



# THE FRIGONS

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

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## AUGUSTIN FRIGON I - Posthumous Homage, Autumn 1952

*Pierre Frigon (4)*

Augustin Frigon, father of Raymond Frigon (1) and grandfather of Paul Frigon (6) and Margot Frigon (7), was the first French Canadian to hold a doctoral degree in science from the Science Faculty of the University of Paris in July 1922. A PhD in electricity! He was consequently a pioneer of the new technologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As well, he was one of the most influential people in Quebec and Canadian society in the 1920's through the 1950's. We find him in key positions developing technical and media communications. We recognize also, his influence on the development of hydro-electricity in Quebec. His career was mainly oriented towards teaching and education. Education and in particular technical training was, according to him, the key to assure a place for French Canadians in the Anglo-Saxon world of North America.



*Augustin Frigon circa 1932*

(5), a benefactor of St. Justine Hospital.

The tributes received by his wife following his death show his influence in many areas of society. Here are a few: tributes from the authorities of Radio-Canada and the École Polytechnique, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, the Musicians' Guild of Montreal, the Municipality of Sixteen Island Lake, Argenteuil County, the French Chamber of Commerce of Canada, the Minister of Canada Post, Senator Vincent Dupuis,

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He was, as well as his daughter Marguerite Frigon

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## 118 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

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Canada: Canadian dollar USA and other countries: US dollar

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

*Gérald Frigon (116)*

Travelling is a wonderful opportunity for getting acquainted with cultures different from our own. Undoubtedly the culture of the native Indians in the 17th century was quite different from that of the new immigrants hailing from Europe. The voyageurs, such as our ancestor François, had to be open-minded about the different modes of life and mentalities they encountered. They adapted to their new environment and developed ways of communicating with these tribes, each of which spoke a different language.

Today, also, we have many travellers among the Frigons. Their travels by plane or by car take them from one urban centre to another, from one

civilization to another. But even if they venture into cultures other than their own, they are never far from familiar hotel chains or other points of reference.

In 2008, the 400th anniversary celebrations of Quebec City will be an opportunity to experience both the 17th and 21st centuries. Special events have been planned for January to October. We have chosen to hold our annual family gathering near Quebec City on August 16 and 17, 2008, hoping that our cousins from New England, Kansas, Illinois, British Columbia and elsewhere will be able to join us for the festivities. It will be a wonderful celebration.

Do join us!

## AUGUSTIN FRIGON

### I - Posthumous Homage, Autumn 1952

*(Continued from page 117)*

Camillien Houde, Mayor of Montreal, the Deans of the faculties of science for the Universities of Montreal and Laval, the Director General of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the Superior General of the Congrégation de Notre Dame, Louis St. Laurent, Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Defence, the Registrar of the Professional Engineers of Quebec, the Secretary of the Board of Directors of St. Justine Hospital, University of Montreal Alumni Association, General Electric Corporation of Canada, the Director of the European Broadcasting Union, Geneva, the Director

General of the Composers, Authors and Publishers Association of Canada, the Editor of the Canadian Geographic Society, the President of Broadcast Music Inc, New York, the Director of the Royal Automobile Club of Canada, the President of the University Club Council of Montreal, the Secretary of the Catholic School Commission of Montreal, Cyrille Delage, etc.<sup>1</sup>

An overview of the collection of his works can be seen in the *Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne*, published in the autumn of 1952<sup>2</sup>, after his death. This is a long text that will be published in four parts; here is the first instalment.

*"Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne, Autumn 1952"*

#### **TRIBUTE TO AUGUSTIN FRIGON PhD Sc, C. M. G.**

We are reprinting below several notes that came to us from the Honourable James McCann, Minister of Revenue Canada, from Mr. Rene Morin, Vice-president of the Office of the Governors of Radio-Canada, and from the Honourable Hector Perrier, judge of the Supreme Court, in honour of the fruitful career of Mr. Augustin Frigon who died July 9, 1952.

To conclude, we present a biography that describes in detail the magnificent work that he accomplished in teaching and in the domain of radio broadcasting.

