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Marriage Contracts in  
Fifteenth-Century Normany:  
An Examination of MSD47 at  
the Spencer Research Library

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MS D47 at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library of the University of Kansas is a book of copies of legal charters relating to the Campront family of Lorey between the years 1268 and 1544. Included are charters describing acquisitions of mills and other property, declarations of homage, and various financial arrangements between the Campronts, their tenants, and other families. Five of the charters are entitled lettres de mariage. Four of these date from between 1421-1426, a period of particular political and social unrest in Normandy. This paper will examine these lettres, as well as the social and historical background which affected their composition, in order to obtain an idea of the economic and familial priorities of a Norman family in the mid-fifteenth century and how these priorities found expression in marriage arrangements.

The volume is a bound book of copies of legal documents in French, measuring approximately twenty-three centimeters in height and sixteen centimeters in width. It was purchased from Ludwig Rosenthal in June of 1960. The fifty-five folia in the volume are vellum, lined with either lead or light ink. Many begin with decorative initials, and several of these contain faces. On some folia, the first or last line has decorated extended ascenders or descenders.

The volume appears to have been bound only once, as there is no obvious second set of stitches. The folia are bound in gatherings

of four. The first gathering contains only two folia, plus two loose folia. This suggests that the two loose folia, containing the table of contents for the remaining portion of the volume, indeed were intended to follow the first two folio. The volume has sustained water damage which has not significantly affected the text, but has damaged the margins. The location of the water damage on the two loose folia suggests that they were in their current position before the damage occurred. The back cover of the book is present, but the cord bindings appear to have been cut, accounting for the absence of a front cover.

The earliest document is dated 1268, and the last of the main collection is from 1438. Another document has been added in a much later hand and dated 1544. Therefore, the actual copying of the charters must have occurred between 1438 and 1544. In fact, the first hand appears to date from before 1500.<sup>1</sup>

The documents encompass most aspects of the economic life of the Campronts through several generations. A focus on the marriage settlements will present an examination of a specific facet of life which was, in fact, central to the existence of the family.

In order to appreciate the relevance of these marriage settlements, the role of marriage in medieval noble society must first be examined. Georges Duby has stated that human societies control their future through marriage.<sup>2</sup> This explanation is

certainly true of the institution of marriage in fifteenth-century France. Marriage was used to ensure a suitable social and financial future for offspring.

Marriage was also central to the realm of religion, as Christianity shaped society's attitudes about reproduction and sexuality and it was through marriage that these concepts were regulated. The ideal of chastity before marriage, and within marriage after the birth of a couple's children, was prescribed, and the power of the Church to regulate morals was ever-present.<sup>3</sup> Of course, Christian perfection was far from the minds of most couples. In fact, economic motivation was the strongest force affecting the decision when and whom to marry, especially amongst the upper classes, since inheritance depended on the birth of legitimate heirs.

A woman's position in her marriage, as with that of the man she married, was often determined by financial factors. The institution of dowry was long established by the late middle ages.<sup>4</sup> In fact, by the fifteenth century, dowry was more important than it had ever been.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note, then, that no mention is made of "dowry" in the Campront lettres de mariage. In fact, in one of the lettres, both sets of parents are contributing to the finances of the couple, with noticeable concern for keeping the wealth in the direct line of inheritance. In all of them, however, dons de mariage are given to the woman

by her male guardian, and it is this don which is of central importance.

Marriage arrangements in France as early as the thirteenth century seemed to provide for a concept of separate property. Property was divided into three categories, with the family land, or heritage, of either the husband or the wife essentially under individual control. Acquired land was theoretically administered jointly, and moveables, or meubles, became by the end of the century property that the husband could not dispose of without the wife's agreement. In fact, while the husband did have some power over his wife's family land, this did not include alienation.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of the Campront marriages, this arrangement indicates that the woman's family had quite a stake in providing for her financial future. In fact, the greater degree of control by women over the land acquired in their marriage, and one may assume over property in general, led to greater control over this property by the wife's family.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the family stood to gain much by arranging a favorable marriage, and contributing to the finances of the couple, if need be. This seems to have been the means by which the family of the woman also made provisions for her heirs.

Political concerns were closely tied to economic questions. Until the Black Death caused such upheaval in demographic

patterns, most men of noble classes were not allowed to marry until late in their lives, if at all. This was a means of buttressing the system of primogeniture. After the plague, however, the institution of marriage evolved to ensure repopulation: sons of nobles more frequently married earlier and had more children.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the political implications of determining who married whom became even more weighty. Marriage became primarily a political operation, wherein people vied for honor, glory, and power.<sup>9</sup>

With so many factors influencing the marriage, it is no surprise that arrangements were very formalized. In noble marriages, after financial, social, and political hurdles were overcome, the Church usually conducted an inquiry to determine if there were any "moral" obstacles. This meant determining how closely the prospective couple were related, as the Church strongly disapproved of consanguineous marriages.<sup>10</sup> Incest, which was defined much more strictly than it is today, was often used by nobles as a convenient means of terminating an unsatisfactory marriage.

Finally, the couple was ready to undergo the ceremony of les fiancailles. The financial arrangements of the marriage were secured at this time as well as a formal marriage engagement that was not to be broken except for the most severe of circumstances and with ecclesiastical approval. After engagement, the couple



were expected to marry in the near future.<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, the Campront documents refer to marriage gifts having taken place in the past tense. This may have been because it was customary for no gifts to be exchanged between husband and wife during the time of their marriage. In this way, the marriage gifts are legally seen to have taken place before the marriage.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, the arrangements and planning that went into the Campront marriages did not occur in a vacuum. The historical circumstances surrounding life in fifteenth-century Normandy were powerful forces in shaping their lives. As is the case with the institution of marriage, it is impossible to explore all the events that may have affected their lives. Nonetheless, some important occurrences warrant discussion.

