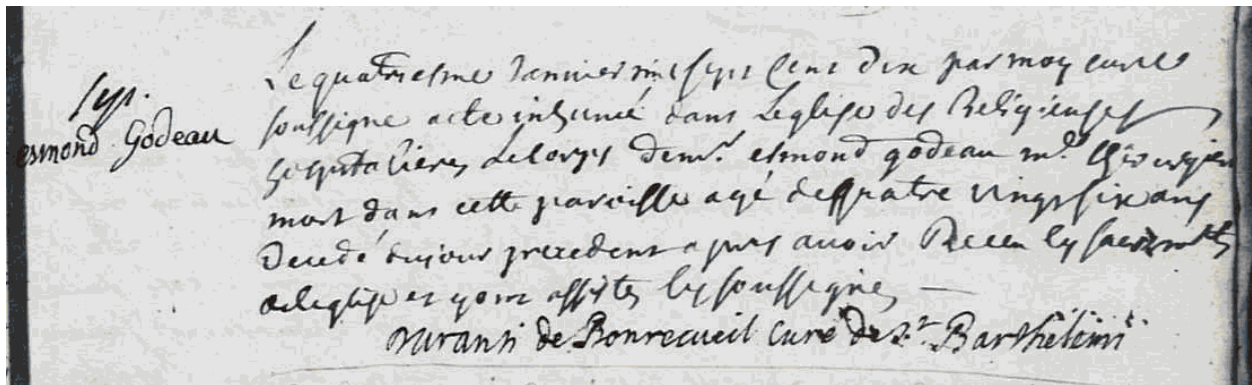


THE BURIAL LOCATION OF EDMÉ GOUDEAU/GODEAU AND HIS SON CHARLES

June 2022

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When I published my book entitled *Long Journey Home: The Ancestry of the Bret, Coco, Drapeau, Goudeau, Gremillon and Tassin Families in France* in 2012, two of the sacraments I included were the 5 January 1710 burial of Edmé Goudeau/Godeau and the 7 May 1722 burial of his son, Charles, grandfather and father, respectively, of Louisiana progenitor Michel Goudeau/Godeau. Both burials had been recorded in the sacramental registers of Église St-Barthélémi in La Rochelle (now in the French department of Charente-Maritime).



Burial record of Edmé (Esmond) Godeau

TRANSCRIPTION:

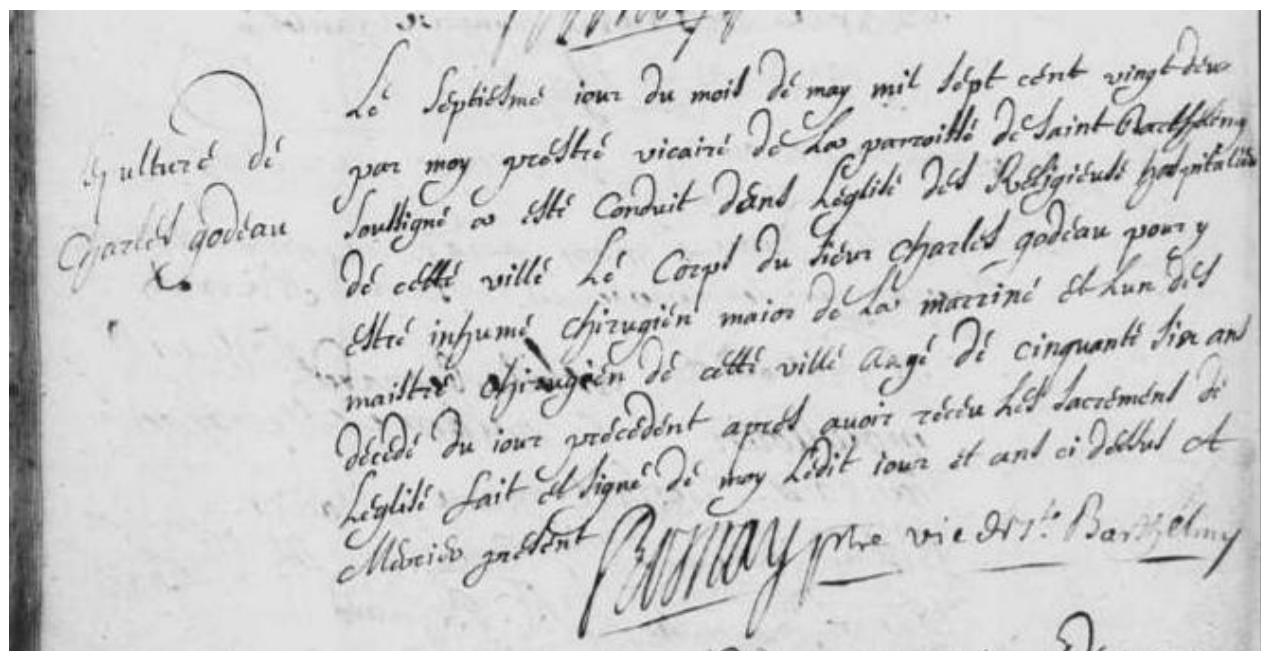
Burial

Esmond Godeau

The 4th of January, 1710, by me, undersigned Priest, was buried in the church of Religieuse Hospitaliere(s), the body of Monsieur Esmond Godeau, master surgeon deceased in this parish, age of 86 years, deceased the prior day after having received the sacraments of the church and was assisted by the undersigned.