*(Continued on page 120)*

1. *Augustin Frigon Collection, "Condolences", Frigon Family Association.*

2. *Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne, Polytechnique Alumni Association, Montreal, 38<sup>th</sup> year, No.151 (Autumn 1952), 111 pages, pp. 227-238.*

**AUGUSTIN FRIGON**  
**I - Posthumous Homage, Autumn 1952**

*(Continued from page 119)*

*"Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne, Autumn 1952"*

***NOTES OF THE HONOURABLE JAMES McCANN***

The Canadian Government has suffered a great loss in the death of Dr. Augustin Frigon, C.M.G., one of its most valuable leaders in many fields of activity. The last 20 years of his active life were particularly devoted to the building up and development of the national radio system known as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which now benefits from a coast-to-coast coverage and possesses the most up-to-date and efficient equipment. This system is the tangible realization of the ideal broadcasting service he wished to offer to the Canadian public in 1929 when he was a member and the technical advisor of the Aird Commission. As a matter of fact, he was to a large measure responsible for the preparation of the Aird Report which has contributed so vitally to the enrichment of the Canadian culture.

Because of this vast knowledge and exceptional abilities as administrator, Dr. Frigon was entrusted early with heavy responsibilities for which he worked with untiring energy; this was probably one of the secrets of this successful career. We all knew him as a man of courage, broad-mindedness and rigid integrity; these qualities won him the confidence and the esteem of all those who were associated with him.

I particularly feel Dr. Frigon's death as a personal loss. Our close contacts in the last decade had developed into a strong, friendship. I admired and valued his keen intelligence, his exceptional foresight and remarkably sound judgement, and I am proud to admit that I have always found him a wise advisor. All those who came into contact with the former General Manager of the CBC found him a man of extreme simplicity, comprehension and discretion. For the future of this country, Dr. Frigon has built his word on broad and solid foundations, giving himself unsparingly particularly to the development of education and broadcasting which were the chief aims of his whole existence.

For these and many other reasons, Dr. Frigon was a Great Canadian. Let us hope that the vital role he has played in Canada for the last quarter of a century will be strongly influential in the orientation of the next generation for a better Canada.

James McCann  
 Minister of National Revenue

*(Continued on page 121)*

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3. *Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG), the highest honour that can be bestowed upon a civilian citizen of the British Empire, was conferred upon Augustin Frigon July 1, 1946 by His Majesty King Georges VI.*

*(Continued from page 120)*

*“Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne, Autumn 1952”*

**NOTES OF RENÉ MORIN**

Mr. Augustin Frigon, C.M.G., former director of Radio Canada and recently nominated project director, died prematurely last July 9th.

Engineer, graduate of the École Supérieure d'Électricité in Paris, first Canadian to receive a doctorate degree in Science from the Sorbonne, president of the École Polytechnique, he was one of the three members of the Royal Commission of Radio Broadcasters charged in 1928 with the task of researching this new public service and reporting back to the Canadian Parliament. It is in light of this report that Radio-Canada was established, based on the recommendations of this commission.

From its inception in November 1936, Mr. Frigon was named assistant general director and in 1944 was subsequently promoted to chief director.

Highly qualified to fill this position by reason of his technical understanding, experience and personal qualities and character, he gave the Société Radio-Canada and his country service that deserves public recognition.

As a member of the Board of Governors of Radio-Canada, I had the opportunity to follow closely and appreciate the greatness of the task that he accomplished. The expansion of the Society, the constant improvement of its services, and the important role that it plays attests to the merits of his work.

The Society was created to institute a national radio broadcasting service in Canada and it was authorized to establish and direct radio stations and radio networks across the country, to stipulate the periods that a private station could reserve the Society's programmes for broadcast, and additionally to control the nature of the programmes broadcast, by private stations as well as by the Society.

Some restrictions of the freedom of private broadcasters, established in the interest of the public and stemming from the exercise of its authority, have from time to time given rise to criticism to which the general director was well attuned.

The management of a large staff, spread over the entire country often gives rise to problems that are difficult to resolve.

The programmes of Radio Canada need to be varied to respond to the varied tastes of different listeners; that which pleases one group, will displease another, the talk is often about controversial subjects and often the opinions that are expressed by one section of the listening audience provokes ire from the remaining groups of listeners.

This means that the task that he had to complete was delicate, difficult and often unappreciated.

He gave to the Society and to the Canadian public his energy, his spirit, his talents and his hard work, always keeping in mind to give his country the best and most useful radio broadcasting service possible.

