

New facts about Mme Labille-Guiard's family

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A DÉLAÏDE LABILLE-GUIARD,¹ (whose famous self-portrait with pupils, *above*, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, having been rejected by the Louvre in 1878 as “sans valeur artistique”) needs no apology for detailed attention – although, as a female artist, she is sure not to lack it from a new generation of academics for whom gender seems to dominate other considerations. But despite recent publications, some basic facts about her family seem to have escaped everyone (the assumption² seems to have been that Marie-Anne Passez,

¹ This essay first appeared simultaneously on my blog neiljeffares.wordpress.com on 12.II.2019. This is the version of record, and may be cited as Neil Jeffares, “New facts about Labille-Guiard’s family”, *Pastels & pastellists*, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LabilleGuiard_famille.pdf.

² Among the more recent publications is of course Laura Auricchio’s monograph, published by the Getty in 2009; my review of it appeared in *Apollo* in December 2010, but didn’t have room for these details. Passez itself is rather unhelpfully unencumbered by the dates and details that normally enhance pedigrees and chronologies. For the Met picture itself there is a very comprehensive bibliography [here](#), to which I can add the article by Paul Mantz, “Les portraitistes du XVIII^e siècle. IV”, *L’Artiste*, XII, 1854, pp. 177–79, in which he describes the picture as “exempte surtout de cette sentimentalité plate et menteuse dont madame Lebrun se montrait si fière”, adding “cette toile vaut mieux que tous les pastels de madame Guyard.”

author of the 1773 monograph on the artist, will have found anything worth gleaning from archives), and so I've gathered together some observations I've made in the hope that future publications will make full use of these minutiae. Perhaps you will think them all trivial; but the theme that emerges (here, and in so much of the archival work I do) is just how close-knit were the artistic families in the ancien régime. You can follow the discussion by referring not only to the Labille-Guiard [article](#) in the main *Dictionary of pastellists*, but also to supplementary documents such as the Labille [genealogy](#).³

First, her father – whose bust (by Pajou) you can just see peeping out behind the canvas above. Claude-Edme Labille is normally presented as the fashion shopkeeper, best known for employing the future Madame Du Barry in 1761–62. He was indeed a marchand mercier, but it doesn't seem to have been noticed that, on 18.IX.1761, he sold the “fonds de boutique de mercier” at the rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, to a Mlle Joséphe Blondelu, fille majeure d'un marchand mercier.⁴ So it is unlikely that (as Passez surmised) Labille-Guiard rubbed shoulders with the royal favourite for any length of time. Shortly before, he was described in another document⁵ as “receveur de la loterie de l'École-militaire.” This was the ambitious scheme suggested by Casanova and promoted by Mme de Pompadour and Joseph Paris-Duverney for financing a military education for impoverished nobility: Labille had been involved from the start, as this entry in the *Journal historique et littéraire* for June 1758 makes clear:

II. LE 18 AVRIL, le premier tirage de la Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire s'est fait dans la Salle de l'Académie, appelée le Magasin Royal, avec toutes les formalités qui avoient été annoncées. Les numéros sortis de la roue de Fortune, sont 83, 4, 51, 27 & 1, la Loterie paye à ce premier tirage beaucoup au-delà de ce qu'elle a reçu, par la rencontre de plusieurs ternes, & de quatre entre autres qui sont échus à une même personne dans un billet de six nombres, pris au bureau du sieur Labille, rue Neuve des Petits Champs. Le propriétaire de ce billet a près de 30 mille livres de bénéfice. Les autres ternes qui ont porté, sont de 15 mille 600 liv. chacun. Le public a été généralement satisfait de l'ordre qui a été observé à ce tirage.

By 1764 he was also “directeur de la Poste de Paris”.⁶ He was still active at the lottery, although by then the idea was struggling, as we can see from documents such as this memorandum⁷ proposing revisions to the Loterie royale militaire bearing his signature in 1776:

