

Je Me Souviens Magazine

A Publication of the American-French Genealogical Society

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From the President's Desk *by Normand Deragon*

It has been awhile since you've seen a newsletter from us. I apologize for the absence. There has been a lot going on at AFGS and I hope you'll agree that it is worth the wait.

After nearly a year of meetings, editing, layouts and rewriting, we now have a new website that is easier to navigate. We've added drop down menus by topics so you can quickly find the information you are seeking.

In past newsletters and the *Je Me Souviens* Magazines, I've hinted at the Society's goal of "going digital." In the 21st Century it makes no sense to produce a newsletter bi-monthly when we have the capability of delivering information to you almost as it happens. The newsletter is now online in high-resolution and full-color. The same will be happening with the magazine. Our printing and mailing costs are constantly rising. The change to e-delivery will save the Society more than \$1,200 annually and preclude the need to raise dues.

Now more than ever, if you have an email address, it is imperative that you send it to us so we can communicate with you. The use of "snail mail" will drop off considerably. We are also planning to send out our renewal notices electronically and you will have the opportunity to renew your dues on our secure website. When the newsletter and magazine are posted, we will send you a message telling you of this fact with a link directly to the publications.

Now I understand that not every member uses email or even has a computer. In that case we will continue to send black and white copies of the newsletter and written notices. We will not be able to send printed copies of *Je Me Souviens*. However, we believe that over time we will have a 100 percent conversion to electronic correspondence. Currently, we have email addresses for about 75 percent of our members. Nearly 100 percent of our new members have provided us with email addresses.

The next project for is to redesign and improve the members-only site. Of the more than 1,200 Society members, just over 700 have enrolled in the members-only site. We are evaluating what to change and which additional genealogical resources we can add to the site to help in your family research. We also will be adding a link to our recorded training programs to view at your convenience on a 24/7 basis. Work on the members-only site upgrade will begin immediately.

Change isn't always easy, but necessary to simplify the way our Society's business is done. That's absolutely a requirement with an all-volunteer organization like ours.

As always, I welcome your constructive comments and feedback so we can continue to provide as much value for your membership dollars as possible.

Tip From Your
“Bookie”
by Janice Burkhart
Librarian



The early families of Quebec are very well documented. It is possible to find: places of origin; dates of birth, marriage and death; lists of children; marriage contracts; wills; and inventories of goods at the time of death. What is the best source to use? Here are the most common sources at the library.

The first choice is usually the Tanguay Dictionary, the Jetté Dictionary or the Red Drouin books. Each of these are good choices but each must be used with discretion.

First is the Tanguay Dictionary (**Dictionnaire généalogique des familles canadiennes.**) It was one of the first collections and covers the years 1608-1700. This collection was written by Msg. Tanguay many years ago. It will give you marriage dates and will list the children of the union. It was a wonderful resource, but many errors were discovered in the research. When using Tanguay, always use the book of corrections.

The second well know resource is the Red Drouin collection (**Dictionnaire National des Canadiennes Français.**) This covers the years 1608-1760. Marriages are listed by family surname of the groom. Each entry lists the names of the couple, the parents and the date and place of the marriage. It is more accurate than Tanguay but it still has errors.

The third resource is the Jetté Dictionary (**Dictionnaire généalogique des familles due Québec des origins à 1730**). Written by René Jetté, it is the most accurate of the three. It covers the years 1621-1730. This dictionary provides a lot of information such as adoptions, occupations, children of the union and in some instances who those children married.

On our computers, you will find the **PRDH**. This is a very accurate representation of each early marriage. It will list the married couple, their children, witnesses, godparents and date and place of marriage. It will give you very accurate information.

Another important collection has been written by Stephen White. The **Dictionnaire généalogique des familles acadiennes** is a well-documented work on Acadian genealogy that is firmly grounded upon the primary sources of information, while containing references to the best secondary sources. The first part of the **Dictionnaire** includes all the information available concerning those families who came into being before 1715. This information comes from the registers of more than 320 parishes, from the registries of more than 125 notaries, and from some 130 censuses or other lists of the residents of, and subsequently the exiles from, Acadia. Those who are interested in the subject will find in the **Dictionnaire** more than 700 notes that explain the reasoning that supports the author's conclusions.

