



THE FRIGONS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
FRIGON, FRIGONE, FREGO,
FREGOE, FREGON, FREGONE FAMILIES

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SPRING 2008

Frigon Footprints in Australia

John Riddell (187) from Australia

Following Jean-Rene Frigon's excellent article, *The Migration of the Frigons, The Line of Joseph*, it seemed an appropriate time to update my article in the Fall 2002 Newsletter regarding the far away Australian connection of the Frigons.



John Frigon circa 1884

Jean Frigon was born in Louiseville QC May 2, 1829 to Joseph Frigon and Josephthe Savoie.

Jean Frigon left Boston, Massachusetts, USA in July 1852 on the barque Ocean Eagle and arrived in Melbourne, Australia on the 20th December 1852. It is hard to imagine how the French speaking Jean Frigon felt when he first set foot on Australian

soil at the sixteen year old village of Melbourne, Victoria. The Victorian Immigration Record of arrivals on the Ocean Eagle lists a John Frigon which is an anglicized derivation of Jean Frigon.



Little is known of his early life in Australia, but from what records there are available it would appear that he along with several other French Canadians trekked across inhospitable country to Omeo in Victoria where gold had recently been discovered. (*Recollections of Early Gippsland Goldfields by Richard Mackay*).

The first record of John Fregon in Omeo is his marriage certificate to Elizabeth McCoy, a sixteen and a half year old Scottish girl, whose family had immigrated from Girvan in Scotland arriving at Port Albert Victoria in 1858 and selected land at Swifts Creek (near Omeo) in 1860.

In between having twelve children between 1866 and 1884, John and Elizabeth realized there was more money to be made supplying the needs of the gold miners in the area rather than trying to find gold which is what took John Fregon to Omeo in the first place. At the time of John Fregon's death from pneumonia on the 20th of April 1886, John and Elizabeth owned and operated the Golden Age Hotel at Omeo and the Tongio Hotel at Tongio as well as a General Store in Omeo.

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110 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIGON FAMILIES ARE TO

- retrace the families bearing the surnames Frigon, Frigone, Frego, Fregoe, Fregone et Fregon
- recruit members and resource persons
- organise gatherings and annual reunions with a view to creating bonds of friendship
- collect genealogical and historical information from the members and other sources in order to favour the promotion, development and the spread of Frigon history, genealogy and other ties between generations
- publish a Frigon Family dictionary
- publish the newsletter *THE FRIGONS*
- publish and make available monographs, biographies, family albums, the results of historical and genealogical research
- assure the preservation of the family archives

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Individual: \$20/year \$50/3 years \$80/5 years

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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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The texts published in the newsletter are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Gérald Frigon (116)

How many photos are mislaid, memories lost...The traces of a well-filled life have faded away, the result of multiple moves, of thoughtless thinning out of one's papers and photos, and other such hazards. The fragments that remain must be archived to relate that past.

These photos, certificates or records are the witnesses of the vital spirit of our predecessors, traces of life. They must not sink into oblivion, but should be transmitted to our young people. Just as the past paved the way for the opportunities of the present, so these memories could become a source of inspiration for our

children in their development. A grandparent might even become, for a grandchild, a greater idol than Goldorak and the contemporary Spiderman.

Let us make a point of saving these documents and showing them to our children and grandchildren. Let us tell them the stories related to these treasures. And if, unfortunately, no descendant sees the value in this heritage, let us give these things to the Association, which, after having copied the pertinent information to our database, will entrust them to the National Archives of Quebec for consultation by future researchers.

ROBERT FRIGON, BIOGRAPHER OF AUGUSTIN FRIGON

Pierre Frigon (4)

Very few among you know that Robert (2) had started writing a biography of Augustin Frigon before he died on November 21, 2006. Both of us had been toying with the idea for a long time when he finally decided to buckle down to the task in

2005. We then agreed that I would discontinue my research on Augustin Frigon. At the time of Robert's death, he was gathering data and writing a first draft of his text.