[Signed] Durann de Bonrecueil Priest of St-Barthélémi

Both records contained the name of the church at which the two men were buried. Although the name of the church was not easy to transcribe on Edmé's burial record, it was easier to read on the 1722 burial record of Charles Goudeau. The church was identified as the church of the *Religieuse Hospitaliere(s)*. Unfortunately, at the time of my initial research on this family, I was unable to find anything regarding a church of this name in La Rochelle. I could only assume that it was a place associated in some way with Église St-Barthélémi – especially since both burials were recorded at that church. That was not the case.



Burial record of Charles Godeau

TRANSCRIPTION:

*Burial of
Charles Godeau*

The 7th day of the month of May 1722, by me Vicar Priest of the Parish of Saint-Barthélémy, undersigned, has taken to the Church of the Religieuse Hospitalieres of this town, the body of Sieur Charles Godeau, to bury there, Surgeon Major of the Marine and one of the Master Surgeons of the town, age of 56 years, deceased the day before after having received the sacraments of the Church, done and signed by me the said day and year above and ____ present.

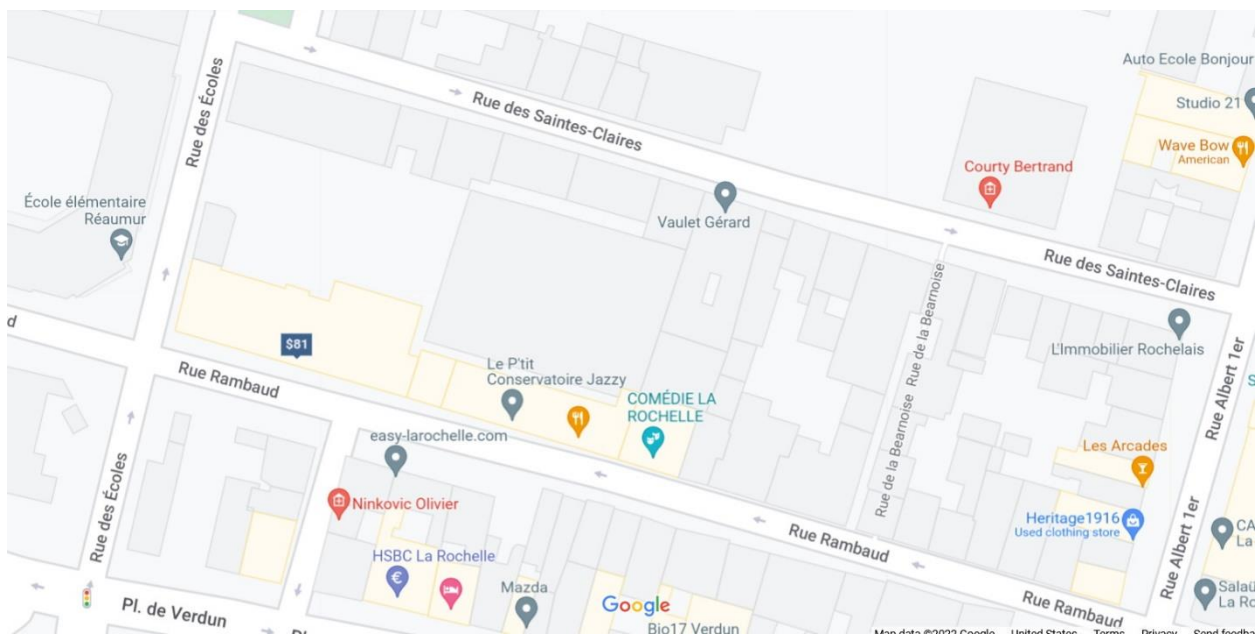
Romay, Vicar Priest St-Barthélémy

I had not made any further attempt since then to identify the *Religieuse Hospitalieres* until I started preparing for our ancestral tour to France which took us to La Rochelle in September 2021. Shortly before we left on the trip, I found part of what I was looking for and, since then, have pieced all of it together. This is what I discovered during my research:

The Nuns of Sainte-Claire are believed to have settled in La Rochelle in the first half of the 14th century. Their convent initially covered almost the entire block between Rue Rambaud, Allée Béarnaise/Béarnaise (the alley is listed as a street/Rue on the two maps below), and Rue Saintes-Clares.