Of immediate importance was the Hundred Year's War. Henry V ascended to the throne of England in 1413. He soon pursued a claim on the French throne based on England's historical claims to the region of Aquitaine, Edward III's "right" to the crown, and the issue of the unpaid ransom of John the Good, who had been captured by the English in 1356. These provided Henry with enough justification to attempt a diplomatic resolution.<sup>13</sup>

Diplomacy failed, and in August of 1415, an English force set

sail for Normandy. The strategic port of Harfleur was captured a month later, and the overwhelming English victory at Agincourt followed in October. The English returned to Normandy in 1417, and Henry's attempts to control the entire country resumed with greater force.

Henry achieved a position of power, and the treaty of Troyes, signed on May 21, 1420, confirmed the union of the two countries through his marriage to Charles VI's daughter Catherine. Henry, and his sons after him, were to be kings of England and France. Turmoil ensued, however, when Henry died leaving only an infant son, turmoil ensued.

Henry had re-instituted old Norman offices such as the ducal chancellor, the ducal seneschal, and probably the Chambre de Comptes at Caen.<sup>14</sup> After his death, the regent, the Duke of Bedford, attempted to continue Henry's policy of re-establishing Norman institutions. He hoped to re-create powerful institutions like the Conseil de Normandie and L'Echiquier staffed with Normans who would exercise this power for the good of the English Crown.<sup>15</sup> However successful his administrative reforms may have been, Bedford's military fate was sealed by his defeat by French troops under Joan of Arc at Orleans in 1429. Charles VII was crowned at Rheims July 18, and the tide of the war turned towards the French.

The Treaty of Arras between Burgundy and France in 1435 eliminated England's important alliance with the duke of Burgundy. Charles' forces eventually forced the English to withdraw from Maine in 1448. The English attacked Brittany while the French captured Lisieux, Argentan, and St. Lo.<sup>16</sup> Coutances, which had been under English occupation since 1417, fell in 1449. Rouen fell in November 1449, and after the Battle of Formigny in April of 1450, the English were driven out of northern France, their only possession being Calais.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, during the period from 1421-1426, the period spanned by four of the Campront marriage settlements, Normandy was either under military threat or complete occupation by the English. The Cotentin peninsula was occupied by the English by the autumn of 1418,<sup>18</sup> and English nobles were granted lands and posts throughout the region, as well as the rest of Normandy. While information about smaller towns is difficult to obtain, the fact that Vire, Ducey, and St. Sauveur-Lendelin were at one time under the lordship of English nobles hints at the scale of English involvement in local affairs.<sup>19</sup>

However, the actual effect that this had on the smaller holdings was not necessarily great. It appears that most of the lesser French nobility remained in possession of their land.<sup>20</sup> None of the documents implies that the Campronts either lost possession of their land or chose to flee English occupation. Therefore, the problems they would have faced during these years would have been

primarily financial.

The seignery essentially formed the framework of Norman society.<sup>21</sup> Yet during the fifteenth century, conditions for the seignery were far from favorable. Depopulation caused by plague, poor weather, and the unstable currency, combined with the actual damage caused by the war, led to drastic declines in revenues.<sup>22</sup>

It seems obvious that this decline would have affected the Campronts. With a decline in population, less land would be cultivated. Less money would then be collected in rents, and in order to collect any revenue, the lord would have to lower the rents to a level that his tenants could pay. This situation seems to have been quite common.<sup>23</sup>

The war, food shortages, and disease led to a decline in population estimated at fifty percent.<sup>24</sup> Rural dwellers fled the countryside, and bands of "brigands" were blamed for causing unrest and crime in sparsely-populated areas. In short, while the Cotentin may have been relatively peaceful from a military standpoint, from a social and economic standpoint it was disturbed.

The debasement of currency added to the problem, since most debts were arranged in terms of money of account. When the value of the currency fell greatly in relation to the money of account, repayment of debts was more costly in real terms. The trend of

debasement was slight, but constant, throughout the entire fifteenth century.<sup>25</sup> The discrepancy between money of account and currency in circulation led to financial chaos.<sup>26</sup> The English demanded high taxes while they controlled Normandy, and this also hurt an economy already ravaged by depopulation and war.<sup>27</sup>

By 1423, military security was encouraging the return of much of the rural population, and production increased despite the ever-present danger of brigands.<sup>28</sup> By the late 1420's, however, military conflict had resumed, and taxation rose as a response. The situation reached a crisis in the late 1430's, when two years of bad harvests drove inflation up.<sup>29</sup>

In sum, it appears that the Campront couples were married under tenuous economic and political situations. While their land may have been secure, their income certainly was not. The charters of MS D47 themselves give only a hint of the upheaval that was occurring throughout Normandy. Nonetheless, by taking a closer look at the marriage settlements, a sense of the priorities and concerns of the Norman nobility can be obtained.

The lettres examined are those involving Jehan de Campront, his father Raoul, and his sister Jehanette, who appears to be married twice during this period. There are certainly other documents relating to marriage in the volume. The lettre de mariage of

Robine de Campront deals with the conclusion of arrangements concerning the marriage of Jehan's sister to Jehan Bondet. Although this is titled a lettre de mariage, it in fact deals with the settling of previous arrangements. This, and the fact that it dates from 1399, have made it largely insignificant for the purposes of this paper. Another charter, entitled the "lettre de laquisition de cent soulz de rente de Olivier Daquetonille," also deals with marriage arrangements. Here, the couple was previously married, and are settling the revenues arranged for them by paying a lump sum to Raoul, father-in-law of Olivier. Again, the circumstances surrounding these documents warrant investigation, but would make a detailed examination in this paper difficult since the actual lettre de mariage is not present.