He had meticulously filed his research documents. Among them we find archive documents, extracts from Web sites, photocopies of documents, letters sent to the archivists of the École Polytechnique de Montréal, Radio-Canada, Laval University, SNC Lavalin, etc. Unfortunately he received very few replies from these different organizations. The work must go on. Under every rock that is lifted, a universe remains to be discovered.

The text he left us consists of about fifteen pages. Robert would certainly have done more work on these pages. He would have definitely refused to publish them in their present form. After a careful reading, I came to the conclusion that the text is worth distributing even if it is incomplete. Here we recognize the fine literary style so

characteristic of him as well as the accuracy of his information. I plan to make his text available in the course of the year. Robert's archives are open to all for consultation.

I am now taking over this file; the long and passionate detective work continues. Because Augustin Frigon worked in so many different fields, the amount of research to be done is enormous; it will certainly be long. I will keep you informed through our annual general assemblies and through the chronicle *Did you know that...?* in which I will give you regular tidbits of information.

At this time, I would like to emphasize the quality of the work Robert had begun in spite of the terrible limitations imposed upon him by his illness. I am also appealing for your support. All documents and information about Augustin Frigon's personal or professional life that you may have in your possession will be greatly appreciated.

In closing, I wish to thank very specially Paul (6), Augustin Frigon's grandson, who graciously gave the Association a great part of Augustin's archives (documents and photos) a few weeks before Robert's death. The latter would have been the happiest of men if life had given him the time to consult them.

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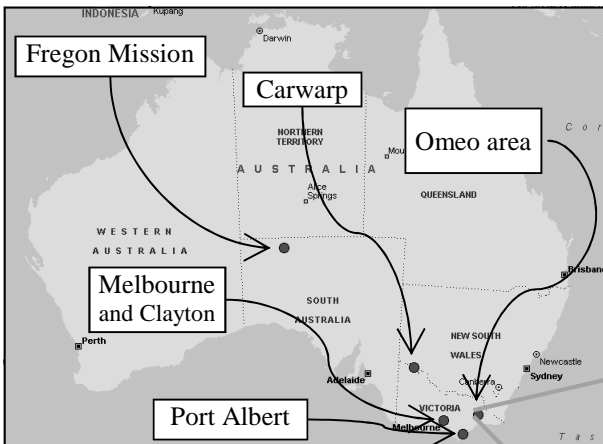
The Omeo Telegraph newspaper published an obituary for John Fregon on 22 April 1886.

“We regret to announce the death of a very old and respected resident in John Fregon aged 49 years who died at his residence in Omeo on the evening of Tuesday 20th instant. The deceased gentleman was Canadian by birth and arrived in this district during the early days of the diggings which pursuit he followed for some years and as we understand was fairly successful. He was noticed for energy and indomitable perseverance and straight forward honesty of character. The deceased leaves a wife and family and a large circle of friends to mourn their loss. The remains were interred in the Omeo cemetery today (Thursday) and were followed by a large concourse of people. The Reverend Father Verlin read the burial service in a very impressive manner.”



effect on the Fregon Family fortunes. The hotels were sold and most of the family left the Omeo area to search for their fortune elsewhere.

