

New France: Les femmes favorisées

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You constantly behold, with renewed astonishment, women in the very depths of indigence and want, perfectly instructed in their religion, ignorant of nothing that they should know to employ themselves usefully in their families and who, by their manners, their manner of expressing themselves and their politeness, are not inferior to the most carefully educated among us.¹

Les femmes l'emportent sur les hommes par la beauté, la vivacité, la gaieté [sic] et l'enjouement; elles sont coquettes et galantes, préfèrent les Européens aux gens du pays. Les manières douces et polies sont communes, même dans les campagnes.²

. . . les femmes y sont fort aimables, mais extrêmement fières.³

. . . elles sont spirituelles, ce qui leur donne de la supériorité sur les hommes dans presque tous les états.⁴

Many a man, observing the women of New France, was struck by the advantages they possessed in education, cultivation and that quality called *esprit* or wit. Even an unsympathetic observer of colonial society, such as the French military officer Franquet, who

visited New France in 1752 - 53, admitted that its women "l'emportent sur les hommes pour l'esprit, généralement elles en ont toutes beaucoup, parlant un français épuré, n'ont pas le moindre accent, aiment aussi la parure, sont jolies, généreuses et même maniérées."⁵ He notes, albeit with disapproval, that women very commonly aspired to stations above those to which they were born.⁶ The Swedish naturalist Peter Kalm, who deplored the inadequate housekeeping of Canadian women, nevertheless admired their refinement.⁷

Those for whom history is an exercise in statistics have taught us caution in accepting the accounts of travellers, which are often highly subjective. However the consensus (particularly that of seasoned observers such as Charlevoix and Kalm) on the superior education and wit of women in New France suggests that their views are founded on something more than natural male proclivity towards *la différence*. Moreover, historians' accounts of society in New France offer ample evidence that women did indeed enjoy an exceptionally privileged position in that colony. The position was so privileged, in fact, that it contrasts favourably not only with that of their contemporaries in France and in New England, but probably also with twentieth-century Canadian women as far as entrepreneurial activity is concerned.

How did the women of New France acquire a superior education? How did they come to be involved in commerce? What gave rise to their vaunted *esprit*? There is no single answer to these questions. The truth is a compound of three separate factors. First, studies of Western Europe under the *ancien régime*, indicate that ideas about women's roles were surprisingly flexible and varied. Secondly, the particular demographic configuration of New France gave female immigrants a number of advantages not available to their counterparts in Europe. Thirdly, the colonial economy, with its heavy emphasis on war and the fur trade presented women with a special set of opportunities. Thus, as we shall see, cultural, demographic and economic conditions combined to produce the remarkable women of New France.

Women And The Family Under the *Ancien Régime*

The notion of "woman's place" or "women's role," popular with nineteenth century commentators, suggests a degree of homogeneity inappropriate to the seventeenth century. It is true that on a formal ideological level men enjoyed the dominant position. This can be seen in the marriage laws which everywhere made it a wife's duty to follow her husband to whatever dwelling place he chose.⁸ In 1650, the men of Montreal were advised by Governor Maisonneuve that they were in fact responsible for the misdemeanours of their wives since "la loi les établit seigneurs de leurs femmes."⁹ Under ordinary circumstances the father was captain of the family hierarchy.¹⁰ Yet, it is clear that this formal male authority in both economic and domestic life was not always exercised. Of early seventeenth-century France we are told that

si la prééminence masculine n'a rien perdu de son prestige, si elle n'a eu à se

défendre contre aucune revendication théorique . . . elle a dû . . . souvent se contenter des apparences et abandonner devant les convenances et les exigences du public l'intérêt positif qu'elle défendait.¹¹

The idea of separate male and female spheres lacked the clear definition it later acquired. This is in part related to the lack of communication and standardization characteristic of the *ancien régime*—along sexual lines or any others. Generalizations about women are riddled with exceptions. Contradicting the idea of female inferiority, for example, were the semi-matriarchal system in the Basque country, and the linen workers guild, in which a 1645 statute prevented a worker's husband from engaging in occupations unrelated to his wife's business, for which he often served as salesman or partner. More important, because it affected a larger group, was the fact that noblewomen were frequently exempt from legal handicaps affecting other women.¹²

One generalization, however, applies to all women of the *ancien régime*. They were not relegated to the private, domestic sphere of human activity because that sphere did not exist. Western Europeans had not yet learned to separate public and private life. As Philippe Ariès points out in his study of childhood, the private home, in which parents and children constitute a distinct unit, is a relatively recent development. In early modern Europe most of domestic life was lived in the company of all sorts of outsiders. Manor houses, where all the rooms interconnect with one another, show the lack of emphasis placed on privacy. Here, as in peasant dwellings, there were often no specialized rooms for sleeping, eating, working or receiving visitors; all were more or less public activities performed with a throng of servants, children, relatives, clerics, apprentices and clients in attendance. Molière's comedies illustrate the familiarity of servants

with their masters. Masters, maids and valets slept in the same room and servants discussed their masters' lives quite openly.¹³

Though familiar with their servants, people were less so with their children. They did not dote on infants as parents do today. It may have been, as some writers have suggested, that there was little point in growing attached to a fragile being so very apt, in those centuries, to be borne away by accident or disease. These unsentimental families of all ranks sent their children out to apprentice or serve in other people's homes. This was considered important as a basic education.¹⁴ It has been estimated that the majority of Western European children passed part of their childhood living in some household other than their natal one.¹⁵ Mothers of these children—reaching down, in the town, as far as the artisan class—commonly sent their infants out to nursemaids and in fact had very little to do with their physical maintenance.¹⁶

This lack of a clearly defined "private" realm relates vitally to the history of women, since this was precisely the sphere which they later were to inhabit.¹⁷ Therefore it is important to focus on their place in the pre-private world. To understand women in New France one first must pass through that antechamber which Peter Laslett appropriately calls "the world we have lost." Its notions of sexuality and of the family apply to France and New France alike.

In this public world people had not yet learned to be private about their bodily functions, especially about their sexuality. For aid with their toilette, noblewomen did not blush to employ *hommes de chambre* rather than maids. The door of the bedchamber stood ajar, if not absolutely open. Its inhabitants, proud of their fecundity, grinned out from under the bedclothes at their visitors. Newlyweds customarily received bedside guests.¹⁸ The

mother of Louis XIV held court and chatted with visitors while labouring to bring *le Roi Soleil* into light of day. Humbler village women kept lesser court among the little crowd of neighbours who attended the midwife's efforts.¹⁹ On the other side of the ocean, Franquet, arriving at Trois-Rivières in 1753, enjoyed the hospitality of Madame Rigaud de Vaudreuil who, feeling poorly, apparently received her visitors at bedside; farther west, he shared a bedroom with a married couple at Fort St. Jean.²⁰ From the seventeenth century to the colony's last days, clerics thundered more or less futilely against the *décolletage* of the *élite*.²¹ Lesser folk leaned towards short skirts²² and boisterous public discussion of impotent husbands.²³ Rape cases also reveal a rather matter-of-fact attitude. Courts stressed monetary compensation for the victim (as if for trespass on private property) rather than wreaking vengeance on the lustful villain.²⁴ There was not the same uneasiness in relations between the sexes which later, more puritanical, centuries saw, and which, judging by the withdrawal of women from public life in many of these societies, probably worked to their detriment.