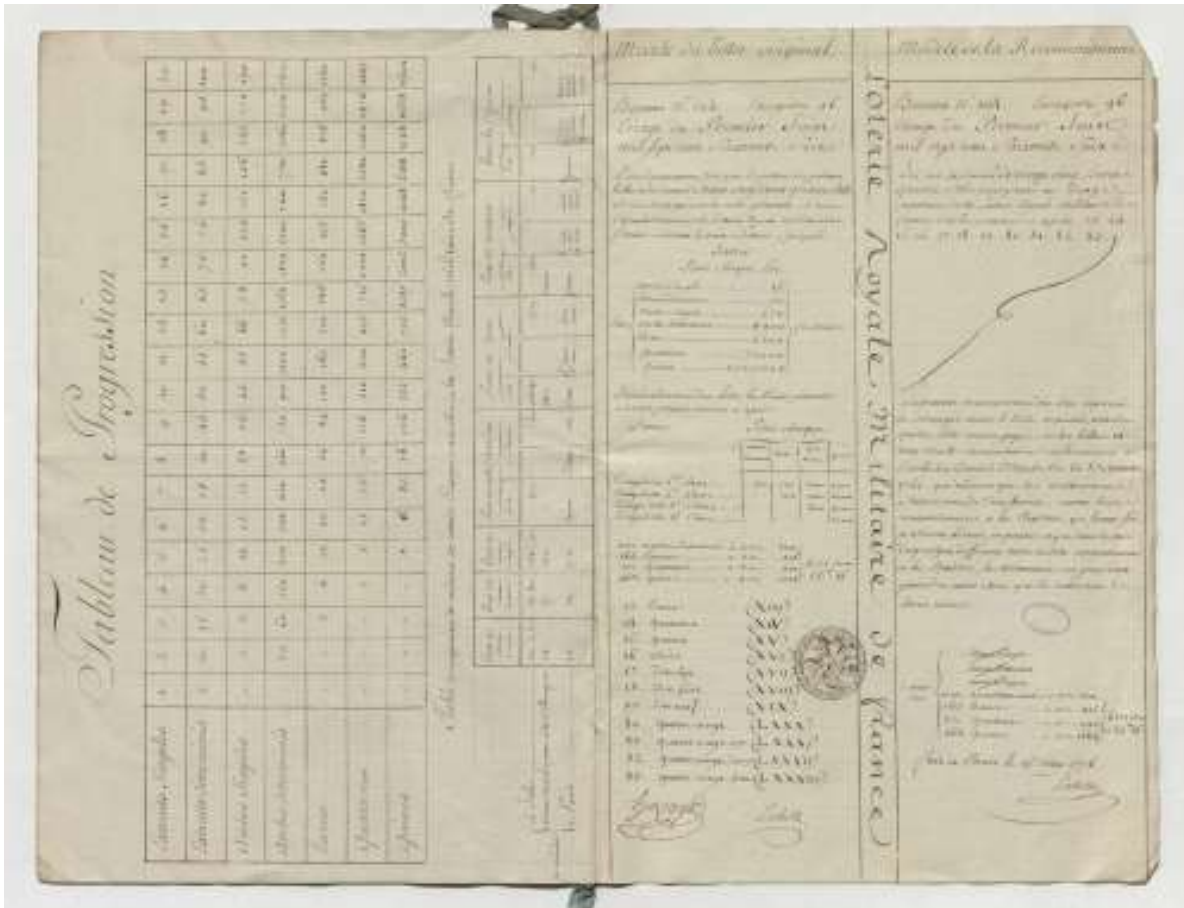
³ Postscript, July 2021: refer to that article for more recent discoveries, notably Labille's connection with the [Ollivier](#) family.

⁴ AN MC/LXXXIV/478. In 1767 Marie-Josèphe Blondelu, then aged 34, married a cousin, François-Antoine Debacq (dispensations de consanguinité, AN Z10 179); later she was remarried, to a Charles Blanvin. Her niece was the artist, Mme Charpentier, née Constance-Marie Blondelu (1767–1849).

⁵ 12.vi.1761, AN MC/LXXXIV/477.

⁶ He is listed as such among the bureaux de souscriptions for *Eau de la Seine, épurée et filtrée, prise au Port-a-l'Anglois, pour la consommation de Paris*, published in 1764. He remained in position at least until 1772: AN Y4960B, registres de tutelles, 24.I.1772, concerning a distant relation.

⁷ AN 745AP/48, Dossier 9.



Despite the various attempts to fix its problems, the lottery was never a success. And this I suggest is what Labille-Guiard meant by “toutes ses pertes” in the impassioned letter she wrote to the comtesse d’Angiviller in 1783 about the distress caused to him by the pamphlets attacking her.⁸ Whatever the challenges, Labille’s involvement in high finance and court circles must have been far more important for his daughter’s social success than would have been the opportunity to sell ribbons with a girl who had not yet progressed far on that ladder.

