

A Short History of the Paquin Families in North America – 1672 to 1976

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Preface by Brother Pasteur Paquin

In my thoughts, I followed a path where I imagined that my ancestors walked. I felt the frisson of glory, the shiver of the drums beating the charge, the bugle ringing of heroism. But I felt the tears come to my eyes to remember the way that was lost in the small village of Potherie in Normandy, the small crumbling crosses that remind us of the French who are fallen for the honor of their country.

Introduction

The current volume isn't truly the history of the Paquin families, but is a collection of documents to help understand their origins and customs from olden times to modern days.

Some of the historical information reminds us that we are the work of God who has perpetuated according to his order "Be fruitful and multiply".

Other information reminds us of our ancestor Nicolas who left France, his country of origin, and made his way to Quebec. It is there that these Paquin families multiplied. From there, they spread throughout Quebec, Canada and the United States.

This work is intended to echo the hopes of the grand name and help us relive the memory of our ancestors.

In thinking about the origin of the Paquin families, we must also think of our proper origin...before being Paquin, we have been beings created by God in his image and likeness.

Origin of the name “Paquin”

The name “Paquin” has three origins....linguistic, social and geographic.

1. Linguistically: “Pascharium” in Latin became “Pascuar” and then “Pascuer” at the dawn of the period called “old French” (tenth to fourteenth century).
2. Socially: We have to consider this as a very old name, coming directly from a place name meaning “pastures”. The beginning of the 12th century was the period of formation of family names in France. This is when “Pacsuar” and then “Pascuer” evolved. “Pascuer” became “Pasquier” and then “Paquier”. It is “Paquier” which became “Paquis”. This suggested a pasture or a field. This is confirmed by the “Dictionary of the Ancient French Language of Godefroy”.
3. Geographically: “Paquin” originated in the east of France. It signified a freehold that permitted use of a cluster of land or pastures. “Paquin” became “he who possesses lands”, and who is wise. Very rapidly these lands became the best of those ever held within the family. Also, someone could not be called “Paquin” if the amount of land was small.

So, it can be seen that the name Paquin has its meaning in land and comes originally from the east of France.

The name “Paquin” became uniform and rapidly accepted in the 13th century – this was not the case with all French names. It became a fixed part of the language quickly and wasn’t modified after the promulgation of Francois the First in 1539 which laid down rules for the French language because it had already been in continuous use for 250 years by that time.

There are many variations of “Paquin” in France:

- Pasquier, Paquier, DePasquier, DuPaquier in Normandy
- Pasquis, Paquis, Pasquinet, Paquinot, Paquignon in the northeast of France
- Pasquin, Paquin in the east of France
- Pasquireau, Paquierau, Pacrot, Paqueret in the Loire Valley
- Pascarel in the south central part of the country

The name “Paquin” originated in “old France”. Those who carried the name “Paquin” were assured of being authentically French.

Normandy, France...and Nicolas Paquin

After working to research our genealogy, it is in Normandy in 1648 where we can trace the existence of our common ancestor, the master carpenter and eventual landowner, Nicolas Paquin.

Normandy is an ancient province of France bordered on the north by the English Channel, on the northeast by Picardy, on the west by Brittany, on the south by LeMans, and on the southeast by L'Ile de France (*Paris and the area immediately around it*). Normandy is divided into High and Low Normandy. Rouen is the capital of the region.

Normandy was originally occupied by multiple Gallic tribes after the Roman conquest. Christianity was introduced in the third century.

Normandy is one of the richest and most fertile provinces in France. The climate is warm with just a bit of cold weather. The sun is excellent for the culture of crops and fields. It is in this beautiful region formed on a plateau of limestone that one discovers the country of our ancestor.

Normandy is a collection of fertile plateaus separated by valleys. There are several important port cities along the coast of Normandy – Dieppe, Havre, Honfleur, and a small town called Potherie which was the village of our ancestors. Today, the actual name of this town is Potherie-Cap-d'Entifer and it has a population of just 400. By train, it is four hours to Paris, which is to its southwest.