Part of the reason these unsqueamish, rather public people were not possessive about their bodies was that they did not see themselves so much as individuals but as part of a larger more important unit—the family. In this world the family was the basic organization for most social and economic purposes.²⁵ As such it claimed the individual's first loyalty.²⁶ A much higher proportion of the population married than does today.²⁷ Studies of peasant societies suggest that, for most, marriage was an economic necessity:

Le travail, particulièrement en milieu rural, était alors fondé sur une répartition des tâches entre les sexes: les marins et colporteurs sont absents plusieurs mois,

leurs femmes font valoir les terres; les pêcheurs des marais vont au marché, les femmes à la pêche; le laboureur travaille aux champs, sa femme à la maison, c'est elle qui va au marché; dans le pays d'Auge, "les hommes s'occupent des bestiaux et les femmes aux fromages". Pour vivre il fallait donc être deux, un homme et une femme.²⁸

The family was able to serve as the basic economic unit in pre-industrial societies because the business of earning a living generally occurred at home. Just as public and private life were undifferentiated, so too were home and workplace. Agricultural and commercial pursuits were all generally "domestic" industries. We see this both in France and in New France. Removal of the man from home for most of the working day, an event which Laslett describes as the single most important event in the history of the modern European family,²⁹ was only beginning. The idea of man as breadwinner and woman as home-maker was not clearly developed. Women's range of economic activity was still nearly as wide as that of their husbands. Seventeenth-century France saw women working as bonesetters, goldbeaters, bookbinders, doubletmakers, burnishers, laundresses, woolfullers and wigmakers. Aside from their familiar role in the textile and clothing industries, women also entered heavy trades such as stoneworking and bricklaying. A master plumber, Barbe Legueux, maintained the drainage system for the fountains of Paris. In the commercial world, women worked as fishmongers, pedlars, greengrocers, publicans, money-lenders and auctioneers.³⁰ In New France, wives of artisans took advantage of their urban situation to attract customers into the taverns they set up alongside the workshop.³¹ It was in farm work, which occupied most of the population, that male and female tasks differed

the least of all. *Habitantes* in New France toiled in the fields alongside the men; and they almost certainly—being better educated than their French sisters—took up the farmwife's customary role of keeping accounts and managing purchases and sales.³² Studies of Bordeaux commercial families have revealed that women also took a large role in business operations.³³ Marie de l'Incarnation's background as manager of one of France's largest transport companies,³⁴ shows that the phenomenon existed in other parts of France as well.

Given the economic importance of both spouses, it is not surprising to see marriage taking on some aspects of a business deal, with numerous relatives affixing their signatures to the contract. We see this in the provisions of the law which protected the property rights of both parties contracting a match. The fact that wives often brought considerable family property to the marriage, and retained rights to it, placed them in a better position than their nineteenth-century descendants were to enjoy.³⁵

In New France the family's importance was intensified even beyond its usual economic importance in *ancien régime* societies. In the colony's early days, "all roads led to matrimony. The scarcity of women, the economic difficulties of existence, the danger, all tended to produce the same result: all girls became wives, all widows remarried."³⁶ Throughout the colony's history there was an exceptionally high annual marriage rate of eighteen to twenty-four per thousand.³⁷ The buildup of the family as a social institution perhaps came about because other social institutions, such as guilds and villages, were underdeveloped.³⁸ This heightened importance of the family probably enhanced women's position. In the family women tended to serve as equal partners with their husbands, whereas

women were gradually losing their position in European guilds and professions.³⁹ We see this heightened importance of the family in the government's great concern to regulate it. At that time, the state *did* have a place in Canadian bedrooms (whose inhabitants we have already seen to be rather unconcerned about their privacy). Public intervention in domestic life took two major forms: the operation of the legal system and governmental attempts at family planning.

The outstanding characteristic of the legal system in New France—the *Coutume de Paris*—is its concern to protect the rights of all members of the family. The *Coutume de Paris* is considered to have been a particularly benevolent regional variation of French law.⁴⁰ It was more egalitarian and less patriarchal than the laws of southern France which were based on Roman tradition. The *Coutume* reinforced the family, for example, by the penalties it levied on those transferring family property to non-kin.⁴¹ It took care to protect the property of children of a first marriage when a widow or widower remarried.⁴² It protected a woman's rights by assuring that the husband did not have power to alienate the family property (in contrast to eighteenth-century British law).⁴³ The Canadians not only adopted the Parisian *coutume* in preference to the Norman *coutume*, which was harsher;⁴⁴ they also implemented the law in a way which maximized protection of all family members. Louise Dechêne, after examining the operation of the marriage and inheritance system, concludes that the Canadian application of the law was generous and egalitarian:

Ces conceptions matrimoniales ne nous apparaissent pas comme un marché, un affrontement entre deux lignées, mais comme un accord désintéressé entre les familles, visant à créer une nouvelle communauté, à l'assister si possible, à dresser

quelques barrières à l'entour pour la protéger

La même simplicité, la même générosité président au partage des successions⁴⁵

The criminal law, too, served to buttress family life with its harsh punishments for mistreatment of children.⁴⁶

The royal administration, as well as the law, treated the family as a matter of vital public concern. The state often intervened in matters which later generations left to the individual or to the operations of private charity. Most famous, of course, is the policy of encouraging a high birth rate with financial incentives. They were also attempts to withdraw trading privileges from voyageurs who showed reluctance to take immigrant women to wife.⁴⁷ Particularly in the seventeenth century, we see the state regulating what modern societies would consider intimate matters. However, in a colony starved for manpower, reproduction was considered a matter of particularly vital public concern—a concern well demonstrated in the extremely harsh punishments meted out to women who concealed pregnancy.⁴⁸ We see a more positive side of this intervention in the care the Crown took of foundlings, employing nurses at a handsome salary to care for them, and making attempts to prevent children from bearing any stigma because of questionable origins.⁴⁹

State regulation of the family was balanced by family regulation of the state. Families had an input into the political system, playing an important role in the running of the state. Indeed, it might be argued that the family was the basic political unit in New France. In an age when some members of the *noblesse* prided themselves on their illiteracy, attending the right college was hardly the key to political success. Marrying into the right family was much more important. Nepotism, or rewarding

one's kin with emoluments, seemed a most acceptable and natural form of patronage for those in power.⁵⁰ In this sense, a good marriage was considered a step upward for the whole family, which helps to explain why choice of spouse was so often a family decision.⁵¹ These family lines were particularly tightly drawn among the military élite in New France. Franquet remarked that *'tous les gens d'un certain ordre sont liés de parenté et d'amitié dans ce pays.'*⁵² In fact, with top military positions passing down from generation to generation, by the eighteenth century this élite became a caste.⁵³

In this situation, where the *nom de famille* was vastly more important than that of the individual, it was apparently almost as good for political (though not military) purposes to be an Agathe de Repentigny as a LeGardeur de Repentigny. Moreover, women's political participation was favoured by the large role of entertaining in political life. For the courtier's role, women were as well-trained as men, and there seems to have been no stigma attached to the woman who participated independently of her husband. Six women, Mesdames Daine, Pean, Lotbinière, de Repentigny, Marin, and St. Simon, along with six male officers, were chosen by the Intendant to accompany him to Montreal in 1753.⁵⁴ Of the twelve only the de Repentignys were a couple. It is surprising to see women from the colony's first families also getting down to what we would today consider the "business" end of politics. Madame de la Forest, a member of the Juchereau family, took an active role in the political cliques which Guy Frégault describes.⁵⁵ Mme. de la Forest's trip to France to plead the cause of Governor de Ramezay was inconsequential, though, in comparison with that of Mme de Vaudreuil to further Governor Vaudreuil's cause in 1709. *'Douée d'un sens politique très fin,'*⁵⁶ she soon gained the ear of the Minister of Marine. Not only did she secure the Governor's victory in

the long conflict with the Intendants Raudot (father and son) and win promotion for his patrons; she appears to have gone on to upstage her husband by becoming the virtual director of colonial policy at Versailles for a few years. Vaudreuil's biographer discusses the influence Madame de Vaudreuil exerted with the Minister Pontchartrain who so regularly sought her comment on colonial patronage that supplicants began to apply directly to her rather than to the minister.⁵⁷ Contemporaries agreed that her influence was vast:

Pontchartrain, rapporte Ruette d'Auteuil, ne lui refuse rien, "elle dispose de tous les emplois du Canada, elle écrit de toutes parts dans les ports de mer des lettres magnifiques du bien et du mal qu'elle peut faire auprès de lui," et le ministre "fait tout ce qu'il faut pour l'autoriser et justifier ses discours." Riverin confirme que . . . "ce n'est plus qu'une femme qui règne tant présente qu'absente."⁵⁸

Governor Frontenac's wife (though not a *Canadienne*) also played an important role at court dispelling some of the thunderclouds which threatened her husband's stormy career.⁵⁹

As for the common folk, we know even less about the political activity of women than that of men. That women participated in a form of popular assembly is hinted at in a report of a meeting held in 1713 (in present-day Boucherville), in which Catherine Guertin was sworn in as midwife after having been elected *"dans l'assemblée des femmes de cette paroisse, à la pluralité des suffrages, pour exercer l'office de sagefemme."*⁶⁰ Were these women's assemblies a general practice? If so, what other matters did they decide? This aspect of *habitant* politics remains a mystery, but women, as historians of

“crowds” have found, were certainly part of the “pre-industrial crowd.”⁶¹ Along with their menfolk, they were full-fledged members of the old “moral economy” whose members rioted, took what was traditionally their rightful share (and no more) when prices were too high or when speculators were hoarding grain.⁶² The women of Quebec and Montreal, who rioted against the horsemeat rations and the general hunger of 1757 - 58, illustrate this aspect of the old polity.⁶³

In sum, women’s position during the *ancien régime* was open-ended. Although conditions varied, a wide range of roles were available to women, to be taken up or not. This was so because the separate spheres of men and women in *ancien régime* societies were not so clearly developed as they later became. There was as yet no sharp distinction between public and private life: families were for most purposes the basic social, economic and political unit. Owing to the underdevelopment of other institutions (the guild, the seigneurie, the village), this situation was intensified in New France. The activities of bread-winner and home-maker were not yet widely recognized as separate functions belonging to one sex or the other. All members of the family also often shared the same economic functions, or at least roles were interchangeable. Nor had the symbolic, the honorific, the stylistic aspects of government yet been separated from the business end of politics and administration. These conditions, typical of most of pre-industrial France, were also found in New France, where particular demographic and economic conditions would enable the colony’s women to develop their freedoms and opportunities to the fullest.

Demographic Advantages

Demography favoured the women of New France in two ways. First, the women who

went there were a highly select group of immigrants. Secondly, women were in short supply in the early years of the colony’s development, a situation that worked in their favour.

The bulk of the female immigrants to New France fall into one of two categories. The first was a group of extremely well-born, well-endowed and highly dedicated religious figures. They began to arrive in 1639, and a trickle of French nuns continued to cross the ocean over the course of the next century. The second distinct group was the *filles du roi*, government sponsored female migrants who arrived between 1663 and 1673. These immigrants, though not as outstanding as the *dévotés*, were nevertheless privileged compared to the average immigrant to New France, who arrived more or less threadbare.⁶⁴ The vast majority of the women (and the men) came from the Ile-de-France and the northwestern parts of France. The women of northern France enjoyed fuller legal rights, were better educated, and more involved in commerce than those in southern France.⁶⁵ When they set foot on colonial soil with all this auspicious baggage, the immigrants found that they had yet another advantage. Women constituted a small percentage of the population. As a scarce resource they were highly prized and therefore in an excellent position to gain further advantages.

The first *religieuses* to arrive in New France were the Ursulines and Hospitallers who landed at Quebec in 1639. These were soon followed by women who helped establish Montreal in 1642. Their emigration was inspired by a religious revival in France, which is thought to have arisen in response to the widespread pauperism following the French civil wars of the sixteenth century. The seventeenth-century revival distinguished itself by tapping the energies of women in an unprecedented way.⁶⁶ Among its leaders were

Anne of Austria and a number of the leading ladies at court.⁶⁷ In other parts of France, women of the provincial élite implemented the charity work inspired by Saint Vincent de Paul.⁶⁸ Occurring between 1600 and 1660, this religious revival coincided almost exactly with the period when the fledgling Canadian colony, besieged by English privateers and by the Iroquois, was most desperately in need of an injection of immigrants, money and enthusiasm.⁶⁹ It was at this moment that the Jesuits in Quebec appealed to the French public for aid. Much to their surprise, they received not a donation but a half-dozen religious zealots, in person. Abandoning the centuries-old cloistered role of female religious figures these nuns undertook missionary work which gave them an active role in the life of the colony.⁷⁰ Thus the great religious revival of the seventeenth century endowed New France with several exceptionally capable, well-funded, determined leaders imbued with an activist approach to charity and with that particular mixture of spiritual ardour and worldly *savoir-faire* which typified the mystics of that period.⁷¹ The praises of Marie de l'Incarnation, Jeanne Mance and Marguerite Bourgeoys have been sung so often as to be tiresome. Perhaps, though a useful vantage point is gained if one assesses them neither as saints nor heroines, but simply as leaders. In this capacity, the nuns supplied money, publicity, skills, and settlers, all of which were needed in the colony.

Marie de l'Incarnation, an extremely competent business-woman from Tours, founded the Ursuline Monastery at Quebec in 1639. Turning to the study of Indian languages, she and her colleagues helped implement the policy of assimilating the young Indians. Then, gradually abandoning that futile policy, they turned to the education of the French colonists. Marie de l'Incarnation developed the farm on the Ursuline seigneurie and served as an unof-

ficial adviser to the colonial administrators. She also helped draw attention and money to the colony by writing some twelve thousand letters between 1639 and her death in 1672.⁷²

An even more prodigious fund-raiser in those straitened times was Jeanne Mance, who had a remarkable knack for making friends in high places.⁷³ They enabled her to supply money and colonists for the original French settlement on the island of Montreal, and to take a place beside Maisonneuve as co-founder of the town.⁷⁴ The hospital she established there had the legendary wealth of the de Bullion family—and the revenues of three Norman domains—behind it. From this endowment she made the crucial grant to Governor Maisonneuve in 1651 which secured vitally needed French troops—thus saving Montreal.⁷⁵ Mance and her Montreal colleague Margeurite Bourgeoys both made several voyages to France to recruit settlers. They were particularly successful in securing the female immigrants necessary to establish a permanent colony, recruiting sizeable groups in 1650, 1653 and 1659.⁷⁶

Besides contributing to the colony's sheer physical survival, the nuns materially raised the living standards of the population. They conducted the schools which were attended by girls of all classes, and from both of the colony's races. Bourgeoys provided housing for newly arrived immigrants and served in a capacity perhaps best described as an early social worker.⁷⁷ Other nuns established hospitals in each of the three towns. The colonists reaped fringe benefits in the institutions established by this exceptionally dedicated personnel. The hospitals, for example, provided high-quality care to both rich and poor; care which compared favourably with that of similar institutions in France.⁷⁸ Thus, the *dévotés* played an important role in supplying leadership, funding, publicity,

recruits and social services. They may even have tipped the balance towards survival in the 1650s, when retention of the colony was still in doubt.