Satellite view of the block in which the Nuns of Sainte-Claire settled in the 14th century



Map of the same block provides a better view of the Allée Béarnaise/Béarnaise

The religious order appears to have remained in the same location for about 300 years but apparently left the city prior to the 1627-1628 siege of La Rochelle. They didn't return to their convent at the end of the fourteen-month siege during which French Cardinal Richelieu's troops surrounded the city to force an end to the Protestant rebellion against the French crown. The fact that the Nuns of Sainte-Claire did not return in 1628 is understandable, however, considering the horrendous loss of life that had taken place in those fourteen months. During that time, the population of La Rochelle was reduced from approximately

27,000 before the seige to about 5,000 after the seige due to casualties of war, famine/starvation, and disease. That short period in time is considered to be one of the darkest moments in La Rochelle history. (Note: *The Nuns of Sainte-Claire did eventually return to La Rochelle in twenty years later and resettled in the block directly north of their original convent.*)

Once the siege ended in 1628, Catholicism was restored to the city. At that point, King Louis XIII divided the functions of the existing hospital – St-Barthélémi - between the *frères de la Charité* (*Brothers of Charity*) (for care of men) and a group of nuns referred to as the *Hopitalière nuns* (for care of women). Due to conflicts, it was decided shortly thereafter that the *frères de la Charité* would remain at the existing St-Barthélémi hospital but the nuns would find another location at which to provide care to women. In about 1630, the *Hopitalière nuns* moved into the abandoned convent originally settled by the Nuns of Sainte-Claire. The ‘new’ convent of the Hopitalière nuns was referred to as the *Couvent-Hôpital des religieuses Hopitalières*.

The complex also included a large garden and an infirmary for the sick. An enclosure and wash house were located in the block immediately west of this one on, what was then, Allée des Capucins (today – Rue des Ecoles) and could be reached via an arched underground passage. By 1636, a new chapel had been added to the *Couvent-Hôpital* complex.



For reference, the location of the Hôpital Saint-Barthélemi was at (what is now) the corner of Rue Aufredi, Rue Saint-Come, and Rue Pernelle (see satellite view on next page). This was across the street from the remains of the belltower of the first Église St-Barthélémi which had been destroyed in 1568 during the Protestant iconoclastic riots.

The satellite view on the following page shows the location of the block in which the Hopitalière nuns lived, worked, and cared for the sick beginning c1630. It is marked with an ‘X’. It also shows its location relative to the original early-13th century Hôpital Saint-Barthélemi (marked as ‘H’) and the surviving belltower of the Église St-Barthélémi (marked as ‘SB’).