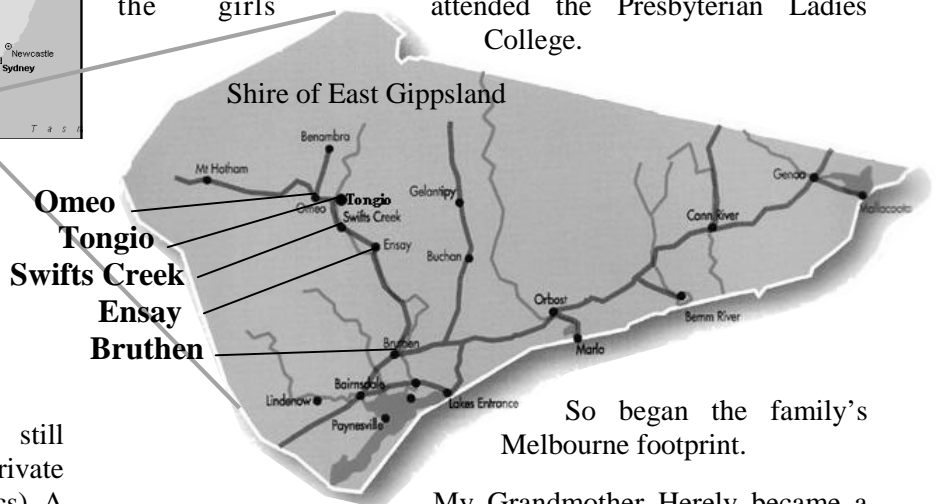
Due to John Fregon’s background, he was a practicing Catholic whilst Elizabeth with her strong Scottish roots was a staunch Presbyterian. Elizabeth and John seemed to have dealt with this conflict of religious backgrounds by agreeing that all the boys in the family would be raised as Catholics and all the girls as Presbyterians. In latter years this decision of theirs was to cause a large rift within the family based on the religious differences. It is clear that Elizabeth and John were successful business people in Omeo as they were able to afford to have their children educated as boarders at private schools in Melbourne. The boys went to Xavier College (Catholic) while the girls attended the Presbyterian Ladies College.



By 1910 the Fregon footprint had extended to several hotels along the main access road from the nearest port town of Bruthen to Omeo. All supplies to the Omeo gold field were carried along this road by bullock teams. The Hotels were operated by the elder Fregon boys.

The only known early Fregon building still standing is the now de-licensed and private residence, Star Hotel at Bruthen. (see pics) A wild forest fire on 13th January 1939 raced through the Omeo and East Gippsland area and burnt any old Fregon buildings still standing, apart from the Star Hotel.

However, the Victorian Land Crash of the mid 1890’s and the decline of gold mining in the Omeo area in the early 1900’s had a dramatic



So began the family’s Melbourne footprint.

My Grandmother Herely became a barmaid in Melbourne while her two surviving sisters Charlotte and Vantillies also moved to Melbourne where Charlotte opened a “tuck” shop in Footscray right next to a Girls School. Of the boys, Angus bought farming property at Carwarp 400km northwest of Melbourne while Dave moved to Melbourne and started a sand mining business. Frank, who ran the Fregon farm at Tongio, went to

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France and lost his life on the 25th of March, 1917. From documented records it seems that Elizabeth never recovered from the loss of her son.

Today there are two main Fregon footprints on the Australian landscape. One is Fregon Street and Fregon Park in Clayton a suburb of Melbourne, and an Aboriginal settlement in the far northwest of South Australia called Fregon. The naming of Fregon Street and Fregon Park is a fairly simple story but the establishment of Fregon in South Australia is a little more complex, but interesting none the less.

A large area to the southwest of downtown Melbourne is known as “The sand belt”. The area now is covered in residential housing but before that was the site of many market gardens and sand mining businesses. Dave Fregon started a sand mining and cartage business which was carried on by his sons Walter and Ted after his death in 1940. The local Council had a waste area which they wanted to turn into a sports oval and Walter and Ted donated a lot of time and machinery to help the project. As a result the park was named Fregon Park and the road beside it named Fregon Road, a permanent Melbourne footprint for the Fregon’s.

Looking back on the Fregon part of my life, one of my greatest regrets is that due to my grandmother being estranged from her Catholic brothers the only one of them I ever met was Angus and that was because he “changed sides”. The story goes that after the death of his only surviving son Angus sought a divorce from his wife Kate but was prevented from doing so by the Catholic Church. Angus’s reaction to this was to dissociate himself from the Church and take up his mother’s and sister’s Presbyterian beliefs.

