

Nicolas Peltier, 1596-1678: A Chronicle

Text by Benoit Pelletier Shoja, eighth great-grandson

Introduction

The first Pelletier family to leave France during the seventeenth century and to settle in the Saint Lawrence Valley, is that of master-carpenter Nicolas Peltier, a native of the city of Gallardon, in the old French province of Orléanais.

The purpose of this present chronicle is to establish a sound, basic biographical understanding about Nicolas Peltier, based on facts known to us today. While this is not an exhaustive historical analysis, we proceed in the hope of opening the way for future discoveries that will enhance this text and enrich our current appreciation for our ancestors.

With that said, let us now consider some of the more important aspects in the life of this early pioneer and his family, explaining them to the fullest degree possible, with help from archives and annals from both sides of the Atlantic.

Was it “Pelletier” or “Peltier”?

Nicolas’ somewhat scrawled signature invariably reads “Nicolas Peltier,” and we maintain this spelling of his surname throughout this article when referring to him and his family. Otherwise, when unsure of how a person signed his or her name, or if the person did not know how to write, we employ the standardized spelling, suggested by the Programme de recherche en démographie historique (PRDH). For instance, some of Nicolas’ children signed “Peltier” and we refer to them as such, while others who could not sign at all are identified as “Pelletier.”

Gallardon

The city of Gallardon is situated in the diocese of Chartres and the department of Eure-et-Loire, some fifty miles southwest of Paris, at the cusp of the Beauce and Hurepoix regions of north-central France. It is one of the oldest settlements in the territory, with many Druid monuments and prehistoric artifacts attesting to its early Gallic inhabitants¹.

Gallardon sits atop one of several verdant hills found in the Beauce plain and overlooks the gently sloping knolls of the Voise and Ocre river valleys. Stretched out in all direction around the city are vast plateaus of wheat, oats and other grains².

The church at Gallardon, founded about 1020, was originally dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Notre-Dame de Gallardon). Enlarged and expanded over the course of the following two centuries,

¹ *Mémoires de la Société archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, tome II*. Chartres: Pétrot-Garnier, 1860 (p. 283).

² Gillard, Gabriel, *Gallardon – Ses souvenirs historiques, ses monuments*. Paris: Le Livre d'histoire-Lorisse, 2002 (p. 16).

a second consecration at the end of the thirteenth century placed the church definitively under the auspices of saints Peter and Paul. The architectural style of Saint-Pierre-Saint-Paul de Gallardon therefore bares the marks of three distinct periods: Roman, Gothic and Renaissance.³

Starting in the early eleventh century, Gallardon was surrounded by a moat and by a great wall with five doors, each with an iron gate⁴. It was further protected by an imposing central château constructed of thick stone walls and several large stone towers⁵. Except for part of one tower, the château was destroyed during the Hundred Years War by the Dauphin, the future Charles VII of France, who later fought alongside Jeanne d'Arc.

In June 1421, following his defeat of the English forces who had taken Gallardon four years earlier, the Dauphin demolished the castle and its tower fortifications; like any medieval warlord, he razed it as he would have any captured stronghold⁶. The walls of the château were sapped and collapsed, except for an enormous sliver of one tower that remained standing. Visible even from Chartres, fourteen miles away, measuring 125 feet tall with walls twelve to fifteen feet thick, the Tower of Gallardon has remained upright for the past six centuries⁷.

Parents and Siblings

It was in Gallardon, in 1596, that Nicolas Peltier was born to François Pelletier and Simone Pichereau. Many other individuals living in and around Gallardon at this same time also bore the Pelletier name, but their exact relationship to one another remains undocumented⁸.

François Pelletier and Simone Pichereau had wed about 1591, presumably in Gallardon⁹. From 1592 to 1610, they brought into the world nine daughters and four sons, all of whom were baptized at Saint-Pierre-Saint-Paul Church in Gallardon¹⁰:

³ (1) *Ibid.* (p. 16); (2) *Mémoires de la Société archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, tome I*. Chartres: Pétrot-Garnier, 1858 (p. 185).