Keep in mind that all of these records are secondary sources. In other words, they were transcribed from the original source. This of course can lead to errors because of misinterpretation of the original writing, typos by the transcriber or other human error. Once you have gathered information from these secondary sources, you would be wise to go to the AFGS film collection and check out the original information to make sure that the printed record is accurate. A little extra effort could insure that your line is correct.

Beginner's Corner
by Dennis M. Boudreau



READING BAPTISMAL RECORDS

I was asked to write an article on this because so many of our new members do not speak or read French and are having a hard time reading the records

found in the Drouin collection, which are all in the original French language. Of course, the easiest thing to do would be to tell you all to LEARN French! I will say this: the further we get from the original ancestors, the more difficult it will be to understand their times and history, and their paper trail, unless one learns the mother tongue. So, please make the effort to learn the language, even the basics. Because we are a nation of “instant results”, the following cheat sheet should be of help to many of our members. Keep a copy of this with your research records.

First, for the numbers: Rather than list them all out for you, the following web site may be of great help. Print out the page and keep it with your research papers.

<http://blogs.transparent.com/french/french-numbers-learn-how-to-count-from-1-to-1000/>

Common terms found in Baptismal records:

Since the record is a **Baptismal** record, the date recorded will be the **baptismal** date. The actual date of birth will be found **within** the record. After the established baptismal date, look for the following:

Nous prêtre soussigné = I the undersigned priest

Né(e) hier / la veille = yesterday

Né(e) avant-veille / surveillance = two days ago. Sometimes the date of the birth will actually be stated: (date) followed by: du courant = current month; mois dernier = last month; annee derniere = last year, etc.

Né(e) et ondoyé(e) = Born and baptized (because of danger of death; usually done by a layman/doctor) with baptism ceremonies later supplied at church.

A lá maison = at home

du légitime mariage = of the legitimate marriage of

de parents inconnus = of unknown parents (usually an illegitimate birth)

words after a father's name = usually his occupation (cultivateur – farmer, meunier = miller, journalier = day laborer, etc.)

de cette paroisse = of this parish

parrain = godfather

marraine = godmother

ayeuls/aieuls = grandparents

qui ne sont signer = who have not signed/they didn't know how to write.

Ptre./Vic./Miss. = Priest (Curé = pastor; vicaire = assistant pastor; missionnaire = missionary)

In later baptismal records, thanks to the Canon Law of 1908, one will find notations of marriages which took place outside the parish, especially within Quebec or in the United States. In the records after 1900, sometimes one will find a date of death stamp with the date and place of death recorded.

Similar “cheat sheets” for marriage and burial records will appear in future issues of this newsletter. Watch for them and save them.

SONGS UPON THE RIVERS: THE BURIED HISTORY OF THE FRENCH-SPEAKING CANADIENS AND MÉTIS FROM THE GREAT LAKES AND THE MISSISSIPPI ACROSS TO THE PACIFIC

by Robert Foxcurran, Michel Bouchard, and Sebastien Malette

The book “*Songs upon the Rivers*” is the story of two peoples living through the partition of their continent. The book was identified as the number one best-selling Canadian history book by the magazine *Canada’s History* since shortly after its publication in October 2016 by Baraka Books of Montreal. From the North Atlantic to the Pacific we relate the transcontinental history of the French-Canadians and their Métis descendants. Here we use the term they used for themselves, *les Canadiens*, whatever their ethnic mix. The westward movement into the interior – to *le pays d’en haut* and *La Louisiane* – would find them in what eventually would become United States territory. *Les Canadiens* went west, starting new families by intermarrying with practically every Native American tribe located north of the 40th parallel. This was before any of the lines we see on modern maps – or those utilized by today’s identity politics – were drawn.