Estranged from his wife and daughters and his Catholic brothers, Angus became more eccentric and after his divorce demolished the bedroom at his farmhouse so his wife couldn’t come back there to live. When visiting

Melbourne, however, he would always visit my grandmother and my family. Interestingly he owned one of the first Peugeot’s ever imported into Australia. In 1956 Angus’s body was found by a neighbour beside a dam on his property and the newspapers at the time claimed he had been murdered. The Melbourne Argus newspaper at the time carried a sensational story about the “Carwarp Body in the Dam Mystery” claiming that the police found six loaded shotguns and eight loaded rifles along with a large amount of cash in Angus’s house.

However following subsequent investigations the Coroner reported that



“On the 6th day of March 1956, on a dam bank at his property at Carwarp the said Angus Semey Fregon was found dead. On the evidence adduced, I find that there was no unnatural cause of death but the said evidence does not enable me to find a precise natural cause of death. I further find that the said death occurred on or about

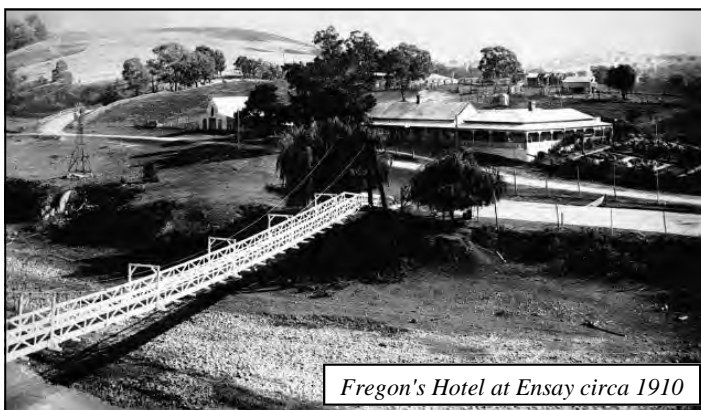
the 13th day of February, 1956, at Carwarp aforesaid”

In his will Angus left the whole of his estate in trust to the Board of Missions, and the Australian Inland Mission, both Presbyterian Church organizations, and directed that the income be used for the betterment of “White Australians or Natives of this country” within a defined area in the remote part of Central Australia. He totally disenfranchised his own family.

The money was spent on the establishment of a remote Aboriginal Community in the far North West of South Australia which the Presbyterian Board of Missions named Fregon in honour of Angus Fregon the benefactor who made it possible.

Today, Fregon is a self governing Aboriginal Community supported by the South Australian Government.

When Jean Frigon first set foot on Australian soil way back in 1852 I am sure he had no idea that he and a sixteen and a half year old Scottish lass would start a family dynasty that by 2008 would have footprints the width and breadth of the large Australian Continent.



Fregon's Hotel at Ensay circa 1910

ARMOND RONALD "FRENCHY" FRIGON

Phillip Frigon (72) from Kansas

Armond Frigon, or "Frenchy" as he was known to most of his family, friends and acquaintances, was born in Longford, Kansas, the day after Christmas 1918. His birth occurred in the middle of a severe snowstorm, preventing the doctor from arriving until after the big event. His mother, Antoinette Bombardier Frigon, and father, Joseph Oliver Frigon, welcomed him as their first child.

The Joseph (Joe) Frigon family eventually welcomed five more children. Bernard, Ernest, Genevieve, Joan and Leo Roy (Roy) were all born in Clay or Cloud Counties, Kansas.

The Joe Frigons were very poor tenant farmers, moving frequently around the Clay and Cloud County areas in order to support themselves. It was common for tenant farmers to move every few years, renting a different farm house and whatever land they could find to make a living on. Moving day was March 1, and Frenchy told stories about loading up the entire household on wagons and moving...many times in very muddy conditions due to spring rains.

Armond proved to be a very industrious child, helping to support his family in any way he could. He had a talent for hunting, trapping and fishing, and was always interested in figuring things out and fixing them by his own inventive means. One year, when he was about 12 years old, things were so hard for the family that he and the older siblings trapped all the critters they could (including skunks), preserving the hides and selling them in order to buy shoes for all the children to attend school. He never forgot how hard they worked to provide for the family, even though smelling like a skunk was not very popular on school days.