⁴ Vié, Maurice. *Gallardon et ses environs, tome I – de la préhistoire à la fin du moyen âge*. Self-published by Vié, 1997 (p. 153).

⁵ *Mémoires de la Société archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, tome I*. Chartres: Pétrot-Garnier, 1858 (p. 195): Before the introduction of gunpowder, the château could have withstood attack by battering ram and catapult. It is only after many centuries of sieges that its fortifications have disappeared.

⁶ Vié, Maurice, *op. cit.* (p. 153).

⁷ (1) Syndicat d'initiative de Gallardon, www.sigallardon.com; (2) Vié, *op. cit.* (p. 116): At the time, it was called simply La Tour—"The Tower"—, but since the 18th century, because of its top-heavy form, it has been commonly known as L'Épaule—"The Shoulder."

⁸ For example, in Gallardon at this same time, there were three men named "François Pelletier." Aside from Simone Pichereau's husband, one was the husband of Marie Marchand, and the other was married to a woman named Jeanne.

⁹ Gallardon baptismal registers open in 1578, but marriages and burials were not recorded before 1658.

¹⁰ Digital images of the Gallardon parish registers are available at the website of the Archives départementales d'Eure-et-Loir: <http://www.archives28.fr/ec/index.php>.

- 1) Simone Pelletier, baptized 16 November 1592. Godfather: Jean Janson. Godmothers: Marion Bernard, wife of Marin Beauchesne, and Marie Pichereau, widow of Jacques Vigoureux.
- 2) Philippe Pelletier¹¹, baptized 18 October 1593. Godfather: Pasquier Pichereau. Godmothers: Philippe Garnier and Jeanne Riollet.
- 3) Jeanne Pelletier, baptized 3 April 1595. Godfather: Marin Beauséjour. Godmothers: Jeanne Goissedet, wife of Jean Bernard, and Marie Pichereau, wife of Vincent Colibert.
- 4) Nicolas Peltier, baptized 6 June 1596. Godfathers: Nicolas Brébier¹² and Éloi Pelletier. Godmother: Mathurine Moinaut, wife of Pasquier Pichereau.
- 5) Marie Pelletier, baptized 11 March 1598. Godfather: Jean Martin. Godmothers: Catherine Derouet and Germaine Pelletier.
- 6) Marie Pelletier, baptized 10 February 1599. Godfather: Claude Dubois. Godmothers: Marie Garnier and Marie Delaroche.
- 7) Jeanne Pelletier, baptized 11 July 1600. Godfather: Georges Pelletier. Godmothers: Marie Pichereau and Jeanne Baudoin.
- 8) Éloi Pelletier, baptized 23 January 1602. Godfathers: Éloi Boudon and Jean Tulloue the Younger. Godmother: Jeanne Boudon, wife of Éloi Vassort.
- 9) Pierre Pelletier, baptized 18 November 1603. Godfathers: Pierre Beauchesne and Nicolas Pelletier¹³, son of Éloi Pelletier. Godmother: Jeanne, wife of Claude Dubois.
- 10) Noëlle Pelletier, baptized 10 April 1605. Godfather: Mathurin Bisson. Godmothers: Noëlle Noffret and Étienne Jaret.
- 11) Marguerite Pelletier, baptized 10 November 1606. Godfather: Jean Yesme. Godmothers: Marguerite Maugin and Mathurine Colibert.
- 12) Philippe Pelletier, baptized 22 February 1609. Godfathers: Philippe Desessarts and André Pelletier. Godmother: Adrienne Henry, wife of Michel Abraham.
- 13) Simone Pelletier, baptized 13 June 1610. Godfather: Gilles Colibert. Godmother: Jacqueline Abran.

