

Michel Richard dit Sancoucy 1629 - 1689

1 A successful farmer

In 1671, seventeen years after his arrival in Acadia, Michel Richard Sansoucy said he was well rooted in the new world and had carved a very enviable heritage for that time. Indeed, according to the "Roles 1 families of Acadia" made by Sr. Randin, sent to Monseigneur Colbert of Quebec City on November 8, 1671, reads ... " Laborer - MICHEL RICHARD was 41 years old, his wife Magdeleine Blanchard was 28 years old Their children 7, René 14 years old, Pierre 10 years, Catherine 8, Martin 6, Alexandre 3, two needs Anne and Madgeleine five weeks, Their bestes in Horns 15 and 14 sheep, Their arable land and in value in two places 14 arpans ".

In 1671, the collective wealth of the Acadians combined 829 horned animals, 399 sheep and 417 acres of arable land.

2 Origins

Michel's parents remain unknown for the moment. (added later: Jean Andre Richard and Michelle Pailin)

Its place of origin would be the parish of St-Georges , Saintes, Saintonge (now Charente Maritime), France. Saintes is about 60 kilometers southeast of La Rochelle, which was the gateway to almost all departures for Acadia.

The parish of St. George does not seem to exist on modern maps where we find however the parish of St-Georges-des-Coteaux. This parish is about 4 kilometers northwest of the town of Saintes.

However, Guy Perron 3, who wrote the genealogical history of François Peron (1615 - 1665), merchant-laborer, bourgeois and bunker of La Rochelle, specifies that, from 1580, the Peron were associated with a family Richard during over 50 years old. Since 1642, Francois Peron practice the "trading and cargo traffic" with other merchants in the area. In 1655, he started a business where he met all the risks involved in trade with the colonies (mainly New France).

Michel Richard said Sansoucy would have been informed by the family tradition of Peron? It seems to me there is a trail to explore.

3 His arrival

Leaving La Rochelle , Michel Richard dit Sansoucy, farmer , arrived at the age of 24 at the end of May 1654 in Port Royal, Acadie. Michel crossed the Atlantic in the company of Pierre Thibodeau, miller, on the Châteaufort, an armed ship at war and chartered on March 25, 1654 from La Rochelle by Emmanuel Le Borgne of Belle Isle. The duration of the crossing therefore been about 60 days. The Châteaufort, a 300-ton vessel ordered by Sieur Guilbeault, was in charge of a cargo of goods valued at 75,000 pounds (\$ 15,000). Michel Richard's conditions of engagement are not known to us. However, according to the descendants of his travel companion Pierre Thibodeau, the latter would have declared at the time of his engagement to be 23 years old and Le Borgne would have paid him a advance of 30 pounds tournaments before the departure of La Rochelle. Going and going being paid, Pierre committed for three years for 80 pounds tournaments (\$ 16) a year. I suppose that equivalent conditions could also apply to Michel Richard dit Sansoucy .

4 His home land

Michel Richard arrives in Port-Royal, Acadia, a young country open to colonial development since 1603.

In this new country, agriculture, cod fishing and the fur trade were the main economic activities. Beyond their commercial character, these activities supported the very life of these newly arrived settlers.

The figure below shows the occupation against 13 of the banks at a later date than his death.

4.1 The population

In 1654, Port Royal, Acadia, was inhabited by a few hundred inhabitants because there were about four hundred souls in round figures, according to the census of 1671. It included a surgeon, two armourers, a mason, a weaver, four coopers, a small number of other artisans. However, the census neglected the settlers of Pentagouet and the Saint-Jean River in Western Acadia. We can estimate that the total population of Acadia was then about 500 people. For 500 inhabitants in Acadia, New England already had 73,000. An Acadian had, in principle, to face 150 Bostonians.

Between the beginning of 1686 years and October 1687, Mr Meulles, Intendant of New France, ordered the holding of a general census of Acadia. For example, in Port-Royal, Acadie, there were 95 families consisting of 197 adults and 395 children (218 boys and 177 girls) for a total of 592 individuals.

