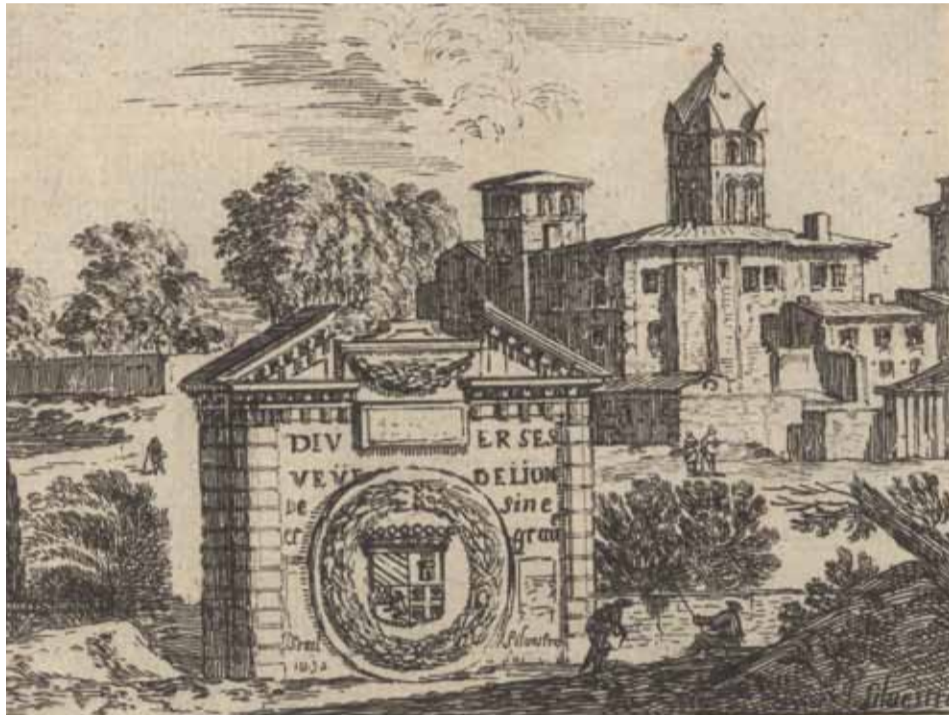


THE FAMILY OF NEUVILLE DE VILLEROY

TOPIC

**ROOM 12:
THE CITY AND THE KING - 17TH-18TH C.**



The coat of arms of the family of Neuville de Villeroy sits prettily on this gate, the so-called Neufville gate marking the entrance to Lyon, Israël Silvestre, 1653, Inv. N 757.11

Five generations of Neuville de Villeroy governing the city of Lyon (1608-1765)

An illustrious aristocratic family of Lyon (albeit hailing from Normandy), the de Neuville de Villeroy family held the government "of Lyons and the provinces of Lyonnais, Beaujolais and Forez" from 1608 to 1789 over five generations. It was **Nicolas IV** de Neuville de Villeroy who, when marrying his son Charles to Marguerite de Mandelot, the daughter of the governor of Lyonnais, arranged a marriage contract whereby this charge would be handed over as a hereditary right to the Neuville de Villeroy family. **Charles I** de Neuville de Villeroy (1542-1617) (Inv. N 2661 Portrait) was the first governor of Lyon from 1608 to 1642. His eldest son, **Nicolas V** de Neuville de Villeroy (1598-1685) (Inv. 4150.1 Portrait), became governor of the city upon the death of his father in 1642. In 1651, he obtained the title of 1st Duc de Villeroy. Upon his death in 1685, he transferred the title and that of Governor of Lyon to his eldest son **François** de Neuville de Villeroy (1644- 1730) (Inv. N 4571 Portrait). He was succeeded by his son, **Louis Nicolas** de Neuville de Villeroy (1663-1734) between 1730 and 1734, his grandson **François Louis Anne** de Neuville de Villeroy (1695-1765) (Inv. 1463.8 Portrait) between 1734 and 1765, then the latter's nephew, **Gabriel Louis François** de Neuville de Villeroy (1731- guillotined in 1794) until 1789.

grey words: items that can be seen in this room

A family in good favour with the kings

The Neuville de Villeroy family can be traced back to a secretary of finance under Louis XII (1462-1515).