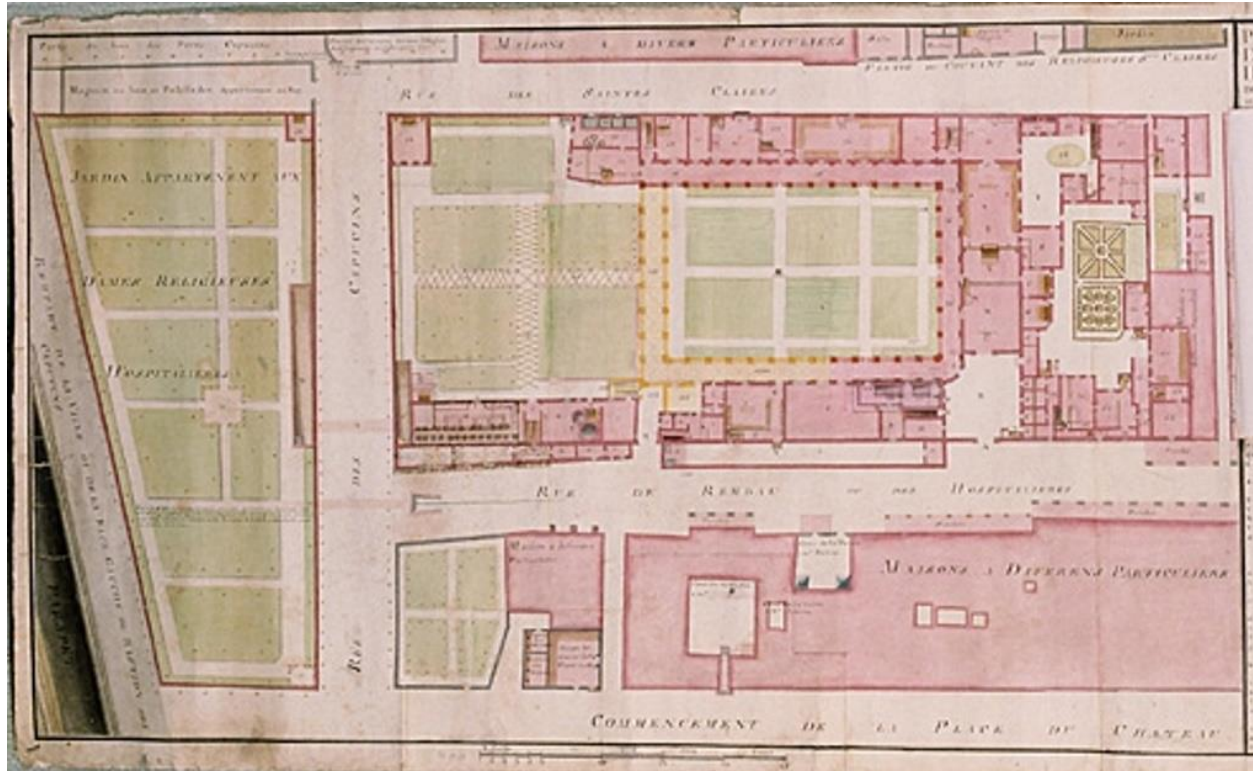


The *Couvent-Hôpital des religieuses Hospitalières* had existed in this old building complex for about 80 years by the time Edmé Goudeau died, and it's likely that he had been practicing medicine for at least 45 years in La Rochelle. It was in his blood, and his two sons, Henri and Charles, would follow in his footsteps. Although we often think of these three Goudeau men as naval/marine *chirurgiens* (surgeons) or surgeons of the King, we also know that Edmé and Charles (and very likely Henri) apparently served as surgeons to the residents of La Rochelle.

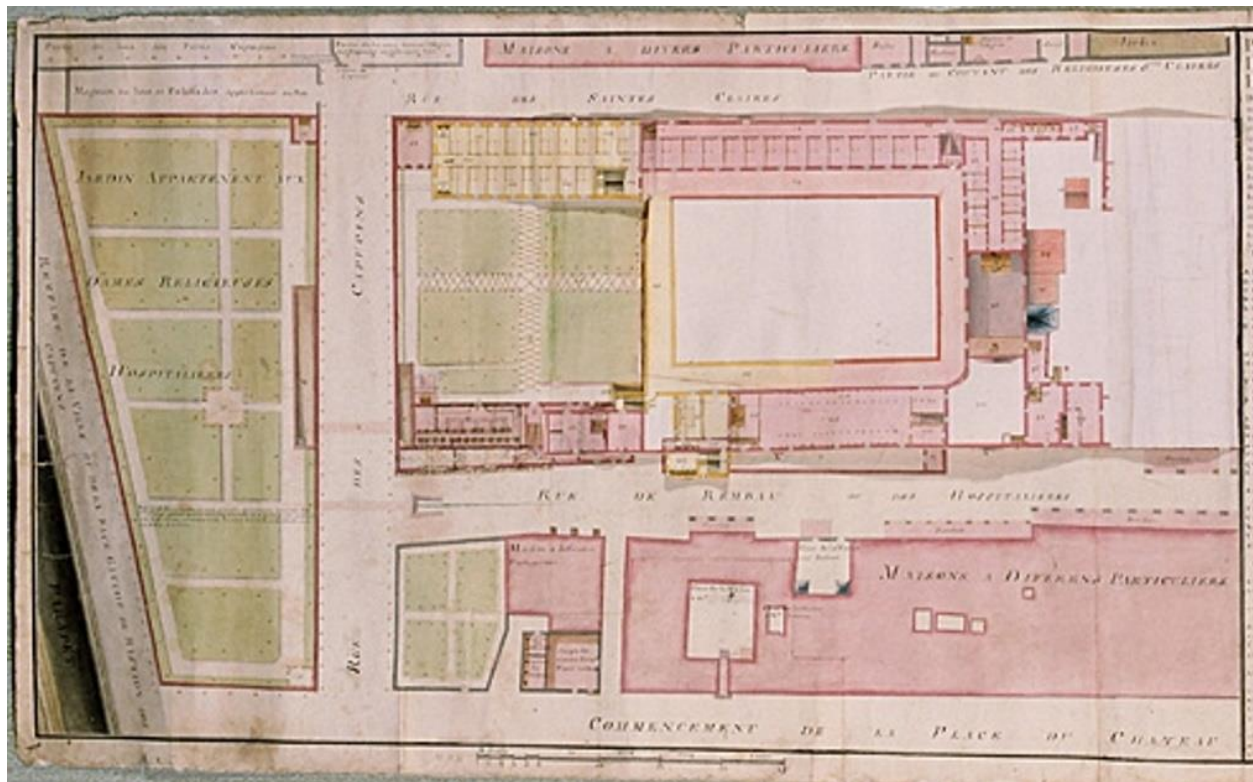
They took care of the people – the average citizens - not just those in the military or those in service to the King. Therefore, based on the fact that the burial location of both Edmé and Charles was identified as the church of the *religieuses Hospitalières*, it's easy to conclude that these two men practiced their profession in the convent infirmary and, possibly, at Hôpital Saint-Barthélemy too. It's not surprising, therefore, that the nuns at the convent wanted to honor the two men who had likely done so much for their patients – two men they likely held in high esteem. The only way they could accomplish this was to grant them their highest honor - that was to allow their burial in the chapel of their infirmary. I suspect that it was a place that meant as much to Edmé and Charles as it did to the nuns. Nothing could have been more fitting.