4.2 Land use

Most of the inhabitants were farmers, established along the rivers. Their properties were long rectangles perpendicular to waterways, like Quebec properties perpendicular to the St. Lawrence. These concessions were long narrow strips of land; measuring two acres (192 feet) abreast along the Dauphin River and extending thirty acres inland into the virgin forest. Initially, the Acadians cultivated mainly wheat, oats, rye, hay, hemp and flax in the lowlands formed by alluvium brought by the river.

Over time, each settler had cleared a piece of land near his home, built on higher land, out of reach of high tides. According to Dièreville, *Voyage en Acadie*, this traveler wrote ... "Except asparagus and artichokes, they have all kinds of vegetables, and all excellent, they have fields covered with cabbages and turnips, they keep all year They put the turnips in the cellar, they are soft and sweet, and much better than in France, they eat them like chestnuts, cooked in the ashes. The cabbages remain in the fields, the head reversed, and the snow the "They make buxom soups with these two vegetables and large pieces of bacon, they make a lot of cabbage because the pigs eat the debris, and it is their only food during the winter . "

Behind the house was an orchard of apples, pears, cherries and other fruit trees that had been brought from France.

4.3 The Aboiteaux - a unique mode of cultivation in America

Settlers on the Port Royal River (now the Annapolis River) were the only agricultural establishment in Acadia at that time. Rather than deforesting high lands to make them arable land, the Acadians used the experience some had in marshland drying to establish a completely original farming system. These settlers, pioneers of water, dried up the marshes around Port Royal (around 5,000 acres) and claimed the sea, by the construction of dams or dikes, land made of fertile alluvium. The figure opposite shows in profile a typical aboiteau. By building aboiteaux (system of dikes and drainage ditches), named after the wooden channel used for the flow of water through dikes, the Acadian water clearers demanded from the sea very rich lowlands that gave high yields. The dikes prevented flooding of the marshes and the aboiteaux authorized the drainage of the highlands. From a height of six to eight feet and eight feet wide, the aboiteaux could protect the alluvial lands of the tides which, in the French Bay, could reach more than 50 feet.

Overall, the soil characteristics of the marshes were favorable for agricultural production. The flat surfaces and the natural soil moisture favored above-average plant growth. The inhabitants, who have multiplied in Port-Royal, note (Nicolas) Denys, harvest a lot of wheat and have a large number of cows and pigs"

A French visitor of the 18th century, the Sieur de Dièreville, left us a description of the construction of aboiteaux:

"They plant five or six rows of large whole trees where the sea enters the swamps, and between each row they lay down other trees along each other and fill all the voids so well with clay well beaten, that the water could not pass in. They adjust in the middle of these works a [channel] so that it allows the low tide, the water of the marshes to flow by its impulse, and forbid to that of the sea to enter there "

According to Daigle, ... "The construction of an aboiteau because of the technology of the time required the implementation of a large amount of labor as well as the decision-making by certain individuals charged to lead. Once completed, there was a need for constant surveillance of the ravages of the sea. The system of building aboiteau and cultivating alluvial lands created a state of interdependence and a community spirit that forged the soul. Acadian and tightened existing ties more closely."

"This type of agriculture was in no way implanted or subsidized by the metropolis [France]." The use of the dyke was the contribution of the Acadians to a local problem: the construction, the maintenance and the choice of appropriate technology testify on the part of the population of a decision-making autonomy encouraged by the weakness of the traditional institutions. Taking more and more distance vis-à-vis the authorities, the Acadians were the only ones responsible for the establishment of this unique culture mode in America " .

The peasants knew a prosperity far superior to that of their cousins remaining in their region of origin. In addition, they had the advantage of being virtually free from most of the feudal easements used in the kingdom of France. Do they not refused to pay the tithe, when the bishop of Quebec tried to enslave them?

Michel had to collaborate, like the other settlers, in the construction, maintenance and maintenance of the aboiteaux in the name of collective interests and his own interests. The census mentions that Michel has land in two places. The Acadians, although the census does not always mention, cultivated almost every two different places on their land. The lowlands, salvaged from the sea, where they sowed wheat, millet, oats, barley, etc., and highlands, near their home, where they grew vegetables and where they had planted fruit trees.

