.com/Vivre/Mariage-Contrat.htm>

Jean de Jarrie d'Aubièrre (family tree):

<https://gw.geneanet.org/adecarne?lang=en&n=de+jarrie&oc=0&p=jean>

"Ysabeau de Jarrie d'Aubièrre, l'énigmatique", Cercle généalogique et historique d'Aubièrre:
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