He demonstrated, in exercising his role, a great administrative sense, remarkable uprightness of judgment, integrity, tact and a spirit of justice from which he gained the confidence of his personnel, the esteem and regard of the members of the Office of Governors of the Society and merited the gratitude of all his fellow citizens.

He accomplished his task indefatigably and leaves a body of work that does him honour.

RENÉ MORIN  
VICE-PRÉSIDENT, RADIO-CANADA

When I transcribed the contract for the lease of two oxen signed by François Frigon known as Lespagnol on October 24, 1678<sup>(1)</sup>, I had no idea that the subject could be so interesting. Believe it or not, it is! It all started in a second-hand bookstore.

While browsing, I came across a journal called "Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française" (a journal dealing with the history of French America). I was flipping absentmindedly through the pages when, suddenly, there it was, an article on the leasing of animals<sup>(2)</sup>! When I read it, I realized it had the answers to many of the questions that had come to mind while transcribing the contract prepared by the notary Jean Cusson. What luck! I then decided to share this discovery with all of you.

The more I progressed in the writing of my article, the more I realized that I needed more information, for many questions remained unanswered. I contacted Valérie D'Amour, one of the two authors of the journal article, and she agreed to answer the questions that were not dealt with in her article. She will never know how grateful I am to her for her assistance. Here, then, is the outcome of this surprising research on the oxen.

On October 24, 1678, François Frigon signed a contract for the lease of a pair of oxen. The quote in ancient French (see the French version of this newsletter), states that *François Frigon, a resident of Batiscan, has leased from Charles Le Gardeur, seignior of Villiée, acting on behalf of the Jesuit Fathers, two oxen<sup>(3)</sup> about eight years old for a period*



Taken from : Jean-Pierre Hardy, *Chercher fortune en Nouvelle-France (Fortune-seeking in New France)* Éditions Libre Expression, 2007, 208 pages, p.15

*of four consecutive years beginning today and finishing on the same date four years from now...Should these animals die, the responsibility will be assumed entirely by Frigon.*

In that contract, the Company of Jesuit Fathers, represented by Charles Legardeur, sieur de Villiers, leased to François Frigon known as Lespagnol two oxen for a period of four years in exchange for "seven and a half "minots" (old measure: about 39 litres) of best quality wheat, that frigon promises and obligates himself to give and pay to the sieur de villiée, each year, on Christmas day and that every year."

The oxen are evaluated at "la somme de cent soixante l (livres)", one hundred sixty pounds (monetary unit). "At the end of the lease, frigon will have to return two oxen worth one hundred and sixty pounds as he promises and is obliged to do."

Furthermore, François Frigon mortgaged his possessions, "binding all his assets, chattels as well as property, present and future", in accordance with the formula often used in contracts dealing with debentures.

Reading this contract along with D'Amour and Cossette's article raises a lot of questions.

A farming lease, you ask? Why pay the rental fee to Charles de Villiers and not to the Jesuits? Why not horses? Was this contract standard? The analytical grid used by D'Amour and Cossette applies to Montreal but is it also valid for Trois-Rivières? Rent or buy? Why rent for four years? Rent in the spring or in the fall? Were the oxen too old? Was it because of

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1- *Bail de deux boeufs par chr (Charles) de villié à françois frigon.* (farming lease of two oxen by Charles de Villié to François Frigon). The title of the contract mentions October 4, but in the contract itself, it is written "...le vingt quattresme octobre mil six cent soixante et dis huit" (the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, 1678). Notary Jean Cusson. National Archives of Quebec in Montreal, microfilm 1455.

2- Leasing of animals: D'Amour et Cossette, *Le bétail et l'activité économique en Nouvelle France, vente et location* (Livestock and Economic Activity in New France, Sales and Rentals), *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol.56, no.2, autumn 2002.

3- Ox: a bull that has been neutered. "Let us emphasize that the custom of castrating horned animals surely goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. When we look at the inventory of Jean Desroches' livestock on October 9<sup>th</sup> 1684, there was question of 'A young castrated bullock about four years of age'. It undoubtedly was used as a beast of burden. Lionel Séguin, *La civilisation traditionnelle de l'«habitant» aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (The Traditional Civilization of the "Habitant" (settler) in the 17th and 18th Centuries), Fides, 1973, p.560.

