

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

Noel Morin & Helen Desportes

During the French Regime, at least 16 immigrants bearing the Morin surname appeared in Canadian registries: the first of them was a priest, then a baker, a colonist, three soldiers and a resident of Saint-Malo who died at the Hotel-Dieu of Quebec on 4 September 1727.

In the region of Montmagny, Eloi-Gerard Talbot (a Marist and tireless researcher), discovered descendants from five different Morin families:

- Pierre Morin dit Boucher, the Acadian;
- Robert Morin, sacristan of Sainte-Anne-de-la Pocatiere, of unknown origin, husband of Francoise Mignier dit Lagace;
- Andre Morin, the Poitevin, husband of Marguerite Moreau;
- Jacques Morin, from Saint-Etienne-de-Brelay, husband of Hilaire Guery; and
- **Noel Morin**, a cartwright.

Other founders were the families of Angevin Jacques Morin, Poitevin Charles, the Breton Pierre and Moise Morin dit Chesevert.

FROM LA BRIE



Noel Morin was born about 1616 in Brie, Ille-et-Vilaine, Bretagne, France, a region of the Paris Basin. Today, the town is the arrondissement of Melun and department of Seine-et-Marne. Noel was baptized at Saint-Etienne which was built in part in the 13th century. During Noel's time, la Brie had a bishop whose episcopal seat was at Meaux.

We know almost nothing about the life in France of the son of **Claude Morin** and **Jeanne Moreau**. The boy learned to write his name, to count and to make wheels and carriages. Did he practice his trade with his father? There is no way to find out. Noel's mother died before he came to New France.

QUEBEC

Noel immigrated from La Brie to Canada about 1637. He made his first official appearance in its national history on Tuesday, 27 December 1639 at the home of



notary Martial Piraude (secretary of the governor Hault de Montmagny and clerk with the clerk's office and tabellionage of Quebec) where he signed a marriage contract with **Helene Desportes**, daughter of **Pierre Desportes** and **Francois Langlois**, niece of Abraham Martin.

All the important people of the capital gathered to celebrate the signing of Noel's marriage contract: from Jean Bourdon to Jean Jolliet, including Robert Giffard, Guillaume and Louis Couillard, Father Jean Lesueur and, of course, their great ladies!

Why such a formal ceremony? According to Rene Jette, the bride was none other than the first white child born alive in the Saint Lawrence region, baptized at Notre Dame des Roucources, Quebec on 16 July 1620. Her godmother was Helene Boulle, the wife of Samuel de Champlain who named Helene as a beneficiary in his will of 1635.

Helene followed her parents back to France in 1629 and returned to Canada in 1634. At 14 years of age, she had married Guillaume Hebert, son of the first colonist Louis and his wife Marie Rollet. Widowed in September 1639, her uncle Guillaume Couillard undertook the guardianship of her three children, two who survived: son Joseph and daughter Francois. Three months later she chose to become the wife of Noel Morin.

On Monday, 9 January 1640, the Jesuit Nicolas Adam blessed this union in the presence of witnesses Nicolas Pivert and Robert Giffard, surgeon and seigneur in New France. Noel Morin gave his bride for "good friendship" a dowry of 200 livres guaranteed by:

"a house at Brie-Comte-Robert where hangs a sign with the blue horse in the parish of St-Etienne on rue des fontaines near the gate of the town which the said groom received from the succession of his mother."

Therefore, Noel was not a vagabond. On her part, Helene brought to the newly-formed marriage the ownership of a house located near the church of Notre Dame, with *"2 arpents of land near Mont-Carmel and a garden measuring 40 perches belonging to the said house."*

The 40 perches in area, which were found north of the storehouse of the One Hundred Associates, in the Upper Town, were officially ceded to the Morin couple on 4 September 1640.

Helene continued to be the wife and mother in her house which measured 24 by 18 feet. Noel also lived there until 1645 while practicing his trade of cartwright.

SAINTE GENEVIEVE COAST

On 26 April 1645, Governor Montmagny gave Noel Morin 50 arpents of land on the Sainte Genevieve coast for 90 livres. He moved his household there and, in a period of 20 years, he built *"three frame dwellings, two of which had a heated room each, cellar and attic, the third serving as a shop and attic above, with a barn and two-and-a-half arpents enclosed with stakes and serving as a yard."*

It seems very likely that the move to the Sainte Genevieve coast was carried out before 9 September 1648, the day on which Jean Guyon and Michel Leneuf were to examine the first Morin house and its lot located on the tip of Cap-aux-Diamants. Later, the Fabrique de Quebec would purchase it all for 800 livres.

At the same time, Morin requested the recruiter Noel Belanger to find him a hired man in France. On 4 Jun 1649, at La Rochelle, Pierre Paillereau, a laborer from Villedoux, canton of Marans, was hired to work for Noel Morin. On 6 February 1650, Antoine Rouillard and Thomas Touchet promised to build on Noel Morin's land the framework of a house *"which will be thirty feet long and twenty feet wide ... six feet under beams."* Noel paid 250 livres for this work, in addition to 20 minots of peas to be given to the two carpenters.

Thus, we see that Helene, Noel and their children established their residence on the Sainte Genevieve coast for a long time to come.

SEIGNEUR DE SAINT-LUC

The head of the Morin family was a man of responsibility and judgment. For example, in 1652 Marie d'Abancourt, widow of Jean Jolliet, called on his services to appraise the cartwright tools left at the home of Jean Bourdon.