What did the convent look like at the time of the 1710 and 1722 Goudeau burials and likely during most of the tenure of Edmé and Charles?

Here are two drawings of the convent and the surrounding buildings dated 15 March 1720. Unfortunately, some of the tiny details on these two plans are too small to read due to the low quality of the scanned documents. However, they do provide a general idea of the layout of the entire convent complex.

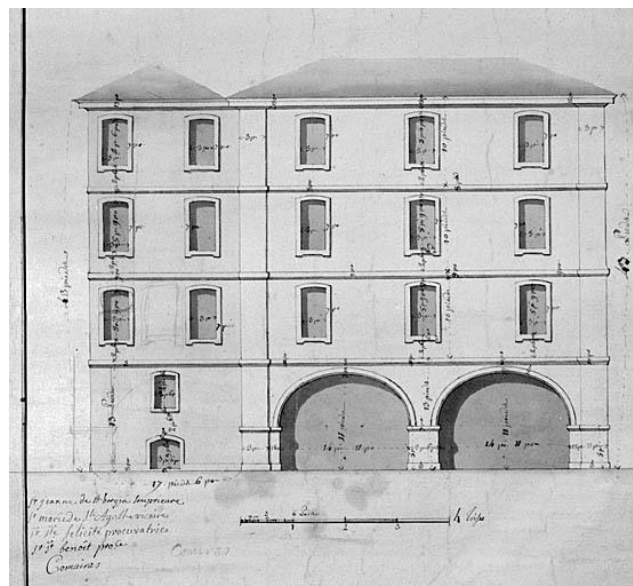


15 March 1720 – Copy 1



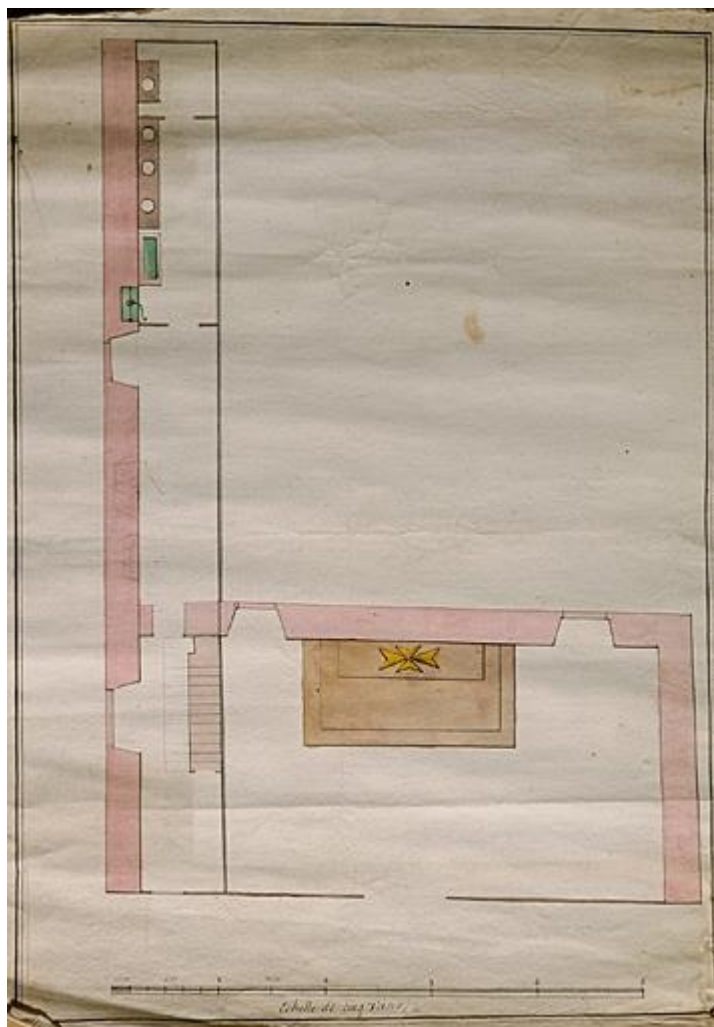
15 March 1720 – Copy 2

Some time in the 18th century, likely after the deaths of both Edmé and Charles, remodeling plans were made for parts of the convent and infirmary. This is what part of the façade looked like at that time.