## Editorial Conventions

In the following transcriptions, the original spelling has been retained. The original contains a great number of abbreviations and suppressions. The missing letters have been indicated by underlining, and words have been reconstructed to fit the complete spellings as they are given elsewhere in the documents. All instances of symbols for the word "et" have been replaced.

Brackets ([]) indicate the position of rubrics that occur in portions of the text. The numbering system used in the table of contents and in the right-hand corner of each folio has also been indicated. A single virgule (/) indicates the end of a line of text, while a double virgule (//) indicates the end of a page.

Lower case proper names and place-names in the original have been capitalized in the transcription. Place-names and their locations on the accompanying map may be found in the glossary immediately following the transcription. Words and phrases that may not be immediately familiar, or spellings quite different from their modern counterparts, are explained in notes, as are anomalies or uncertainties concerning the persons involved. The titles used for reference are those in the table of contents on folia three and four.

Document #1

Lettre de mariage au seigneur de la Ruquetiere  
(Jehanette de Campront and Jehan de Campront)

July 29, 1421

(xx vj xiiij-r.) A tous ceulx qui ces lettres verront Je/han Danneville garde du seel des obliga/cions de la viconte de Coustances salut Sa/voir faisons que par devant Pierre Osouf/ tabellion Jure<sup>1</sup> en siege de Quiebou fut pre/sent en sa personne Jehan de Campront escuier/ seigneur en propriete de Maupertus qui coguerent<sup>2</sup>/ et confessa de la pure vollente sans aucune/ contrainte qui il avoit donne et octroye a/fin de heritage<sup>3</sup> A damoiselle Jehanette de Camp/ront<sup>4</sup> sa seur au mariage faissant dicelle Jehanette et de Jehan de Campront escuier filz Engeram de Campront escuier seigneur de la Ruq//quetiere<sup>5</sup> (xx vj xiiij-v.) se ainssy est que Jceluy mariage soit/ fait et acomply Cest assavoir tel droit comme/ ledit donneur avoit et povoit avoir en deux/ fieux lun appelle le fieu de Rouge Fosse assis/ en la paroisse de Montuirtin Engregne et/ ailleurs ou il sestentend et lautre nomme le fieu de Beaumont qui est assis en la paroisse de/ Lingreville<sup>6</sup> tant en hommes homages fran/chises dignitez services et libertes qui en ren/tes de grains de argent oyseaux et oeufs/ Reliefs<sup>7</sup> xiii<sup>es</sup><sup>8</sup> avecquez le droit du gage ple/ge<sup>9</sup> court et usage<sup>10</sup> et egeualment tout ce que/ yceluy doneur avoit es diz fieux povoit/ et devoit avoir et devoit avoir



calenguier<sup>11</sup> et demander sans/ aucune choses en demander Retenir  
ne exep/tier par devers<sup>12</sup> luy en aucune maniere A/vecque toutes  
jcelles Rentes comme il avoit et/ povet<sup>13</sup> avoir en la ditte  
paroisse de Lingrevil/le sans riens y retenir [Item Cent soulz/  
tournois de rente<sup>14</sup> assis<sup>15</sup> en la paroisse de Grimo/ville sur  
lostel et terres de Gauldredouil et/ a Justice sur yceluy hostel  
et terres adit ce appartenir/ [Item ung quartier de forment de  
rente me/sure de Coustances assis en la paroisse du dit/ lieu de  
Grimoville sur Jehan le Rouxet a cau/se de certain tenement qui  
il en tient du nombre//(xx vj xiiij-r.) de certaine rente que il  
doit audit donneur Et fut/ ce fait pour y tel mariage comme il  
povoit apparte/nir a la ditte Jehenette et en faisant en  
trait/tant Jceluy pour quoy y celuy donneur permist<sup>16</sup>/ et  
sobligna a la dicte<sup>17</sup> Jehenette ledit don ga/rantir delivrer et  
deffendre vers tous et contre/ toulx se par ly ou par son fait  
est empesche/ en aucune maniere Et adicte furent presents Jehan/  
de Campront escuier seigneur du Lorey<sup>18</sup> et Raoul/ de Campront  
escuier pere dudit donneur qui/ au don dessus dit se  
consentierent et acorderent/ et voulurent que ledit Jehan de  
Campront &/ laditte Jehannette et leurs hoirs yessans<sup>19</sup> deux/ en  
joissent en temps advenir comme deleur/ propre heritage en cas  
que ledit mariage sera/ fait et acomply comme dessus est dit Et  
au/cy se establiret pour ledit donneur et permistrent/ et  
sobligerent que encontire<sup>20</sup> diceluy don il/ nyra ne aller ne  
aller [sic] ne fera en temps/ advenir en aucune maniere Et quant  
es/ choses dictes dessus et a chacune dicelles te/nir et

accomplir les dessus dis chacun en son/ fait et entant que a  
chacun peut touchier o/bligerent<sup>21</sup> eulx et leurs hoirs et tous  
leurs/ biens meubles et heritages presents et advenir aven/dre  
doffice de Justice pour deffaut de ce enterigner<sup>22</sup>// (xx vj xiiij-  
v.) En tesmoignage de ce ses lettres sont seelles du seels  
dessus/ dit a la rellacion dudit jure sauf aultri droit Ce fut  
fait en la presence de Olivier de Soulle escuier monsieur/ Jehn  
Pellerin pastre cure de Saint Martin de Bon/ Fosse Thomas  
Letenour<sup>23</sup> bourgoiz de Coustances et ply/sours aultres le xxix<sup>e</sup>  
Jour de Juillet lan mil/ cccc vingt et ung.

