



THE FRIGONS

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

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HENRIETTE AND ÉMILIE FRIGON, SEAMSTRESSES

Pierre Frigon (4)



Consulting annual directories can sometimes be quite informative. For instance, in *Lovell's 1871 Directory*, we found a Miss M. Frigon, seamstress, at 222 Cadieux Street in Montreal. Then, in 1884, there was a Miss Henriette Frigon, at 224 on the same street. She was listed at 232, in 1888, at 776, the following year, and at 774, in 1898. In 1899, she occupied 774, 776, and 778 with Miss Émilie Frigon. In 1900, they were at 774, etc. As seamstresses, they must have had to endure the very difficult life of this category of workers. They were single and we assume they plied this trade to supplement the family income. They did piece work and were at the mercy of foremen "who often give them work on Saturday night to be finished by Monday morning." They were undoubtedly like "the poor worker who often has nothing but the little bit that she earns to support an old mother or younger sisters, who passes all day Sunday working for fear of losing her job, so that her heartless boss can earn more."¹ In the language of the period, these tenement workplaces were called "family workshops" and there was no law protecting these poor women from the abuse of their employers. Inspectors visited the factories but they had no legal power over the private workplaces. Even at the factory their power was limited to writing reports and making suggestions. This was the difficult period when the employer took big risks and used every means to satisfy his hunger for profits. It was also the time when labour laws were being enacted for the first time. The employer was king and master in his shop and did not hesitate to exercise his power.

In the 19th century, work conditions in the manufacturing sector were abominable: excessively low salaries, child labour, interminably long workdays, unhealthy premises, and few safety plans or measures in the work place. The clothing industry also often employed the "sweating system," literally, the "system that makes you sweat," a practice that rendered the situation particularly difficult in this sector².

(Continuation on page 10)

¹ All the information contained in this article comes from Jean De Bonneville, *Jean-Baptiste Gagnepetit, Les travailleurs Montréalais à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Montreal Workers at the End of the 19th Century), Éditions de l'Aurore, Montréal, 1975, pages 65 à 74.

² See: Arthur Saint-Pierre, "Sweating system et salaire minimum (Sweating System and Minimum Wage), *Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne*, Vol. V, 1919, pp. 178-206.

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PRINTED PAPER SURFACE

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Numerous owners made employees work under contract elsewhere than in their factories. In 1874, an employer declared to the *Royal Commission for the Investigation of Relations between Work and Capital*, that fewer than 100 of his 700 employees worked in the factory. The “sweatshop system” prevailed: it was an inhuman system of exploitation begun during the English Industrial Revolution and used in Montreal by numerous clothing manufacturers. Less prevalent than in England, this form of exploitation of the workers nevertheless found a fertile ground here: an abundant workforce that was poor and docile. The system was based on the principal of subcontracting. There was an intermediary between the owner of the factory and the worker. For example, this person might obtain a contract for 200 pairs of trousers. He then divided the work between 12 to 15 women who worked at home or at his place for a pittance. He could arbitrarily apply penalties for trifles for which he reduced salaries. His income increased in proportion to the penalties he deducted from the workers’ salaries under the pretext of errors, insubordination, or whatever. The employer pocketed the other portion. The middleman could earn up to \$40 or \$50 per week. These “team runners”, “foremen”, and other “straw bosses”, whether employed in the shop or as henchmen of the “sweat system”, hired and fired the employees, determined their salaries, hired children, imposed fines, all in the name of the owner, who stayed in the shadows and observed.

In 1897, W. L. M. King investigated how the contracts for postal worker uniforms were carried out and noted the persistence of this system. *“It appeared that the young women who did piece work could not even earn five dollars a week unless they put in several hours of overtime. Since, with few exceptions all the persons employed in these workshops outside of the factories were women or girls, it seems fair to conclude that very few of them, and in some cases none of them, received wages sufficient for their subsistence if they depended entirely on this type of work to earn their living.”* With these agreements, certain contractors made a 100% profit.

Moreover, the workplaces were poorly lighted and without ventilation. They were very cold in winter and stiflingly hot in summer. To save money, they were not heated during the night; the heat was turned on half an hour before the arrival of the workers. The women shivered until 10 o’clock beneath ceilings that leaked and dripped. When it was very cold, they were sent home... without pay, of course.

