



# THE FRIGONS

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## Marie-Claude Chamois, Wife of François Frigon, Heiress to Honoré Chamois - I\*

Pierre Frigon (#4\*\*)

Among topics of special interest to historians and descendants of François Frigon, are those relating to Marie-Claude Chamois, her identity, her claim to the family fortune left by her father, Honoré Chamois, and what eventually became of her. In the lines that follow, you will witness the strange and courageous struggle for justice of Marie-Claude Chamois, an exceptional woman who married François Frigon, ancestor of all North American Frigons, and who had to return to France to conduct a most trying court battle against her mother to prove her right to the family fortune. The plea (*plaidoyer*) to the court of last appeal - *le Parlement de Paris* - is among the published works of Henri-François d'Aguesseau, illustrious French magistrate of the 17th century. It is because of this source that it is possible to tell in some detail this portion of the life of Marie-Claude Chamois.

### A well-off but uneasy family

She was born on January 8, 1656, in Saint-Gervais parish, bishopric of Paris<sup>1</sup>. She was baptised the 29th of the same month. At birth, Marie-Claude was put out to nurse by her mother, Jacqueline Giraud, as was the practice in well-to-do families of the time. She was taken to "the named Bouthillier, Mesuisier in Paris (and) was later raised at home; she lived with her mother in a rented house in Faubourg Saint Antoine. It is in this house the respondent claims to have been mistreated, with consequences that have affected her throughout her life."<sup>2</sup>.

The fortune of Honoré Chamois "deceased in 1660 and appointed King's Secretary (*Secrétaire du Roi*)", seemed

to afford him great ease: "With regard to Honoré Chamois' fortune, it seems he owed it entirely to the Count of Harcourt, to whom he was Secretary." The Harcourt family was part of the French old nobility. Established in Normandy, the Harcourt *seigneurie* became county in 1328, then duchy in 1700. Henri de Lorraine, Count of Harcourt, dit Cadet de Perle (1601-166), commanded Piémont and took Turin (1640). He was *Vice-roi de Catalogne* in 1644. In Flanders he conquered the Spaniards. He was linked to the *Fronde des Princes* and was awarded the government of Anjou. This family, in the middle of the 17th century, was thus quite powerful and it is likely that Honoré Chamois derived great benefit from his role as Secretary to the count. D'Aguesseau provides information which confirms that his fortune was closely linked to that of the Harcourts: "It has been explained, Gentlemen, the disposition and qualities of this act. The mother (Jacqueline Girard) has a considerable obligation towards a creditor to her husband's estate. (...) It is a remarkable fact that it is a credit to be taken on the Count of Harcourt's estate..."

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\* Translation: RAF

\*\* Membership Number

After her husband's death, Jacqueline Girard was left with her four children. The eldest, Marie, who would marry Pierre Mareuil, two boys Henri and Philippe-Michel, and the youngest, Marie-Claude. She was then 4 years of age.

The years go by. At thirteen, Marie-Claude flees home and finds refuge in a home for young girls. Here are the circumstances: "All the parties agree that either by negligence of those to whom Jacqueline Girard had entrusted her daughter during her absence, or to escape her brother's harassments, or to avoid her mother's mistreatments, Marie-Claude Chamois no longer was to be seen in the mother's home, nor with the family, nor in public even". D'Aguesseau emphasizes later that she was "...obliged to flee home to avoid cruelties cast upon her by her own brother who no longer respected her natural, religious and legal rights; she had been taken by the named du Rivault to the sieur de Retz, Sous-Vicaire de Saint Paul,...". She is then "taken to the Hôpital de la Pitié, under the name Marie Victoire. The person who brought her there is named on the Register, as Gabrielle Emeri; it is said that she had been recommended by the sieur de Perceval, Vicaire de Saint Paul." Three days later she is taken to the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière in a wing for young girls where the nuns teach home keeping and good manners to young girls recruited mostly from the Paris suburbs. She will live there for one year. Then, in 1670, she emigrates to New-France with a group known as the King's Daughters (*les Filles du Roi*). Forty seven percent (47%) of the King's Daughters were less than twenty years old, that is 323 of the 685 girls whose ages are known<sup>3</sup>. There were 76 less than 16, that is 11%. She was all of fourteen.

In coming issues: II - *A New Life in New France*; III - *Return to France and trial*; IV - *Identity of Marie-Claude Chamois and her right to the inheritance (part 1; the evidence)*; V - *Identity of Marie-Claude Chamois and her right to the inheritance (part 2 The testimonies)*

## XXII. PLAIDOYER.

Du 21 Avril 1693.

