

INTRODUCTION:

When researching my French Canadian genealogy I was always very interested in my ancestors who were Voyagers. When searching at the UVM library I found a great series of books called "Rapport of the Archivist of Quebec" (RAPQ). In some of the many volumes it listed the Engagements (Commitments for a specific journey to Makinac or Detroit, Lake of the Woods or one of many places in the West.

I wanted to make this easily available to genealogists at our library. I went to the BANQ website in Montreal and downloaded all 8 books; and then extracted the pages of engagements and merged them together and created a PDF document that can be easily searched.

HOW TO SEARCH

After loading the document, do a CTRL-F which will pop open a search box; and then enter the surname you are searching for. Click on NEXT until you have completed your search.

Edouard-Zotique Massicotte created eight major sections of voyager engagements in eight volumes of RAPQ as follows:

1670-1745 Vol. 1929-1930 pages 191-466 275 pgs

1746-1752 Vol. 1930-1931 pages 353-453 100 pgs

1753-1758 Vol. 1931-1932 pages 243-365 122 pgs

1758-1778 Vol. 1932-1933 pages 245-304 59 pgs

1788-1797 Vol. 1942-1943 pages 261-397 136 pgs

1798-1801 Vol. 1943-1944 pages 335-444 109 pgs

1802-1804 Vol. 1944-1945 pages 307-401 94 pgs

1805-1821 Vol. 1945-1946 pages 225-340 115 pgs

For a total of 1,010 pages of engagement data

This stands as the single most important source on published engagements. However, it is not very thorough for the latter years. Even the earlier volumes are incomplete. The last volume in the series only covers the contracts produced by the notaries Chaboillez and J. G. Beek. The vast majority of these contracts in the last volume are for the NWCo. Some other miscellaneous legal documents are included such as obligations to settle fur trade related debts. Also, some of the engagements are for whole groups, that is, all the men travelling in a brigade.

REPertoire OF ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE WEST PRESERVED IN THE JUDICIAL ARCHIVES OF MONTREAL. BY E.-Z. MASSICOTTE

Except for agriculture, there were no industries under the French regime local enough to provide employment for all the offspring of large families. There was only a trade relatively considerable: the fur trade; that an industry of a certain magnitude: I cart by water. To this trade and this industry required the help of thousands of boatmen, craftsmen, trappers to transport the goods to be exchanged, supply scattered posts, repair or manufacture weapons and tools, join

nomadic tribes, build forts or dwellings, finally, to bring distant regions the bundles of furs that were traded with the natives or the coureurs de bois.

And it is in Montreal, mainly, that hundreds young people flocked from various parts of the colony and seeking to hire themselves in order to subsist or collect some francs with a view to getting married, then settling close to their relatives, when it was not for the sole pleasure of traveling, seeing new and satisfy their taste for adventures.

By its geographic location and the activity of its merchants, Montreal was the perfect place for the final organization of commercial, industrial, military or supply shipments which were heading towards the southern, central or western parts of the vast American continent.

In the Report of the archivist of the province of Quebec from 1921-22 (pp. 189 and following) we published the Directory of leave and trading permits granted by the King or his representatives, then registered in Montreal before 1760. There we find the list of gentlemen, bourgeois, civil servants, who obtained permission to engage in the fur trade, directly or indirectly.

The Directory of the engagements of the common people compiled since, completes the previous one. It offers great interest in perspective of family history as well as that of history localities located along major waterways, outside the province of Quebec.

From 1670 to 1760, and in the district of Montreal only, we have 13,055 engagements contracts. If we think that sometimes two or three men are engaged in the same contract, one can say in round numbers, that 15,000 French-speaking individuals left Montreal for the West during the 17th century and from the 18th century.

No doubt a good number of them have returned and have reengaged two or three times, however, it is certain that many have perished on these journeys, that others married women of European or native origin, founded families and are fixed in uncultivated regions. How many vigorous and enterprising men have we lost this way? How many settlers did our race have so it spreads on various points of the continent? Proportionally to the people of New France, we will see that this number is quite high.

Montreal is definitely not the only place where contracts like the ones we site have been passed. For the same period there must have been in Trois-Rivières and Quebec city, in lesser quantity, perhaps, since Montreal was the starting point of departure for the high country and the great post for soliciting voyageurs.

This directory will also answer many questions that genealogists posed in vain, when after having recorded the births of a family, they found that one, two and three children disappeared without a trace.

To prepare this work, it was necessary to examine the records of notaries whose names follow:

Adhemar	1668-1714		Foucher	1746-1800
Adhemar jr	1714-1754		Frerot	1669-1675
Barette	1709-1744		Gastineau	1652-1653
Basset	1657-1699		Grise	1756-1764
Bourdon	1677-1720		Hodiesne	1740-1764
Cabazie	1673-1693		Lalanne	1752-1767
Chaumont	1727-1752		Latour	1741
Cherrier	1738-1789		Lepallier sr	1703-1733
Chevremont	1732-1739		Lepallier jr	1733-1739
Closse	1651-1656		Loiseau	1730-1760
Comparet	1736-1755		Monmerque	1731-1765
Coron sr	1721-1732		Moreau	1681-1698
Coron jr	1734-1767		Panet	1755-1778
Cusson	1700-1704		Pilliamet	1755-1760
David	1719-1726		Pottier	1686-1701
Danre de Blanzzy	1738-1760		Raimbault sr	1697-1727
De Courville	1754-1781		Raimbault jr	1727-1737
Deguire	1758-1762		Saint-Pere	1648-1657
De Monchy	1764-1767		Saint Romain	1731-1732
Desmarais	1753-1754		Souste	1745-1769
Dufresne	1733-1750		Vautier	1752-1785

The titles of the contracts extracted from these registers are arranged below in chronological order. Far from stopping, this annual exodus increased under the English regime as a result of several causes which can be briefly list: freedom of the trade of furs, progressive colonization of regions west of Montreal, increase in volume by the use of larger vessels. It is to the point that La Rochefoucault-Liancourt wrote, at during his stay in America (1795-1797):

"Depending on the nature of the work they (the Canadians) are called, they leave their country for the summer or for a year or for many ... The King's service, for example, they are taken up from buildings in Montreal to Kingston ... "It took nine days to make this trip up and three days to come back. Loading and unloading took each a day. We were traveling in fifteen days from Montreal to the Illinois and from there in twenty days to New Orleans. Doesn't it follow that, one day or another, we will have to continue this directory and make it until around 1850, if we want to reach the strains of these anglicized French Canadian families or Americanized for two or three generations, and which are found in fairly large numbers in those parts of the United States watered by the rivers and streams that once were the only ways of transport.

E.-Z. MASSICOTTE