The manufacturing of clothing was a sector mainly dominated by a female workforce. The census of 1891

mentions that of 1157 “milliners and dressmakers” registered, there were only 15 men. The workers of this industry earned about \$173 per year, twice less than the average salary of other Montreal workers. Worse still were the salaries of the young women or girls captive of the “sweating system” who worked at home seventy-five or eighty hours a week for a meagre pittance of \$0,50 to \$3.

Sanitary conditions were precarious in the factories. *“In the room where the women work, refuse accumulates under the tables, mixed with a sticky, oily substance from the machines. The odours that emanate from this rubbish are anything but healthy. Washing seems to be an unknown activity. There is no regular sweeping; but during working hours, each worker is free to dust her corner.”* There was no (fresh) air in those locales: they were saving on heating costs.

Toilets were non-existent in numerous factories. *“Trough-like, wooden containers lined with lead, half-filled with water receive the excrements of hundreds of workers during working hours. The emanations from these containers contaminate the air of the workrooms and it is only at night that they are emptied by a watchman who removes a plug at the bottom of the troughs and empties them into the sewers. For lack of a seat, the user has to climb on the rim to squat and the floor inevitably receives a certain amount of urine which penetrates as far as the interjoist where it is supposedly absorbed by a layer of ground tan (oak bark) that is occasionally replaced. The ventilation is usually imperfect, and, because of the repugnance of these toilets they are usually situated in a remote corner, to the detriment of the lighting.”* In this polluted atmosphere, there was a mixture of organic residues, gas, and the stench of the septic tanks. Following an inspection, James Mitchell mentioned the following: *“The most difficult thing was to convince the manufacturer of the existence of substances that are invisible to the naked eye. So it was necessary to prove their existence before proposing a remedy.”*

All in all, regardless whether the work was done at home or at the factory, the clothing industry workers exhausted themselves and became ill for starvation wages. Other than



A Foreman and His Workers

Source : http://www.businessethics.ca/blog/2006_07_01_archive.html

in hygiene and heating, has the situation really changed in this field? Judging by the picture, it seems that the sweatshop foremen are always on the job!

*Gérald Frigon (116)*

Our next annual reunion will be rich in opportunities to discover new treasures, both visual and intellectual. You will certainly return home with a head full of newly acquired information. Knowledge, however, is more easily acquired by active participation than by passive receptivity. The Association's fields of activity, history and genealogy, offer a vast panoply of research subjects so that all of you can find something that corresponds with your interests and is easy of access. Research provides so much pleasure... Besides the satisfaction that comes from both the endeavour and the results achieved, the researcher develops his personal interior resources. Psychologists and specialists in gerontology all say that the retiree must find new hobbies, new leisure time activities to occupy his time and his mind.

Collapsing in front of the TV or isolating oneself in the world of lost dreams will pass the time but will not nourish the mind as will the hobby (inexpensive) that I am about to propose to you: researching the life of our ancestors, their environment, their relationships, their way of life (the place of the woman, state of medicine, education, etc.). Our historians have studied all these subjects; all we have to do is consult our municipal libraries and make a résumé of our findings for the newsletter. Our Association Web site, in the section "Service to the Members," lists several subjects that have not as yet been chosen for research. Should you require assistance, we can help you to write your report for the newsletter, thus helping you to share your data with our "cousins.»

A WORD FROM THE NEWSLETTER TEAM

Here's the latest news!

Your Association Newsletter has undergone a few changes.

First, at the November 14, 2009 Board of Directors meeting, it was proposed and unanimously accepted by the members, to publish three rather than four issues of the newsletter annually, in January, May and September, for the next five years.

Then, in order to free more space for articles and to compensate for the reduction of the number of newsletters, the Board of Directors List and the Aims of the Association will be published only once a year, in the Winter Newsletter.

You have noticed that we have begun to include the

photo of the authors and of our newsletter collaborators so that you may more easily recognize them at our reunions.

Lastly, thanks to the initiative of Sylvie Frigon (27), the newsletter now includes a new rubric: "Golden and Diamond Wedding Anniversaries." Merci, Sylvie!

We thank each of you for being members of our Association and we wish you a pleasant summer. Do not hesitate to send us your articles. Leave your children and grandchildren a special heritage: the knowledge of their roots.