Dans la Cause de JACQUELINE GIRARD, Veuve d'HONORÉ CHAMOIS, MARIE-CLAUDE CHAMOIS, femme du Sieur FRIGON, & ledit Sieur FRIGON.

Il s'agissoit de l'état d'une Fille sortie, à l'âge de treize ans, de la maison de sa Mere, qui avoit passé en Amérique, s'y étoit mariée, y avoit demeuré seize ans, étoit revenue en France après la mort de son Pere & de ses Freres, & que sa Mere ne vouloit pas reconnoître.

QUOIQUE cette Cause vous ait été expliquée avec tous les ornemens & toutes les couleurs qui peuvent la rendre vraisemblable; nous croyons néanmoins pouvoir dire d'abord que, lorsqu'on examine la variété des circonstances, la nouveauté des incidens que le caprice de la Fortune ou l'artifice de la Supposition y a fait entrer, on ne fait si l'on doit la considérer comme l'ouvrage ingénieux d'une fiction agréable, ou comme le récit sincère d'une véritable histoire.

Une fille obligée, dès l'âge de treize ans, à chercher, dans les Hôpitaux, une sûreté qu'elle n'a pu trouver dans la maison de sa mere; réduite à la triste nécessité de se charger de la honte & des apparences du crime, pour y éviter de le commettre, contrainte enfin à fuir, dans un autre Monde, les malheurs qui la menaçoient en celui-ci, paroît aujourd'hui dans votre Audience, après une absence de seize années, & elle implore le secours de la Justice, pour réparer, par l'autorité de vos Jugemens, l'injure qu'elle prétend que la Fortune a faite à la vérité de sa naissance.

Le nombre & l'enchaînement des faits qu'elle articule, la force

From *Œuvres de M. Le Chancelier D'Aguesseau*, mentioned below

1. *Dictionnaire des familles du Québec, des origines à 1730*. René Jetté, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1983

2. All cited text, apart from those that are numbered, are taken from: *Œuvres de M. Le Chancelier D'Aguesseau, tome second, contenant les plaidoyers prononcés au Parlement en qualité d'Avocat Général dans les années 1691, 1692, 1693*, Paris chez les libraires associés, 1761, avec approbation et privilège du roi, pp 506 à 523.

XXII. Plaidoyer. Du 21 avril 1693. Dans la cause de Jacqueline Girard, Veuve d'Honoré Chamois, Marie-Claude Chamois, femme du Sieur Frigon, & ledit Sieur Frigon.

3. Cahier d'histoire #24, *Les filles du roi en Nouvelle-France*, Étude historique avec répertoire bibliographique, Sylvio Dumas, Société historique du Québec, Québec, 1972, p.68

GRAND FAMILY REUNION OF FRIGONS - SUMMER 1996 - IN BATISCAN

SEE PAGE 4 FOR A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## 1734 - Marie-Madeleine Frigon with the Ursulines\*

### Odette Frigon (#52)

To discover traces of a Frigon ancestor in the well-preserved Archives of the Ursulines in Trois-Rivières, is to go back to the origins of our family in North America.

In 1734, Marie-Madeleine Frigon, born August 14, 1711, joins the Ursuline Monastery in Trois-Rivières as a lay sister. She is the grand-daughter of Marie-Claude Chamois and François Frigon.

In 1908, the history of Saint-Prosper-de-Champlain, is told by a Trois-Rivières Ursuline, Sister Eugénie Lasalle dit Talusier in the book: *Autour du clocher natal*, written to honour *Monseigneur* François-Xavier Cloutier, whose family still lives in the village. Her book is to be found in rare book collections in colleges and universities, in the ethnographic section.

E. Talusier, a relative of Benjamin Sulte - the well-known Québec historian with whom she had collaborated, wrote a number of books. The only one she ever signed was *Autour du clocher natal*. Her other books, for large part, treat of the Ursulines' history. At the time, sisters were not allowed to sign their books and Sister Eugénie Lasalle took the pen name of Talusier, after the first of her family to arrive in *Nouvelle-France*. This information comes from research she left with the monastery.

The daughter of Jean-François Frigon, Madeleine, after her noviciate, is admitted to the rank of *épouse de Jésus-Christ* and takes the name *Soeur de Saint-Joachim* by notarial act at *notaire* Yacinthe-Olivier Pressé on May 12, 1736. Her father releases all the assets to which she is entitled for her dowry. In addition he donates 50 *livres*. She died at age 78, after having lived 53 years in this privileged place that was the monastery, whose gardens even today can be admired in most poetic surroundings, between the monastery and the Saint-Lawrence River, in front of the chapel, and close to the *Musée des Ursulines*, in Trois-Rivières.