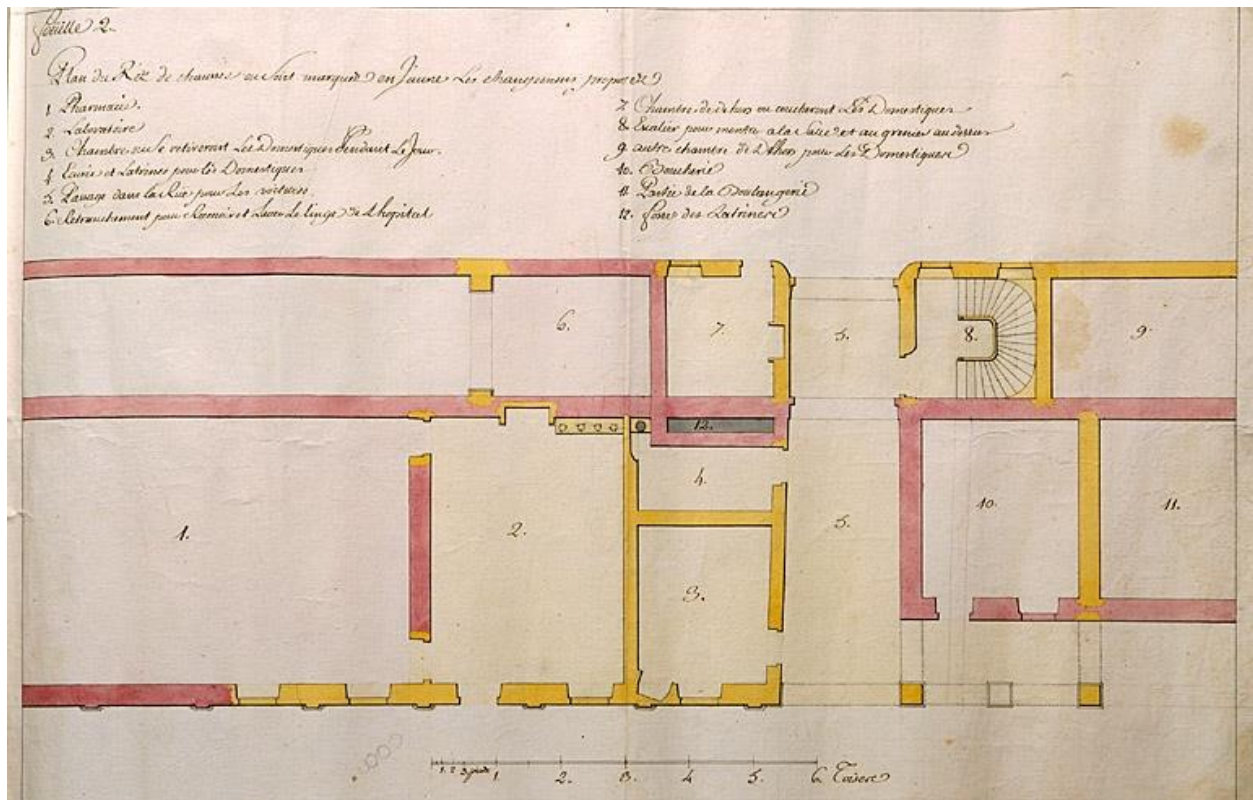


Along with the drawing of the façade, there was a partial drawing made of each floor. Each drawing outlined the current structure in red and the proposed construction changes in yellow.

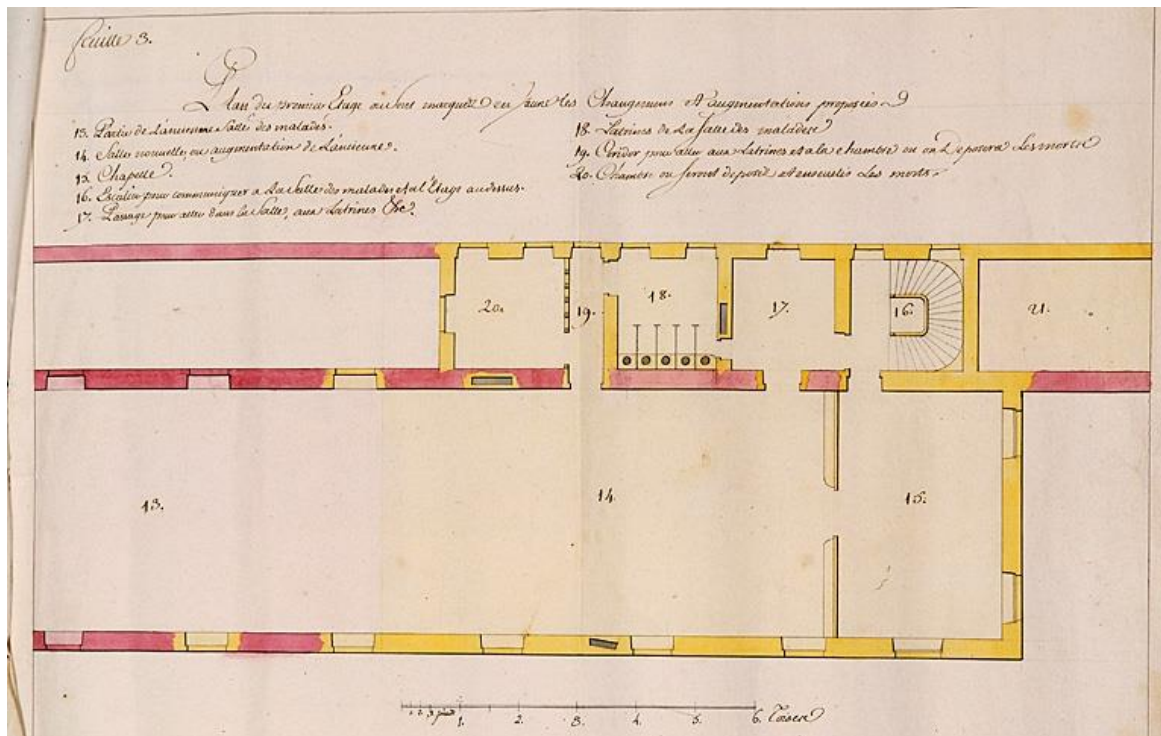
The drawing below was described as the *Chapelle de la salle des malades* or Chapel of the room of the sick (the infirmary). The floor on which the chapel was located is not mentioned on the document. Was this the main convent chapel and perhaps the one in which Edmé and Charles were buried? There's no way to know that.