François Frigon (130)
and the Newsletter Team

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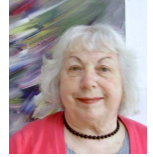
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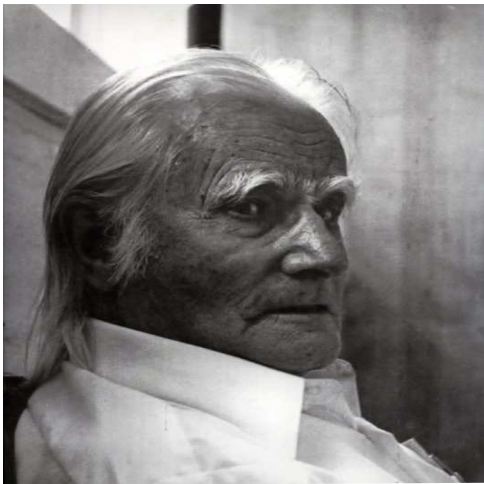
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Frequenting Brother Jerome's studio was an unforgettable way of life in the 80s and 90s. It was the art of painting, but it was also a philosophy of life.

Jerome's health was fragile. He suffered depressions under life's pressures. However, he managed to paint right up to his last days. Ulric-Aimé Paradis, known as Brother Jerome, was born August 29, 1902, and died April 30, 1994.



Brother Jerome

Jerome was a member of a religious community but he spent most of his time in his studio situated just behind Notre Dame College, in the shadow of St. Joseph's Oratory. Most of his life was spent with his students who came from every part of Quebec. At noon, he would ask a few of them to accompany him to dinner with the brothers at the college. Sometimes he would go off with one or the other to visit studios outside of Montreal.

In his studio, he would talk to us about painting, about modernism. We spent years working with this master, in all simplicity, unlike the students of the Beaux-Arts and the university who continually had to change professors.

We would organize feasts at the studio. For example, at Halloween, we would spend the night painting with a disguised Jerome. At Christmas, he had a gift for each one of us, one of his drawings, which we saved preciously.

Jerome's studio had something of the sacred about it. We felt a deep interior peace there. Yet, I never saw

Jerome pray. With us he lived as an artist. He was a friend. Sensitiveness, calm, movement expressed by asymmetry rather than by rapid strokes characterized us, like at the beginning of Quebec modernism. The artists who were taught by Brother Jerome still use this technique today



Brother Jerome, 1991

In his studio, he would have us paint 10 to 20 gouaches a day, using the gestural technique. Jerome reviewed all our work. He would mark them A, B, C and sometimes 2A. We marvelled at each other's work, without animosity or competitiveness.

A large room was reserved for his use at one end of the studio. Occasionally we would slip in to meditate upon his extraordinary work. The studio was filled with his paintings. His cat, lovingly called "Pinceau" (paint brush) roamed among his canvases scattered on the floor and on the walls.

Jerome encouraged us to live without being preoccupied by conventions, to "dirty" our colours, to live in the manner that suited us.

After his death, the studio was demolished to make way for a parking lot. Our heritage lost an important monument. Lately, artist members of the Association des artistes de l'atelier du Frère Jérôme met to celebrate his 100 years. The historians Guy Robert and Daniel Gagnon have written about Brother Jerome's work.

Editor's note:

Consult the Web site <http://www.ouellette001.com/vivre/vivre7.htm> to learn more about Brother Jerome. Odette's name appears on the list of his students.

REMINDER

Theme : Time and Space

REMINDER

It has already been five years since our last Grand Gathering. Our destination this time will be the region of Montreal. The Gathering will open on Saturday, at **Notre-Dame Basilica**, which was built in 1824 to replace Montreal's first stone church constructed in 1672. There will be a guided tour of the basilica, followed by our Annual Meeting which will take place in one of the parish halls. A caterer will serve lunch in the same room. This will be followed by a visit to the **Maison Saint-Gabriel**, a heritage museum in Pointe-Saint-Charles. It is in that house, bought by Marguerite Bourgeoys in 1668, that she received the *Filles du Roy* (wards of the king), the young single women who came from France to marry and to help ensure the future of the colony. The present building dates from 1698 and has been designated as a National Historic Site. Claude Deslandes, veterinarian and avid historian, will speak to us about the domestic animals in New France. Supper will be held at the Restaurant Magnan. In the evening we will return to Notre-Dame Basilica in Montreal for the **Light and Sound Show**.

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Sunday will begin with Mass at the old Ste-Rose de Lima Church in Laval. After brunch at an area restaurant, we will visit the *Cosmodome* and the *Space Camp* of Laval, accompanied by a guide who will explain the exhibits to us. A film and a conference, accompanied by a sampling of morsels of "astronaut food" will complete our "virtual" voyage into space.

We promise you an enriching and interesting two days. As you know, your presence is the key to making this Gathering a success!

