

The Filles á Marier

1634-1662

Most of us are familiar with the story of the King's Daughters or *Fille Du Roi*; the state sponsored program that brought almost 800 single women to Quebec in the early days of the French settlement, but what is not so well known is the story of the *Fille á Marier*. Between 1634 and 1662; 262 young ladies braved the elements to begin an uncertain future in the backwoods of Canada.

When the Company of 100 Associates began their settlement scheme, their plan of recruiting laborers; who would be indentured for three years. However, this meant that more than 80% of the colonists were men, so even if they decided to stay at the end of their term, there was little hope of them starting a family, unless they chose a Canadian girl. But, since her family would never allow her, or her children, to leave their village; the company directors needed to avoid this from happening.

So instead, they began recruiting "marriageable young girls", who would first sign a contract in France and then be given passage and a small dowry to become the wife of a Quebec settler. You might wonder why these young girls (many under 16), would risk the dangers and hardships, which by now most of France were well aware of; but believe it or not; for many it was the best option.

At the time, marriages were arranged, so if the girl's family did not have the means to provide a suitable dowry, her only option was to become a nun, if she was Catholic; or marry beneath her station. In the case of the young Filles á Marier, though a marriage contract must be signed before departure, she had every right to refuse the union, once she met her husband-to-be. As a matter of fact, many of them did just that, and were provided safe passage home.

Below is a list of all the women brought over under this plan. Some were sponsored by their church, a company associate or merchant. Others were of minor noble families; cousins or sisters of men already in the colony. Marguerite Bourgeoys and Jeanne Mance, also escorted several, training them in the necessary domestic skills, and ensuring that they would be well looked after. Later, critics of the plan tried to say that all the girls were prostitutes taken off the streets of Paris, but this was rarely, if ever, the case. Most settled down, raised families and formed the roots of many French-Canadian families.

Marriageable Young Girls

The Poisson Family

Mathurine and Barbe Poisson were from the parish of St. Jean-Mortagne, Alencon, Orne, France; the daughters of Jean Poisson and Barbe Broust. They arrived in the Quebec Colony as Filles á Marier; with Mathurine contracted to Jacques Aubuchon and Barbe to Leonard Lucault.

Mathurine Poisson (1627-1665)

Mathurine Poisson was born in 1627 and died in 1665 at Cap de la Madeleine, Champlain, Québec. She married Jacques Aubuchon on October 08, 1647 at Ville De Quebec and the couple had eight children before her death. Jacques was born on December 01, 1617 at St. Rémi de Dieppe, Rouen, Seine-Maritime, France; the son of Jean Aubuchon and Catherine Marchand. He died on December 07, 1701 at Trois-Rivieres.

Jean Aubuchon - Was born on March 25, 1649 and died on September 09, 1655 at Trois-Rivieres.

Marie-Anne Aubuchon - Was born in 1651 and died on January 14, 1708 in Champlain, Quebec. She married Francois-Romain Chorel and the couple had six children.

Rene Aubuchon - Was born in 1653 and died on March 29, 1688 at Trois-Rivieres.

Jacques Aubuchon - Was born on May 04, 1655 and died in 1682 at Batiscan.

Ignace Aubuchon - Was born on October 05, 1657 and died in 1665 in Trois-Rivieres.

Joseph Desailliers Aubuchon - Was born on February 12, 1659 in Trois-Rivieres and died on October 05, 1722 in Sorel, Quebec. He married Louise Dandonneau and the couple had ten children.

Francois Aubuchon - Was born in 1662 and died in 1700 at Trois-Rivieres.

Nicolas Aubuchon - Was born in 1663 and died in 1665 at Trois-Rivieres.

Barbe Poisson (1631-1711)

Barbe Poisson was born about 1631 and died on January 7, 1711 in Montreal. She married Leonard Lucault on October 12, 1648 and they had a daughter Marie born on July 01, 1650. She grew up to marry Rene Cuillierier and gave birth to sixteen children. Marie died on December 22, 1727 in Montreal.

Leonard Lucault died of injuries sustained in a raid by the Iroquois, on June 20, 1651; and Barbe then married Gabriel Celles on November 19, 1652. Gabriel was born in 1626 at Nonant, Caen, Calvados, France; the son of Jean Celles and Colette Pagnot. He arrived in the colony as a judge.