In the longer run, they endowed the colony with an educational heritage, which survived and shaped social life long after the initial heroic piety had grown cold. The schools that the *dévotés* founded created a situation very different from that in France, where education of women in the seventeenth century lagged behind that of men.⁷⁹ The opinion-setters in France sought to justify this neglect in the eighteenth century and a controversy began over whether girls should be educated outside the home at all.⁸⁰ Girls in Montreal escaped all this. Indeed, in 1663 Montrealers had a school for their girls but none for their boys. The result was that for a time Montreal women surpassed men in literacy, a reversal of the usual *ancien régime* pattern.⁸¹ The superior education of women which Charlevoix extolled in 1744 continued until the fall of New France (and beyond)—a tendency heightened by the large percentage of soldiers, generally illiterate, among the male population.⁸² The Ursulines conducted schools for the élite at Quebec and Trois-Rivières. This order was traditionally rather weak in teaching housekeeping (which perhaps accounts for Kalm's famous castigation of Canadian housewifery). Nevertheless they specialized in needlework, an important skill since articles of clothing were a major trade good sought by the Indians. Moreover the Ursulines taught the daughters of the élite the requisite skills for administering a house and a fortune—skills which, as we shall see later, many were to exercise.⁸³

More remarkable than the Ursuline education, however, was that of the *Soeurs de la Congrégation*, which reached the popular classes in the countryside.⁸⁴ Franquet, was apparently shocked by the effect of this exceptional

education on the colonial girls. He recommended that the *Soeurs'* schools be suppressed because they made it difficult to keep girls down on the farm:

Ces Soeurs sont répandues le long des côtes, dans des seigneuries où elles ont été attirées pour l'éducation des jeunes filles; leur utilité semble être démontrée, mais le mal qu'en résulte est comme un poison lent qui tend à dépeupler les campagnes, d'autant qu'une fille instruite fait la demoiselle, qu'elle est maniérée, qu'elle veut prendre un établissement à la ville, qu'il lui faut un négociant et qu'elle regarde au dessous d'elle l'état dans lequel elle est née.⁸⁵

The second distinct group of female immigrants to New France was the famous *filles du roi*, women sent out by the French government as brides in order to boost the colony's permanent settlement. Over nine hundred arrived between 1663 and 1673.⁸⁶ If less impressive than the *dévotés*, they too appear to have arrived with more than the average immigrant's store of education and capital. Like the nuns, they were the product of a particular historical moment which thrust them across the sea. The relevant event here is that brief interlude in the 1660s and 1670s when the King, his Minister Colbert and the Intendant Talon applied an active hand to colonial development.⁸⁷

There has been much historical controversy about whether the *filles du roi* were pure or not.⁸⁸ More relevant to our discussion than their morality are their money and their skills. On both these counts, this was a very selective immigration. First of all, the majority of the *filles du roi* (and for that matter, of seventeenth-century female immigrants generally) were urban dwellers, a group which enjoyed better access to education than the peasantry did.⁸⁹

Moreover, the *filles du roi* were particularly privileged urbanites. Over one third, some 340 of them, were educated at the Paris Hôpital Général. Students at this institution learned writing and such a wide variety of skills that in France they were much sought after for service in the homes of the wealthy. Six percent were of noble or bourgeois origin. All the *filles* brought with them a 50-100 *livres* dowry provided by the King; most supplemented this with personal funds in the order of 200-300 *livres*.⁹⁰ According to Lanctôt, among lay immigrants, these women constituted the immigration “*la plus stricte, la plus saine et la plus recommandable de toute cette époque.*”⁹¹ The Parisian origins of many *filles du roi*, and of the nuns who taught their children, probably account for the pure French accent which a number of travellers attributed to the colony’s women.⁹²

These two major immigrant groups, then, the nuns and the *filles du roi*, largely account for the superior education and “cultivation” attributed to the colony’s women. Another demographic consideration also favoured the women of New France. As a result of light female emigration, men heavily out-numbered women in the colony’s early days; a balance was not attained until 1710.⁹³ It might be expected that, as a scarce commodity, women would receive favoured treatment. The facility of marriage and remarriage, the salaries women received, and the leniency of the courts and the administrators towards women, suggest that this hypothesis is correct.

Women had a wider choice in marriage than did men in the colony’s early days. There were, for example, eight marriageable men for every marriageable woman in Montreal in 1663. Widows grieved, briefly, then remarried within an average of 8.8 months after their bereavement. In those early days the laws of supply and demand operated to women’s

economic advantage, as well. Rarely did these first Montreal women bother to match their husband’s wedding present by offering a dowry.⁹⁴ The colony distinguished itself as “the country of the *douaire* not of the *dot*.”⁹⁵

Other economic indicators suggest that scarcity served women well. Observers of women’s salaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are used to finding them ranging from one-half to two-thirds those of men. This list of 1744 salaries of New France therefore comes as something of a surprise:

Un professeur de collège	400 livres
Une institutrice	500 livres
Une sage-femme attachée à	
l’Hôtel-Dieu de Québec	400 livres
le prévôt des maréchaux	500 livres
le lieutenant général de Montréal	450 livres
le procureur du roi (Mtl.)	250 livres
un conseiller ordinaire au Conseil Supérieur	300 livres
un Missionnaire au Poste de la mer de l’Ouest	600 livres ⁹⁶

Perhaps the government, as in later centuries, led the way as an “equal opportunity” employer. At any rate, nursemaids hired by the government acquired not only the civil servant’s dignity and job security but were paid, we are told, their salaries in cash, in advance, and at a rate “more than the townspeople were accustomed to pay for the nursing of their own children.”⁹⁷

In the social and legal realm we also find privileges which may have been attributable to the shortage of women. Perhaps it is due to the difficulties of replacing battered wives that

jealous husbands in New France were willing to forego the luxury of uncontrolled rage. Some of the intendants even charged that there were libertine wives in the colony who got away with taking a second husband while the first was away trading furs.⁹⁸ Recent indications that New France conformed rather closely to French traditions make it unlikely that this was common.⁹⁹ But the judgements of the Sovereign Council do offer evidence of peaceful reconciliations such as that of Marguerite Leboeuf, charged with adultery in 1667. The charge was dismissed when her husband pleaded before the Sovereign Council on her behalf. Also leaving vengeance largely to the Lord was Antoine Antorche, who withdrew his accusation against his wife even after the Council found her doubly guilty.¹⁰⁰ In this regard the men of New France differed from their Portuguese brothers in Brazil, who perpetrated a number of amorous murders each year; also from their English brethren in Massachusetts, who branded or otherwise mutilated their errant wives and daughters.¹⁰¹ When such cases reached the courts in New France the judges, too, appear to have been lenient. Their punishments for adulterous women were considerably lighter than those imposed in New England. Other female offenders, such as the whiskey trader captured in 1661, received a much lighter punishment than men convicted of identical offences. A further peculiarity of the legal system in New France, which suggests that women were closer to being on an equal footing with men than in other times and places, was the unusual attempt to arrest not only prostitutes but their clients as well.¹⁰²

Another indication of the lenient treatment Canadian women enjoyed is the level of insubordination the authorities were willing to accept from them. There was a distinct absence of timidity vis-à-vis the political authorities. In

1714, for example, the inhabitants of Côte St. Leonard violently objected to the Bishop's decision to cancel their membership in the familiar church and enroll them in the newly erected parish of Rivière-des-Prairies. A fracas ensued in which the consecrated altar breads were captured by the rebellious parishioners. An officer sent to restore order was assailed by angry women:

L'huissier chargé d'aller assigner les séditeux, raconte que toutes les femmes l'attendaient "avec des roches et des perches dans leurs mains pour m'assassiner," qu'elles le poursuivirent en jurant: "arrête voleur, nous te voulons tuer et jeter dans le marais."¹⁰³

Other women hurled insults at the Governor himself in the 1670s.¹⁰⁴ An even more outrageous case of insubordination, was that of the two Desaulniers sisters, who by dint of various appeals, deceits and stalling tactics, continued to run an illegal trading post at Caughnawaga for some twenty-five years despite repeated orders from governors, intendants and the ministry itself, to close it down.¹⁰⁵

A further indication of women's privileged position is the absence of witchcraft persecution in New France. The colony was founded in the seventeenth century when this persecution was at its peak in Western Europe. The New Englanders, too, were burning witches at Salem. Not a single Canadienne died for this offence.¹⁰⁶ It is not—as Marie de l'Incarnation's account of the 1663 earthquake makes clear¹⁰⁷—that the Canadians were not a superstitious people. A scholar of crime in New France suggests that this surprising absence of witchcraft hysteria relates to the fact that "*depuis le début de la colonie une femme était une rareté très estimée et de ce fait, protégée de la persécution en masse.*"¹⁰⁸

Thus, on the marriage market, and in their protection from physical violence, women seem to have achieved a favourable position because of their small numbers. Their relatively high wages and lighter court sentences may also have been related to the demographic imbalance. Moreover, the original female immigrants arrived in the colony with better than average education and capital, attributes which undoubtedly helped them to establish their privileged status.

