



Thomas Touchet (b. Abt. 1626, d. Aft. 30 Apr 1683)

Thomas Touchet (son of [Jacques Touchet](#) and [Marie Poitevin](#)) was born Abt. 1626 in Thaon, Bayeux, Normandie, France, and died Aft. 30 Apr 1683 in Unknown. He married [Suzanne Ferrier](#) on Abt. 1654 in Colomby-sur-Thaon, Bayeaux, Normandie, France.

Notes for **Thomas Touchet**:

Thomas Touchet was the first Touchet to arrive in New France in 1654. Later, other Touchets would arrive. We know them only by the dates of their marriages. Efforts to connect any of them with Thomas have failed to provide any relationship.

These others are: Jacques-Claude Touchet dit Lafleur m. 1738 to Marie-Josephe Hayot; Jacques Touchet m. 1759 to Marie Tardif; Jean-Guillaume Touchet m. bef. 1703 to Jeanne Richard; and Andre Touchet dit Laroche m. 1738 to Elisabeth Guilbert. (The term, "dit" was often used as an alternate name, especially when there were many others of a certain name. It could also be added on a whim and for almost any reason.)

According to Trudel, Thomas "...probably arrived in 1645, passed for catholic" "...at the bottom it (states) Huguenot." "...makes abjuration in private on May 21, 1646." This may have been a case of mistaken identity, as the original source for this information made the assumption based only on a first name. Again according to Trudel, Thomas's wife, Suzanne and son, Simon, were also noted as Huguenot, merely by association.

In fact, at that time and in 1646, Thomas was still living in France. He was counted that year, "Thomas Touchet, age 20, carpenter, living with Jacques de LaBerge (his stepfather) and Marie Poitevin."

We do not know the date Thomas actually did leave France, but his first official appearance in New France goes back to 6 February, 1650. On that day, he and the Percheron, Antoine Rouillard, both Master Carpenters, were in the office of the Quebec Notary, Guillaume Audouart. Noell Morin, a resident of the Sainte-Genevieve Coast entrusted them with the construction of a frame house, 30 by 20 feet, with 2 doors and 4 windows. The builders would each receive 100 livres tournois and a half-minot of peas. They made their mark at the bottom of the notarized contract. Making his "mark" suggests that Thomas did not know how to write his name, yet he knew carpentry and was a master of it, so he must have known how to work with numbers and make calculations.

At the end of the same year, 1650 on 4 December, Thomas and Rouillard were hired to make and complete a house, 40 by 20 feet, for the price of 300 livres, a barrel of lard, another of wheat, 6 pots of eau-de-vie (brandy, but more likely home brew) and 4 pots of wine. Nicolas Juchereau, Sieur de Saint-Denis, promised to furnish the planks and the nails necessary to complete this work. They had their work cut out for them until the month of August of the following year.

Note: During the beginnings of New France, the first homes which Thomas was hired to build were usually just a single room and would house entire families. Later, a lean-to would probably be added for the cooking.

But Thomas was not all work. He enjoyed associations with friends as well. On 8 March 1652, at St-Anne-de-Beaupre, he became godfather to Marguerite Racine, infant daughter of Etienne Racine and Marguerite-Marie Martin. Marguerite Cauchon was godmother with Father Paul Ragueneau, presiding at the ceremony. The pioneer Touchet was also asked to be godfather to Thomas Miserio on 4 December 1652.

According to notarial records Thomas appears to have been regularly employed for most of his life. Of particular note, is a contract which he signed in 1653 in the presence of notary Audouart, in which he promised Guillaume Couillard to build an addition, 18 by 18 feet in half-timber 6 inches thick, at the end of his house and also to make a double fireplace mantle. It is notable that it was in this house of some 1250 square feet that the small Seminary of Quebec was begun in 1668 and that it was housed there until December 1677.

In the fall of 1653, Thomas returned to France. According to later Canadian documents, he was "between 27 and 36 years old and serious-minded." And so it was that in the city of Thaon, near Caen, diocese of Bayeux, presently in the department of Calvados, Thomas Touchet married Suzanne Ferrier, about 35 years of age. The wedding took place about 1654 or 1655. Then, in about 1656, at Columby-sur-Thaon, near Caen, canton of Creully in France, the couple brought into the world a son who received the name of Simon at his baptism. He was the only known offspring of this Touchet-Ferrier couple.

In the spring of 1658, Thomas, Suzanne, and Simon were ready to return to New France. They were all at La Rochelle, France at the beginning of that April, waiting to embark on the 28-man ship, "Taureau" for their return.

On April 5th, 1658, Thomas's half-brother, Robert de la Berge signed a contract of indenture for 3 years with Mace Gravel in order to pay for his passage. Robert then accompanied the family of his half-brother, Thomas.

There seems to have been at least some contact between Thomas and his half-brother, Robert since their arrival together in 1658. Thomas was there when Robert and the widow, Francoise Gausse dit Le Borgne set the terms of their marriage contract on 6 May 1663 in the presence of notary, Claude Auber.