Document #2

La lettre du mariage de noble homme Raoul de Campront

(Raoul de Campront and Ysabel de Villiers)

March 17, 1424

(xx vii-v.) A tous ceulx qui ces lettres verront/ ou orront Jehn Letelier viconte de Coustances/ es terres que souloit tenir le Roy de Navarre<sup>24</sup> Et/ garde des seaulx des obligations de la ditte viconte salut [Sur le traittie du mariage/ dit et parle par entre Raollet de Campront<sup>25</sup>/ filz Jehan de Campront escuier seignour du/ Lorey du lore [sic] dune partie et Ysabel de Villiers fille de Guillaume de Villiers<sup>26</sup> escuier seignour de/ Maupertus<sup>27</sup>

et damoiselle Guillaumette sa femme/ dautre [Sachent toulx que par devant Renouf Guernet clerc Jure et establi quant/ a ce soubz Jehan Hays clerc tabellion Jure/ en siege de Marigny Furent presents lesdittez/ parties que recongnerent de leurs bonnes vol/lentez sans nul contraignement avoir fait a/cort ensembles et contre/ aulture en la maniere/ qui ensuit Cest assavoir que en cas ou ledit/ mariage se parfera<sup>28</sup> ledit seignour du Lorey/ donnoit et donn a son dit filz<sup>29</sup> par maniere de prester<sup>30</sup>/ en dit mariage faisant quarante livres tour/nois<sup>31</sup> chacun an de Rente a la feste Saint Mi/chiel en Septembre [Lesquelles il permist et sobligna a asoir<sup>32</sup> bien et suffisamment en bonne/ assiete<sup>33</sup> et suffiesante en cas que son dit filz// (xx vii i-r.) vouldroit

Departir donecques luy Et aussy luy presta/ soixante acrez de sa terre assise en ces demains de/ Campront et son hostel et manoir de Campront/ Et onecqz ce permist et sobliga a poier a sa vollete/ la somme de cent frans pour meuble Et ledit/ de Villiers et sa dicte femme donnent et donnerent/ a leur dicte fille endit mariage faisant cinquante/ livres tournois de rente chacun an affin de heritage/ au tempe de la Saint Michiel en Septembre pour cy/ et entelle maniere que tant comme ledit de Villiers/ vivra il ne sera tenu poier rendre ne aseer/ fors trente livres de Rente du nombre desdiz/ cinquante livres<sup>34</sup> Et apres son deceps lesdits/ Raoullet et Ysabel ou cas ou ledit mariage se/perfera auront et apercevront affin de heritage/ lesdis cinquante livres de Rente affin de heritage/ sur les heritages et appartenir des diz de Villiers/ et femme Et permistrent et soblignent les diz de Villiers et fame a faire assiste a leur ditte/ fille ou a ses hoirs yesans delle ou cas ou ledit mariage se/perfera lesdits trente livres/ de rente en bonne assiette et suffiesante des/quelz trente livres de Rente que donnent aussi/ lesdiz de Villiers et fame ly assistrent pnte/ment<sup>35</sup> seze livres tournois de Rente a prendre/ et lever chacun/ an sur Lorains du Mesnil<sup>36</sup> do quil doist/ a cause du fieu de Nicorp qui sestent en// (xx vij i-v.) Nicorp en Gratot et en pluseurs aultres lieux Les/quelles saize livres de Rente lesdits de Villiers et/ fame ne seront pas tenus a fournir en aucune/ maniere mes demouront et demeurent a les ga/rantir deliverer et deffendre ver toulx et contre tout/ tant seulement Et non lever rien desdictes seze/ livres a la

Saint Michiel prouchain venant Et pour/tant comme touche le demourant desdit trente/ livres de Rente que donient asoer ledit de Villiers/ et femme a leur dicte fille comme dit est eulx per/mistrent et sobligerent aluy assoir en bonne/ assiette et suffiesante et ledit de Campront per/mista sobligna ala prendre et accepter pour/ et en nom de la dicte Ysabel en cas ou ledit ma/riage seperfera Et par semblable maniere/ que ledit de Campront a donne a son dicte filz/ la somme de cent francs pour meuble et ledit/ de Villiers et sa ditte femme donnent a leur ditte/ fille la somme de cent francs pour meuble/ toutes foiz que il leur plaira a leur volentez/ a estre poies ou non Et quant les dessus/ diz Jehan de Campront et Guillaume de Villiers/ et sa ditte fame auront feces les assietes donc/ par dessus est faite mencion dit fut et acor/de par entreulx en acordant ledit mariage est fait que eulx ne demouront tenus a fournir/ lesdits assiettes aucune maniere mes demoront// (xx vij ij-r.) et demeurent tenus et obligies a les garantie de/liverer deffendre vers toulx et contre toulx ou ail/leurs chacun de soy eshang en leur propre heritage/ a la value se mestiel en estoit Et auxi/ ledit Jehan de Campront la garde et gouverment/ lesdits Raollet et Ysabel et aura et recevra tou/tes leurs dictes rentes et Revenues pour leur/ trouver toutes leurs necesseres de toutes cho/ses ses Par ainssi que en cas ou les diz Raollet/ et Ysabel navroient hoirs yessans deux et deleur/ char que lesdits donns retourneront aux dis/ donnours ou a leurs hoirs Et quant a ce te/nir acomplir et enterigner lesdictes parties chacun /en son fait obligent eulx et

leurs hoirs et/ toulz leurs biens meubles et heritages presents/  
et advenir A vend par la Justice du lieu pour/ deffault de ce  
enterigner Et pour les coux et/ despens pour ce faiz et soustenus  
Rendre donc/ le porteur de ces lettres seroit creu<sup>37</sup> par son  
sere/ment sans aultres preuve Et Renoncher/ quant a ce toulz  
preneurs de croys<sup>38</sup> atoutez/ execucions deffence de fait et de  
droit. En tes/moing de ce nous a la Rellacion dudit comis/  
avonsmis a ses lettres le seel dessus dit sauf/ autri droit Ce  
fut fait lan de grace mil/ iiiij<sup>xx</sup> et quatre Le xvij<sup>e</sup> Jour de Mars.