Economic Opportunities

Even more than demographic forces, the colonial economy served to enhance the position of women. In relation to the varied activities found in many regions of France, New France possessed a primitive economy. Other than subsistence farming, the habitants engaged in two major pursuits. The first was military activity, which included not only actual fighting but building and maintaining the imperial forts, and provisioning the troops. The second activity was the fur trade. Fighting and fur-trading channelled men's ambitions and at times removed them physically from the colony. This helped open up the full range of opportunities to women, whom we have already seen had the possibility of assuming a wide variety of economic roles in *ancien régime* society. Many adapted themselves to life in a military society. A few actually fought. Others made a good living by providing goods and services to the ever-present armies. Still others left military activity aside and concentrated on civilian economic pursuits—pursuits which were often neglected by men. For many this simply meant managing the family farm as best as one could during the trading season, when husbands were away. Other women assumed direction of commercial enterprises, a neglected area in this society which preferred military honours to commercial prizes. Others acted as a sort of home-office partner for fur

trading husbands working far afield. Still others, having lost husbands to raids, rapids or other hazards of forest life, assumed a widow's position at the helm of the family business.

New France has been convincingly presented as a military society. The argument is based on the fact that a very large proportion of its population was under arms, its government had a semi-military character, its economy relied heavily on military expenditure and manpower, and a military ethos prevailed among the élite.¹⁰⁹ In some cases, women joined their menfold in these martial pursuits. The seventeenth century sometimes saw them in direct combat. A number of Montrealers perished during an Iroquois raid in 1661 in which, Charlevoix tells us, "even the women fought to the death, and not one of them surrendered."¹¹⁰ In Acadia, Madame de la Tour took command of the fort's forty-five soldiers and warded off her husband's arch-enemy, Menou D'Aulnay, for three days before finally capitulating.¹¹¹

The most famous of these seventeenth-century *guerrières* was, of course, Madeleine de Verchères. At the age of fourteen she escaped from a band of Iroquois attackers, rushed back to the fort on her parents' seigneurie and fired a cannon shot in time to warn all the surrounding settlers of the danger.¹¹² Legend and history have portrayed Madeleine as a lamb who was able, under siege, to summon up a lion's heart. Powdered and demure in a pink dress, she smiles very sweetly out at the world in a charming vignette in Arthur Doughty's *A Daughter of New France, being a story of the life and times of Magdelaine de Verchères*, published in 1916. Perhaps the late twentieth century is ready for her as she was: a swashbuckling, musket-toting braggart who extended the magnitude of her deeds with each successive telling, who boasted that she never in her life

shed a tear; a contentious thorn in the side of the local curé (whom she slandered), and of her *censitaires*, (whom she constantly battled in the courts).¹¹³ She strutted through life for all the world like the boorish male officers of the *campagnard* nobility to which her family belonged.¹¹⁴ One wonders how many more there were like her. Perhaps all trace of them has vanished into the wastebaskets of subsequent generations of historians who, with immovable ideas of female propriety, did not know what on earth to do with them—particularly after what must have been the exhausting effort of pinching Verchères' muscled frame into a corset and getting her to wear the pink dress.

By the eighteenth century, women had withdrawn from hand-to-hand combat, but many remained an integral part of the military élite as it closed in to become a caste. In this system, both sexes shared the responsibility of marrying properly and of maintaining those cohesive family ties which, Corvisier tells us, lay at the heart of military society. Both also appealed to the Ministry for their sons' promotions.¹¹⁵

What is more surprising is that a number of women accompanied their husbands to military posts in the wilderness. Wives of officers, particularly of corporals, traditionally helped manage the canteens in the French armies.¹¹⁶ Almost all Canadian officers were involved in some sort of trading activity, and a wife at the post could mind the store when the husband had to mind the war. Some were overzealous. When Franquet rode into Fort Saint Frédéric in 1752 he discovered a terrific row among its inhabitants. The post was in a virtual state of mutiny because a Madame Lusignan was monopolizing all the trade, both wholesale and retail, at the fort; and her husband, the Commandant, was enforcing the monopoly.¹¹⁷ In fact, Franquet's inspection

tour of the Canadian posts is remarkable for the number of women who greeted him at the military posts, which one might have expected to be a male preserve. Arriving at Fort Sault Saint Louis he was received very politely by M. de Merceau and his two daughters. He noted that Fort Saint Frédéric housed not only the redoubtable Madame Lusignan but also another officer's widow. At Fort Chambly he "spent the whole day with the ladies, and visited Madame de Beaulac, an officer's widow who has been given lodging in this fort."¹¹⁸

The nuns, too, marched in step with this military society. They were, quite literally, one of its lifelines, since they cared for its wounded. A majority of the invalids at the Montreal Hôtel Dieu were soldiers, and the Ursuline institution at Trois-Rivières was referred to simply as a *hôpital militaire*.¹¹⁹ Hospital service was so vital to the army that Frontenac personally intervened to speed construction of the Montreal Hôtel-Dieu in 1695, when he was planning a campaign against the Iroquois.¹²⁰ In the colony's first days, the Ursulines also made great efforts to help the Governor seal Indian alliances by attempting to secure Iroquois students who would serve as hostages, and by giving receptions for Iroquois chiefs.¹²¹

Humbler folk also played a part in military society. In the towns female publicans conducted a booming business with the thirsty troops. Other women served as laundresses, adjuncts so vital that they accompanied armies even on the campaigns where wives and other camp followers were ordered to stay home.¹²² Seemingly indispensable, too, wherever armies march, are prostitutes. At Quebec City they plied their trade as early as 1667. Indian women at the missions also served in this capacity.¹²³ All told, women had more connections with the military economy than is generally noted.

While warfare provided a number of women with a living, it was in commerce that the *Canadiennes* really flourished. Here a number of women moved beyond supporting roles to occupy centre stage. This happened for several reasons. The first was that the military ethos diverted men from commercial activity. Secondly, many men who entered the woods to fight or trade were gone for years. Others, drowned or killed in battle, obviously never returned.¹²⁴ This left many widows who had to earn a livelihood. This happened so often, in fact, that when in 1710 women finally overcame the population imbalance due to their weak immigration, the tables turned quickly; they soon outnumbered the men, and remained a majority through to the Conquest.¹²⁵ Generally speaking, life was more hazardous for men than for women¹²⁶—so much so that the next revolution of the historiographic wheel may turn up the men of New France (at least in relation to its women) as an oppressed group.

At any rate, women often stepped in to take the place of their absent husbands or brothers. A surprising number of women traders emerge in the secondary literature on New France. In the colony's earliest days, the mere handful of women included two merchants at Trois-Rivières: Jeanne Enard (mother-in-law of Pierre Boucher) who "by her husband's own admission" was the head of the family as far as fur-trading was concerned; and, Mathurine Poisson, who sold imported goods to the colonists.¹²⁷ At Montreal there was the wife of Artus de Sully, whose unspecified (but presumably commercial) activities won her the distinction of being Montreal's biggest debtor.¹²⁸ In Quebec City, Eleonore de Grandmaison was a member of a company formed to trade in the Ottawa country. She added to her wealth by renting her lands on the Ile d'Orleans to Huron refugees after Huronia

had been destroyed. Farther east, Madame de la Tour involved herself in shipping pelts to France. Another Acadian, Madame Joybert, traded furs on the Saint John River.¹²⁹

With the onset of the less pious eighteenth century, we find several women at the centre of the illegal fur trade. Indian women, including "a cross-eyed squaw named Marie-Magdelaine" regularly carried contraband goods from the Caughnawaga Reserve to Albany.¹³⁰ A Madame Couagne received Albany contraband at the other end, in Montreal.¹³¹ But at the heart of this illegal trade were the Desaulniers sisters, who used their trading post on the Caughnawaga reserve as an *entrepôt* for the forbidden English strouds, fine textiles, pipes, boots, lace, gloves, silver tableware, chocolate, sugar and oysters which the Indians brought regularly from Albany.¹³² Franquet remarked on the power of these *marchandes*, who were able to persuade the Indians to refuse the government's request to build fortifications around their village.¹³³ The Desaulniers did not want the comings and goings of their employees too closely scrutinized.