*Frances Arlene Nelson and Armond Frigon*

Frenchy attended one room school houses during his elementary years, and began attending school speaking only French. He soon picked up English, later losing his French speaking skills but always retaining the ability to understand the general meaning of a conversation in French. He was proud of his French heritage.

Schooling ceased after the 8th grade, except for a few fall semesters at the local High School where he attended only to play football. After a few seasons, the school put a stop to this practice, and Frenchy entered the work

world full time. He falsified his age and entered the Civilian Conservation Corps, (CCs), a government program which put young men to work, sending home \$25 of his \$30 paycheck each month to support his family. He served in the US Army, stationed for a brief time in the European Theater during the later stages of WWII.

He was married to Frances Arlene Nelson (who went by Arlene) on May 9, 1941. They soon welcomed a daughter and three sons: Jolene Joy, August 1, 1942, Raymond Douglas, September 25, 1943, Harvey Lynn, April 22, 1946, and Phillip Edward November 8, 1953. When he died at the age of 88, Frenchy had 10 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren. He took

great joy in talking about his family, and looked forward to each and every visit he received. From young to old, he loved them all. His wife, Arlene, preceded him in death on March 31, 2006.

Frenchy was best known all over the United States for his business, "Frigon Guns". He began shooting trap in the early 60's, going to local trap shoots, and, while he was at it, selling a few guns, parts, and re-loaded ammunition. As he spent more time at it, the

*(Continued one page 115)***GENEALOGICAL SKETCH***(Armond Frigon's family)***François and Marie-Claude Chamois****Jean-François and Gertrude Perrot****Antoine Pierre and Marie-Anne Trottier**LINE OF ♦ **Joseph and Magdeleine Lefebvre****Joseph and Josephite Savoie**BRANCH OF ♦ **Olivier and Clémentine Soucy****Jean Évangéliste Eugène and Virginia Charest****Joseph Olivier and Antoinette Bombardier****Armond "Frenchy" and Frances Arlene Nelson****Jolene Joy and Lloyd Edward Frigon****Raymond Douglas and Doretha Cheryl WERNER****Harvey Lynn and Connie Deane Neill****Phillip Edward and Jean Ann Peter**

GEF (93)

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business grew, until it was the family’s sole support. They eventually bought a travel trailer and spend two-thirds of the year traveling to various states, attending state, regional and national shooting competitions, and setting up his display to sell guns and related supplies. He was a great trader, and loved nothing more than spending the day (or two or three) discussing a possible deal and bartering over the final trade. He involved his children also; they at one time all shot competitively and were involved in the family business. They learned many good lessons about working hard and making something out of what you had at hand. Frenchy built most of his own needed display items, and constructed his own travel van to display the guns. He could fix just about anything, and was an expert mechanic also (one of his other earlier businesses, in addition to selling and fixing appliances and TV’s.) He maintained a retail gun store in Clay Center until the late 1980s. He became an excellent trap shooter, and was inducted into the Kansas State Trapshooting Hall of Fame in 1984. His son Phil was inducted in 2003, making them a rare

father-son pair of members.

Other business accomplishments he was proud of include the manufacture and sale of a commemorative engraved US bicentennial rifle, one made for each of the 50 states. He also worked with a company in Italy to manufacture and market his own Frigon Gun. It was a 12 gauge trap gun. One of his greatest enjoyments was to promote the sport of trap shooting, and could always be counted on to drop what he was doing at any shoot to go help coach a young or inexperienced new shooter.

Frenchy remained active in the gun world until just a few months before he died, keeping in contact with his many friends and fellow shooters. His perpetually positive attitude and constant encouragement to all those around him will be missed. He was a person who always made you feel better after you talked to him.

We, his family have many wonderful memories of his life. He represented the Frigon Families well.