As for demographic flow of *les Canadiens* out of the lower St. Lawrence Valley, it’s somewhat counterintuitive for those of us who grew up in New England, but *les Canadiens* moved west deep into the interior of the continent for two centuries, before any of them moved south into New England. As most of the West of *les Canadiens* ended up in U.S. territory, it fell out of modern Anglo-Canadian national history, and wasn’t written back into U.S. history. This awkward fact resulted in neglect of these peoples and their story. A survey by Valery Havard published by the Smithsonian Institute in 1879 estimated that roughly two-thirds of this sizable Metis population had ended up in the U.S.

There are roughly 20 million speakers of French in the Americas today, split more or less evenly between the Caribbean and North America. The history behind this residual modern demographic and linguistic presence is not obvious. The French approach to colonizing in the Americas was different from those of other Europeans. Under the bourbon dynasty, *La Nouvelle France* was treated as an obligation, one that was never fully embraced. Only allowing for small out-migration, the authorities decided that France needed its people and financial resources on the home front. Settlement was limited to the lower end of the two principal river systems draining the interior of the continent – the St. Lawrence and lower Mississippi.

In the interior France joined Indian alliance systems, establishing out posts and small settlements concentrated in eastern Michigan, along the Mississippi, and the rivers between. Moreover, tribute was provided to the Native Americans, not taken from them.

Another point rarely singled out is the fact that the Louisiana Territory, in the 40 years prior to purchase, became the primary refuge of colonists from France’s collapsing empire in the Americas. The settler population grew from roughly 10 thousand to something like 40 thousand during this period. There were four major sources of refugees. Three came primarily from Canada: Acadians (Cajuns); Canadians from the St. Lawrence Valley; along with a mix of Canadians, Métis and Creoles from the Illinois shore. Both of these latter groups tended to choose Upper Louisiana, settling in what is now the state of Missouri. The fourth entailed both whites and blacks from France’s principal Caribbean colony of St. Domingue (modern day Haiti).

While referring to them collectively as “French,” the best single summary I’ve come across on the role that the Canadians, Métis, and Creoles played in settling the American West is that of

Jay Gitlin in *The Bourgeois Frontier* (2009). “The **true legacy** of the French in the American West... is the role they played in western expansion, in negotiating the course of the American Empire...”

Les Canadiens were also among the first farmers, ranchers, blacksmiths, carpenters, boat builders, ferrymen, millers, and lumbermen among the re-settler communities all across the American West. For their part, the descendants of the Métis played a major role in rebuilding the modern tribal confederations. In the Pacific Northwest, this included the Flathead, Umatilla, and Colville Confederations. The last generation of these French-speaking tribal members located in the Northwest passed away in the 1970’s and eighties.

Then there is the role of the French-speaking missionaries of the bilingual American Catholic Church pursuing a peaceful transition for the Canadiens, their Métis families and the Native Americans. From Quebec came, Father Gibault in Illinois during the Revolutionary War, the missionaries that became the first three bishops of the Pacific Northwest: the Blanchet brothers and Modeste Demers, assisted by the Sisters of Providence including Mother Joseph. From France came Fathers Richard to Michigan, and Chirouse to Washington: and from Belgium came Fathers DeSmet to western Montana and Croquet to northwestern Oregon.

During the 19th century, American journalists, novelists and historians perceived a need to diminish the presence of the Canadian and Métis in the American West, both quantitatively, and qualitatively. Indulging in non-representative sampling their numbers were reduced to insignificance, while denigrating their characters as nothing but frivolous uncouth creatures with their offspring being treated as untrustworthy half-breeds – fit only for use and disposal.

Modern histories of the American West need to reflect the actual state of affairs on the frontier. The U.S. population is expected to have a multiethnic majority by mid-century. This is not a new phenomenon. The real American frontier was actually the prototype, being a multiethnic bicultural zone. But miscegenation (mixed breed marriages) at the time was deemed to be a dangerous dead-end for humanity and our nation, one to be contained and ended on the frontier.

And finally, French is not a foreign language in the northern borderlands of the U.S. It has been one of our oldest and most important American languages throughout our history. NAFTA labeling requirements that include French are not the anomaly that most folks might think.