Document #3.

Lettre de mariage Guillaume de Percy  
(Jehanette de Campront and Guillaume de Percy)

December 10, 1424

(xx vj xij-r.) A tous ceulx qui ces lettres verront/ Jehan Danneville garde du seel des obliga/cions de la viconte de Coustances salut Sa/voir faisons que par devant Pierres Osouf/ tabellion Jure en siege de Quiebou furent/ presens Raoul de Campront escuier seigneur de/ Maupertus a exufrit<sup>39</sup> et Jehan de Campront/ escuier son filz seigneur dudit lieu de Mau/pertus en proprieté lesquelz conquerent et con/fesserent de leurs pures vollentes sans au/cune contrainte que ilz avoient donne af/fin de heritage a damoiselle Jehanette de Camp/ront fille dudit Raoul & seur dudit Jehan/ au mariage faisant dentre Jcelle Jehennette/ et Guillaume de Percy<sup>40</sup> escuier se ainssy est que//(xx vj xij-v.) jceluy mariage soit fait et acomply par entreulx/ Cest assavoir tout y tel droit et seignorie comme/ lesdis donneurs avoient et povoient avoir en deux/ fieux noblement tenus assis en la Lande Darour/ et ailleurs ou ailleurs ou ilz sestendent dont/ lun est nommey le fieu Pellenilain et lautre/ fieu Jceluy Raoul lont Ja pieca pour eschange/ de feu<sup>41</sup> Bernart le Cointe contre certains autres/ heritages que ledit Raoul ly embailla en contre es/change comme il est plus aplain desclere<sup>42</sup> es<sup>43</sup>/ lettres sur ce fces<sup>44</sup> tant en revenues de grains/ argent oyseaulx ouefs

servicez faisant et Rede/vances seigneurites et libertes de quel estat ou con/dicion que ilz soient ou puissent estre<sup>45</sup> et le dro/it des gages plege court et usage que egal/ment en toutes aultres choses quelzconquez/ sans rien y retenir ne excepter par devers/ eulx en aucune maniere Et permistrent et sobli/gerent Jceulx donnours ledit don de mariage/ garantir deliverer et deffendre vers tous et contre/ toulx a la ditce Jehennette et dePercye en cas/ dessus dit et a leurs hoirs et mettre hors de/ tous empeschements et encombrements ou ailleurs/ eschanges en leur propre heritage a la value semes/tier<sup>46</sup> en en [sic] estoit sans ce que yceulx donnours/ ne leurs hoirs soient aucunement obligies a po/int de fourneture en aucune maniere Et quant//(xx vi xiii-r.) es choses dessus dittez tenir et accomplir lesdis/ de Campront obligent eulx et leurs hoirs et tous/ leurs biens meubles et heritages presents et advenir a ve/ndre doffice de Justice pour deffaut de ce enterigner/ En tesmoinage de ce ces lettres sont seeles du/ seel dessus dit a la relacion dudit Jure sauf autri droit Ce fut fait present Guillaume de la/ Haie escuier mestre Symon de Percye et Perrin Leter/rour Le x<sup>e</sup> jour de Decembre lan de grace/ mil iiii<sup>c</sup> et ving quatre.



Document #4

Lettre du mariage Jehan de Campront  
(Jehan de Campront and Marie de Villiers)

December 10, 1426

(xx vij ij-v.) A tous ceulx qui ces lettres verr<sup>ont</sup> Guillaume Osber Garde du seel des obli/gacions de la viconte de Carey Salut Savoir/ faisons qui par devant Colin Caunelande cleric/ tabellion Jure et commis A Saint-Lo fut present/ Noble homme Monsieur Raoul Tesson chevalier seigneur/ de Dangy lequel de sa bonne volente confessa/ avoir donney octroie quittie et delessie affin/ de heritage A damoiselle Marie de Villiers sa/ niepce fille de feu Pierres de Villiers<sup>47</sup> en son vi/vant seigneur de Villiers surport et de deffuncte/ damoiselle Jehennette Tesson sa ftme<sup>48</sup> et seur du/ dit chavalier en pur et franc don de mariage/ Cest assavoir vingt sept livres tournois de Ren/te Aux tempes de Passquez et Saint Michiel/ par moittie Et fut ce fait en faissant et trait/ant le mariage au plesir de dieu de Jehan/ de Campront escuier seignour de Maupertus/ et dicelle damoiselle niepce dudit chevalier/ Et pour la bonne et vrai amour Naturel/ le que Jceluy chevalier a asa ditte niepce et pour/ les bons et pour les Agreablez servicez que/ jcelle damoiselle a faiz tant aluy que ama/dame Beatrix de Percy<sup>49</sup> sa feme Avecqz lesq<sup>lx</sup>/ Jcelle damoiselle a demoure pour longue espace//(xx vij iij-r.) de temps<sup>50</sup> desquelles choses Jcelluy chevalier/ se tint a bien