These *commerçantes*, honest and otherwise, continued to play their part until the Conquest. Marie-Anne Barbel (*Veuve Fornel*) farmed the Tadoussac fur trade and was involved in diverse enterprises including retail sales, brickmaking and real estate.¹³⁴ On Franquet's tour in the 1750s he encountered other *marchandes* besides the controversial "Madame la Commandante" who had usurped the Fort Saint Frédéric trade. He enjoyed a more restful night closer to Montreal at the home of Madame de Lemothe, a *marchande* who had prospered so well that she was able to put up her guests in splendid beds which Franquet proclaimed "fit for a duchess."¹³⁵

A number of writers have remarked on the

shortage of entrepreneurial talent in New France.¹³⁶ This perhaps helps to account for the activities of Agathe de St. Père, who established the textile industry in Canada. She did so after the colonial administrators had repeatedly called for development of spinning and weaving, with no result.¹³⁷ Coming from the illustrious Le Moyne family, Agathe St. Père married the ensign Pierre Legardeur de Repentigny, a man who, we are told, had "an easy-going nature." St. Père, of another temperament, pursued the family business interests, investing in fur trade partnerships, real estate and lending operations. Then in 1705, when the vessel bringing the yearly supply of French cloth to the colony was shipwrecked, she saw an opportunity to develop the textile industry in Montreal. She ransomed nine English weavers who had been captured by the Indians, and arranged for apprentices to study the trade. Subsequently these apprentices taught the trade to other Montrealers on home looms which Madame de Repentigny built and distributed. Besides developing the manufacture of linen, drugget and serge, she discovered new chemicals which made use of the native plants to dye and process them.¹³⁸

Upon this foundation Madame Benoist built. Around the time of the Conquest, she was directing an operation in Montreal in which women turned out, among other things, shirts and petticoats for the fur trade.¹³⁹ This is a case of woman doing business while man did battle, for Madame Benoist's husband was commanding officer at Lac des Deux Montagnes.

This absence of male entrepreneurs may also explain the operation of a large Richelieu lumbering operation by Louise de Ramezay, the daughter of the Governor of Montreal. Louise, who remained single, lost her father in 1724. Her mother continued to operate the saw-milling operation on the family's Cham-

bly Seigneury, but suffered a disastrous reverse due to a combination of flooding, theft and shipwreck in 1725. The daughter, however, went into partnership with the Seigneuss de Rouville in 1745 and successfully developed the sawmill. She then opened a flour mill, a Montreal tannery and another sawmill. By the 1750s the trade was flourishing: Louise de Ramezay was shipping 20,000 *livres* loads, and one merchant alone owed her 60,000 *livres*. In 1753 she began to expand her leather business, associating with a group of Montreal tanners to open new workshops.¹⁴⁰

Louise de Ramezay's case is very clearly related to the fact that she lived in a military society. As Louise was growing up, one by one her brothers perished. Claude, an ensign in the French navy, died during an attack on Rio de Janeiro in 1711, Louis died during the 1715 campaign against the Fox Indians, La Gesse died ten years later in a shipwreck off Ile Royale. That left only one son, Jean-Baptiste-Roch, and, almost inevitably, he chose a military career over management of the family business affairs.¹⁴¹ It may be that similar situations accounted for the female entrepreneurs in ironforging, tilemaking, sturgeon-fishing, sealing and contract building, all of whom operated in New France.¹⁴²

If military society was the warp for this network of trading women, family connections were the woof. Madame Benoist belonged to the Baby family, whose male members were out cultivating the western fur trade. Her production of shirts made to the Indians' specifications was the perfect complement. The secret of the Desaulniers' successful trade network may well be that they were related to so many of Montreal's leading merchants.¹⁴³ The fur trade generally required two or more bases of operation. We saw earlier in our discussion that this society not only placed great value on

family connections but also accepted female commercial activity. It was therefore quite natural that female relatives would be recruited into business to cover one of the bases. Men who were heading for the west would delegate their powers of attorney and various business responsibilities to their wives, who were remaining in the colony.¹⁴⁴

We find these husband-wife fur trade partnerships not only among '*Les Grandes Familles*' but permeating all classes of society. At Trois-Rivières women and girls manufactured the canoes which carried the fur trade provisions westward each summer. This was a large-scale operation which profited from fat government contracts.¹⁴⁵ In Montreal, wives kept the account-books while their husbands traded. Other women spent the winters sewing shirts and petticoats which would be bartered the following summer.¹⁴⁶

The final reason for women's extensive business activity was the direct result of the hazards men faced in fighting and fur trading. A high proportion of women were widowed; and as widows, they enjoyed special commercial privileges. In traditional French society, these privileges were so extensive that craftsmen's widows sometimes inherited full guild-master's rights. More generally, widows acquired the right to manage the family assets until the children reached the age of twenty-five (and sometimes beyond that time). In some instances they also received the right to choose which child would receive the succession.¹⁴⁷ In New France these rights frequently came into operation; and they had a major impact on the distribution of wealth and power in the society. In 1663, for example, women held the majority of the colony's seigneurial land. The *Veuve* Lemoyne numbered among the twelve Montreal merchants who, between 1642 and 1725, controlled assets of 50,000 *livres*. The *Veuve* Fornel acquired a

similar importance later on in the regime. Some of the leading merchants at Louisbourg were also widows. The humbler commerce of tavernkeeping was also frequently a widow's lot.¹⁴⁸

Thus, in New France, both military and commercial activities which required a great deal of travelling over vast distances were usually carried out by men. In their absence, their wives played a large role in the day-to-day economic direction of the colony. Even when the men remained in the colony, military ambitions often absorbed their energies, particularly among the upper class. In these situations, it was not uncommon for a wife to assume direction of the family interests.¹⁴⁹ Others waited to do so until their widowhood, which—given the fact that the average wife was considerably younger than her husband and that his activities were often more dangerous—frequently came early.

Conclusion

New France had been founded at a time in Europe's history in which the roles of women were neither clearly nor rigidly defined. In this fluid situation, the colony received an exceptionally well-endowed group of female immigrants during its formative stage. There, where they long remained in short supply, they secured a number of special privileges at home, at school, in the courts, and in social and political life. They consolidated this favourable position by attaining a major role in the colonial economy, at both the popular and the directive levels. These circumstances enabled the women of New France to play many parts. *Dévotes* and traders, warriors and landowners, smugglers and politicians, industrialists and financiers; they thronged the stage in such numbers that they distinguish themselves as *femmes favorisées*.