Another reason for Labille’s retirement in 1761 (when he was aged 56 or so) was that (contrary to Passez, who gives a much later date), his wife, Marie-Anne Martin or Saint-Martin, had just died. (They were married at Saint-Sulpice on 16.II.1740.) I will leave it to others to explore the psychological significance of losing a mother at the age of 12 rather than 19 (as previously thought), particularly for an artist renowned for her “neuf muses au berceau”, the female pupils she protected. But the burial entry in the registers of Saint-Eustache for 1.IV.1761 (the day after Mme Labille’s death) reveals three new facts: her age – she was 44 – unsurprising, but hitherto unremarked; that her burial was attended not by her widower, but by a son, Edme, of whom Passez makes no mention; and that another witness was “Pierre Baudouin, garde meuble du roi.”

This Pierre Baudouin (1709–1787), bourgeois de Paris (the name is common, and he is not necessarily a relation of Boucher’s son-in-law), is discovered again in a series of documents⁹ in the registres de tutelles concerning his 36-year-old daughter Félicité-Marguerite, born mentally retarded but looked after by her mother, Jeanne-Marguerite Le Clere, until the latter’s death resulted in a need for formal certification (“interdiction”). One of the witnesses to that was the peintre en miniature, Jean-François-Marie-Louis-Auguste de Lorraine. Another relative was Nicolas Guiard, whom you will recognise as the artist’s first husband: of him more later. But in passing let us note that Guiard was there described as “premier commis de M. Saint-Julien,

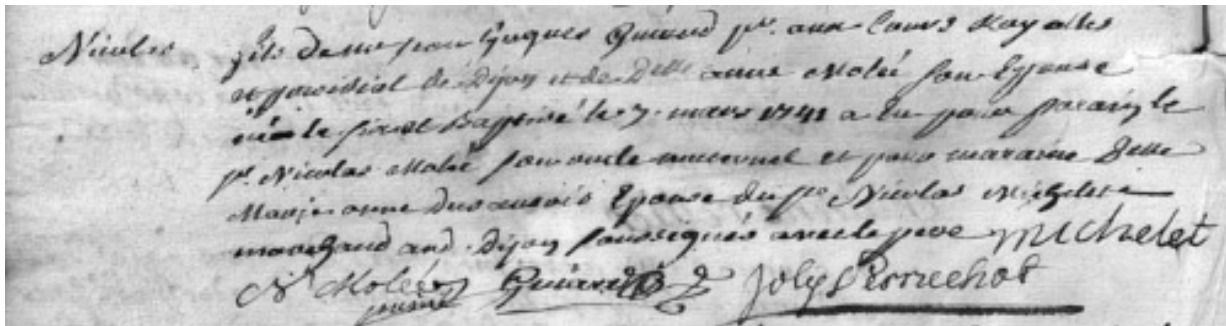
⁸ Published, like much of the archival material known to date, in baron Roger Portalis’s *GBA* articles, 1901-2, pp. 98f.

⁹ AN Y5129A, 6.v.1785; Y5156B, 18.viii.1787.

trésorier du clergé”. François-David Bollioud de Saint-Julien (12.VII.1713–20.IX.1788), receveur général du clergé de France, known to art history for commissioning Fragonard’s *L’Escarpolette*, is often confused with the art critic and collector Guillaume Baillet, baron de Saint-Julien (c.1715–1795). Bollioud de Saint-Julien’s wife was Anne-Madeleine-Louise-Charlotte-Auguste de La Tour du Pin – she of course was the “Madame Dupin de Saint-Julien” whose (lost) pastel Labille-Guiard exhibited in the salon de 1785, no. 96 (J.44.253; Passez 56, citing Portalis’s cryptic remark but without tying it together with her name, let alone the relationship with the artist’s husband; Portalis then proceeds to confuse the receveur with the critic).

Of Labille-Guiard’s sister Félicité, Passez tells only (correctly) that she died in 1768, and (incorrectly) that she married a Simon Gros, thus missing one of the significant artistic connections of our subject. In fact Félicité Labille (1748–Paris 27.V.1768) married, in Paris, Saint-Eustache on 27.II.1764 (contract of 21.II.1764, AN MC/LXXXVIII/492), the toulousain miniaturist¹⁰ Jean-Antoine Gros (1732–1790). Two years after her death he married the miniaturist and pastellist Pierre-Madeleine-Cécile Durant; their son was the famous history painter and portraitist, Antoine-Jean, baron Gros (1771–1835).