4.4 Aboriginal Legacies

Each family owned one or more bark canoes, an inheritance of Aboriginal peoples: the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet, of Algonquin origin. Mi'kmaq territory stretched from the Gaspé Peninsula to Cape Breton, passing through the east coast of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The territory of the Maliseet Nation was essentially west of the Saint John River.

The end of the Acadian concessions plunged into the forest, where oaks, beeches, conifers of various species, and especially maples, grew. The Micmacs had taught them to slash maple trees in the spring and boil the sap for maple syrup (which was unknown in Europe). Still according to Dièreville, "Voyage en Acadie", he wrote ... "They even made fir trees, leavens and molasses, a kind of beer that is not bad, but their most common drink is water." This is the "little spruce beer" that they had to learn about making from the Micmacs. During the winter, the Acadians, for the most part, hunt wild beasts in the highlands of their lands, especially for their fur. They accompany the Indians in the woods, who not only teach them the art of hunting, but also teach them how to pick the plants and roots they will cure.

4.5 Education

Since 1644, education was provided by twelve Capuchin Fathers at Port Royal. However in 1654, Sedgewick, Major General of the Massachusetts militia, attacked and took Acadia. This military force killed a Capuchin Father and drove out the others. In 1676, Father Petit, the first priest to establish a permanent ministry in Acadia, founded the first Acadian school in Port-Royal.

4.6 The dwellings

In 1685, in Beaubassin, Robert Rumilly 34 describes the houses as follows ... "these houses are made of wood, the only material at hand, chopped off the ax, piece by piece. The roof is covered with fir shingles, made in where the wooden pegs replace the nails, rare and expensive, the door hinges themselves are wood, a dining table, benches, rarely rustic chairs and two, three or four chests are the furniture. on the wall, the musket and the powder horn, on a frame, coaches where the sun marks the hours ".

As for Menneval, 1688, he observes that ... " The Port-Royal is a place that has almost no shape, and although it is composed of about twenty nasty houses of mud and wood, there is but only six inhabitants, the rest being scattered in the space of six or seven leagues along the river . "

5 The political context

5.1 French Government

At the time of Michel Richard's landing , the political framework supporting the development of this small community was confused. In 1632, Cardinal Richelieu, Minister of the King of France, had appointed his cousin Isaac de Razilly, Lieutenant General of Acadia. But in the meantime, the King himself had also appointed Charles Latour, Lieutenant General of Acadia. Razilly died in 1635 and his cousin Charles de Menou d'Aulnay succeeded him. Thus, in 1654, there were two lieutenants or governors of one and the same territory, both with the same objective: the control of trade, fishing and furs.

In this quarrel of titles, was added Nicholas Denys, French entrepreneur interested in fishing and timber trade. The motor of the story is always the same and the figure opposite shows the territories occupied by the antagonists.

Thus, in the summer of 1654, Le Borgne and Guilbeault, principal creditors of the late Sieur Charles D'Aulnay (a lieutenant-general of two, who died by drowning on August 24, 1650), came to Port Royal, Acadie, to claim their rights over the estate of Sieur Menou d'Aulnay. On their arrival, Leborgne and Guilbeault seized several establishments and took possession the same year, of Port-Royal. At the same time, they attacked Charles La Tour, another designated lieutenant and Nicholas Denys, a French entrepreneur.

Michel, was he aware of this historical plot?

5.2 English Government

The quarrels between Latour, Leborgne and Nicholas Denys were short-lived because on 16 August 1654, two and a half months after Michel's arrival , the colony surrendered to Major Robert Sedgewick and his 4-ship expedition of 500 men.

History reports that Le Borgne, placed a detachment between the coast and the fort to harass the landing of the enemy and thus delay the assault of the fort whose garrison was small. One might suppose that Michel was one of the soldiers or at least one of the hired men who helped the defenders of Port-Royal.