Consult our Web site for the Registration form: <http://www.genealogie.org/famille/frigon/>

FAMILY HISTORY SHARING

Georges Frigon (93)



Our Association researchers are appealing to the members for help in finding the ancestry of the Frigons whose pictures appear below.



Nathalie Frigon,
Doctoral
candidate,
University of
Sherbrooke,
Owner of the
Centre Equestre
Royal of Magog?



Noémie Frigon
plays ringette
with the Atome
C Club of
Thetford-
Mines, QC.
Courier
Frontenac
2009-10-20



Claude Frigon
President of the
Board of Directors
of the CPE (child
care centre) Le
Pipandor of
Shawinigan South
Le Nouvelliste
2010-03-24

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When I was Brother Jerome's student, I would sometimes sit in his studio and study his canvases. Jerome would explain to me how he worked. You add coat upon coat (of paint). First, you cover the entire surface with one colour, leaving some empty spaces. Then you apply a second coat of a different colour, again leaving blank spaces. Each addition to the canvas is applied in the same manner. You will deduce that the third coat I used (on the acrylic below) was yellow.

Jerome would often say to me as I worked with harsh, basic, primary colours, "Dirty your colours, dirty your colours!" I, who had lived in Duplessis' county in Mauricie in the 50s, understood that, figuratively speaking, being told to smear my colours meant to free myself, to be myself!

Follow your paintbrush. Begin with your most beautiful colour. Let the white of the canvas show through. It's your hand that paints, the inspiration comes from within. Work without an academic method in a simple and repetitive manner. Follow a *cheminement éclaté* (fragmented path) where everything moves and is simultaneously at rest.



Odette Frigon, Acrylic, 14 x 18, 2009.

Smudge your colours. Mix them directly on the canvas, spontaneously, without a plan: make way for magic!

It is asymmetry that creates movement: Jerome's every gesture was well thought out.

As newcomers at the studio, we began by painting several gouaches rapidly. The lines, forms, and colours that kept recurring spontaneously were "ours": our personal style!

Then we painted with acrylic, with oils and other types of paints. We would concoct our own recipes, experimenting with turpentine, linseed oil, nut oil, etc.

Sometimes our ideas would differ from those of our master and we would discuss them with him. Jerome worked with us for years so it is not surprising that today, when I paint alone, I still hear his voice, his critiques...

Knowing when to stop working on a painting is the greatest quality of an artist: "Leave it alone!"

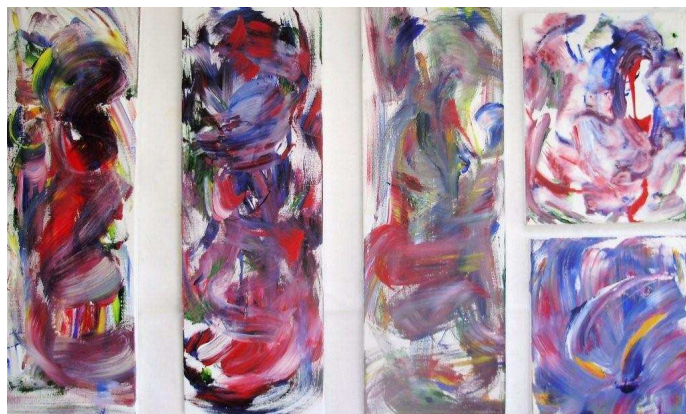
While we worked, we would turn the canvas every which way. Jerome used to say that when you can no longer tell which side is up, it is a good sign. Close your eyes and paint: "Let your subconscious do the work!"

Jerome used different sized mats on our paintings to teach us to "see.» We learned to put our canvases aside for a while in order to better analyze the perspective, etc. Today we use the digital camera to help us to "see" our work. Aides assisted Jerome and occasionally accompanied him on his outings or escapades outside the city.

Jerome taught us to be ourselves. Everybody's work is very personal. "Create! Don't copy!"

(Continuation on page 15)

(Continuation from page 14)



Odette Frigon, Acrylics, 2009

Jerome was a companion of Paul-Émile Borduas and developed his techniques with him during the 40s. He would refer to children's drawings, to primitivism. He marvelled at their creations. Borduas had frequented Maurice Denis' studio of sacred art in Paris. He brought back with him sensitivity, creativity, spontaneity, all qualities that laid the foundation of Quebec's modern art.

It was not easy for the autonomists to assert themselves within such a movement of change. Jerome was not invited to sign the *Refus Global*, but he shared its ideas.