Talusier speaks of our ancestor as a model of simplicity and devotion who quietly celebrated her jubilee under the presidency of the *grand vicaire Saint-Onge*. One day while receiving the hospitality of the mothers in Québec, *Monseigneur Plessis* gave her the surname *Mère Marie-Jeanne l'Archevêque de Saint-Joseph dite Saint-Joachim*. (*Les Ursulines des Trois-Rivières*, Tome 1, page 533).

The annals of the Ursulines tell the story of a small number of privileged families which, under the French regime, could count among their members, a number of women who were more educated than the men. This was due to the excellent education the *Ursulines* and the *Soeurs de la Congrégation* gave young girls. The author mentions that at church the women read their prayer books while the men recited their beads. From the same book, page 184.

## Autour du Clocher Natal

NOTES HISTORIQUES

SUR LA PAROISSE DE SAINT-PROSPER

COMTÉ DE CHAMPLAIN

PAR

E. TALUSIER.

Éclairons d'un jour plus vif les origines  
de ce peuple canadien, né de l'Eglise et  
de la France, dont les traditions sont si  
belles, dont le passé est si glorieux, et  
dont les destinées futures nous inspirent  
une inébranlable foi.

T. CHAPUIS.



VANASSE & LEFRANÇOIS,  
IMPRIMEURS,  
TROIS-RIVIÈRES, P. Q.

1909

\* Translation: RAF

## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Second Annual General Meeting took place as planned on Saturday September 23 in Cap-de-la-Madeleine. It was a great success. Some twenty persons were present. From under the officiousness of the general meeting came a sense of excitement of cousins meeting for the first time. In fact, one of the most important decisions taken was to hold a gathering of the clan next summer - possibly in August - in Batiscan, where Marie-Claude Chamois and François Frigon first settled. Spontaneously and with enthusiasm the following members formed a sponsoring committee: Armande (#88) of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade; Daniel (#87) of Champlain; Jean-René of Trois-Rivières and Odette (#52) of Montréal and Saint-Proper. The project is thus in good hands. Be sure to mark your calendar right away so as not to forget this event which will take place in the Saint-Maurice River Valley - *La Mauricie* - with its famous landmarks: *Les Forges du Saint-Maurice*; *Le Sanctuaire du Cap-de-la-Madeleine*; *Le Vieux Presbytère de Batiscan*; *Le Couvent des Ursulines* to mention only a few of the attractions of the region...

## DID YOU KNOW THAT?

■ The grandfather of **Julie Frigon Croteau** (#44) of Ville Lasalle, **Arthur Frigon**, was Personal Secretary in the cabinet of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and, later (in 1913?) became Chief Accountant, an important position at the Queen's Printer in Ottawa. His annual salary was \$2000, a fairly handsome salary at the time! (Researched by **Lucie Frigon Caron** (#56) of Hull)

■ The father of **Brigitte Frigon Martineau** (#38) of Amos, **William Xavier Frigon**, who lived in Saint-Proper where he ran a butter and cheese factory, was awarded in 1903, a medal for product excellence by the Ministry of Agriculture, following a contest.

■ The son of **Charles Hilaire Frigon** (#50) of Edmonton, **Anthony Frigon** and his wife Wai Wai Thinn, are currently living in the Maldives, a republic extending over an archipelago in the Indian Ocean. He has been assigned there by his employer Kenn Borek Air Limited of Calgary to operate Twin-Otter air service to the surrounding islands.

■ Sister **Veronica Roy** (#91)\* of Concordia, Kansas, recently published two very attractive family albums: *Ma Famille: Hébert - Frigon - St-Peter - Morin - Senesac 1639-1994* and *Our Saindon Cousins 1718-1990*. Sister Veronica is proud of her Frigon family relationship. She graciously gave publicity to our Association which resulted in several new members from Kansas and Arizona.

\* At press time, we heard of Sister Veronica's sudden death on November 15 in an automobile accident near Concordia. Her sister, Linda Roy Cross, wrote us from Reston, Virginia, with news of this tragedy and details of her sister's dedicated life, which will be published in our next issue. Our sincere condolences to her family.

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### Bulletin LES FRIGON

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Le membership se  
chiffrait à 91 au  
1<sup>er</sup> novembre 1995.