comptent Pour quoy il permista et / sobligea la ditte rente de  
vingt sept livres/ tournois Ausdis de Campront et damoiselle  
A/pres ledit mariage fait et confermey et a leur/ hoirs en nom et  
la ligne dicelle damoiselle/ garantir vers toulx et contre toulx  
mettre hors/ de toulx empeschements [sic] fournir fair valer/  
sans dechie et sans amenisement et poier ou/ faire paier par  
chaun an aux tempes dessus dit/ Audit escuier et damoiselle et  
aleurs hoirs ainssi/ quedit est ou aqui ces lettres porta par  
voi/ dexecucion sur tous ses biens meubles et heritages/ resents  
et advenir Jusquez a ce qui ses hoirs/ ou ayans cause en ayent  
fait ou baille bon/ne et suffiesant assiete Aux diz de Campront/  
et a damoiselle leurs hoirs ou ayans cause<sup>51</sup>/ Cest assavoir en  
telle assiete que les dis/ eu deverront estre contens  
deshheritages terres/ et seignories et Revenenes appartenir  
audit donneur et/ qui ly sont venuz et escheur<sup>52</sup> de la  
succes/sion de feu Robert Tesson son pere escuier/ ou autres  
aussi Laquelle assiete J/celluy chevalier sera tenu faire et  
bailler/ a une foiz en une deux ou trois parties/ Et Jcelle  
ainssy faitte lesdiz deCampront/ et damoiselle ou ayans cause  
seront tenus// (xx vij iij-v.) prendre et recepvoir parmy ce que  
Jcelluy chevalier/ ses hoirs ou ayans cause seront et demouront  
oblig/ez A garantir ycelle tournee et assiete vers tous et/  
contre toulx Mettre hors de toulx empeschements/ fournir et faire  
valoir sans dechie et sans amenisement/ par ainssy que se la  
ditte damoiselle Marie na/voit hoirs delle yessans en mariage ou  
que la li/gne qui seroit yessans delle seroit destainte Cest

pre/sent don Revendroit audits donneur ses hoirs ou/Aians cause sans aucunes .difficulte et Sans ce que /les aults hoirs delle en ligne collateral<sup>53</sup> le puis/sent empeschier ne contre dire en aucune ma/niere non obstant quelxcon longueur ou lapse / de temps depuiz coura Sauf et preserve<sup>54</sup> toutes/ voiz le droit du veufuage du mary delle se le /cas advenoit pour en Jouir ainssy que faire se/ peult et doilt selon la coustume de paiz Et quant / a ce tenir et acomplir ledit chevalier obligea luy et ses/ hoirs et toulx leur biens meubles et heritages presents / et advenir A vendre doffice de Justice pour def/fault de ce enterigner et rendre coux mises/ et depens faiz et eux pour ce En tesmoinage de/ ce ces lettres sont seelles dudit seel A la rellacion/ dudit jure sauf aultri droit. Ce fut en la pre/sence de noble homme monsieur Phe<sup>55</sup> de la Haye che/valier et Jehan de Maten escuier le vendredi xx\*/ jour de Decembre lan de grace mil iiiij<sup>c</sup> vingt six.

1. Anne Hyde, Curator of Manuscripts, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, description of MSD47, processed January 16, 1963, 2.
2. Georges Duby The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest, trans. Barbar Bray (New York: Pantheon, 1983) 18.
3. While it is impossible to determine how literally Biblical references to marriage were taken, it is interesting to note that St. Paul saw marriage as an alternative to fornication, suitable only for those unable to control their lust. After the birth or children, the couple should ideally choose a chaste life. For a discussion of developments in the canonical interpretation of marriage, see Duby, chapter 2. This work also discusses many instances of the involvement of ecclesiastical powers in the realms of engagement, marriage, and divorce.
4. Dowry had been known in classical times, but it became standard during the Middle Ages, usurping the place of morgengabe, a Germanic tradition involving "paying" for the wife's virginity. By the late Middle Ages, dowry was often seen as a daughter's portion of the family inheritance, which explains the reason the wife's family exercised such care in arranging marriages. For a discussion of dowry, see Diane Owen Hughes, "From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe," in The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History, Women & History Series 10, (New York: Institute for Research in History, 1985) In fact, in the Campront settlements, dowry seems to be used as a means of settling the married couple until they come into their proper inheritance.
5. Francis and Joseph Gies, Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages, (New York: Harper & Row, 1987) 291.
6. Charles Donahue Jr., "What Causes Fundamental Legal Ideas: Marital Property in England and France in the 13th Century," in Michigan Law Review, (Ann Arbor: Michigan Law Review, 1980.) vol. 78, 59-88.
7. Ibid.
8. Gies, 291.
9. Duby, 81.
10. Jean-Baptiset Molin and Protais Mutembe, Le Rituel du Mariage en France du XIIe au XVIe Siecle, (Paris: Beauchesne, c. 1974) 51.
11. Molin and Mutembe, 50.

12. Personal communication with James A. Brundage, Professor of History at the University of Kansas, April 16, 1992.

13. Henry Miskimin, Money and Power in Fifteenth Century France. (New Haven: Yale University Press, c. 1984) 8.

14. C.T. Allmand, Lancastrian Normandy 1415-1450: The History of a Medieval Occupation. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) 124-125.

15. Jean Mabire and Jean-Robert Ragache, Histoire de la Normandie, (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1986) 195.

16. Miskimin, 15.

17. Miskimin, 15.

18. Mabire and Ragache, 193.

19. Allmand, 62-65.

20. For example, in the sergenterie of Saint-Lo, all those who had held fiefs in 1417 remained in 1426. See Allmand, 218.

21. Guy Blois, The Crisis of Feudalism: Economy and Society in Eastern Normandy c. 1300-1500. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 215.