(Continued from page 122)

their age that two were leased rather than one? Was seven and a half “minots” of wheat per year too much to pay? Why pay at Christmas time? Was the price for the rental of the oxen too high? In a word, did François Frigon known as Lespagnol get his money’s worth? Let’s see!

### First, what is a “bail à ferme”, a farming lease?

A farming lease is a contract stipulating that an owner (lessor), turns over to someone (lessee), for a certain length of time and for a certain price, the use of a piece of land or of a right. In this case, it is two oxen.

### Why pay the rent to Legardeur, sieur de Villiers and not to the Jesuits?

Until July 3, 1684, Charles Legardeur was the “Seigneur de Bécancour”. He had inherited his seignory from his father Pierre le Gardeur de Repentigny<sup>(4)</sup>. We also know that by “a contract signed in 1674 (...) for an annual sum of 1200 pounds for seven years, the Jesuits grant Charles-Pierre Legardeur de Villiers all their lands, fiefs or rented out, in the region of Trois-Rivières; that is to say, the fiefs of Batiscan, Cap-de-la-Madeleine, Saint-Christophe, and those they possess in the town and on the outskirts of the city: the lease also covers the revenue to be collected on some 200 parcels of granted land (some 8500 *arpents*) and the milling rights of two flour mills. We must conclude that that which is covered by the lease must have brought in at least 1200 pounds per year. This same calculation carried over the whole of the Jesuit fiefs (except for Sillery that did not belong to them), should, in theory, show the estimated annual revenues to have been between 2500 and 3000 pounds.”<sup>(5)</sup>

Thus, the Jesuits subcontracted the administration of

their seignories. This explains why the payment for the lease of the oxen was paid to Charles Legardeur de Villiers and not to the Jesuit Fathers. Charles Legardeur paid the latter 1200 pounds a year while his potential income was between 2500 to 3000 pounds: a potential profit of 1500 pounds per year. That was the amount that a single successful fur-trading expedition could yield, and without the perils of the latter!

### Why lease oxen rather than horses?

It is known that horses were a rarity in “la Nouvelle-France.” There were no roads: the rivers were used for transportation and communication. In 1681, there were 77 horses and 19 mares in the colony; the historian Benjamin Sulte of Trois-Rivières made an inventory of their owners<sup>(6)</sup>. The number of horses increased significantly at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century for there were 3786 horses in 1717.<sup>(7)</sup>

At the time of the 1685 census<sup>(8)</sup>, and even in the 1681 census<sup>(9)</sup>, there were no horses inventoried in Batiscan. We presume that in 1678 there were none either, since there were none three and even seven years later.

At least until 1685, in Batiscan, oxen were used for ploughing, grubbing, and carting. And they were rare, these oxen! In fact, in 1681, the census listed 53 families living in Batiscan. Only five of them had two oxen (Pierre Morant, Jean Lafont, Pierre de Lagarde, Jean Crevier and François Fortage), and one family had only one (Laurent Lefebvre). This makes a total of only 11 oxen. It is understandable that grubbing was slow and the productivity of the land meagre. We imagine that seven years earlier, acquiring a pair of oxen must have been quite an accomplishment.

A note in passing: in the 1681 census, 159 horned cattle<sup>(10)</sup> and 5 cows were also listed. Other than

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4- Les Cahiers des Dix, vol no 29, Gérald Malchelosse, Montreal, 1964, *La famille Pommereau et ses alliances* (The Pommereau Family and its Alliances), p.219.

5- Marcel Trudel, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France IV, La seigneurie de la compagnie des Indes Occidentales 1663-1774* (The Seigneurie of the West Indies Company), *Fides*, 1997, p.671.

6- Benjamin Sulte cited in Robert-Lionel Séguin, *La civilisation traditionnelle de l'«habitant» aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (The traditional civilization of the “habitant” in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), *Fides*, 1973, pp.533-534.

7- Letter addressed to the Marine Council, February 26, 1717, by Vaudreuil and Bégon. Robert-Lionel Séguin, *La civilisation traditionnelle de l'« habitant » aux XVII et XVIIIe siècles*, *Fides, Montréal*, 1973, 701 pages, p. 540.

8- General Census of the Government of Canada. This census can be consulted at the National Archives of Quebec in Montreal: France, the colonial archives, CA, microfilm 9485.