Sometimes we are told that some of the artists in our group never frequented Brother Jerome's studio. That is true because our group is getting old and we need new people to carry on. Our group has as president, Doris Bellefeuille, a woman bursting with energy whose leadership makes the group very dynamic. We meet once a month and exchange notes on our progress. Each one has a chance to speak.

Several artists have frequented the studio, among them Diane Dufresne whom I have been with, and others such as Raoul Duguay.

The artists of Brother Jerome's studio have known him well. Among those who have officially written about him are Parisians with Doctorates in History, which makes us chuckle.

In conclusion, a word straight from the mouth of Brother Jerome. To those of us who took art courses in academic settings, Jerome would exclaim: "Poor you!" And that said it all.

For more information about Odette's paintings, you may communicate with her through Facebook: on Google, search for Odette Frigon, click on « Odette Frigon/Facebook, then sign in on Facebook.

FAMILY NEWS

Georges E. Frigon (93)

DEATHS

Sincere condolences to our members, cousins, and families who have lost a loved one.

Marjorie has left us!

Raymond Frigon's (1) companion, Marjorie Hylde Koller (née McPhee), passed away in Ottawa on January 10, 2010, at the age of 93, two years after the death of Raymond. Born in Montreal, Marjorie trained and worked as a nurse at the Royal Victoria Hospital where she worked with Dr. Wilder Penfield. During the 1930s, she traveled the world as a private nurse. From the mid-50s to the mid-60s, Marjorie was bursar and nurse at the Elmwood Girls School in Rockcliffe, after which she managed a clinic for a group of allergy specialists until her retirement in 1979. For many years she was deeply involved in the volunteer palliative care nursing program at the Riverside Hospital and studied with Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in New York

City to better understand the human journey at life's end. We have known Marjorie and appreciated her many qualities. Our sincere sympathy to the family.

July 2009

Bernadine Faye Frigon, spouse of Gary Lentz, daughter of Mildred Demanett Frigon (#189), died in Cheney, OK, USA, on July 20, 2009, at the age of 70.

Bernadine was from the line of Joseph, branch of Joseph.

September 2009

Paul Louie Frigon, friend of Cindy Feilner, died in Navarre, FL, USA, on September 10, 2009, at the age of 52.

Louie was from the line of Louis-Augustin, branch of Abraham..

October 2009

Julien Houde, spouse of Thérèse Béland, son of the late Arthur Houde and the late Rose-Anna Frigon, died in Shawinigan South, on October 14, 2009, at the age of 91 years and 7 months.

Rose-Anna Frigon was from the line of Antoine, branch of Antoine.

A DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The wedding anniversaries of our descendants



Last August 23, 2009, a surprise party reunited the family and friends of Thérèse and Rolland Frigon of Ste-Anne-de-la-Pérade, to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. They were married on September 3, 1949 at Ste-Anne-de-la-Pérade. We wish them many happy years with their descendants. *Sylvie Frigon (27) comes from the line of Pierre-Antoine, branch of Souleine*

GENEALOGICAL SKETCH

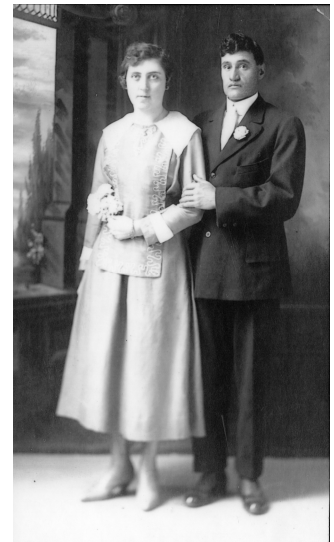
François and Marie-Claude Chamois
 Jean-François and Gertrude Perrot
 Antoine Pierre and M.-Anne Trottier
 Pierre Antoine and Joseph Massicot
 Antoine and Marie-Anne Frigon
 Joseph Souleine and Henriette Cloutier
 Jean C and Exilda Nobert
 Primat and Marie Rompré
 Rolland and Thérèse Marcotte
 Sylvie and Bernard Naud



Marriage of Bernard Naud and Sylvie Frigon in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade, on September 6, 1980



Marriage of Rolland Frigon and Thérèse Marcotte in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade, on September 3, 1949



Marriage of Primat Frigon and Marie Rompré in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade, on April, 1919

gef (93)

Send wedding anniversary photos of yourself, your parents or grandparents to the Association.

The members will be glad to see the descendants of the Frigon families.

Please get in touch with me for further details. I will be happy to send you information.

Sylvie Frigon

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