There is nothing more unnatural in the course of human affairs than a straight or sold line, whether it is for political boundaries, or demographics. These two peoples – *les Canadiens* and their Native American relations, neighbors and friends – sought accommodation and inclusion, not exclusion and removal. A more nuanced treatment of our past promotes a more nuanced vision of our future. There has been too much oversimplification, exaggeration, and non-representative sampling along the way. This is especially so in the case of the history of the shifting western frontier of North America, later partitioned between the U.S. and Canada. It’s time for historians to get out in front on these issues, and this story.

(AFGS has this very important book for sale. Please see the order form elsewhere in this newsletter.)

**WHO WERE THE *FILLES Á MARIER* – “MARRIAGEABLE GIRLS”
CONDENSED FROM “BEFORE THE KING’S DAUGHTERS:
THE FILLES Á MARIER, 1634-1662” BY PETER J. GAGNÉ**

Between 1634 and September 1663, 262 *filles á marier* or “marriageable girls” emigrated to New France representing one quarter of all the single girls arriving in New France through 1673. As opposed to the *Filles du Roi* who emigrated between 1663 and 1673, the *filles á marier* came alone or in small groups. They were not recruited by the state and did not receive a dowry from the King. They were promised nothing but the possibility of a better life. If they survived the perils of the crossing, they lived with the daily threat of death at the hands of the Iroquois. If they survived the Iroquois, they had to deal with the hard life of subsistence farming, harsh winters spent in a log cabin that they may have helped build, epidemics of smallpox and “fever” and difficult and often dangerous childbirth. Further, Peter J. Gagné has defined the qualifications to be considered a *fille á marier* as follows:

- Must have arrived before September 1663
- Must have come over at marriageable age (12 thru 45)
- Must have married or signed a marriage contract at least once in New France or have signed an enlistment contract
- Must not have been accompanied by both parents
- Must not have been accompanied by or joining a husband

Crossing the Atlantic was a dangerous undertaking in the 1600’s, and it is estimated that 10% of all passengers en route to New France died during the crossing. Sickness and disease were the main factors contributing to deaths at sea. Passengers were forced to share the hull with livestock that was either being shipped to the colony or served as meals during the crossing. While the passengers may have been permitted on deck during good weather and calm seas, storms forced their confinement to the hull where they were shut in not only with the livestock, but also with the odor of latrine buckets, seasickness and the smoky lanterns used for lighting. The climate and close quarters fostered the rapid spread of diseases such as scurvy, fever and dysentery. Under such conditions, very little could be done for those who were suffering.

The *filles á marier* chose to emigrate under perilous conditions to a wilderness colony because the advantages offered by the colony were great enough to make them forget the dangers of the crossing and rude character of colonial life. In France, the girls would have had little or no choice in their marriages because arranged marriages were the norm. Parental consent was required for men under the age of 30 and women under the age of 25. Young girls were placed in convent schools or pensions only to await a marriage in which they had no choice or to become a nun. In New France, these women could choose whom they wanted to marry and had the freedom to change their minds before the marriage took place.

Most of the *filles á marier* belonged to the rural class and were the daughters of peasants and farmers. A small number were from urban families, the daughters of craftsmen, day laborers and servants, while an even smaller number were the daughters of businessmen, civil servants, military men and the petty nobility. Their average age was 22, and more than one-third had lost at least one parent. About 20% were related to someone who was already a colonist. Most were married within a year of their arrival in New France. While waiting to find a husband, many of the girls lodged with religious communities – either the Ursulines in Québec City or the *Filles de la Congrégation Notre-Dame* in Montreal – although about 100 *filles á marier* lodged with individuals.

As you do your genealogy, you are sure to find at least one *filles à marier* amongst your ancestors. These remarkable women were offered the chance at a better life and they took it!

Before the King's Daughters: The Filles à Marier, 1634-1662 by Peter J. Gagné is offered for sale by AFGS. See order form elsewhere in this newsletter.



July – The library will be closed for research on Saturdays during the month of July.

July 15, 2017 – Workshop – **“How to Read and Use the Various Repertoires in the Library,”** presented by Janice Burkhart. Time – 10:00 am in the library room.

July 22, 2017 – Workshop – **How to Use the Library, How to Use the Film Room and How to Use the Cemetery Headstone Index,”** presented by Janice Burkhart, Fran Tivey and Sue Musial. Time 10:00 am in the library room.