Normandy was originally inhabited by a sizable population of blondes with blue eyes who were generally quite tall. They were also very active, intelligent and had many interests. These people were often remarked upon for their good looks.

Potherie, France

Just as "Paquin" has many potential origins, Potherie also has a muddy background. One source says that Nicolas Paquin was baptized on April 5, 1648 in "Potterie" (meaning pottery). Another says that Nicolas Paquin, born in "La Poterie", was the son of Gilles (*in one account: another says Jean*) Paquin and Renee Fremont, and goes on to say that Nicolas's work in France was as a master carpenter. Nicolas had at least three siblings: Marie (1649), Marthe (1650), and Jeanne (1653). No matter the spelling, all sources point in the same direction – the town was in Normandy and in the archdiocese of Rouen.

Quebec, Canada

Quebec was founded in 1608 by Samuel de Champlain. This area of Canada became the home port for the French who arrived in the country. Many of the emigrees came to Canada by traveling down the St. Lawrence river.

Typically, the French men emigrated to Canada first. French women were subsequently recruited as wives. This was between 1663 and 1673. They had to present their birth certificates, be healthy and industrious, and be recommended by their pastor. They (about 800) were known as the King's Daughters. They were basically lined up in Quebec when they arrived, and the men picked out their bride. There were priests present to marry them immediately.

The beginning of the Paquin families of Canada dates to 1672 with the arrival of Nicolas Paquin. He came to the country when asked by Jean Deschamps who was looking for carpenters on behalf of his son Francois who had established a home in Quebec in 1671. Nicolas terminated his apprenticeship in carpentry in Potherie and signed on to work with Francois Deschamps in Quebec for three years. It seems that the Deschamps paid for Nicolas' passage to Canada but that he had to bring all of his own carpentry tools. Nicolas – along with another carpenter, two stone masons and four laborers - arrived in Riviere-Ouelle, Quebec in the summer of 1672 aboard the ship St. Jean Baptiste. This was a small village of roughly 1,600 people on the St. Lawrence River.

When his three year contract was done in the autumn of 1675, Nicolas left Riviere-Ouelle to live in the area around the village of Ste. Anne de Beaupre. His work there qualified him as a master carpenter. At this time, he decided it was time to marry and start his own business.

All who wanted to be married had to complete a legal contract about their upcoming marriage. The future wife had to promise to take her future husband's name: both parties had to promise to share their home and furnishings. This ceremony was grand and all of one's family and friends were typically invited. The marriage contract of Nicolas was drawn up in Québec. It was signed on October 20, 1676 at the Vachon home in Québec, and the following November 18 (allowing one month for the wedding preparations), the marriage took place in the Catholic church Notre Dame in Chateau-Richer, Quebec. The bride was Marie-Francoise Plante who was 21 years old, daughter of Jean Plante and Francoise a Marin Boucher who resided in Chateau-Richer. At this time, the average bride's dowry was 300-500 pounds (*money of the time*) or the equivalent in furniture/household furnishings. In the case of Nicolas and Marie-Francoise, the dowry was the sum of 200 pounds (*money*) and a milk cow. Her parents pledged to pay this at the rate of 50 pounds (*money*) per year as a sort of advance on her inheritance from them.

Grandfather (*Papere*) and grandmother (*Mamere*) Boucher, the maternal grandparents of the bride, are part of many French Canadians' genealogical roots. When you count this couple's children, their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren - those who were baptized in those three generations - you see that 495 people are part of this family tree. (*Because of this couple's time in Quebec, it can be seen that Nicolas did not himself marry a King's Daughter.*)

This strain of Nicolas Paquin and Marie-Francoise Plante is the only one with those names who emigrated to Canada. Now, there are roughly 360 Paquin families in Montreal alone who have descendants of 1,800 people currently living there. In all of North America, there are around 2,500 Paquin families (12,000 individuals). This doesn't count the children of the Paquin daughters whose married names include Arcand, LeSieur, Cloutier, Gregoire, Mathieu, Germain, etc.