It is uncertain at this time what became of Nicolas' siblings and we cannot say who among them survived to adulthood or later married. According to Gallardon historian Maurice Vié, around the same time as Nicolas' birth, from 1596 to 1598, epidemic disease, food shortages and civil war ravaged the Beauce countryside¹⁴.

¹¹ In the case of Philippe Pelletier and her godmother, Philippe Garnier, "Philippe" is a feminine name.

¹² On 7 May 1597, Simone Pichereau likewise served as godmother to Simone Brébier, daughter of Nicolas and of Jeanne Égasse. Nicolas Brébier was a carpenter, the son of Mathurin Brébier.

¹³ This person was misidentified as ancestor Nicolas Peltier in a previous article, "Nicolas Peltier: A Chronicle, 1594-1678," which appeared in *Michigan's Habitant Heritage* (vol. 25, no. 2, Apr. 2004) and in *La Pelleterie* (vol. 18, no. 2, summer 2004). This other Nicolas Pelletier, a blacksmith, son of Éloi and of Jeanne Riollet, was baptized in Gallardon on 7 December 1594. In 1614, he wed Catherine Deleau, daughter of Thomas and of Marguerite Labbé. He appears to have died in the 1630s. His exact connection to ancestor Nicolas Peltier remains to be discovered.

¹⁴ Vié, Maurice, *Gallardon et ses environs, tome II – de la renaissance à la révolution (1500-1800)*. Self-published by Vié, 1998 (pp. 66, 68).

Furthermore, for twenty years starting in 1608, repeated religious and civil upheaval, contagious diseases, failed crops, famine and harsh weather plagued the region and caused many deaths¹⁵. Vié notes, "Rare were those families that did not lose half of their children before the age of ten."¹⁶ Such was the situation into which Nicolas and his siblings were born and in which they grew up.

Maternal Cousins

While Pelletier was a common name in Gallardon at the end of the sixteenth century, and while the parish registers are not detailed enough to determine who was related to whom¹⁷, such is not the case for Nicolas' mother's relations, the Pichereau family.

Compared to Pelletier, the Pichereau name was less common in Gallardon and appears less frequently in the parish registers. But they were a small, closely-knit family, often identified in the registers as having served as godfather or godmother to one another's children. Likewise, they can be found among those persons whom François Pelletier and Simone Pichereau chose to sponsor their own children. Let us take a closer look at those Pichereau families that we have found in the old Gallardon parish registers.

First, there is the couple Vincent Colibert and Marie Pichereau, who appear in the baptismal register for the first time in November 1581. They show up regularly over the course of the next nine years, at the baptisms of their six children:

- 1) Jean Colibert, baptized 9 November 1581. Godfathers: Master Jean Pichereau and Lubin Colibert. Godmother: Marthe Martin, wife of Jean Heurtault.
- 2) Lubin Colibert, baptized 9 September 1583. Godfathers Richard Colibert and Denis Bisson. Godmother: Jacqueline Hauray, wife of Lubin Colibert.
- 3) Simone Colibert, baptized 20 February 1585. Godfather: Charles Colibert. Godmothers: Simone, wife of Jean Pichereau, and Marguerite Léger.
- 4) Marguerite Colibert, baptized 13 December 1586. Godfather: Thomas Leloup. Godmothers: Marguerite Denesles and Marie Lebreton, daughter of François Lebreton.
- 5) Gilles Colibert¹⁸, baptized 1 September 1588. Godfathers: Jean Boudon and Symphorien Debaste. Godmother: Marie Pichereau, "sister of the said wife."
- 6) Denise Colibert, baptized 7 March 1590. Godfather: Germain Durant. Godmothers: Martine, widow of Jean Dubois, and Marthe Colibert, daughter of Richard Colibert.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 68.

¹⁷ Mothers' names are often incomplete or omitted; godmothers' surnames are often absent; godparents are not always identified as being someone's child or spouse. These omissions make it difficult to determine parental lines.