Barbe made a name for herself when in 1661, her husband was out working in the fields and the Iroquois launched another attack. All those around watched the advancing Iroquois in terror, when Barbe sprang into action, grabbing an armload of guns and running with them to the men in trouble. She reportedly said, *"I lost one husband to the Iroquois. I will not lose another"*. According to Dollier de Casson's *Histoire de Montreal*: *"During an attack by 160 Indians in February 1661, only Le Moyne (De Louneville) had a weapon with which to defend himself. Just as he was about to be captured he was saved by Mme. Celles Duclos, who brought him an armful of weapons."*

Barbe and Gabriel had ten children before his death on November 15, 1671.

Lambert Celles- Was born on December 24, 1654 and died on June 14, 1659 in Montreal.

Marquerite Celles - Was born on July 03, 1657 in Montreal and died unknown. She married Francois-Joseph Cartier and the couple had five children.

Gabriel Lambert Celles - Was born on February 01, 1660 in Montreal and died on December 05, 1720 at Vercheres Quebec. He married Anne Messier and the couple had four children.

Barbe Celles - Was born on September 21, 1661 in Montreal and died unknown.

Claude, Jeanne and Marie-Catherine Celles- Were triplets, born on April 06, 1665 in Montreal. All died at birth.

Catherine Celles - Was born on May 02, 1666 and died unknown.

Jeanne Celles - Was born on March 11, 1669 in Montreal and died unknown.

Alexandre Celles - Was born on October 06, 1671 and died unknown.

Barbe's brother Jean Poisson, was captured by the Iroquois at Trois Rivieres, on August 19, 1652. In *Stories of Canada*, by Ferland, (volume 1, page 405): *"A party of one hundred twenty Iroquois had taken some prisoners and had removed cattle. Msr. Plessis-Bochart, governor of the Three-Rivers, wanting to take them again and drive out the petty thieves, embarked on launches forty or fifty French with a dozen Savages. With approximately two miles above the fort, they saw Iroquois hidden in the undergrowth on the skirts of the forest. The place was bordered by marshes which made the descent extremely difficult. In spite of the danger they followed the Iroquois into the woods, and Plessis gave the order to unload and go to the enemy. He himself, led the men; but, because of the difficulties of the ground, the French fell under fire and their adversaries could not be seen approaching. In this despaired attempt, Msr. Du Plessis was killed with fifteen of his men; several remained prisoners and the others, being thrown in their launches, went to carry this sad news in Trois-Rivières." A Few days after this disaster, of the French, having gone to visit the place of the combat, found on a an Iroquois shield, these words*

written with coal: "Normanville, Francheville, Poisson, the Palm, Turcot, Chaillou, Saint-Germain, Onneiochronnons and Agrechronnons. I n'ai still lost qu'un ongle".

**Marie Pinet
(1631-1673)**

Marie Pinet De La Chesnaye was born about 1631, possibly in Aulnay, Loire Valley, Tourraine, France; the daughter of Nicolas De La Chesnaye and Madeleine Maranda Marault. She arrived in the Quebec Colony as a Filles á Marier, contracted to be the bride of Pierre Masse. They were married May 15, 1644 in Ville De Quebec. Pierre and Marie had six children before her death on September 11, 1673 in Sillery. He died unknown.

Marie-Madeleine Masse - Was born on March 02, 1655 in Ville De Quebec and died on November 15, 1709 at Pointe-Aux-Trembles. She married twice: Rene Duverger (no children) and Jean Mezeray (15 children)

Denis Masse - Was born on May 02, 1645 in Ville De Quebec and died on October 01, 1676 in Neuville, Portneuf. He married Catherine Pinel and had a son Denis.

Jeanne Masse - Was born on April 25, 1649 in Ville De Quebec and died unknown in Cap-Rogue. She married twice: Guillaume Constantineau (5 children) and Gilles Jean (3 children).

Pierre Masse II - Was born on August 22, 1652 in Ville De Quebec and died on December 06, 1710 in Ste. Foye. He married Catherine-Jacqueline Pain and the couple had at least four children.

Marie-Anne Masse - Was born on January 10, 1658 in Ville De Quebec and died on November 10, 1732 in Sillery. She married Francois Dolbec and the couple had thirteen children.

Guillaume Masse - Was born on September 20, 1660 in Ville De Quebec and died unknown in Sillery. He became a Store Keeper and was married to Marie-Madeleine Amyot.

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