Passez describes Labille’s unsatisfactory first marriage to “Louis-Nicolas Guiard”, whom she suggests she met because they were neighbours, or perhaps through the agency of the sculptor Gois, a friend of Vincent with connections in Guiard’s native Dijon. Passez gives his age as 27, so many sources have inferred that he was born in 1742; some recent genealogical sources give his birth as 1744. In fact a trawl through the parish records for Dijon produces his baptismal record, in Saint-Michel, in 1741:



Nicolas (there was no Louis at his baptism) was born on 6.III.1741 (and baptised the following day as was the norm), to Jean-Hugues Guiard (1709–1758), procureur aux cours royales de Dijon, and his wife Anne Molée, daughter of a huissier at the court. Although Nicolas’s grandfather was a menuisier, the [Guiard](#) were long established in Dijon, with legal connections.¹¹ Nicolas’s uncle and cousin were, like his father, procureurs at the court, the cousin being guillotined in 1794, while an aunt was married to a musicien de la chambre du roi. We can also add that after his divorce from the artist, Nicolas Guiard’s second marriage, to Marie-Catherine-Charlotte Robert (Passez, p. 39, n.6) took place in Paris, 2.VII.1795.

¹⁰ Neither his correct date birth nor his first marriage is in Lemoine-Bouchard.

¹¹ A Hugues Guyard, conseiller at the parlement in 1704, may have been a distant relation.



Nicolas had several sisters. One of them, Michelle-Ursule (1746–a.1808), married, in Dijon in 1777, one Philibert Joly (1751–1808), avocat, son of a Bénigne Joly (1726–1810), a landowner in Gevrey in the same diocese. This I think provides a clue to a pastel (J.44.198, *right*) described as of “le chevalier Bénigne Joly de Gevrey, docteur en droit”, which was exhibited in 1933 as by Ducreux. When it came up for sale in 2007 with that attribution, Joseph Baillio and I independently considered it more likely to be by Labille-Guiard. It subsequently appeared as no. A20 in Auricchio 2009; without examining it *de visu*, its appearance makes me retain the possibility that it has either been restored or is a copy of a lost Labille-Guiard. But the sitter is evidently Philibert, not his father, nor his son, also Bénigne, born 1780. The date of the pastel, read as 1752 in 1933 and 1772 in 2007, is most likely 1777, that of the marriage.

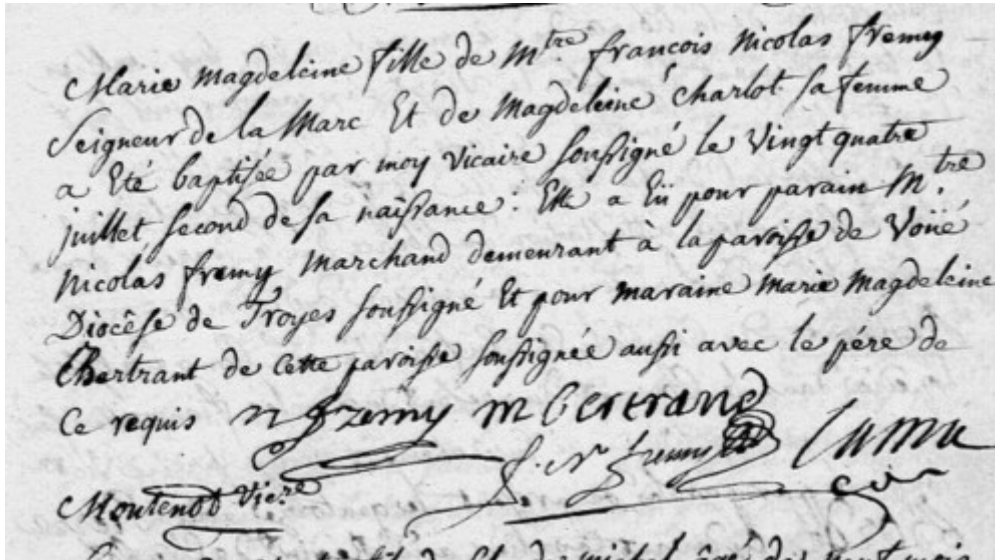
But what of Passez’s speculations about the artist’s introduction to Guiard? As we have seen, Adélaïde’s mother was probably related to the Baudouin family who were also connected to Nicolas Guiard. But there is a much earlier connection which requires us first to investigate another branch of her family, the Charlot and Frémy, found in the Aube area.



