



# THE FRIGONS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIGON FAMILIES

Volume 2 Number 2

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## LIGHT ON THE PAST - II

Robert Frigon (2\*)

*The first instalment of this series appeared in the last issue of THE FRIGONS, Volume 1 Number 2 Winter 1994-1995. This is the second instalment, others will follow.*

It was a wide-spread practice in the Trois-Rivières region to trade liquor with the Indians for furs or fresh meat, a practice frowned upon by both the civil and religious authorities. The degrading conditions brought upon the natives, of both sexes, who abused liquor came to the attention of the *Conseil Souverain*, located in Québec City. Because of the situation, the *Conseil* ordered a judicial enquiry into the trading of liquor in the two villages of Trois-Rivières and Cap-de-la-Madeleine. The enquiry took two years to complete.

Hearings proceeded to take place at Cap-de-la-Madeleine. Witnesses were called by **Guillaume de LaRue**, high judicial official in charge of the *prévosté* of the Cap-de-la-Madeleine. On January 24, 1667, it was **Jean Cusson**'s turn to testify. He recalled being on his *concession de Batiscan* on the 12th or 13th of the month, in the company of **François Frigon**, when between 9 and 10 in the evening, they refused to give shelter from the cold to two inebriated Indians. One of the two was somewhat quarrelsome and the other tried to appease him by offering him more liquor. They were obliged to sleep outside on the snow, under the stars.

And Cusson went on to say<sup>1</sup>: (translation) "*And the next morning at day-break the natives had knocked at the door, but he refused to let them in because of the noise they had made during the night. Nigoret's son then pleaded that they simply wanted to get warm, having almost died of cold that night.. Cusson seeing they were no longer drunk but exhausted, decided to allow them in*

*so they could get warm next to the fire"*

Our ancestor, in 1667, was still in the service of Michel Peltier. Though 15 years his senior, Jean Cusson seemed to have a liking for François Frigon. No doubt, they had been out hunting when the incident with the natives took place. The village of Batiscan was at the time a clearing in the middle of the forest. And it was winter when moose were being hunted.

On January 29, 1667, **François Frigon** submitted his testimony which was taken down by **Jacques de LaTousche**, *notaire royal* and *Seigneur de Champlain*. François confirmed Jean Cusson's statements. He asserted that he was in the employ of Michel Peltier and



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\* Membership number

<sup>1</sup> For original statement in French, see article *Lumières du passé* in the French version of this issue

that on the January 1st preceding "... *Having picked-up meat for the "Sieur de la Prade", his "maître" in Rivière- Ste- Anne, which an Indian by the name of Atikocanisch had given him...*". Through his testimony, which continued, and dealt especially with the activities of **Sieur Gamelin, seigneur de Ste-Anne**, surgeon and distiller, he painted a portrait of the times. Trading liquor against moose meat, a well established custom,

though forbidden, was practiced by not a few. It is no doubt during this period that our ancestor developed a liking for negotiating with the natives, though still working for Michel Peltier, his *maître*. It was perhaps an apprenticeship imposed on him, no doubt willy-nilly. □

### WHO WAS THE PAUL FRIGON LIVING IN PARIS IN 1890?

*A friend of the Frigon family, Madame Agathe Savard of Saint-Eustache, has written us about a tale her mother used to tell her about a mysterious inheritance and a certain Paul Frigon who, it seems, lived in Paris...around 1890. Is any one of our readers able to help solve this puzzle? Below is the letter, translated from the French.*

"Following the article published in LaPresse February 25, 1995 concerning François Frigon, I recall a story my mother used to tell me.

My mother's parents: Jean-Baptiste Lavigne dit Poudrette and his spouse Déléoise Boileau.

Jean-Baptiste Lavigne not knowing how to read, it was his wife who would have told him that a notary in L'Abord-à-Plouffe wanted to see him. Her grandparents lived in Senneville near Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue. It seems that the notary wanted to discuss an inheritance from a Paul Frigon located in Paris.