History reports that ... "Robert Sedgwick, major general of the militia of Massachusetts, decided to attack Acadia without being ordered by anyone. Sedgwick was originally to fight the Dutch settled in New Amsterdam (New York) when the war ended between Holland and England. Frustrated in its plans, Sedgwick had the idea of taking the opportunity to settle the French account in Acadia, even if England and France was at peace.

He first obtained the surrender of Latour on the Saint John River, then turned to Port Royal where he received little resistance from Le Borgne. The latter was sent to France with his men, while Latour was sent to England. Sedgwick left a garrison on the spot and returned to Boston where he received a triumphant welcome. Nevertheless, the authorities reproached him for having exceeded his powers.

The fact remains that Acadia had just passed into the hands of the English who named Thomas Temple as governor of Acadia in 1662".

5.3 Return of the French authorities

In 1667, the Treaty of Breda restores Acadia to France. However, the English delayed the effective restitution until 1670. At that moment, Leborgne is confirmed in his functions and appoints his son, Alexandre, governor and lieutenant general of the King in Acadia.

In 1670, Louis XIV named Hector D'Andigné, Sieur de Grand Fontaine, governor of Acadia, while Le Borgne Jr. became lord of Port-Royal. The governor arrived July 17, 1670 on the French ship "San Sebastian" to Penobscot (nowadays, in the US state of Maine). This vessel carried on board, in addition to the crew, fifty French soldiers, a company of the Carignan regiment. With them three officers: the leader of the detachment, Captain Andigné of Grand Fontaine, a lieutenant, Joybert de Soulanges, and a sign, of Abbadie de Saint-Castin, one of the bravest leaders of the future struggles of America.

From 1654 to 1670, the Acadians, including our Michel, practically did not know France. They frequented the English more often than the French, and came to regard this coexistence with the English as an essential part of their life in America. An element of the Acadian character was born during this period, their spirit of accommodation with English power.

Nevertheless, the Acadian cultural specificity seemed to assert itself because the Abbot Petit wrote around 1676 that ... " The Port-Royal Habitation is made up of about eighty families who make at least six hundred souls, people of a gentle and godly nature, we see among them no oaths, no debauches of women, nor drunkenness, Though they are scattered up to four and five leagues on the river, they come in crowds to the church. Sundays and feasts, and they frequent the sacraments, God forbid me to attribute their piety to my pains, I found them on their feet when I came here, and yet fifteen or sixteen years ago that they were without priests, under the domination of the English".

During his life in Acadia, Michel has lived under the direction of six Acadian governors, of which Emmanuel Le Borgne of Belle Isle (1657-1670); Hector de Grandfontaine (1670 to 1673); Jacques de Chambly (1673 to 1678); Michel de Vallière (1678 to 1684); François Marie Perot (1684 to 1687); Louis-Alexandre des Friches, Sieur of Meneval (1687 to 1690).

6 His destiny

6.1 Union with Magdelaine Blanchard

Around 1655, Michel unites his destiny with that of Magdelaine Blanchard in Port-Royal. From this union, will all be born in Port-Royal:

1. René, Sieur de Beaupré, around 1657 and married to Madeleine Landry around 1679;
2. Pierre, about 1660 and married towards 1686 to Marguerite Landry, Madeleine's sister;
3. Catherine, around 1663 and married around 1678 to François Broussard;
4. Martin, around 1668 and married around 1691 to Marguerite Bourg;
5. Alexander, the eldest, around 1668 and married to Elizabeth Petitpas around 1690;
6. Madeleine (twin), around 1671 and married around 1686 to Charles Babin;
7. Anne (Jumelle), around 1671 and married around 1686 to Germain Thériot;
8. Marie-Joséphé, around 1672 and married around 1689 to Michel Vincent;
9. Cécile, around 1676 and married around 1692 to Pierre Forest;
10. Marguerite, around 1679 and married around 1698 to Jean Leblanc.