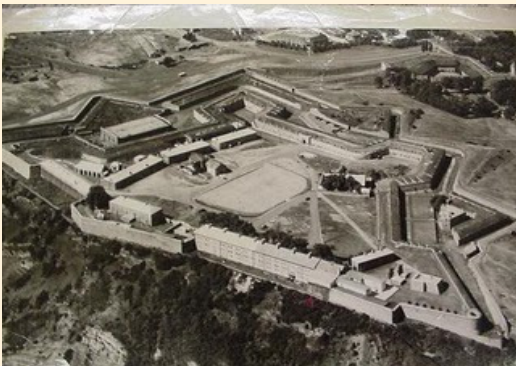
On 15 November 1653, Jean de Lauzon, Governor of New France, ceded to Noel Morin a quarter-league of frontal property by a league deep, beginning an arpent below the La Caille River and going up the Saint Lawrence towards the south side. The Ile-aux-Oies were included in this concession. Thus, Seigneur Morin became the owner of a portion of the seigneurie of la Riviere-du-Sud, today part of the town of Montmagny.

This acquisition as a fief entailed rights and duties. The new recipient must render faith and homage to the West Indies Company. Noel named his domain Saint Luc, and thereafter bore the title of Sieur de Saint Luc. Why this evangelist rather than another one? Nobody knows. Did the seigneur and seigneuresse intend to leave Quebec, the town where their growing children could be educated? It seems unlikely. This property which fell from the sky would later be divided among their sons, relatives and son-in-law Guillaume Fornier.

FIFTEEN YEARS OF PROGRESS

The years covering the period from 1653 to 1668 were marked by progress and expansion for both the children and the parents of this family.

On 17 May 1655, Noel and Helene were granted a pew by the Fabrique of Quebec. It was located on the north side, in the nave, near that of Charles Sevestre. In return, the Fabrique received 2 arpents of land which the Morins owned, today the land on which stands the citadel of Quebec. On the following



4th of July, the terms of the transaction were drawn up. The two arpents were appraised at 180 livres. Of this amount, 100 livres were used to pay the tuition of son Germain, a student at the Seminary.

On 5 June 1658, Louis Sedillot and Noel Morin agreed to each build their half of a boundary fence between their property at Saint Genevieve. However, Sedillot delayed carrying out his promise for more than four years.

Guillaume Fornier married Francois Hebert, stepdaughter of Noel Morin, on 20 November 1651. On 12 September 1663, Guillaume was given a receipt for the 1,000 livres tournois that he had provided to the Morins over a 10-year period, and without prejudicing the rights of succession owned by his wife.

During the same era, through the intervention of his father, Nicolas Morin obtained a concession from the Jesuits at Sillery. Nicholas died a few years later at age 23. Then, on 3 August 1664, the Seigneur de Saint-Luc took part in the election of the mayor Claude Charron.

On 23 May 1666, Noel Morin ceded 30 arpents of land to Jean Pannier for the price of 60 livres. The buyer probably returned to France. On 2 August of the same summer, Jean Poitras bought the other half. In the census of 1666, Marie Charlotte Poitiers (widow of Helene's son Joseph Hebert who was killed by the Iroquois in 1661) lived under the roof of her mother-in-law.

Jean Ballie earned his bread as Noel's hired hand. The following year, Jean was still working for Morin. In addition, Zacharie Jolliet, 17 years old, learned the trade of cartwright from his master, Noel Morin. At that time, the farm had 40 arpents under cultivation and 12 head of cattle. On 20 June 1667, an official report concerning the road which went to Sainte Genevieve was drawn up. It was time to improve it.

SITUATION DURING THE LAST YEARS

In 1668, the die was cast. The homestead on the Saint Michel route, obtained from the Jesuit Fathers on 24 February 1663 in the seigneurie of Sillery, 2 arpents of frontage by 25, first assigned to his son Nicholas, passed to his brother Jean-Baptiste Sieur de Rochebelle. The farm was worth 450 livres. Nicholas had died leaving a debt of 75 livres. Jean-Baptiste accepted this land for 475 livres, the value of the inheritance. On the same day, 25 February 1668, Noel Morin named Jean-Baptiste his administrator.

In 1664, Noel Morin had been chosen guardian of Charles Amador Martin, son of Abraham. On 16 April 1669, he gave a signed receipt to the Ursulines of Quebec for 240 livres, a portion of the inheritance in favor of his protegee, who would be ordained a priest on 14 March 1671.

On 4 May 1670, the part of the land sold to Pannier was resold for 90 livres by Charles Aubert, Sieur de LaChesnaye.

On 4 January 1671, Helene and Noel indicated their intentions: On the day of their death all their furniture and real estate would be divided between their sons Charles and Alphonse on the condition that they support their parents. Furthermore, the sons would give their young sister, Marie Madeleine, 300 livres when she married. Then on the following 12 November, the Sieur de Saint Luc rendered faith and homage to Louis Couillard, Sier de L'Espinay.



The master cartwright, 64 years old, did not easily resign himself to idleness. On 15 June 1673, he agreed to "make and perfect" 24 canon mountings and to furnish the necessary wood. "I am familiar," he said, "with these cannons in the Upper and Lower Town." Charles Legardeur, first counsellor to the king and commandant of Chateau Saint Louis, promised to pay for this special work by giving Morin 40 livres per mounting ... in other words 960 livres.

On 30 October 1674, Noel Morin and Louis Bosse agreed to settle a suit amicably. Bosse had obtained a homestead at Montmagny. Without knowing the exact cause of the litigation, Bosse gave his land to his Seigneur Morin and even required compensation of 60 livres. We know that between 1672 and 1676, the Fief of Saint-Luc was divided to the benefit of Guillaume Fournier, Jean Proulx, Alphonse Morin, Pierre Jolliet, Jean Baillie, Michel Isabel, David Corbin, Charles Bazire and Jean Rollandau.

This is the way things were when Helene Desportes died on the Sainte Genevieve

coast on Saint Jean's Day, 24 June 1675. Her burial act was not recorded in the registry, but her name appears there more than 20 times as godmother!