The grandfather went to L'Abord-à-Plouffe with his

horse. On his return he professed not having understood anything and the notary had asked him to put his "cross" on a document - and that was all and nothing came of it. I reckon that this took place between 1880 and 1890, or possibly a little sooner.

Who was this Paul Frigon? Did he ever exist? I have not found in my genealogy anyone of this name.. If after some research you find an answer, I would be most happy to see this enigma solved.

Agathe Savard

Saint-Eustache, February 25, 1995" □

### DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

**Louis Frigon** and **Pierre Frigon** were among the first French-speaking Quebecers to be awarded patents for their inventions: **Louis**, patent No. 4442, February 27, 1872, for a spring mattress, and **Pierre**, with Georges Couvrette, patent No. 5869, March 21, 1876, for a boat rudder<sup>1</sup>. ● **Father Jean-Baptiste Frigon**, OMI, 1871-1930, a native of Trois-Rivières, and ordained at Laredo, Texas in 1894, was selected three times as American delegate to bless the graves in France, Belgium and England of American soldiers who died in the First World War. ● **Edward (Ned) Frigon**, a native of St. Prosper apparently, was the first white person to settle in the Northern part of Vancouver Island, B.C....in 1858. He died there in 1917 at age 92. ● **Charles Hilaire Frigon's** (50\*), (of Edmonton), great-grandfather, **Joseph Frigon**, in 1852, left **Louiseville**, his native city, for **Illinois** with his wife Mathilde Poulin and their ten young children, of which **Hilaire**, his

grandfather, who later in 1882 left for the **Dakota Territories**, in Turton where, in 1892 was born **Pierre**, his father, who, in 1900, with his parents and nine sisters and brothers, moved to the **Northwest Territories** (pre-Alberta) where the family became established in **Picardville** where **Pierre** married Violetta Roch in 1922, from which union were born 18 children of which **Charles Hilaire** married Janette Bresden in **Edmonton** in 1951, from which marriage were born 8 children of which **Charles** who in 1984 married Cynthia Johnson, from which marriage was born **Denis Michael** on December 9, 1990. ● **Omer Frigon**, father of **Mainville Frigon** (54\*) of Ottawa (Gloucester) was first to settle in **Landrienne** (near **Amos**, Abitibi), with his young family, and he had 56 grandchildren and 45 great grandchildren. ● A reunion of the **Alberta Frigons** will take place August 4 to 7 at Jackson's 5 Acre Forest near Sundre. Terry Meunier, of Leduc, is the coordinator.

\* Membership number

<sup>1</sup> *Les premières inventions québécoises*, Guy Giguère, Les Éditions Quebecor

## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since its foundation in May 1994 the Association has enjoyed encouraging growth. Membership has reached almost 80, quite an accomplishment since the Frigon family is relatively small when compared to the larger Quebec founding families - *les familles souches*. There are about 3,000 Frigons in North America (none in France, as far as is known), or about 1,000 households. Members are to be found mainly in Quebec, but there is a scattering in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, and in the United States: New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Colorado, Arizona, Washington, California and ... Hawaii. This great spread across the continent needs an explanation.

The dispersal of Frigons from the cradle in the Saint-Maurice Valley was undoubtedly initiated by the Quebec diaspora of the 1800s. But does this explain why our small family is spread throughout most of the North American continent? The pioneer spirit shown by the *familles souches* - and necessity - certainly played a major role, but is there another reason? What about the Frigon and Chamois genes transmitted by the founding couple, François and Marie-Claude? François preferred the life of a *coureur-de-bois* - a trapper - to that of a farmer. He liked to move around and made many trips to the *Pays-d'en-Haut* - the Up-country. And Marie-Claude? It is known that she was enterprising, daring ... perhaps even rebellious. In fact, born into a very well-off family, she early sought refuge from the family in an orphanage in Paris. Later during a well-documented court trial, she was in confrontation with her mother who had disowned her\*. Having come to Canada as a *Fille du Roi* - one of the King's Daughters, appointed by Louis XIVth to marry *colons* - she first entered into a marriage contract with Pierre Forcier, soon cancelled to allow her to marry our ancestor. With her husband's support, 15 years later, she left her family, the youngest barely a few months old, to go to France to claim an inheritance. She came back 18 years later, stayed barely a year, and went back to Paris, never to return.