Magdeleine Blanchard came from the old founding families of Acadia including Blanchard and Lambert. Indeed, Jehan Blanchard, father of Magdelaine was born at La Chaussé, in Loudunois, France in 1611. He comes to Port-Royal with his parents in 1641. The very year of his arrival, he marries, in Port-Royal, Radegonde Lambert, daughter of Jean Lambert and, probably, an Indian Micmac. Following this union, Radegonde was born in 1629. His father, Jehan Lambert was already in Port-Royal in 1612; March 13, 1612, he is mentioned as a witness in an affidavit written by Louis-Hébert in Port Royal 45. It is likely that he was brought by Jean de Biencourt, Baron de Poutrincourt (father of Charles), the true founder of Acadia on Jonah, party of Dieppe, Normandy, February 25, 1610.

In 1679, Michel, aged 49, lost his wife Magdelaine Blanchard, aged only 37, probably victim of the birth of Marguerite, the tenth child of this union. Following the death of his wife, Michel had to provide, with the exception of René, Sieur de Beaupré, who had also married around 1679, the family education of his nine other children whose ages ranged from 0 to 17 years.

6.2 Union with Jeanne Babin

After three years of widowhood, Michael, then aged 52, gets second marriage the hand of a young girl of fifteen, Jeanne Babin, whose father and mother were neighbors: Antoine Babin and Marie Mercier. During her period of widowhood, her children, René, Sieur de Beaupré and Catherine were respectively married in 1679 and 1680 in Port-Royal. Despite her young age (15 years), Jeanne Babin began her married life with a family of 8 children whose ages ranged from 0 to 21, some older than their new mother including Pierre (21) and Martin (18).

Jeanne Babin also came from the old founding families of Acadia including Mercier Caudebec and Gaudet. Indeed, Jehan Gaudet, his great-grandfather on the maternal side who was the dean of the colony during the census of 1671 48 would also have come with Charles de Biencourt, between 1610 and 1614. From this union, will be born in Port-Royal:

1. Michel, Sieur de Lafond, around 1683 and married on 25 February 1707 to Agnès Bourgeois;
2. Alexandre dit Boutin, around 1686 and married on December 26, 1711 to Marie Levron.

6.3 His death

Michel seems to have left this land around 1688 (the year when war breaks out again between France and England), before turning 60. He left dying, his young wife, Jeanne Babin who was barely twenty years old, and seven (7) unmarried children: five (5) children from her first marriage, including her sons Martin and Alexandre, aged 23 and over. 20 years old, and her three youngest daughters: Marie, Cécile and Marguerite, aged respectively 14, 12 and 9 years old, as well as her two young boys of the second bed, Michel, Sieur de Lafond and Alexandre dit Boutin, aged 4 and 2 years.

Jeanne Babin, a young widow, remarried about 1689 with Laurent Doucet, the same age of whom she had at least eleven (11) children.

7 His contribution to the colonization of Acadie

With the exception of her eldest daughter, Catherine Richard, who married a Frenchman (Jean-François Broussard) who landed in Acadia around 1671, all his children joined Acadian families of old stumps including Babin, Blanchard, Bourg, Bourgeois, Forest, Landry the Elder, Landry the Cadet, Le Blanc, and Levron dit Nantais, Petitpas, Terriot and Vincent,

Of the six sons of Michel, four settled in Port-Royal: René, Sieur de Beaupré, Alexander the eldest, Michel, Sieur de Lafond and Alexandre the young dit Boutin, while Pierre became a stock in Grand-Pré (colony founded in 1675 by René Le Blanc) and Martin in Beaubassin (colony founded by Jacques Bourgeois in 1672, first named Chignectou and then Beaubassin, today Amherst, NE).

Of Michel's six daughters, four settled in Port-Royal: Catherine (married to Jean Broussard), Marie-Anne (married to Germain Thériault), Madeleine (married to Charles Babin) and Cécile (married to Pierre Forest) while Marie-Josephte (married to Michel Vincent) settled in Pigiguit and Marguerite (married to Jean Leblanc, son of René Le Blanc, founder of Grand-Pré) settled in Grand-Pré.

**Denis Richard Brossard,
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<http://famillesrichard.com/michel.htm>

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