- **Nicolas V** was brought up as a child of honour with Louis XIII and in 1646 was appointed "*Maréchal de France*" before moving on to become "*Maréchal*" of the King's armies with supreme authority over all the other "marshals". Appointed by the Queen Mother as Governor of Louis XIV, he collected any number of honorary titles and titles of responsibility: grand master of France for the coronation of Louis XIV in 1654, *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Saint-Esprit* – the most prestigious order of knighthood under the French monarch – and head of the royal council of finances in 1661, and finally captain of the 1st company of the King's own bodyguards.
- **Camille** de Neuville de Villeroy (1606-1693) (Inv. N 2660 Portrait), his younger brother, became lieutenant general to the king with Nicolas V in 1645. Then, when the *Fronde** (the Great Revolt) threatened (1648-1653), he asserted his loyalty to king Louis XIV by keeping Lyon under royal authority.
- **François**, son of Nicolas V and Madeline de Créqui (1609-1675) (Inv. N 1978 - Portrait), was brought up at the French court near Louis XIV. This is why he remained one of the king's favourites despite his inadequacies and failures. An accomplished courtier, he was sent to Venice as French Ambassador between 1668 and 1688. Appointed *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Saint-Esprit* and knighted to the *Ordre royal & militaire de Saint-Louis*, he was promoted to the rank of *Maréchal de France* in 1693, even though his military career ended in a string of defeats: the loss of the city of Namur, the loss of Flanders, the absurd bombardment of Brussels or the war of Spanish Succession. Louis XIV appointed him chief of the royal council of finances from 1714 to 1715 and in his testament appointed him as head of government of Louis XV, a charge he executed from 1717 to 1722 with that of member of the Regency of Philippe d'Orléans until 1723. Saint-Simon spoke of him in these terms: "*a senseless man whose only wit was that given to him by the custom of the grand world into which he was born and spent a very long life.*"



Portrait of Charles 1^{er} de Neuville de Villeroy, marquis of de Villeroy and d'Halincourt, oil on canvas, anonymous artist, 18th c., Inv. N 2661

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House of Vimy near Lyon, residence of the de Neuville de Villeroy family, today known as Neuville sur Saône, engraving, Israël Silvestre, 17th c., Inv. 46.434

At home... with the king!

Thanks in particular to Nicolas V and François, the family de Neuville de Villeroy was present at the King's household. This was a staff administration that existed under the Old Regime and then the Restoration. Managed by the "*grand maître de France*" (grand master) – one of the kingdom's foremost figures – the staff in question came to between 1,000 and 2,000 persons, depending on the periods. Staff were split into three "households":

- the military household, comprising the elite troops of the royal army, whose regiments were actively involved in every campaign and formed the king's own bodyguard,
- the ecclesiastic household, directed by the grand chaplain of France, who was in charge of mass, religious ceremonies and the king's purse,
- the civil household, the largest in terms of personnel and split into about twenty departments such as the King's Chamber – where would be found the children of honour and chamber valets – the King's Kitchens, Ceremonies, Stables, Hunting – in charge of the King's hunt – and the "Pleasure Menu" in charge of the spectacles, plays and ballets organised at the court.

Holy Orders

The family de Neuville de Villeroy is also associated with an illustrious religious career. At the age of 5, **Camille** de Neuville de Villeroy was named commendatory abbot of Ainay in 1611. He collected the abbey's revenues without forasmuch exercising any authority over interior discipline for the monks. He studied with the Jesuits then in Rome, where he became a theologian. In 1618, he was named Abbot of the Ile Barbe, where he made a name for himself by rebuilding the church destroyed by the protestants in 1562. Then he became commendatory abbot of Mozac (lower Auvergne) from 1641 to 1655. As gratitude for his loyalty to the king as lieutenant general of Louis XIV during the "*Fronde*", the queen offered him the seat of archbishop of Lyon, which he accepted despite showing little interest in ecclesiastic life. Invested in June 1654, he also became Count of the City and "*Primat des Gaules*"*. In favour of catholic reform, he set about re-establishing discipline with the regular and secular clergy within the diocese, already preferring negotiation to force. In Lyon, he also promoted the installation of new religious orders and helped to develop convents, most notably for women. His library, one of the finest in France with over 5,000 volumes, was bequeathed to the Jesuits of the Holy Trinity.

glossary

Primat des Gaules: an honorary title attributed to the Archbishop of Lyon to signify his supremacy over all the bishops and archbishops of France. His cathedral church received the title of "primatiale".

The "Fronde" was a period of revolt against the absolute monarchy in France triggered by excessive taxation and the contestation of parliamentary privileges (1648-1653).



Portrait of Camille de Neuville de Villeroy, oil on canvas, Thomas Blanchet, 2nd half of the 17th c., Inv. N 2660