Chateau-Richer

Chateau-Richer was a town of 3,000 located near Beupre and very near the village of Ste. Anne de Beupre. Both are just north of the city of Quebec. This territory had been settled by colonists in 1636, and around 1640 the citizens decided they needed a roughly-built church.

Because of the fertile soil and abundant fish in the river, the community grew rapidly and they decided to replace their wood church with one of stone. Construction began in the summer of 1658.

In 1678, Nicolas Paquin decided to buy land in the Holy Family parish on the Ile d'Orleans from Jean Moreau. This island is located in the St. Lawrence River about five km east of Quebec City. Nicolas purchased three acres of land along the island's coast and its north crossing, and paid 600 pounds (*money*) plus a live capon. The money was due in three payments of 200 pounds (*money*) each year, beginning on the feast day of St. Remi, October 1, 1678. The registry notes that this land was located at "numbers 231 to 233" in the map of New France and that it was the last plot in this particular parish. In 1669, the first church had been built in the parish.

Nicolas and Francoise had 13 children.

1. Nicolas II, baptized in 1677 in an unknown location was the first of the children to marry on October 10, 1705. His wife was Marie-Anne Perrot. They moved to Deschambault: his is the first Paquin family to live in Deschambault. His first son (also named Nicolas) was born in May, 1708.
2. Genevieve, baptized in 1688 in an unknown location and about whom there are no additional details reported

3. Marie, born and baptized on December 5, 1679. On December 10, Marie – just five days old – was buried in the cemetery of Holy Family church.
4. Marie, born and baptized on November 18, 1680 (while it seems odd that two children in the same family would have the same name, this is as it is recorded). Marie was the second child in the family to marry: she wed Jean-Francois Marcotte of Deschambault on June 12, 1708.
5. Gentien, born on April 26 and buried at only ten days old on May 6, 1683
6. Antoine, born on April 18 and baptized on April 19 of 1684. He died on October 20, 1704.
7. Jean, born on August 22 and baptized on August 23, 1686. He died and was buried at two years old on November 15, 1688
8. Genevieve, born and baptized on October 9, 1688 (again, we see a name repeated). Her wedding was the same day as her sister's (below): she married Jean-Francois Naud of Deschambault.
9. Marie-Madeleine, born on December 19 and baptized on December 13, 1690. She was married on the same day as her sister Genevieve – July 23, 1711. Marie-Madeleine married Jacques Perrault from the town of Deschambault.
10. Louis, born on April 29 and baptized on April 30, 1693. He died and was buried on April 19, 1703 at ten years old.
11. Marie-Anne, born on September 13 and baptized on September 14, 1695. She was married 1710 to Pierre Groileau and moved to Deschambault.
12. Marguerite, born and baptized on January 3, 1698. She died and was buried on January 10, 1699 at just one year old.
13. Jean-Baptiste, born on May 14 and baptized on May 15, 1701, He relocated to Deschambault and was married in 1731.

Life in Nicolas Paquin's Time

Office for the Poor

In 1688, the government of New France (Quebec) established the Office for the Poor. Each city was to have its own organization to help the poor in that community. Nicolas and Marie-Francoise were members of the Holy Family parish who helped the poor in their congregation. Nicolas was in charge of dispensing help to the poor in his parish during 1698. As a manager, he could insist that the poor who were in good health looked for work and, if they weren't able to work, they had to place their children in service before the family could receive aid. Marie-Francoise was chosen as one of four women in the parish to go to every house in the parish to ask for donations for the poor.

The Celebration of the Infant Jesus

When the Church celebrated the birth of the divine savior, the infant Jesus was shown for the veneration of the believers.

This was a celebration with a procession of three sleighs that made their way through the parish, starting early in the morning, often in intense cold and despite heavy snowfalls. The horses were lively and strong.