¹⁸ The register reads "son of Richard Colibert and Marie Pichereau," but Richard Colibert's wife was Bastienne Mariette. Besides, the priest indicated that the godmother, Marie Pichereau, was the child's mother's sister. It is possible that Richard was a brother or other relative of Vincent's and that the priest simply confused them. Like the Pichereaus, the Coliberts were a smaller family.

From Gilles Colibert's baptismal act (1588), we learn that, like his mother, his godmother was also named Marie Pichereau. More important, we learn that they were sisters. In the oldest Gallardon parish registers, besides Vincent Colibert's wife, we find three other women named "Marie Pichereau"—or possibly the same woman, married to three different men—, one the wife of Denis Bisson¹⁹, the other, the wife of Jacques Vigoureux, and the third, the wife of Blaise Denis. Let us consider these three couples' children.

Children of Denis Bisson and Marie Pichereau:

- 1) Barbe Bisson, baptized 5 December 1580. Godfather: Vincent Colibert. Godmothers: Matherie Lebrect and Barbe Poluche.
- 2) Jeanne Bisson, baptized 20 April 1582. Godfather: Jean Leroy. Godmothers: Marie Macé, daughter of Gilles Macé, and Jeanne, daughter of Pierre _____ (a spot of ink obliterated this name).

Children of Jacques Vigoureux and Marie Pichereau:

- 1) Claude Vigoureux²⁰, baptized 17 April 1586. Godfather: Jacques Desessarts. Godmothers: Claude Chenenier, wife of Noël Lebeau, and Anne Chenenier, daughter of Master Jacques Chenenier.
- 2) Jacques Vigoureux, "filius deffuncti Jacobi Vigoreulx,"²¹ baptized 27 June 1589. Godfathers: Father René Jaret and Vincent Colibert. Godmother: Simone Pichereau.

Child of Blaise Denis and Marie Pichereau:

- 1) Antoine Denis, baptized 24 April 1593. Godfathers: Antoine Reynard and Pasquier Pichereau. Godmother: Mathurine Dubois, wife of Étienne Bénard.

In the same order of ideas, let us note the presence of yet another Marie Pichereau, identified as the "daughter of the late Jean Pichereau"; on 8 November 1586, she was godmother to Marie, daughter of Marin Bariteau²².

Now, could this Jean Pichereau (father of Marie, above) have been the same person who in November 1581 served as godfather to Jean Colibert? Was he perhaps married to the poorly-identified "Simone" who in February 1585 served as godmother to Simone Colibert? Might he have

¹⁹ Likewise written "Besson" and "Bison" in the parish registers.

²⁰ In the case of Claude Vigoureux and her godmother, Claude Chenenier, "Claude" is a feminine first name.

²¹ "Son of the late Jacques Vigoureux." His father therefore died sometime between September 1588 and the day of this baptism.

²² Marie Bariteau's other godparents were Mathurin Ranelle and Marie Aullier, daughter of René Aullier.

been the grandfather of all these children whom we have just considered? These are questions to which we do not know the answers.

Lastly, as one final example of the presence of the Pichereau family in Gallardon, let us mention Pasquier Pichereau and Mathurine Moinaut. We have already seen them serve as godfather and godmother to two of François Pelletier and Simone Pichereau's children: Philippe (1593) and Nicolas (1596). François and Simone likewise later served as godfather and godmother to Pasquier and Mathurine's children:

- 1) Jean Pichereau, baptized 28 September 1596. Godfathers: François Pelletier and Claude Moinaut. Godmother: Philippe Garnier.
- 2) Simone Pichereau, baptized 25 October 1598. Godfather: Nicolas Debaste. Godmothers: Marie Pichereau, wife of Blaise Denis, and Simone Pichereau, wife of François Pelletier.

The fact that all these individuals appear together at different times in the parish registers of Saint-Pierre-Saint-Paul de Gallardon leads us to believe that they were all somehow related, though the exact degree of their kinship remains unknown. The least we can say at this time is that these people were all undoubtedly present in the early day-to-day life of ancestor Nicolas Peltier.