22. Allmand, 166.

23. Blois, 221.

24. Blois, 65.

25. Miskimin, 63.

26. Miskimin, 30.

27. Allmand, 47.

28. Allmand, 160

29. Allmand, 162-164.

1. A tabellion jure was a sworn notary. Authorization by a person holding this office lent public verification of authenticity to a document.

2. This appears to be a form of the verb "conjurer" or to adjure.

3. Heritage was the title given to "family land." Therefore, it is likely that this land was given directly to Jehanette and would in fact remain somewhat under her control.

4. This appears to be the same "Jehanette" who was married to Guillaume de Percy in 1424. It is possible, but unlikely, that there were two daughters in the family named Jehanette. Perhaps she was widowed, or perhaps the first marriage did not work out, but unfortunately there is no way to determine the circumstances of these marriages.

5. The confusion here stems from the fact that other documents seem to identify Engeram de Campront as the father of Jehan de Campront, making him the grandfather of Raoul, and thus the great-grandfather of Jehan and Jehanette. Jehan, brother of Jehanette, is properly identified. It seems unlikely that an error of this magnitude was made. One possible explanation is that another branch of the family, perhaps a cousin, also carries the "de Campront" name and it is this man who is married Jehanette de Campront. There does not appear to be any other mention of the "seigneur de la Ruquetiere" in the other documents.

6. Rights to two fiefs appear to be a common "don de mariage," as a similar arrangement was made for Jehanette in 1424.

7. Relief was a levy paid by a tenant when land was inherited from its previous tenant. Its amount varied according to its size. Blois, 217.

8. The treiziemes was a levy of one thirteenth (1/13) the value of a piece of land, paid to the lord upon its sale. This was also prescribed by the Coutume de Normandie. Blois, 217.

9. Gage-plege was a customary seigneurial jurisdiction in Normandy.

10. Court et usage was the "customary justidiction...of a low justice, that is the jurisdiction concerning rents and land, as defined by the Coutume de Normandie, intended to preserve seigneurial rights...[T]hese judicial rights conferred a leading role on the lord, but its economic impact was negligible, because the product of fines usually failed to offset the costs of their recovery." Blois, 217.

11. This seems to be a form of "chalengier" or "calenger," meaning "to claim."

12. Vers.

13. This appears to be an abbreviation for povent, the plural form, which does not agree with the singular avoit. This is perhaps a means of abbreviating the phrase, "as he might have and they might have."

14. The sous tournois is a money of account, like the livre tournois. This would be in keeping with the practice of rendering lease agreements in terms of money of account.

15. Here "assis" appears to mean "assized."
16. This appears to be the third person singular form of "permettre" in the preterite case.
17. "Dicte" appears as the abbreviation "dce" nearly as frequently as the abbreviation "dt" in several forms.
18. This is the first example of the confusing identification of the fiefs of the Campronts. In the beginning of the document, Jehan is called "seigneur en propriete de Maupertus." Here, he is "seigneur de Lorey." Apparently, the Campronts originated in Campront but no longer live there, as they are never referred to as "seigneurs de Campront."
19. "Issance," or issue.
20. This word could be a form of "encounter," or "in anticipation of."
21. This verb appears to be in the preterite case, indicating past action.
22. To accomplish.
23. This name appears to be obviously "Letenour." However, a "Leterour" is listed as a witness to document 3. Most likely, this is a different family name, but the similarity bears notice.
24. The political implications of this statement are ambiguous. The king of Navarre had been actively involved in Norman politics in the mid-fifteenth century. Blois, 294-297. However, there is little indication of activities in the fifteenth century that would warrant such a show of support as the drafting of legal documents with the phrase, "the lands that the King of Navarre would like to hold."
25. Raollet appears to be a variation of the name "Raoul." This would agree with his identification as son of Jehan de Campront. However, he is marrying Ysabel de Villiers in 1424. If this is Raoul de Campront, he must be marrying for a second time, as his children are of marriageable age in the same year. However, the possibility remains that this is another son of Jehan de Campront who is not mentioned elsewhere in the documents. This would account for the need for the couple to be "guarded and governed" by Jehan. However, as he is not mentioned as a brother to any of the other Campront siblings, I have chosen to represent him as Raoul. On the genealogical chart, his children Jehan, Jehanette, and Aliz are shown as descending from him, rather than from him and Ysabel, as it would be impossible for them to be the children of this marriage. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine his identity with certainty from the given information.

26. A branch of the Villier family apparently held land in England, as well. They have descendants listed to this day in DeBrett's Peerage.

27. Here, Guillaume de Villiers is lord of Maupertus. This would account for the Campront's possession of the fief if Raoul had inherited it upon his father-in-law's death. However, this marriage is taking place in 1424, while in 1426, Jehan is called lord of Maupertus. One possibility is that Raoul is holding the fief until Jehan reaches maturity, when it becomes his.

28. This word, which also appears at "separfera" must be a form of "separer."

29. This is the only example amongst the "lettres" of the husband being given a gift by his guardians. This would have the effect of raising the economic status of the couple above that which could be sustained by the bride's parents.

30. "Prester," meaning to give or to endow.

31. For comparison, one acre of land in Saint-Jean-des-Essarts in Normandy sold for five sous in 1430. In Orleans in 1428, one cow sold for seven livres, tensous. Georges D'avenel, Histoire Economique de la Propriete, des Salaires, des Denress, et de tous les prix en general..., v. 2, (Paris: Imprimeris Nationale, 1844) 83, and v. 4 (1848) 79-80. The total output of French coinage in 1428 was equal to 684,334.5 total livres of account, Miskimin, 136. It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that the couple would be provided with a very comfortable revenue, as are all the couples to whom rentes are given.