October 2007

Brigitte Martineau, née Brigitte Frigon, wife of the late Armand Martineau, died in Amos, on October 30, 2007, at the age of 91.

Brigitte Frigon comes from the line of Louis-Augustin, branch of Silvestre, and she was a member of our Association.

December 2007

Léopold Frigon, wife of the late Florida Martel and companion of Rolande Simard of Saint-Félicien, died in Roberval, on December 4, 2007, at the age of 90.

Léopold Frigon comes from the line of Pierre-Antoine, branch of Souleine.

January 2008

Normand Frigon, companion of Isabelle Calabro, and son of Georgette Lamothe and Henri-Paul Frigon, died in Montreal, on January 6, 2008, at the age of 60.

Normand Frigon comes from the line of Pierre-Antoine, branch of Soulein.

Aline Frigon, wife of Claude Lebel of St-Léon, died in Montreal, on January 11, 2008, at the age of 75. She was a native of Louiseville.

Aline Frigon comes from the line of Olivier-Pierre, branch of Olivier.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

Send us your anecdotes!

SIMON FRIGON, JR OF ILLINOIS

Simon was born in St-Louis-le-Grand (Louiseville, QC) in 1854. He was two years old when his family emigrated to the United States and settled in Beaverville, Illinois.

At the age of nineteen he married Célianise Dionne. They had three sons and five daughters. Their descendants, through their sons, bear the family names of Frigon and Frigone.

From 1873 to 1899, the family lived on a farm near Beaverville, Illinois. During the two years that followed, Simon ran a butcher shop in St. Anne, Illinois, and, from 1901 to 1913, he was established in Chicago where he ran a pharmacy.

Joseph Simon passed away in 1913. His body was found floating on Lake Michigan, near Chicago, after being missing for two weeks. He was on a business trip to Englewood.

The newspapers of the time, the *St. Anne Record* and *The Republican, Watseka*, wrote that he had been assassinated. Robbery could have been the motive.

Simon Frigon, Jr. comes from the line of Joseph Frigon, branch of Simon.

FRANK B. FLORENTINE AND HIS AUSTRALIAN COUSINS

Frank Florentine, a doctor living in Saginaw, Michigan, was the brother of Simon Frigon, Jr. of Illinois, of whom we have just spoken. Frank, born in St-Léon-le-Grand (Louiseville, QC) in 1849, was the oldest of the family. He was seven years old when the family emigrated to the United States and settled in Beaverville, Illinois.

He was not yet sixteen years old when he joined the Union

Army as a volunteer during the American Civil War. He was discharged the following year, the war having ended one month after his enlistment.

He studied in Illinois and in 1876 received his medical diploma from Chicago's Northwestern University at the age of 27. The same year, he opened a medical office in Saginaw, Michigan.

The following year, he married Mary Louise Andre. They had two sons. Their descendants bear the name Florentine.

We know that at one period of his life, he maintained a correspondence with his cousin John Joseph Fregon and his cousins Herely and Vantillies of Australia. Two of his letters written in 1916 and 1918, sent to John Joseph Fregon, have reached us. This is what we have learned about Frank B. Florentine, who was in his mid-sixties.

- He was 5 feet 9 inches tall (1,75 meters) and weighed 180 pounds (81,6 kilograms).
- He was proud of his health, which he attributed to having never taken either alcohol or tobacco and to having a wholesome life-style. He wrote: "I am as vigorous as a man of forty, I have all my teeth, I have never had a tooth ache and I do not have a single grey hair."
- He always actively practised medicine in his Saginaw office.
- Even though he said he lead a happy life, he deplored the fact that his two sons lived far from him. He lived alone with this second wife, Effie Ashelby. His parents, his brothers and sisters had all passed away.
- During the war of '14 -'18, he kept up his French by corresponding with his French friends in the trenches, men he had known while studying in Paris. He was proud that his spoken and written French was as good as his English.

Frank B. Florentine comes from the line of Joseph Frigon, branch of Simon.