

B 8979 no 4; witch 327, Mengeotte Gourdot, femme Jean Pierre Cordier de St Nicolas

(18 September 1609; informations preparatoires)

First witness, Louis Sauceratte, bouchier, is missing. Also lacks start of deposition of second witness.

(2) Barbe femme Thierion Thierion, cordonnier

Opening missing. Heard that when she lived at Haut de Kieibly she often went missing with small child, and one day husband could not find her. When husband of sister to witness returned with his cart, saw candles burning in hayloft, and told wife. She advised Mengeotte's husband, who came to look for her, and took child down in his arms. As accused came down she told sister she would repent having told him; tried to put hand on horse, and when prevented touched stomach of sister, who was pregnant. Later she was brought to bed before term, and was in labour for 3 days; child was born dead, all blackened, and with mark of hand on its stomach. Sister told witness and others that accused had done her great wrong, and if she recovered she would have her punished. She heard about this, and came in secret to visit her alone; husband met her leaving, and told her off, then found wife had lost speech. She died 3 days later, and was found to have mark of hand on her stomach like child. Witness believed she had killed them both because of a 'reconnaissance', and in view of common repute.

(3) Françoise femme Louis Sauceratte, 31

More than a year earlier one of her daughters quarrelled with one of Mengeotte's; shortly after daughter aged 5 fell ill with unknown sickness. Was still emaciated, with stomach swollen, although eating and drinking normally, and getting worse. Believed she had given this, in view of quarrel and reputation. Her husband had said that 2 or 3 days before arrest, when great storm came over, she had spat several times in his face, and that he had put up with a lot from her.

(4) Margueritte veuve Nicolas Houel, harquebuttier, 40

12 years before her husband had been at supper in house of accused, who was neighbour, and became mysteriously ill. Lasted 3 years, with limbs paralyzed, and able to eat only a little bread, until he died. Always said that she had given him this; food he had that night did not taste good, and she struck him on shoulder. During illness begged her several times to kill him or cure him, but she laughed and said he had 'mal St Marcel'. General reputation.

(5) Claudon veuve Demenge Berniquel, chartier, 60

10 years before had dispute after she did some spinning for accused, who thought she asked too much money for work. Someone else who had been at supper with Mengeotte warned witness to beware, and shortly afterwards she came to house on pretext and struck her on shoulder. Was frightened, and same evening arm became paralyzed, which it remained for 9 weeks, until she persuaded accused to visit her and bring her bread, salt, and lard. Following year was persuaded (though reluctant) to speak with her in shelter in her garden, and put face up against hers; then developed great pain at point where faces had touched, and was ill for 6

months, passing 'ordure' by her mouth, until cured by same means as before. Mengeotte also advised her to take 'bruel' and boil it in water, then drink this continuously, but she did not want to do this, and just ate other things she brought. Suspected her because of earlier quarrel, dispute over some logs, and general reputation.

(19 September 1609)

(6) Alizon veuve Cugin Aubertin, chartier, 60

Story of how 7 or 8 years before she had taken refuge in hayloft; it was witness who alerted her husband. When he arrived she threatened to throw child down unless he left, but he climbed up and took it from her. Then rest of story about mark of hand etc.

(7) Claudon veuve Aubertin Laurent, 54

Essentially the same story, about wife of François Chartier.

(8) Marie femme Ottin la Mort, chartier, 30

Same story; claimed that victim had said that if she recovered her husband would kill Mengeotte or they would have her burned. She herself had lost a cow after refusing her 3 eggs; general reputation.

(22 September 1609)

(9) Bastienne femme Nicolas Grespin, tisserand, 60

Had quarrelled with her 5 years earlier over some words which were reported; went to her house to justify herself, saying she had never said them. Mengeotte was still angry, seized her by shoulders and shook her, saying 'tu l'as dit, tu l'as dit'. Immediately fell ill, as if troubled in mind, and 2 months later accused came to visit her. Knelt and begged mercy from her and husband, but said to him 'que lors que sa femme seroit morte elle la feroit fendre'. Overhearing this, witness called her witch, and she left. Remained very ill for 3 years, and was still not fully recovered; believed she had caused this because of quarrel and general reputation.