The priest was in the first sleigh, which was the most beautiful sleigh with the best horse. Care was taken to polish the harness and its many bells.

In the second sleigh, another cleric or notary of the parish would ride. This sleigh collected meats, wool, sweet breads, soaps and tobacco from the parishioners.

Finally the 3rd cleric or notary occupied the last sleigh into which the parishioners deposited the various grains from their fields.

Stopping at each household, the priest would find several generations assembled to greet him. There was joy on all of the faces as they knelt at the pastor's feet. Even the family stove brought a note of cheerfulness to the visit with its crackling fire. If there were sick or infirm, the priest would console and bless them. Small disagreements would be put aside, and peace would be restored.

Quickly, the wife would give the priest wool or a piece of bacon, while her husband would put one or two bushels of wheat or oats in the third sleigh. Whether their farming year was good and bad, all would give something for God.

During the visit, the small children would be sitting properly, oldest to youngest, and their pink cheeks indicated they were waiting for something from their priest. The priest would quickly give each a small religious picture or medallion. They would receive the gift in their right hands and say thank you. Then at a sign from the priest and a hearty good-bye, the procession would go to the neighbors' house.

The parish priest would keep all of the donated goods from each house he'd visited at his house until the day of the sale in the church square. This would be an auction, and the person the most skilled in speaking to a crowd would preside over the auction. An object would be offered to the crowd and the highest bidder would receive it, with the money going to the parish.

Chores

This name was given to all voluntary work that was done for the good of the parish. This could include the erection of a house frame or a barn. And it also included the annual threshing of flax from the farmers' fields.

Growing flax, one of the oldest cultivated plants in history, was essential to the culture of Canada. The annual threshing of the flax became a happy meeting for the parish. Mothers and girls took part, while leaving the men the bulk of the heavy work. The grain would already have been carefully cut and dried, and would be delivered in bundles to the place for threshing.

Threshing removed the seeds from the flax stalk by crushing open the dried seed pods. At that time in Canada, hand threshing was done by simply beating the dried stalks until all the seed pods have been crushed, then shaking the seeds free. The fibers remaining in the flax stalk would become linen fibers which would be spun into cloth.

Corn was also sowed on all the farms. Each farmer had his field of corn to be protected against the invasion of weeds. After picking the corn in the fall, they had a corn roast at home, which the young people enjoyed. There was the inevitable dance at the end.

It was these times of chores that were converted into real celebrations. True and lasting friendships were made at these celebrations, sometimes ending in contracts of marriage.

Without doubt, the old Canadians of the countryside created a social life that was uniquely theirs. There was nothing sad, boring or monotonous about it. Their work became their pleasure as well as their subsistence.

Funerals

Nicolas himself died on December 16, 1708 and was buried on December 17, 1708 in the cemetery at Holy Family church. He was roughly 60 years old. His wife, Marie-Francoise, was buried on April 18, 1726, also at Holy Family church.

When death visited a house, the news was carried by neighbors, the priest, and the family. Immediately, the body was washed, dressed and enveloped in a cloth fastened with pins. But shoes were not put on the dead person's feet.

The body was placed on a bed in the best room of the house, and while it was there, many visitors came. At regular intervals, pious people recited the rosary and other special prayers.

The coffin was built by a carpenter, and the wood planks were provided by the family. The carpenter wasn't paid for his work. When it was complete, the coffin was painted black and ten iron handles were attached, like those on a dresser.

Funerals happened the day after death, and sometimes on the same day. The body was put into the coffin but the coffin was not closed in the house. That was done once the coffin was out of the house.

If the family didn't have a wagon to use as a hearse, a dozen strong men would offer to carry the body. Four or six men would put the coffin on their shoulders and carry it to the church, switching to another set of carriers if the distance was too great.

In winter, after the religious service, the coffin was placed in a large pit about 20 square feet that was dug in the fall. This pit received all the bodies until spring. After each burial here in the winter, the coffins were covered with straw.

