

## Les Filles du Roi: A Centuries-Old “French Connection”

In my years of genealogy research, I have had the good fortune to cross paths and share experiences with so many people on the hunt for their ancestral roots. I learned from others, exchanged war stories (figurative and literal), and had the privilege of applying my research skills to rediscover family history for clients. Each project was a new journey and each family story that resulted was unique. My most recent assignment, an 85<sup>th</sup> birthday gift for a lovely lady named Denise Ste-Marie Lucibello, was both a genealogical and historical journey. The research would span four centuries, beginning in France in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. The end objective was to achieve Denise's long-time wish to become a member of *La Société des Filles du roi et soldats du Carignan*, an organization for the descendants of a specific group of 17<sup>th</sup> century settlers who immigrated from France to the colony of New France in Quebec.

Since I had never heard of the *Filles du roi* (the *King's Daughters* in English), I first needed to



Early image of the Colony  
of New France.

do some research on the history of Quebec and the colony of New France. France had begun making efforts at colonization in Canada as early as the 1500s. Quebec City, founded by Samuel de Champlain in 1608, is recognized as the first permanent French settlement there. Not surprisingly, the early settlers (including a regiment of soldiers) were primarily male. Committed to the growth of the colony, King Louis XIV launched a program to sponsor about 750 young French women for immigration to New France beginning in 1663, his objective being to incent the male settlers and soldiers to marry, have children, and remain in the colony. Over the centuries since then, these young women were sometimes incorrectly said to be prostitutes. In fact, there were requirements for the women applying for the program, including a letter of reference from their priest. They were required to be of “moral caliber” and to



**ABOVE: Denise Ste-Marie and Frank Lucibello at their wedding in 1957. BELOW: Denise Ste-Marie's parents, Joseph Ste-Marie and Gabrielle Pilote.**



be physically fit since life in New France would be rigorous. The young women were primarily of meager means and lower social status. The King paid for their passage to New France, provided some clothing, and a small dowry. Upon arrival in New France, the young women were cared for by the Ursuline Sisters. There were no immediate or forced marriages. Some married in a matter of months, others married much later. Couples would get engaged in church and married by a priest. Not all elected to marry in New France; some even returned to France.

Among the *Filles du roi* was Mathurine Gourd who arrived in New France in 1666 and married a regimental soldier, Louis Ste-Marie, in 1667 in Montreal. Louis had arrived in New France with his Carignan regiment in 1665. Mathurine was from Paris, in the Ile-de-France region, and Louis

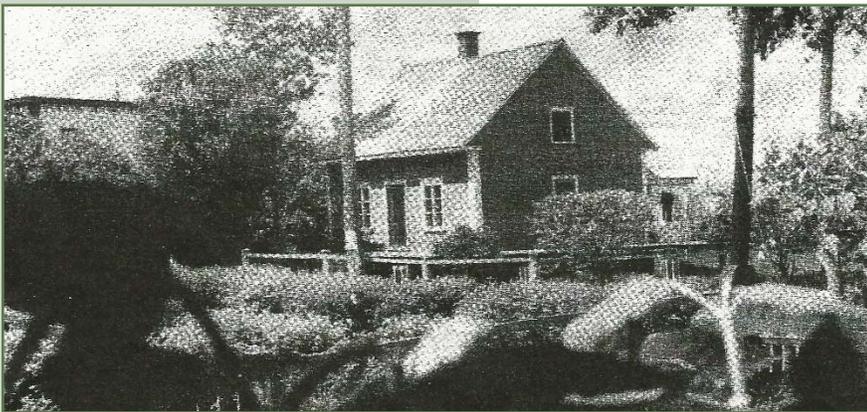
was from Saint-Symphorian, Tours, France. Louis and Mathurine Ste-Marie were the 7<sup>th</sup> great-grandparents of my client Denise Ste-Marie Lucibello, who was, like the eight Ste-Marie generations that preceded her, born in Quebec.

Denise had worked on her Ste-Marie genealogy for three decades, compiling a great deal of information on the Ste-Marie family and the *Filles du roi*. In 1990, she attended a Ste-Marie reunion in Quebec with her husband Frank Lucibello. Frank, a native of Paterson, New Jersey, met Denise by chance in 1956 in Maine where he was stationed with the Air Force and she was vacationing with a friend. They married in Loretteville, Quebec, in 1957.

With the help of her son-in-law Marc, a detailed family tree for Denise's Ste-Marie line was created on Ancestry.com. I had met Denise and Marc three years ago when they attended a program I presented. Remembering me, they reached out to ask for my assistance for a very specific purpose: to help



**Denise Ste-Marie's father and grandfather.**



**Home of Denise's grandfather, Joseph Ste-Marie, Lac-aux-Sables, Quebec.**



**The one-room schoolhouse where Denise Ste-Marie attended grades 4-7 in Quebec.**

Denise apply and qualify for membership in *La Société des Filles du Roi et soldats du Carignan*. That meant locating and aggregating ten generations of vital records-type documentation, completing the detailed membership application, and submitting the application and documentation in accordance with the specific requirements of the Society (including how each exhibit should be numbered and highlighted and even what color highlighters were acceptable).

Never having worked on a project like this and knowing how much it meant to Denise, I had some initial trepidation. Once I jumped in and began, the usual genealogical lure of "the hunt" took over. Many of the early records I needed were in French. Fortunately, many decades ago, I had taken four years of French in high school. That came in handy. Also handy was the fact that the Drouin Collection of early Quebec church records and the Tanguay

Genealogical Dictionary of Canadian Families are indexed and available on Ancestry.com. An essential on-line resource for this project was the PRDH (Research Programme in Historical Demography), a university research program underwritten by the Université de Montréal and the Quebec government Department of Education. I also used Canadian census records and Find-A-Grave to fill in the gaps in generational documentation. The completed application, along with 40 exhibits organized generation by generation in a binder, were submitted to the Society for review in August. Only days after receipt of the package, a representative of the Society emailed Denise to confirm her acceptance for full membership in *La Société des Filles du Roi et soldats du Carignan*. In fact, Denise had dual eligibility for membership as both a descendant of one of the King's Daughters and a descendant of a soldier of the Carignan regiment. It was a privilege to assist her in realizing her wish to join the Society.

# Rassemblement Internationale des Ste-Marie d'Amérique



## Ste-Marie Reunion 1990 in Quebec.

Over 350 years ago, a young woman left her home and family to cross the vast Atlantic Ocean by ship in the hope of a better life. Her future husband, a soldier, had also left home behind to serve his country in a fledgling colony. Nine generations later, Louis Ste-Marie and Mathurine Goad are remembered and honored for their courage and sacrifices by Denise and her family. To quote 19<sup>th</sup> century author George Eliot: "Souls live on in perpetual echoes. Our dead are never dead to us unless we have forgotten them." Amen. 