NOTES

1. F.-X. Charlevoix, *History and General Description of New France* (New York: Harper, 1900), Vol. 3: p. 28.
2. Cited in R.-L. Séguin, "La Canadienne aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, XIII, (mars 1960), p. 492.
3. Séguin, "La Canadienne," p. 500.
4. *Ibid.*
5. L. Franquet, *Voyages et mémoires sur le Canada* (Montréal: Editions Elysee, 1974), p. 57, recording a tour in 1752 - 53.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
7. Séguin, "La Canadienne," pp. 492, 505.
8. G. Fagniez, *La Femme et la société française dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: J. Gambler, 1929), p. 154.
9. Marcel Trudel, *Montréal, la formation d'une société* (Montreal: Fides, 1976), p. 216-217.
10. John F. Boshier, "The Family in New France," in *In Search of the Visible Past*, Barry Gough, ed. (Waterloo, Ont.: W.L.U. Press, 1976), p. 7.
11. Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, p. 121.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 104, 193.
13. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Vintage 1962), pp. 392-406.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 365-66.
15. Peter Laslett, "Characteristics of the Western Family Considered over Time," *Journal of Family History*, 2 (Summer 1977), pp. 89-115.
16. Richard Vann, "Women in Preindustrial Capitalism," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, R. Bridenthal, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p. 206.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-8; Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, pp. 397-406.
18. Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, pp. 122-23; 179.
19. Vann, "Women in Preindustrial Capitalism," p. 206.
20. Franquet, *Voyages*, pp. 135 and 61.
21. Séguin, "La Canadienne," pp. 499 and R. Boyer, *Les Crimes et châtements au Canada française du XVIII^e au XX^e siècle* (Montreal: 1966), p. 391.
22. Séguin, "La Canadienne," p. 506.
23. Boyer, *Crimes et châtements*, p. 351.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 344-46.
25. Laslett, "Western Family," p. 95.
26. I. Foulche-Delbosc, "Women of Three Rivers, 1651-1663," in *The Neglected Majority*, A. Prentice and S. Trofimenkoff, eds. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), p. 26.
27. Boshier ("The Family," p. 3) found the marriage rate in New France to be about three times that of modern-day Quebec.
28. This information is taken from a study of Normandy, which was the birthplace of many of the Canadian colonists. J.M. Gouesse, "La Formation du couple en Basse-Normandie," *XVII^e Siècle*, Nos. 102-3 (1974), p. 56.
29. Laslett, "Western Family," p. 106.
30. Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, pp. 99-104, 108, 111, 114-16.
31. Louise Dechène, *Habitants et marchands de Montréal au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1974), p. 393.
32. Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, pp. 101, 1913, Séguin, "La Canadienne," p. 503; also G. Lanctôt, *Filles de joie ou filles du roi* (Montréal, 1952), pp. 210-13.
33. Cf. Paul Butel, "Comportements familiaux dans le négoce bordelais au XVIII^e siècle," *Annales du Midi*, Vol. 88 (1976): pp. 139-157.
34. M.E. Chabot, "Marie Guyart de L'Incarnation, 1599-1672," in *The Clear Spirit*, M. Innis, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 28.
35. Boshier, "The Family," p. 7; H. Neatby, *Quebec, The Revolutionary Age* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. 46.
36. Foulché-Delbosc, "Women of Three Rivers," p. 15.
37. Boshier, "The Family," p. 3. I have rounded his figures.
38. Dechène, *Habitants et marchands*, p. 434, and Boshier, "The Family," p. 5.
39. Vann, "Women in Preindustrial Capitalism," p. 205; cf. also Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Cass, 1968), chs. V, VI; and Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, for the scarcity of women's guilds by the seventeenth century.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 168 ff.
41. Y. Zoltvany, "Esquisse de la Coutume de Paris," *RHAF*, (decembre 1971).
42. Foulché-Delbosc, "Women of Three Rivers," p. 19.
43. Neatby, *Quebec*, p. 46.
44. Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, p. 147.
45. Dechène, *Habitants et marchands*, pp. 423-24.
46. A. Morel, "Réflexions sur la justice criminelle canadienne au 18^e siècle," *RHAF*, 29 (septembre 1975), pp. 241-253.
47. Lanctôt, *Filles de joie*, p. 219.
48. Bover, *Crimes et Chatiments*, pp. 128-29.
49. W.J. Eccles, "Social Welfare Measures and Policies in New France," *Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*, IV, (1966), Seville, pp. 9-19.
50. J. Boshier, "Government and Private Interests in New France," in *Canadian History Before Confederation*, J.M. Bumsted, ed. (Georgetown, Ontario: Irwin-Dorsey, 1972), p. 122.
51. Boshier, "The Family," pp. 5-7; Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, p. 182.
52. Franquet, *Voyages*, p. 148; cf., also Frégault, *Le XVIII^e siècle canadien* (Montréal: Collection Constantes, 1968), pp. 292-293.
53. W.J. Eccles, "The Social, Economic and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France," *Canadian Historical Review*, LII (March 1971), pp. 8-10.
54. Franquet, *Voyages*, pp. 129-30. For another, similar trip, cf. pp. 140-42.
55. Frégault, *Le XVIII^e siècle*, pp. 208-9, 216-21.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30.
57. Y. Zoltvany, *Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 110; also p. 217.
58. Frégault, *Le XVIII^e siècle*, pp. 228-30.
59. W.J. Eccles, *Frontenac: The Courtier Governor* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1959), p. 29.
60. *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec, 1922-23*, p. 151.

61. For example, George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford, 1959).
62. Superbly described in E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London; Penguin, 1976), Ch. Three.
63. Séguin, "La Canadienne," pp. 498-99.
64. Jean Hamelin, "What Middle Class?" *Society and Conquest*, Miquelon, ed. (Toronto, 1977), pp. 109-110; and Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands*, p. 44, who concludes that the largest contingents of male immigrants arriving in seventeenth-century Montreal were *engagés* and soldiers.
65. H. Charbonneau, *Vie et mort de nos ancêtres* (Montréal: Presses de l'université de Montreal, 1975), p. 38; A. Burguière, "Le Rituel du mariage en France: Pratiques ecclésiastiques et pratiques populaires," (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle)," *Annales E. S. C.*, 33^e année (mai-juin 1978), p. 640; R. Mousnier, *La famille, l'enfant et l'éducation en France et en Grande-Bretagne du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Sorbonne C.D.U., 1975); Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, p. 97. Commercial activities, however, also prevailed among the women of Bordeaux, an important port in the Canada trade. (*Ibid.*, p. 196).
66. Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, pp. 267, 273-74, 311-12, 360-61.
67. Claude Lessard, "L'Aide financière de l'Eglise de France à l'Eglise naissante du Canada," in *Mélanges d'histoire du Canada français offerts au professeur Marcel Trudel*. Pierre Savard, ed. (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1978), p. 175.
68. Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, pp. 311-321.
69. Marcel Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973). For a gloomy assessment of the neglected colony during this period.
70. G. Brown et al., eds., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (hereafter *DCB*), (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1966-) Vol. 1, p. 118; and J. Marshall, ed., *Word from New France* (Toronto: Oxford, 1967), p. 2.
71. Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, pp. 320-33, 358. Of course, not all *religieuses* were competent as leaders. Madame de la Peltrie, for example, patron of the Ursuline convent, appears to have been a rather unreliable benefactress. Despite her firsthand knowledge of the difficulties under which the Ursulines laboured, her "charity" was quixotic. In 1642, she suddenly withdrew her support from the Ursulines in order to join the colonists setting off to found Montreal. Later she again held back her funds in favour of a cherished chapel project, even though the Ursulines' lodgings had just burned to the ground.
72. Chabot, "Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation," pp. 27, 37; *DCB*, 1, p. 353; Lessard, "Aide financière," pp. 169-70.
73. *DCB*, Vol. 1; pp. 483-87; also Lessard, "Aide financière," p. 175.
74. This is the interpretation given by G. Lanctôt in *Montreal under Maisonneuve* (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1969), pp. 20-24, 170.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
76. Lanctôt, *Filles de joie*, p. 81 and Trudel, *Montréal*, p. 21. The Hôtel-Dieu de Montreal also sponsored immigrants from 1655 to 1662 (Lanctôt, *Filles de joie*, p. 81.)
77. Trudel, *Montréal*, p. 84.
78. Eccles, "Social Welfare Measures," p. 19; F. Rousseau, "Hôpital et société en Nouvelle-France: l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec à la fin du XVII^e siècle," *RHAF*, Vol. 31 (juin 1977), p. 47.
79. Mousnier, *La famille l'enfant et l'éducation*, pp. 319-31.
80. Vann, "Women in Preindustrial Capitalism," p. 208.
81. Trudel, *Montréal*, p. 276, 87; P. Goubert, *The Ancien Régime* (New York: Harper, 1974), p. 262.
82. Neatby, *Quebec*, p. 237; French soldiers had a literacy rate of three to four per cent. A Corvisier, *L'Armée française de la fin du XVII^e siècle au ministère de Choiseul* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), p. 862.
83. Fagniez, *Femme et société canadienne*, p. 191.
84. Séguin, "La Canadienne," p. 501, lists nine of these schools in addition to the original one in Montreal.
85. Franquet, *Voyages*, pp. 31-32.
86. According to Lanctôt, (*Filles de joie*, pp. 121-30) there were 961. Silvio Dumas counts only 774 (*Les Filles du roi en Nouvelle France*, Québec, 1972, p. 164). Other estimates have ranged between 713 and 857.
87. J.-N. Fauteux, *Essai sur l'industrie au Canada sous le Régime Français* (Quebec: Proulx, 1927), "Introduction."
88. For the record, it now seems fairly well established that the females sent to New France, unlike those sent to the West Indies, were carefully screened, and any of questionable morality returned by the authorities to France. Lanctôt (*Filles de joie*) and Dumas, (*Filles du roi*) agree on this. See also Foulché-Delbosq, "Women of Three Rivers," pp. 22-23.
89. Dechêne finds a majority of *Parisiennes* among the Montréal filles, (*Habitants et marchands*, p. 96). Lanctôt states that one-half of the 1634-63 emigrants were urbanites and that two-thirds of the filles were from Ile-de-France (*Filles de joie*, pp. 76-79 and p. 124). On education in France see Mousnier, *La famille, l'enfant et l'éducation*, pp. 319-25.
90. Lanctôt, *Filles de joie*, pp. 110-130, 207.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
92. Séguin, "La Canadienne," p. 492; Franquet, *Voyages*, p. 57.
93. J. Henripin, *La Population canadienne au début du XVIII^e Siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1954). The overall population was sixty-three percent male in 1663 (Trudel, *Beginnings*, p. 261), an imbalance which gradually declined.
94. Trudel, *Montréal*, pp. 45-47, 108, 113.
95. Foulché-Delbosq, "Women of Three Rivers," p. 19.
96. Frégault, *Le XVIII^e Siècle*, p. 144.
97. Eccles, "Social Welfare Measures," p. 18.
98. Cole Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada* (Québec: P.U.L., 1968), p. 163.
99. The richest single source for evidence along these lines is Dechêne's *Habitants et Marchands*.
100. Boyer, *Crimes et châtements*, p. 326.
101. *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 29 October 1979, p. 1; Boyer, *Crimes et châtements*, pp. 329, 340. Cf. also N. Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, based on an actual occurrence.
102. Boyer, *Crimes et châtements*, p. 329, 350, 361-62; also Morel, "Justice criminelle canadienne."
103. Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands*, p. 464.
104. Séguin, "La Canadienne," pp. 497-99.

