

*Translation*

White River, November 24, 1786

Sir: I cannot come to Detroit at this time as it is the rush of the autumn trade, so I am sending you my accounts against Joseph Reah.<sup>58</sup> He goes up to complain of an alleged assault by me, and that you may know the truth of the matter I give you the facts in detail.

That man kept begging me to set him up in trade and even employed one of my clerks to intercede for him. Against my will, I let him have merchandise on commission at 10% in beavers, with an agreement that he was to trade according to my prices, and that bad skins and female, should be graded at half value, as the custom was then, and the same for all other peltries, to which he agreed. He was then at White River, about 25 leagues distant from me, and he was to bring the peltries in to me. This was all by verbal contract, in the presence of Mr. Largeau,<sup>59</sup> Reah promising to do everything according to this agreement.

Some time later, he brought in peltries and told me he could not make his living on the 10% contract, and that the goods were too high priced. I consented to allow him 12%

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Reah (variously spelled) was employed in the Indian Department at Detroit prior to Feb., 1783, when on the approach of peace he was discharged. See *Mich. Pio. Colls.*, XI, 345. It seems likely that this was the person here mentioned. One Rhé or Ray from the Illinois country (characterized by Richard McCarty as "our little Doctor Ray" (*Ill. Hist. Colls.*, II, 620) volunteered for La Balme's expedition against Detroit in 1780, and on its destruction in the vicinity of Fort Wayne, Indiana, was taken captive and sent in to Detroit. He is said to have been the only prisoner taken alive. Whether he was identical with the individual here mentioned we are uninformed.

<sup>59</sup> Francis Largeau, a native of France, married Mary Debouter. The couple lived in the parish of St. Pierre-le-Vieu, in the diocese of La Rochelle. Their son, Jacques Largeau *dit* St. Jacques, born at the parental home in 1700, migrated to Canada and married at Montreal, April 26, 1735, Mary Ann Gastinon *dit* Duchêne, born at Montreal, Feb. 24, 1704. A son of this union, Louis Francis Largeau, born at Montreal, Sept. 1, 1736, came to Detroit, where on Jan. 30, 1779, he stood as godfather for Julia Duchêne. Data derived from Denissen, *op. cit.* It seems apparent from this document and subsequent ones that Largeau was later employed by, or at least intimate with, Louis Lorimier, and that he accompanied the latter when he fled to Spanish Illinois in 1787. There is considerable interesting information in Louis Houck's *History of Missouri* . . . II, *passim*, concerning Largeau's subsequent career in Spanish Louisiana, where he became secretary of Don Thomas Portelle, commandant of New Madrid from 1791 to 1796, and where he also continued on terms of intimate relationship with Lorimier.