September 2, 3, 4 – Library closed for Labor Day

September 16, 2017 – Peter Gagné, author of **“Before the King's Daughters: The Filles à Marier, 1634-1662,”** will talk about these pioneer women and do a book signing. Time – 10:00 am in the second floor large meeting room. Limited space. **Don't miss this opportunity!**

September 17, 2017 – **Open House** from 1:00 – 4:00 pm.

September 30, 2017 – Workshop – **“Things You Need to Know When Doing French-Canadian Genealogy – Research Cheat Sheets,”** presented by Dennis Boudreau. Dennis is a master genealogist and author who has a wealth of information and tips that you will find most helpful! Time – 10:00 am in 2nd floor classroom.

October 7, 2017 – Workshop – **“The Silent Presence – The French in New England,”** presented by Jeanne Douillard. Time – 10:00 am in 2nd floor classroom.

October 13, 2017 – **Hall of Fame** – 7:00 pm on 2nd floor. Join us in celebration of the accomplishments of 4 Outstanding Franco Americans.

October 14, 2017 – **Annual Meeting.** Come and hear plans for the Society. Take the opportunity to meet the Board and ask questions.

October 21, 2017 – Workshop – **“DNA 101 – What it Is and How to Get Started,”** presented by Tom Allaire. Come and receive information about this new resource for your research toolbox. Time – 9:00 am in 2nd floor classroom.

October 28, 2017 – Workshop – “**French Canadian Notarial Records and How to Use Them,**” presented by Michael J. Leclerc, the Genealogy Professor. Michael is an international speaker and will certainly share valuable information with you. Limited space. Time 10:00 am in the 2nd floor classroom.

November 4, 2017 – “**WHAT IS PRDH AND HOW TO USE IT**” by Patti Locke. Patti Locke will tell you how to use **PRDH**, a very important resource in your research repertoire. Time – 9:00 am in the library room.

November 12, 2017 – “**WWI Commemorative Celebration,**” organized and presented by Roger Beaudry. Time – 1:00 pm on the 2nd floor.

November 25, 2017 – **Raffle Drawing**

A PRIME RESOURCE AT AFGS by *DIANE OLIVER*

An article in JMS Magazine (Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter, 2016) by Janice Burkhart urges that we take advantage of the numerous periodicals available at the AFGS library. I want to second that motion!

To fully describe the wealth of information contained in those magazines is not possible here. However, I would encourage you to take Jan and me at our combined word and not ignore these wonderful sources of information. AFGS has more than 300 publications. For those of you who are fortunate enough to appreciate the language, quite a few are published in French.

The majority of them are published by genealogical societies that often discuss genealogical issues in their own back yard but offer information on other topics as well. Often, they discuss ancestors who made an impact in that area.

Other periodicals are published by family associations, giving information on upcoming family reunions in different places as well as stories on ancestors with that family name. Finally, there are also topic specific publication such as Journal of La Societe des filles du roi et soldats du Carignan, Inc., and American Spirit-Daughters of the American Revolution.

No matter the main focus of any of the periodicals, they include practical information relating to research (customs, illnesses, and occupations of the times), interpreting records, new publications for the genealogist – and more. An article that I recently came across discussed the invention of the bread slicing machine. While this topic would not seem to relate to genealogy, it does relate to business of the time and the advent of new technology. After all, the lives of our ancestors were spurred by their faith and hopes for a better life. An innovative idea put them a step closer to that life.

The majority of the periodicals is located in the room opposite the main research room, and is cataloged NUMERICALLY on the shelves. Peruse the ALPHABETICAL index to find those that interest you, making note of their numerical designators. (There are a numerical index and an alphabetical index, both of which are located in the center aisle of the room, on the counter top end cap of one of the shelf units.)

Publications concerning Acadian issues are located in the main research room.

Please take advantage of these resources. You are certain to find useful information. A word of caution, however: perusing these precious gems is like digging for gold – once you find one tidbit you want to search for more!