32. Asseoir.

33. This phrase, and variations thereof, indicate the passage of time until something is settled or completed. Here, it refers to the amount of "rent."

34. This phrase makes it very clear that Guillaume de Villiers does not wish the terms of the agreement to be changed in a manner that would make him responsible for paying a higher "annuity."

35. I have not been able to positively identify this abbreviation. A possibility is an adverbial form of "pentir," meaning to repent of, as in the sense of regret.

36. The names of many towns in the area of Maupertus begin with the word "Mesnil." Whether "Lorains du Mesnil" is a place name, or whether they are two separate locations, is impossible to determine since I have not been able to locate "Lorains."

37. "Creue," or increased.



38. There are two possible translations for this word, "cross" and "believed." Neither one appears to make sense in the context of the phrase.

39. "Exufruit" perhaps translates as "authority."

40. Like the Villiers, the de Percys seem to have been related to a family in England. Presently, Percys are listed amongst the nobility in Northumberland.

41. deceased.

42. "Desclare," or explained.

43. Here, "es" is an abbreviation for "en les."

44. I have retained the abbreviation "fces" because it could signify either "feasances" or "faciendes." Either of these words could be translated as "deed" or "transaction," which seems to agree with the sense of the abbreviation.

45. By the fifteenth century, dues in kind were usually insignificant, with the predominant income being from money arrangements. Blois, 219. Therefore, the redevances were probably more substantial, from an economic point of view, than the grain, eggs, etc. Of course, the unstable economic condition of the time makes it impossible to determine.

46. Semestiel, or twice a year.

47. There is no mention of a relationship between Pierres de Villiers and Guillaume de Villiers. While it is likely that they are related, I have shown only their relationships to the Campront family, as it is impossible to determine how, if at all, they themselves are related.

48. This abbreviation appears as "ftme" or "stme." It appears as if the scribe attempted to squeeze the letters closely together, perhaps in order to correct an error. In the context of the phrase, it must signify "femme," although I have not been able to determine its derivation.

49. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of the relationship, if any, between Beatrix de Percy and Guillaume de Percy, who married Jehenette. For this reason, no descent is indicated on the genealogical chart.

50. It is likely that Marie was orphaned, as both her parents are referred to as deceased, and she lived for some time with her uncle and aunt. Interestingly, it is her maternal uncle and his wife who arrange for her marriage. This indicates that a woman's family could remain important for generations, since it appears that

Mariè's mother's family, not her father's family, aranged for her upbringing and marriage.

51. This phrase is common in the documents. Literally, it means "having cause" or "having motive." Because of the previous mention of the heirs, it appears to signify, "those who have cause," as in the case of other interested parties besides the direct heirs.

52. This must be derived from "eschier," meaning "to fall" as in "to become the property of someone (by inheritance.)"

53. This is an example of a family's wish to keep wealth in the direct line of descent. If the couple dies without direct heirs, the gift returns to the Tessons or their heirs. This seems to indicate that the woman's family identity remains important, since her maternal uncle arranges her marriage settlement.

54. This appears as an ambiguous abbreviation in the original. "Preserve" fits both the abbreviation and the sense of the phrase.

55. This name is abbreviatied. I have not been able to determine what it signifies. It might be an abbreviation for "Pierres," but this name is not abbreviated elsewhere in the volume.

## Glossary of Place Names

BEAUMONT, fief mentioned in document 1. Location unknown.

CAREY, administrative center of region, mentioned in document 2. Location unknown.

CAMPFONT, apparent origin of the Campronts. F5.

COUSTANCES-Coutances, administrative center of region mentioned in documents 1, 2 and 3. C5.

GRATOT, location mentioned in document 1. C5.

GRIMOVILLE, parish mentioned in document 1. Location unknown.

LA LANDE DAROUR-perhaps La Lande-d'Airou, mentioned in document 3. approximately twelve kilometers south-southwest of Maupertuis.

LINGREVILLE, parish mentioned in document 1. C8.

LOREY-Le Lorey, fief held by the Campronts, mentioned in documents 1 and 3. F4.

MARIGNY, seat of region, mentioned in document 2. G4.

MAUPERTUS-Maupertuis, fief held by the Campronts and the Villiers, mentioned in documents 1, 2, 3 and 4. H8.

NICORP-Nicorps, fief held by Campronts, mentioned in document 1. D6.

QUIEBEOU-Quibou, seat of region mentioned in documents 1 and 3. H5.

ROUGE FOSSE, fief in the parish of Montuirtin Engregne. Location unknown.

RUQUQUETIERE, fief held by Engeram de Campront, mentioned in document 1. Location unknown.

SAINT-LO, administrative center of region, mentioned in document 4. I3.

SAINT MARTIN DE BONNE FOSSE, origin of Jehan Pellerin, mentioned in document 1. H5.

VILLIERS, apparent origin of the Villiers, mentioned in documents 2 and 4. J3.

GENEALOGY

Guillaume de Campront  
seigneur de Lorey

Engeram de Campront  
seigneur de Lorey

Jehan de Campront

Guillaume de Villiers = Guillaumette

Jehan Bondet = Robine de Campront  
≈ 1399

Raoul de Campront = Ysabel de Villiers  
March 17, 1424 *de Villiers, sans date*

Pierres de Villiers = Jehanette Tesson

Raoul Tesson  
seigneur de Dangy

=  
Beatrix de Percy

Marie de Villiers = Jehan de Campront  
seigneur de Maupertus

*Dec 10, 1426*

Jehanette de Campront

=Jehan de Campront  
July 29, 1421

=Guillaume de Percy  
December 10, 1424

Aliz de Campront

=  
Olivier d'Aquetonville

≈ 1435

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