105. Jean Lunn, "The Illegal Fur Trade Out of New France 1713-60," *Canadian Historical Association Report*, (1939), pp. 61-62.
106. Boyer, *Crimes et châtements*, pp. 286-87.
107. Marshall, *Word from New France*, pp. 287-95.
108. Boyer, *Crimes et châtements*, p. 306.
109. Eccles, "The Social, Economic and Political Significance of the Military Establishment," *op. cit.*
110. Charlevoix, *New France*, Vol. 3, p. 35.
111. Ethel Bennett, "Madame de La Tour, 1602-1645," in *The Clear Spirit*, M. Innis, ed. (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 21.
112. *DCB*, Vol. 3, pp. 308-13.
113. *Ibid.*, pp. 308-13; and Boyer, *Crimes et châtements*, pp. 338-39.
114. For a splendid description of the attitudes and life-style of this class in France, see p. de Vaissière, *Gentilhommes campagnards de l'ancienne France* (Paris, Perin 1903).
115. G. Frégault, *Le Grand Marquis*, (Montéal: Les Etudes de l'Institut d'Histoire de l'Amérique française, 1952), pp. 74-75 and Corvisier, *L'Armée française*, p. 777.
116. *Ibid.*, pp. 762-63, 826.
117. Franquet, *Voyages*, pp. 56, 67-68, 200.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 35, 76, 88.
119. Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands*, p. 398; Franquet, *Voyages*, p. 16.
120. *DCB*, Vol. 2, p. 491.
121. Marshall, *Word from New France*, pp. 27, 213, 222-23, 233.
122. Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands*, p. 393; Franquet, *Voyages*, p. 199; Foulché-Delbosc, "Women of Three Rivers," p. 25; Corvisier, *L'Armée française*, p. 760.
123. Boyer, *Crimes et châtements*, pp. 349-51; Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands*, p. 41. Dechêne concludes that, considering Montreal was a garrison town with a shortage of marriageable women, the degree of prostitution was normal or, to use her term, *conformiste* (pp. 437-38).
124. Eccles, "The Social, Economic and Political Significance of the Military . . .," pp. 11-17; Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands*, p. 121.
125. Séguin, "La Canadienne," pp. 495, 503.
126. Trudel, *Montréal*. pp. 30-33; and Charbonneau, *Vie et mort*. p. 135.
127. Foulché-Delbosc, "Women of Three Rivers," p. 25.
128. Trudel, *Montréal*, p. 163.
129. Bennett, "Madame de la Tour," p. 16; Madame Joybert was the mother of the future Madame de Vaudreuil. *DCB*, Vol. 1, p. 399. For E. de Grandmaison, see *DCB*, Vol. 1, p. 345.
130. Lunn, "Illegal Fur Trade," p. 62.
131. Eccles, *Canadian Society . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
132. Lunn, "Illegal Fur Trade," pp. 61-75.
133. Franquet, *Voyages*, pp. 120-21.
134. Lilliane Plamondon, "Une femme d'affaires en Nouvelle-France: Marie-Anne Barbel, Veuve Fornel," *RHAF*, 31 (septembre 1977).
135. Franquet, *Voyages*, pp. 156-58.
136. For example, Hamelin in "What Middle Class?" The absence of an indigenous bourgeoisie is also central to the interpretation of Dechêne in *Habitants et marchands*.
137. Séguin, "La Canadienne," p. 494.
138. For accounts of Agathe de Saint-Père, see *DCB*, Vol. III, pp. 580-81; Fauteux, *Industrie au Canada*, p. 464-69; and Massicote. *Bulletin des Recherches historiques* (hereafter BRH), 1944, p. 202-07.
139. Neatby refers to this activity in the early post-Conquest era (Quebec, pp. 72-73); Franquet encountered Madame Benoist in 1753 (*Voyages*, p. 150).
140. For a discussion of the de Ramezay's business affairs Cf. Massicote, *BRH*, 1931, p. 530; and Fauteux, *Industrie au Canada*, pp. 158-59, 204-15, 442.
141. *DCB*, Vol. II, p. 548.
142. Fauteux, *Industrie au Canada*, pp. 158; 297, 420-21, 522; and P. Moogk, *Building a House in New France* (Toronto: 1977), pp. 60-64.
143. Lunn, *Illegal Fur Trade*, p. 61.
144. See Moogk (*Building a House*, p. 8) for one case of a husband's transfer of these powers.
145. Franquet, *Voyages*, p. 17.
146. Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands*, pp. 151-53, 187, 391; and Séguin, "La Canadienne," p. 494.
147. Charbonneau, *Vie et mort*, p. 184; Fagniez, *Femme et société française*, pp. 111, 182-84. A recent study by Butel ("Comportements familiaux") has documented the phenomenon of widows taking over the family business in eighteenth-century Bordeaux.
148. Trudel, *Beginnings*, p. 250. This was largely due to the enormous holdings of Jean Lauzon's widow. Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands*, pp. 209 and 204-5, 393; Plamondon, "Femme d'affaires." W.S. MacNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p. 25.
149. This happened on seigneuries as well as in town, as in the case M. de Lanougière, "a soldier by preference," whose wife, Marguerite-Renée Denys, directed their seigneury (*DCB*, Vol. 1, p. 418).