That is what the *actes notariés* and the *plaidoyer* of D'Aguesseau tell us, the only existing witnesses to the couple's lives. Their motto seems to have been: "Nothing ventured, nothing gained". Underneath it all, we Frigons, it could be said, are all somewhat Frigon...somewhat Chamois...

Raymond Frigon

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Coordinator: Raymond Frigon

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Members (76) are listed according to membership number

\* See *Marie-Claude's Adventure*, THE FRIGONS Vol.1 No.1,

## THE PRICKLY "FRAGON"

Pierre Frigon (4)

*This article - here translated from the author's original in French - is about the **fragon épineux** - prickly fragon - a traditional medicinal plant in France. It is speculated that the Frigon family name may have derived from fragon or its variations: fregon, frigon.*

**THE** family name Frigon may have derived from *fragon*, the name of a plant known since antiquity for its medicinal properties. For those who would like to know more about this plant, here is a detailed description of the plant and its properties.

Also known as *buis ardent*, *buis piquant*, *houx frelon*, *petit houx*, *housson* or *myrte sauvage* (and in English as *butcher's broom*), this woody plant with its latin name *ruscus aculeatus* belongs to the liliaceous family. It is a perennial bush not more than 3 feet high with a bushy top and growing in the dry undergrowth of plains and hills. The winter landscape, with its drab undergrowth, is enlivened by this shrub with its dark and shiny leaves brightened up by vivid red of berries the size of cherries. A not too demanding plant, it adapts well to dryness, chalky and poor soil, but does not tolerate frost. It is found in Central and Southern Europe, Western Asia and North Africa. Its false-leaves, smooth-edged and oval-shaped, alternating along the stem, are spread out palm-like and are thorne-tipped. They are of an intense and dull green all year round. Amazingly, the small star-like flowers, purplish or green, grow in pairs at the false-leaf junctures. They are in bloom from April to September. The rhizome is grey in colour, knotty, angled, creeping, with brownish roots and smells slightly of turpentine.

Fragon has been used as a diuretic since antiquity. In the first century, the Greek physician Dioscoride, advocated crushing the leaves and berries in wine, or a concoction of the rhizome. It is the latter that has come into use. After careful cleaning, it is dried out at 30°C. It gives off

a faint but characteristic odour, and the initially sweet taste quickly becomes sour. The rhizomes are gathered in September and sometimes in the Spring. The diuretic as well as laxative properties, are due to the presence of calcium and potassium salts, as well as a resin and an essential oil. The bowel moving properties of the *fragon* is enhanced in the concoction "apéritif des cinq racines" - "the five roots laxative, by the presence of fennel, asparagus, celery and parsley, in equal parts.

Fragon also acts as a febrifuge and vasoconstrictor. It relieves the pain due to gout, hemorrhoids, jaundice, lithiasis, menopause, oedema, phlebitis and varicose veins.

The flower has no medicinal properties. The fruit is poisonous. The leaf and especially the rhizome are used.

In way of a conclusion, let us consider that if our name does come from fragon, the family may have originated in a region of France where this plant grows. In France, it grows only in the western and southern regions. The south of France, where there is no frost, is very close to Spain... □

Main sources: *Atlas des plantes médicinales*, Francesco Bianchini, Editions Fernand Nathan, 1975. *Secrets et vertus des plantes médicinales*, Sélections du Readers Digest, 1977

## A PLEA TO OUR READERS

Your newsletter is in need of articles, anecdotes, recollections, photos, family news, births, deaths, marriages, accomplishments, etc. Please forward anything you have to the newsletter's coordinator: Raymond Frigon, 403-15 Murray Street, Ottawa, ON K1N 9M5, (Phone/fax: 613-241-5433)

Many thanks!