28 September 1609; C.M. Rémy asks for interrogation and confrontations

30 September 1609; Change de Nancy approves

9 October 1609; interrogation

Said she was 46, native of Donjulien, married to Jean Pierre Cordier for 25 years. 11 children, of whom only one son and 2 daughters were alive. Father had been killed more than 40 years earlier in woods of Tounry, and mother had died in prison at Donjulien. then body was burned in barrel as a witch - this was more than 25 years before. She herself had lived at St Nicolas for 32 years.

Knew she had been accused as witch by Jacqueline Manouvrier and Ydatte Marchal, but said they had done her wrong. Asked about episode in hayloft, said

she had fled there because her husband beat her and she was frightened, but denied causing any harm or touching anyone.

Denied all charges. Said she had known that Bastienne femme Nicolas Grespin suspected her, and had made alleged remark with intention of proving innocence, but had not heard her call her witch. Otherwise no admissions - in this case as in others at St Nicolas that year was asked enormous questions repeating depositions.

10 October 1609; confrontations

Claudon veuve Demenge Berniquel added that accused told her that her husband often said she had 'un visage laid et affreux', asking of this was true, to which she replied 'que lors que les personnes sont irritez, ne peuvent estre autrement'.

At confrontations she denied everything, but only reproach was to say that Bastienne femme Nicolas Grespin was 'une langarde'.

13 October 1609; PG asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

15 October 1609; Change de Nancy approves

17 October 1609; interrogation under torture

Maintained denials when given thumbscrews, but started to confess when racked. Said she had been witch for 6 years, and that man in grey had come to house when she was angry. Gave her money (oak leaves), and black powder. Used this to kill sheep of Louis Sauceratte, and to cause death and illnesses as alleged by witnesses - simply listed these. At first said she could not remember name of devil, then said it had been Mre Dominique. Had only been to sabbat twice, and saw Jacqueline and Ydatte. Finally added name of la belle Hostesse, her neighbour, whom she recognized by scarf and 'pelisson'.

21 October 1609; substitut for PG asks for death sentence. Change de Nancy approves, subject to free repetition of confessions.

23 October 1609; interrogation

Now denied all previous confessions, saying she had not known what she was saying because of pain of torture. Asked them to put her to death, saying she would be happy to die a martyr, but would confess nothing.

31 October 1609; substitut asks for renewed torture. Change de Nancy approves.

2 November 1609; interrogation under torture

Renewed confessions when racked. Seduction had been when angry because husband chased her out, by Persin, who had intercourse with her. Otherwise confessions mostly as before. Said that at sabbat they danced, played cards, and feasted. Added to those she had seen 'la Contesse' of St Nicolas, wife of a draper, but had not recognized any others because they were masked. Had retracted confessions because master told her to do so, promising she would suffer no harm.

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3 November 1609; interrogation

After long hesitation confirmed previous confessions. Said that belle Hostesse was called Catherine, as was wife of François le Comte le viel, whom she had also accused. Also accused Alizon Sandriere, widow living at le hault de Thiebly.

3 November 1609; substitut asks for death sentence, confirmed by Change de Nancy.

4 November 1609; court at St Nicolas orders that she be confronted with Catherine Verrier, femme Pierre Clement, hostellain à la Croix Blanche, Catherine femme François le Comte le viel, and Alizon Sandriere. When this was done she withdrew all accusations, saying they proceeded from hatred because of quarrels against first 2, and deposition against her made by Alizon. Had wanted to make them suffer as she had done. This was in presence of Jacques Arnoult and Charles Charles, priest and vicaire of curé of St Nicolas.

Followed by formal death sentence.