The next drawing was of the ground floor with proposed changes in yellow. Much of the space on this floor was used by the domestiques. Other spaces of interest on this floor were the Pharmacy (1), Laboratory (2), Boucherie (butcher)(10), and part of the Boulangerie (bakery)(11).



This was a drawing of the first floor (the one above the ground floor) and, once again, is a partial plan of the space with proposed changes in yellow.



This is a transcription of the legend at the top of the drawing:

- 13 Part of the former infirmary
- 14 New room or extension of the old one
- 15 Chapel
- 16 Staircase to communicate with the infirmary and the floor above
- 17 Lounge to go to the hall, to the latrines
- 18 Latrines in the infirmary
- 19 Corridor to go to the latrines and to the room where to leave the dead
- 20 Chamber where the dead will be kept (?)

As you can see, room #15 is identified as the chapel. Were they adding a 2nd chapel in the infirmary? It almost appears that this one was going to be much smaller than the chapel in the drawing identified as that of the *Chapelle de la salle des malades*.

I've not included the drawing for the 2nd floor in this report. It appears to have contained the attic and storage space.

So, what happened to the *Couvent-Hôpital des religieuses Hospitalières* in the many decades after the Goudeau burials?

According to the information I've found, the convent was sold in 1792 during the French Revolution in order to establish a fairground. This was not surprising since that tumultuous period was fought for, amongst other things, the de-christianization of much of France. Destroying a convent would have been consistent with some of the other destructive acts that were carried out on religious-based properties during the revolution. Multiple sources state that the property was then sold in 1851 to Pierre l'Evêque who, supposedly, built or established a hotel there the following year.

The site is now a hotel called the *Hôtel Le Champlain* which has been owned by the same family since 1942 and is currently operated by Anne Jouineau. The information about the hotel history on their website states that part of the convent was "bought by a prominent citizen" in the 19th century "who converted it into a town house". This is a slightly different from other sources. The site also states that the "Hôtel Le Champlain and its French formal garden occupy the former convent building". It is apparent that part of the original convent is behind the walls of this hotel but how much of the original building still exists is unclear. For instance, remains of the cloister arcades appear to be part of the walls of the formal garden and can also be seen in the garage that is located to the right of the current building.



Hôtel Le Champlain – Formal Gardens with possible Cloister Arcades

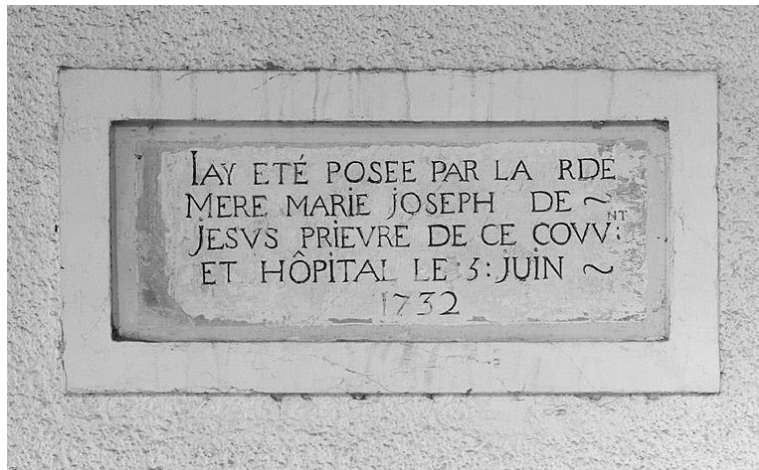


Current view of the Hôtel Le Champlain with garage entrance on right side of picture