The connection arose through Adélaïde's aunt Catherine Labille (c.1713–1788) who, in Sommevoire (near Troyes) in 1732, married Claude-Charles Charlot (c.1700–1759), from Barsur-Aube, notaire, procureur fiscal. Their son was Claude III Charlot (1739–1788); for obvious reasons he is unlikely to be the male sitter painted in an II (1793/4) which *Passez* (no. 134) identifies as him. As to *Passez* no. 148, Auricchio no. U29, a mother and child painted in 1798/99 (*left*), that may well be the second wife of Claude II's son, Nicolas-François Charlot, who married Marie-Nicole-Adélaïde Regley (1771–1827) in 1787. Let us note however that Mme Labille-Guiard was marraine (*in absentia*, represented by Marie-Julienne Régley, the infant's grandmother) at the baptism of the older child, Adélaïde Charlot, on 6.VII.1791 at Ricey Haute Rive. There is then a gap in online genealogies until Vincent is born, in 1803; but I have found, and publish here, the entry in the parish records for Les Riceys for another daughter, Léontine, on 21 fructidor an V (7.IX.1797), which seems to fit well.

But I want to look in more detail at Claude III Charlot's sister Madeleine (1734–1800). Once again research has been set back by an amateur genealogy site that confidently posted details of her marriage, said to have taken place in Troyes in 1758, and resulting in many hours of fruitless search. In fact (spoiler alert for those who enjoy a puzzle: at the time of writing you won't find this indexed online) it was in Vendeuvre-sur-Barse, on 19.II.1753, that she married François-Nicolas Frémy, sgr de La Marque (1727–).

That name will of course be familiar to those who know *Passez*: Mlle Frémy was one of her special pupils, and has always had her entry in the *Dictionary of pastellists* (and of course *Ratouis de Limay* etc.). Mlle Frémy is first mentioned in 1781, displaying her "first attempts" at the salon de la Jeunesse; but in fact she was already 27, as we can see from Marie-Magdeleine's baptismal record in Vendeuvre in 1754:



(I should take this opportunity to point out that one of the other celebrated pupils, Mlle [Carraux de Rosemond](#), who appears in the Met painting behind her teacher, was only 20 at the time of the picture. Her background hitherto unknown, she was Swiss, baptised in the canton du Valais 12.IX.1765:

It provides several important links. First, the groom, François-Nicolas Frémy, was the son of Nicolas Frémy, seigneur de La Marque and Jeanne Baudouin. The latter was surely a relation of the Pierre Baudouin who attended the burial of Labille-Guiard's mother. But two witnesses to the marriage are also noteworthy. "Nicolas Guiard, marchand à Paris" was the bride's uncle (this cannot be the 12-year-old future husband of Adélaïde Labille, but is likely to have been a close relation). Further a cousin of the groom, one François de Vertu "demeurant au Susain", of whom nothing is known (is his illegible residence a misspelt Sézanne?).

Scholars have puzzled for years over the surname "des Vertus" later used by Labille-Guiard: some have seen it as a nom de fantaisie, and enlisted it in support of feminist theses about women painters. (Strictly speaking, as far as I am aware, she didn't sign the Académie's register this way, but her name was entered thus twice in the registers at the time of her admission in 1783; and she used the name again in 1785, when issuing a receipt for her royal pension.) Could she have acquired an estate with this name from a cousin?

In fact another document confirms this theory. This is the renonciation à la succession¹³ of one Nicolas-François Charlot des Vertus of 2.IX.1789, in which the surviving children of Claude-Charles Charlot disclaim the estate of their youngest brother. This Charlot des Vertus was the uncle of the Nicolas-François Charlot mentioned above. MM. Charlot des Vertus & Compagnie, Négociants, rue Bourbon Villeneuve, Paris, can be found in a few journals of the time: in 1781 they advertised seeking to collect charitable donations for the city of Troyes following a fire on 24.V.1781 which in less than two hours destroyed 80 houses, causing nine deaths and losses of 200,000 livres. Just days before this Charlot des Vertus advertised¹⁴ for sale a "fermage sis à Vauchonvilliers" (near Troyes) for 6220 livres. I suggest that the reason for the sale was Charlot's financial situation (resulting in an estate not worth claiming just seven years later), and that other disposals may also have taken place privately, to relatives such as Labille-Guiard herself, including (although the *transport* has not itself been discovered) the fief of Les Vertus. Today this place may have disappeared – although it could refer to a village just north of Sézanne (about 70 km from Troyes).

The witness at Frémy's marriage was surely another member of the Charlot family from whom the fiefdom had passed. Whether it had legally been conveyed to Labille-Guiard in 1783, or perhaps just promised, is not yet clear.

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¹³ AN Y 5202. He had died in 1788: inventaire après décès, 29.IV.1788; AN MC/RE/LXXVII/5.

¹⁴ *Affiches, annonces et avis divers de Reims et généralité de Champagne*, 21.V.1781, p. 82.