Domestic industries

It was particularly important to improve farming methods in order to increase the harvests. Work was also put to making the work of plowing faster than the pair of oxen most farmers used: even strong horses were faster. Shipbuilding using the oaks in the region became an industry on the St. Lawrence.

Other industries were developing in the small shops and homes. The land was to provide not only food and shelter but also clothing. They had sheep, and after the wool was carded, the mothers brought out their spinning wheels in the evenings. The older girls put tangles in the wool through a wire feeder to straighten the fibers. They made

hats with tassels, mittens, and jackets. They also manufactured cloth that could be sold to make clothing and blankets.

When it came to shoes, they used the hides of their cows or goats, and made shoes sewn by hand. They also made harnesses, belts and kinds of tote bags.

They used the linen made from their flax harvest to make towels, sheets and tablecloths. In this new country, people worked and relaxed. Thus all lived happily in their work and family lives without forgetting the practice of their religious duties.

Significant occupations of Paquin family members (through 1976)

- Clergy – there were 32 ordained priests and abbots...plus 2 lay men who dedicated their lives to the clergy.
- Education – there were 14 Brothers (*maybe Jesuits?*), 97 Sisters (*nuns*) who were teachers, 45 professors, and 29 women who were teachers (*although it was noted that these 29 were just some of many*)
- Physicians - 51
- Attorneys - 14
- Notaries - 6
- Local governments - there were 15 who were members of their local government
- Music – there were 13 professional musicians, ranging from pianists (*most frequently mentioned*) to Spanish guitar, violin and singers.

Longevity

While it cannot be said that Paquins are all long-lived, many lived into their 90s. There were several who were over 100 years old, including Mrs. Lufrasia Paquin (nee Aimee Morin) who lived until she was “104 + 10 months”: she had 12 children.

Among the Paquins who were married, there were many who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversaries.

After three centuries in North America, the descendants of Nicolas Paquin and Marie-Francoise Plante could be found in every region and diocese of Quebec, in all of the Canadian provinces, and in the United States. The parish of the Holy Family of L'Île d'Orleans was indeed the birthplace of the Paquin family in North America

Notes: This book didn't contain the genealogical links between Nicolas Paquin and Edece Paquin Germain, so it's not known how many generations of the Paquin family separated the two. Perhaps someone knows of another source that has this information.

What we do know is that Edece Paquin was born on November 9, 1880 to Joseph Paquin and Caroline Dufresne Paquin. Edece was the oldest of 15 children. It's interesting to note that there was a set of twins (one boy, one girl) in the family, although both died. Joseph and Caroline moved to Somerset on July 9, 1880, shortly before Edece's birth.

We have some information of Edece's Paquin grandparents: her father was the son of Exavier Paquin and Rose Grenier Paquin.

Edece's siblings:

- *Marcia – unmarried*
- *Clara – married a Proulx*
- *Adelle – married William Cloutier*
- *George – unmarried*
- *Rose – married Isaac LeMire*
- *Edward – un married*
- *Valeda – married Pat Nolan*
- *Matilda – married John Winkler*
- *Twins – died*
- *Baby – died*
- *Anna – married Phil Thorpe*
- *Ferdinand – married Mabel ?*
- *Alice – Sister Anne Marie*

And, while not strictly “Paquin” information, we do know a bit about Edece’s husband’s family. Edward Germain was born on July 19, 1879 to Zehire Germain and Elizabeth Parnell. They had 11 children:

- *Alex – unmarried*
- *Mary – married Joseph L’Allier*
- *Louis – married Genevieve Cloutier*
- *Edward – married Edece Paquin*
- *Anna – married Adalore Vanasse*
- *Angela – married John Liberty*
- *Oliver – unmarried*
- *Agnes – married George Trembley*
- *Amable – unmarried*
- *John – unmarried*
- *Fred - unmarried*