

arpent: a French land measure

midwife: a woman who helps deliver babies

militia: citizens who train as soldiers in their spare time

THE SEIGNEURY

You read earlier that the parcelling of land into seigneuries was begun by the Company of a Hundred Associates. By 1663, there were 104 seigneuries divided into more than 13 million square arpents and spread over 320 kilometres on both sides of the St. Lawrence.

The seigneur had to build and live in a manor house, hold court in the event of disputes, attract settlers, and build a mill. Usually, he was also responsible for defence. The habitants were required to pay rent, provide days of service to the seigneur, and serve in the militia. They had to keep their land productive and grind their grain into flour at the seigneur's mill.



Figure 8-20 If the seigneur was absent and could not defend the seigneurie, members of his family could be called up. In 1692, teen-aged Madeleine de Verchères led the defence of a seigneurie when it was attacked by Iroquois forces.

Figure 8-21 Rich merchants working in New France were able to import furniture and other articles from France. Judging from the contents of this room, what observations can you make about the people who used it?

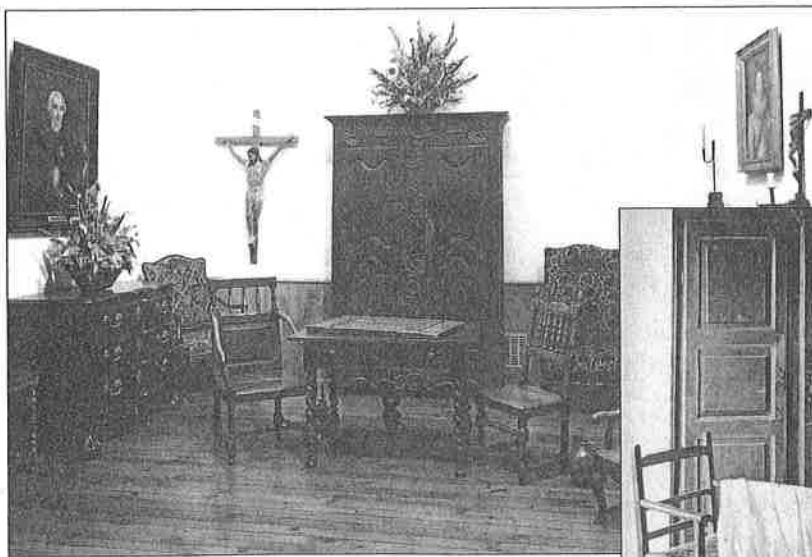


Figure 8-22 The homes of the habitants were well-built and often made of stone. Their furniture was made by local craftspeople, or by the habitants themselves. What signs of prosperity and lifestyle can you find in the picture?

THE HABITANTS

The lives of the habitants were built around the manor and the Church. Many of the younger people worked in the fur trade or, if they could be

spared, in some of the small industries of Quebec. Women worked on the farm, and they had many children, always delivered in the home by midwives. They lived simply, but reasonably well, once the danger of attack by the Iroquois had been removed.

Life was based on the cycle of the farm. In the spring, crops were planted, sugar was harvested from sugar maples, and the fishing season began (in the spring, many species



Better Off in New France?

Although the habitants had many of the same duties as peasants in France, their lives were better in many ways. The average farm was 150 metres wide and 2500 metres long, of which only 25 percent needed to be farmed. The habitants paid the seigneur two bushels of wheat, a live chicken, and about \$5 a year in rent. They were **tithed** for one-twenty-sixth of

the wheat they harvested.

A French peasant, on the other hand, paid 600 times as much rent as the habitant, and many taxes, which the habitant did not have to pay at all (see page 59, Did You Know?). It is not surprising that the peasants of New France regarded themselves as superior to the peasants of the home country.

One intendant, apparently fed

up with the attitudes of the habitants, described them this way:

The men are all strong and vigorous but have no liking for work; the women love display and are excessively lazy, those of the country districts just as much as the towns' people.



Figure 8-23 This watercolour looks towards the Ile d'Orléans, which is shown in Figure 8-6. You can see the style of farmhouses, and even a few habitants. You can't see the manor house, probably because the painter is using it as a vantage point. What might be the purpose of the fenced areas on the river itself?

to tithe: to tax

came into the shallows to spawn). The habitants spent the summer cultivating and weeding their fields, cutting wood, and clearing wasteland. The fall marked the climax of the year's labours. This was harvest time, when the crops were gathered. In the fall, animals were slaughtered and foods preserved for the winter.