MARGUERITE POMMENVILLE

Marguerite Pommenville, long time member and Board member of AFGS, passed away on February 17, 2017. “Maggie” was the membership chairperson, helped with our mailings and helped members in the library on Tuesday evenings. She is greatly missed by all who knew her. If you would like to send a card to “Maggie’s” family, you may send it c/o AFGS and we will see to it that your card is delivered.

A Great Book That Should Be In Your Library
Before the King’s Daughters: The Filles à Marier, 1634-1662

AFGS is proud to offer a wonderful book that all genealogists doing French-Canadian research should have in their library. This book, written in English by Peter Gagne, is a treasure trove of historical, genealogical and biographical information. It is being offered for sale with the permission of the author who holds the copyright.

Before the King’s Daughters: The Filles à Marier, 1634-1662 is a biographical dictionary of the 262 women and girls sent from France to populate Quebec between 1634 and 1662. This work gives an overview of who the Filles à Marier were and then presents comprehensive biographies of all the “Marriageable Girls” including a wealth of information never before available in English! This set also includes a glossary, a comprehensive bibliography, various historical documents, and an index of husbands.

This book is extremely popular at our library. Most French-Canadians have multiple “Fille à Marier” in their line. By popular demand, AFGS will soon be offering a certificate and pin program to honor and recognize these very brave women. Therefore, we have decided to offer this wonderful book for sale to you as we know that you will be delighted with it. Current inventory is limited so please order right away and give yourself a well-earned gift.

(See page 10 for **Songs Upon The Rivers** book order form.)

ORDER FORM – YOU MAY ALSO ORDER ONLINE AT [INSERT LINK HERE](#)

Please send me:

_____ copies of **Before the King’s Daughters: The Filles à Marier** @ \$50.00 each _____

Sub Total _____

RI Residents please add 7% tax (\$3.50 per book) _____

Shipping \$6.00 for first book; \$4.00 for each additional book _____

Grand Total _____

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Street: _____ Email: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

____ Credit Card# _____ Expiration Date: _____ 3/4 digit code: _____

____ Check: Make Checks payable to AFGS Mail to: **AFGS, P.O. Box 830, Woonsocket, RI 02895-0870**

RESIDENTS OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES, PLEASE USE CREDIT CARDS ONLY AND CONTACT ROGER BEAUDRY AT rbeaudry@afgs.org FOR POSTAGE CHARGES.

ORDER FORM – YOU MAY ALSO ORDER ON LINE AT [INSERT LINK HERE](#)

Please send me:

_____ copies of **Songs Upon the Rivers @ \$34.95 each** _____

Sub Total _____

RI Residents please add 7% tax (\$2.45 per book) _____

Shipping \$6.00 for first book; \$4.00 for each additional book _____

Grand Total _____

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Street: _____ Email: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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SONGS UPON THE RIVERS: THE BURIED HISTORY
OF THE FRENCH SPEAKING CANADIENS AND MÉTIS
FROM THE GREAT LAKES AND THE MISSISSIPPI ACROSS TO THE PACIFIC
by Robert Foxcurran, Michel Bouchard, and Sebastien Malette

Have you ever wondered why there are so many cities and towns across the Midwest, up and down the Mississippi River and in the western United States with French names? How did they get named and why are they French? For those of us who live on the east coast, we may tend to think that most of the French Canadians came down to New England to work in the mills sometime in the late 1800's to the early 1900's. But when we think that way, we dismiss a very important part of our history. French explorers and fur traders as well as French speaking settlers were exploring and settling the west from very early times. You will not necessarily read about this or learn about this in history books because the English explorers tend to receive credit for most of this exploration. Did you know that Louis and Clark explored much of the land that had already been explored by the French? How do you think the Nez Perce Indians got that name? It is the name given to this tribe and the nearby Chinook people by French explorers and trappers in the early 1800's. Take a look at a map. Here are a few names you will see: La Porte, IN; Bourbonnais, IL; Des Moines, IO; St. Louis, MO; Ste. Genevieve, MO; Terrebonne, OR; and French Creek, SD. So it seems history is not always what you have read, or learned, or heard. This book is the first in a series of books that will help you have a better understanding of your history and culture. I think you will be fascinated.

(See page 9 for **Before the King's Daughters: The Filles à Marier** book order form.)