Remains of Cloister arcades inside a garage next to Le Hôtel Champlain

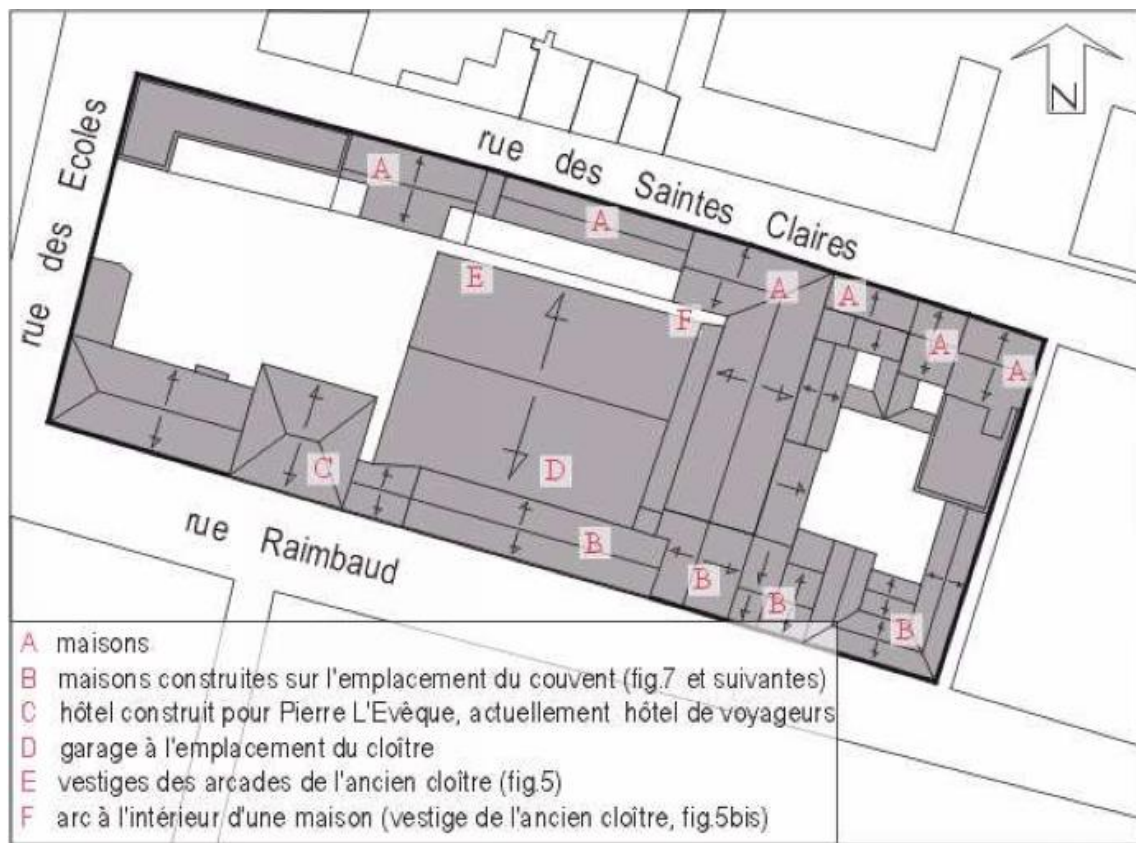
There is also a plaque dated 3 June 1732 which is located on a wall inside the building which states that it laid by Mother Marie Joseph of Jesus, Prioress of the Convent and Hospital.



(Interesting side note: 'Jouineau' is the original spelling of the surname of our Juneau ancestors who can be found in the records of La Rochelle as early as 1629. If I remember correctly, the only occurrences of that surname at the time in the La Rochelle records were related to our family. Therefore, out of curiosity, I made an attempt to contact the hotel owner regarding the hotel history as well as Anne Jouineau's lineage but, to date, my email has gone unanswered.)



This final diagram is undated but it provides an overview of what likely remains of the *Couvent-Hôpital des religieuses Hospitalières*.



This is a transcription of the legend at the bottom of diagram:

- A Houses
- B Houses built on the site of the convent
- C Hotel built for Pierre l'Evêque, now a traveler's hotel c1852
- D Garage at the site of the cloister
- E Remains of the arcades of the old cloister
- F Arch inside a house (remains of the old cloister)

We may never know exactly if the earthly remains of our two Goudeau ancestors were moved at some point to a local cemetery or if they still exist deep within the hallowed walls or floors of the remnants of these very old buildings. Likely, we'll never know. However, in some strange way, the very thought of walking through a building knowing that our ancestors stepped through the same space more than three hundred years ago provides a momentary connection to the past that we rarely get an opportunity to experience. It bridges the distance between us and them, not only in miles, but in time. As once written in an old genealogy proverb, "You live as long as you are remembered".... Rest assured, our dear ancestors, that you will not be forgotten.