The habitants ate well, and shortages seem to have been rare. People raised pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, and some cows, so there was an abundance of milk, butter, and

cheese. Peas were an important crop, and pea soup a common dish. They ate lots of fish, particularly on Friday—the Catholic meatless day. Fruits and berries were abundant.

Habitants enjoyed music and story-telling, which occupied many a winter's evening. They were also regular church-goers. As was the custom of the medieval farmers of Europe, they often worked together on joint projects and helped each other with planting, clearing, or harvesting.

THE TOWNS

The largest towns in New France were Quebec and Montreal, followed by Trois Rivières and Tadoussac, all of which were on the St. Lawrence River. Quebec was the oldest and most important of the towns. With its fortifications, it was also the strongest.

None of these communities was large. In the early seventeenth century, only about 18 000 Europeans lived in the whole of Canada. Towns, with their small industries, schools, hospitals, and other **amenities**, were rather more interesting places to live than the scattered seigneuries. At the far end of the St. Lawrence, bordering the territory of the Iroquois (a border the Iroquois did not accept), Montreal was becoming a lively place. Fur brigades arrived via the Ottawa River, the Church was very active, and Native visitors and **emissaries** came and went regularly.

WOMEN IN NEW FRANCE

In the early days, Canada had attracted some women from France, but they were relatively few in number. If they could avoid it, the fur-trading monopolies did not want to build up communities of farmers. Some of the first female immigrants to New France were nuns, sent out by religious orders to help convert and educate Native peoples. Marie L'Incarnation, who came to Quebec in 1668, founded the Ursuline Order of Nuns for just such a purpose. The Ursulines established a long tradition of Catholic service in New France.



Figure 8-25 Quebec, with its upper city high on the bluffs and its lower city teeming with port activities, was the largest European town in Canada. Did the Church have much influence in New France? How can you tell?



amenities: things and services which improve life

emissaries: people sent out on missions

Figure 8-26 This woman, in her long, fur-trimmed cape and hood, is dressed for winter. She also carries a fur hand-warmer. What can you conclude about her financial and social status?

As in old France, women in Quebec and Acadia had few legal rights. A married woman could not easily carry on business, sue or be sued, or dispose of her own property, without her husband's consent. Even so, women often worked like partners in the family business, learning the skills of buying and selling, investing, and bookkeeping. Because many men had to travel to trade furs, women were often more knowledgeable about the day-to-day running of the business than the men.

As widows, women could and did actively take part in the business life of the colony. After her husband's death in 1745, for example, Madame Marie-Ann Fornel invested in land and other ventures with great success. Similarly, Louise de Ramezay ran lumber mills, a tannery, and a flour mill. Other women also operated successful businesses in New France. Of course, on the farms, women worked alongside the men, much as they did in Europe.

Immigration to New France, 1608–1759

This graph shows immigration to New France from the beginning to the virtual end of the colony in 1760. Examine the chart carefully and make a statement about the male-to-female ratio of immigrants. During what two periods does immigration peak? Read the text for reasons to account for these peaks.

Table 8-1 Immigration to New France, 1608–1759

Period	Men	Women	Total
Before 1630	15	6	21
1630–1639	88	51	139
1640–1649	141	86	227
1650–1659	403	239	642
1660–1669	1075	623	1698
1670–1679	429	369	798
1680–1689	486	56	542
1690–1699	490	32	522
1700–1709	283	24	307
1710–1719	293	18	311
1720–1729	420	14	434
1730–1739	483	16	499
1740–1749	576	16	592
1750–1759	1699	52	1751
unknown	27	17	44
Total	6908	1619	8527

ACTIVITIES

- Describe life on a seigneurie on the St. Lawrence River, perhaps during the Iroquois wars.
- Reread the feature on page 241 and decide whether you would have preferred to stay in France and live in a feudal-style farm or move to Canada and live as a habitant. Make a list of pros and cons for each option. Consider criteria such as familiarity of surroundings, physical labour, and taxes.
- Like the Jesuits, the women of the Ursuline Order of Nuns were some of the first Europeans to come to Canada. Why are people who are attached to religious orders ideally suited to leave their home country and take up residence in a new land?