It has been noted that, also attending that celebration, were Martin Prevost and his Huron wife, Marie-Olivier-Sylvestre Manitouabewich, daughter of Roch Manitouabewich and Outchibibnousk Oueou.

Note: "Dictionnaire Genealogique des Familles Canadiennes" refers to her as a "Sauvegesse" and a footnote translates as, "This is the first marriage of a French(man) with a female savage--the word "savage" here meaning, "woman of the forest."

In the spring of 1663, on 18 June, Thomas received in the seigneurie of St-Joseph, upstream of the St-Charles River, 2 arpents of frontal land, "with a depth which is bordered by the stream St-Michel." In all, it had an area of fifteen arpents: 12 and a half acres with 384 ft of river frontage.

Thomas was not a well-to-do man by any standards. On 24 November 1663, the bailiff Levasseur tried to defend his client Touchet before the Sovereign Council; Thomas owed 17 livres 10 sols to the Normand Gabriel Lemieux; he had to pay up to the very last penny. On the following 15 December, a similar problem was raised by Eustache Lambert. He ordered Touchet to pay his debts. The judges required first that the accounts be cleared in the presence of Charles Aubert, Sieur de LaChesnaye.

But then, on 9 November 1663, Thomas was hired to build for Jean Gloria, the recently appointed royal notary, a building 30 by 18 feet with gable in half-timbers, 1 fireplace mantel, 1 round staircase, 1 cellar door frame. Additionally, he was hired to erect another building, 13 by 10, with an opening and a small fireplace mantel; he had to roof the 2 buildings. It appears that it wasn't long before Thomas was able to pay his debts in full.

Then, in February and March of 1666, under the direction of the newly appointed Intendant, Jean Talon, the first census for New France was taken. In that census we find: Thomas Touchet, age 40, master carpenter; Suzanne Ferier, age 48, the wife; Simon Touchet, age 10, son; and Reyne Regnau, age 22, apprentice carpenter. It seems as though our Thomas had taken on a teaching roll.

Note: The many discrepancies in ages and dates are due to the fact that more than 90% of all immigrants to New France were illiterate and did not know when they were born.

Note: This first census for the Colony of New France totalled 3418, including priests, nuns, and soldiers.

To support his wife and his young son, Thomas took on extra work. On 30 November 1666, he promised the Intendant Jean Talon to erect the frame of a lodging measuring 27 by 16 feet, having a hip roof with 2 ends, with 1 dormer window, 1 fireplace mantel, the necessary openings and doors, not forgetting the stair-head for a cellar, 12 by 12 with a small frame.

Thomas was first of all a carpenter, not a farmer by trade. In 1667, he only owned one head of cattle and had some 7 arpents of land under cultivation. For whatever reason, Thomas ended up selling this property to the Intendant Jean Talon on 15 January 1668 and moving to the Beaupre Coast.

Thomas's work had become noticeable and he had gained a reputation as an honorable man. The notaries received him often to resolve different matters of dispute.

On 25 November 1669, he and his friend, Simon Bourbeau were hired to build for

Seigneur (lord) Charles Aubert de la Chesnaye, a house in half-timbers with gallery, stairway, bedroom, cabinets and a lean-to. The new building was built on the Ste-Genevieve Coast. Although expanded and updated, it stands to this day, and is frequently shown in picture books.

Intendant Jean Talon knew of the expert from the Beaupre Coast. On 14 December 1670, he ordered 2,000 feet of lumber from him to be delivered to the quays of the capital.

Note: The Intendant Jean Talon bears some attention here in order to show the high regard in which Thomas was held. Jean Talon had been appointed the first Intendant to New France by King Louis XIV. An Intendant controlled all aspects of the legal system, oversaw his territory's finances, the provisioning of armed forces, construction of and maintenance of roads and much more. In short, the role of an Intendant was very broad and the Intendant exercised great power. Jean Talon was a fair, reasonable and well-respected man. He had hired Thomas to build his house and even after Thomas had moved away to the Beaupre Coast, he remembered him.

Notary's records show that Thomas signed other building contracts on 20 October 1672, on 11 October 1673, on 10 January 1677 and on 15 December 1682. The dates of the contracts were becoming farther apart. He contracted for what appears to be one last house on 30 April 1683. He was 57 years old. There is no mention of him after 1683. His date and place of death remain a mystery.

One fact seems certain: never were there any complaints before the court concerning the work done by Thomas Touchet. He lived humbly as a valient artisan. He left his son and his descendants with an example of respectable work well-done.

More About **Thomas Touchet** and **Suzanne Ferrier**:

Marriage: Abt. 1654, Colomby-sur-Thaon, Bayeaux, Normandie, France.

Children of **Thomas Touchet** and **Suzanne Ferrier** are:

- i. +[Simon Touchet](#), b. Abt. 1658, Colomby-sur-Thaon, near Caen, Bayeux, Normandie, France, d. 12 Jan 1703, L'Ange-Gardien, Montmorency, Quebec, Canada.