9- We used the transcription of the census done by Benjamin Sulte in: *Histoire des Canadiens-français, 1608-1880, origine, histoire, religion, guerres, découvertes, colonisation, coutumes, vie domestique, sociale et politique, développement, avenir*, (History of the French Canadians, 1608-1880, origin, history, religion, wars, discoveries, colonisation, customs, domestic, social and political life, development, future), a work that includes portraits and plans, Volume 3, Éditions Élysée, Montreal, 162 pages, pp.61-62, new publication of the original 1882 edition, published by Wilson & Co., Montreal.

10- That census distinguished between, “vache” (cow), “boeufs”(bulls) and “bêtes à corne” (horned animals). The word “boeuf” seemed to have been reserved for the cart animals. As for “bêtes à corne”, we cannot tell exactly which animals the term refers to, since cows and bulls both fall into that category.

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Antoine Trottier, sieur Desruisseaux who owned 30 horned cattle, no other family owned more than six. François Frigon was in a good position with his five horned cattle. However, the census did not mention the two oxen he leased in 1678 and that he must still have had in 1681 since his contract had not yet expired.

Now, let's go back to the "farming lease".

### Were the terms of the contract standard?

First, we will look at the data provided by Valérie D'Amour and Evelyne Cossette who had analyzed sales contracts and animal leases for the period 1661-1760. Their analysis included 213 notarized contracts signed in Montreal (132 leases, 81 sale contracts).<sup>(11)</sup>

The following information was usually included in animal rental contracts:<sup>(12)</sup>

- Identification of the parties involved.
- Duration of the lease.
- Description of the animal: age, colour, value.
- Terms of the lease.
- Care to be given to the animals year-round: food, lodging, care.
- Rental fees: in cash, work hours, goods of all sorts.
- Natural death of the animal.
- Death of the animal due to negligence on the part of the renter.
- Terms of payment: payment at fixed dates.

We note that, in François Frigon's contract, all the above-mentioned specifics were included with the exception of the description of the animals and the care to be given to them.

About the description of the animals, D'Amour and Cossette wrote: *"Perhaps even more surprising is the lack of specification of the colour of the oxen in 60 cases (37%), this qualitative data being essential for the recognition of each animal owned and leased. And again, in 29 cases (18%), there is simply no description at all of the animals. It is possible that in some cases, it was not a lack of knowledge on the part of either the acquirer or the lessor<sup>(13)</sup> / seller of the*



Taken from : Jean-Pierre Hardy, *Chercher fortune en Nouvelle-France (Fortune-seeking in New France)*  
Éditions Libre Expression, 2007, 208 pages, p.15

*animal that is sold or leased, but a lack of vigilance and precision on the part of the notary who failed to write the information.*'<sup>(14)</sup>

The colour, then, was the way to identify the animals. It shows how limited the livestock was in the colony! Elsewhere, in the Trois-Rivières region, on 22 contracts described by Robert-Lionel Séguin<sup>(15)</sup> the colour of the animal was entered in 19 of them.

Since the oxen were not described in François Frigon's farming lease, it was probably a case of negligence on the part of the notary. The notary must have thought the description was not necessary in view of the fact that the two oxen would not be returned to the owner but replaced by two others of the same value.

There was also no description of the care to be given to the animals. This kind of omission was less frequent. In the contracts that we studied, animal care was almost always specified as it was used to establish the responsibility of the renter in case of the death of the animal. Was it negligence on the part of the notary? Most likely not, for in this contract, it was specified that, whatever the cause of the animal's death, François Frigon would be fully responsible. It was therefore of little importance to the lessor that the lessee would take good care of the animals.

**In the next article:** "Does the analytical grid used by D'Amour and Cossette in their analysis apply to the farming leases signed in the Trois-Rivières region? Lease or purchase? Why lease oxen for a four-year period? Leasing in the fall or in the spring? Were the oxen too old? Was the age of the animals the reason for leasing a pair rather than only one?"

11-D'Amour and Cossette, *Le bétail et l'activité économique en Nouvelle-France, vente et location* (Livestock and economic activity in New France, sale and rental), *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol.56, no.2, autumn 2002, p. 217.

12-D'Amour and Cossette, pp. 223-224.

13- Lessor: one who leases something to someone else.

14-Complementary information provided by Valérie D'Amour.

15-Robert-Lionel Séguin, pp.545-548.