Beginning Migrations

On 29 February 1612, fifteen-year-old Nicolas Peltier entered into an apprenticeship agreement²³ with a master-carpenter from the nearby city of Épernon, six miles north of Gallardon. In the contract that he signed that day, Nicolas was identified as the son of the late François Pelletier²⁴ and of Simone Pichereau.

The contract stated that, starting the following day, 1 March, and during the following four years, Nicolas would be the "apprentice and student" of master-carpenter Michel Delaval²⁵. For his part, Delaval agreed to "show, teach and instruct" young Nicolas in the art of carpentry, to "prepare his drink and food," to keep him "warm and clean" and to provide him with "clothes, linens and shoes," all at his own expense. In return for this, Nicolas would be "obliged to serve the said Delaval" and to perform all "honest and licit things that he be commanded to do," without "elsewhere serving" and "without paying him anything."

²³ Archives départementales d'Eure-et-Loir, Jean Fullone registry, call number 2 E 49 / 35. Transcription of original French text by Michel Thibault, Brigitte Féret and Benoit Pelletier Shoja, with additional help from Émilie Lebailly and Guy Perron. Unless specified, all other transcriptions and translations are by the author.

²⁴ Burials were not recorded in the Gallardon parish registers before 1658, but given that François appears to have been living at the time of Simone Pelletier's baptism, 13 June 1610, we can assume that he died sometime after that, but before the signing of Nicolas' apprenticeship contract, 29 February 1612, a period of twenty months.

²⁵ In the parish registers of Saint-Pierre d'Épernon are found the baptismal acts of two sons of Michel Delaval and of Marie Thomas: Claude, baptized 24 January 1610 (godparents: Crispin Rousseau and Jeanne Amurry), and Daniel, baptized 7 March 1613 (godparents: Master Daniel Charpentier and Marie Monnerot, wife of Pierre Rousseau). It remains to be proven if this Michel Delaval is the one who undertook Nicolas' instruction in the art of carpentry.

Nicolas Peltier signed the contract that day along with Michel Delaval, who added beneath his signature the silhouette of a broadax, the tool used by carpenters and joiners for hewing posts and beams; likewise, Delaval probably added this identifying mark to any timberwork he completed. Local magistrate Thomas Deleau also signed the contract, along with the notary's secretary.

Marriage and Emigration

The exact details of Nicolas' tutelage are unknown to us. Likewise, we cannot say how long he stayed in Épernon, what he did or where he went once his contract with Delaval expired. Although the exact place and date of his marriage have not yet been discovered, genealogists estimate that about 1632, Nicolas married Jeanne de Voisy (or, de Vousy).²⁶

Nicolas and Jeanne had two sons before leaving France, Jean Peltier, born about 1633, and François Pelletier, born about 1635.²⁷ At this same time, for reasons not yet known to us, the family made its way to one of the Atlantic seaports, likely on the western coast at La Rochelle, or somewhere along the Normandy coast, to the north, where they boarded the vessel that carried them to the French colony in North America.

Arrival in New France

The earliest known mention of Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy in the archives of New France is the baptismal record of their daughter, Marie, found in the reconstructed parish registers of Notre-Dame de Québec. These records had to be recreated after having been destroyed in a fire that razed the chapel where they were stored. Émile Falardeau explains, "All registers before 15 June 1640 were destroyed in the conflagration of the chapel of Québec. A missionary [later] visited each house to collect information and began a new register."²⁸ Cyprien Tanguay adds, "It is to Father Le Jeune that we owe the copy of the acts that he carefully collected, and which form the first volume of these precious genealogical documents."²⁹

With regard to the baptism of baby Marie Peltier, there appears to have been some uncertainty in her parents' minds that summer of 1640 about the exact year in which the rite had taken place. The reconstructed act begins, "On 3 April 1637 or 38, Father Nicolas Adam, Jesuit, baptized Marie, daughter of Nicolas Pelletier, master-carpenter, and Jeanne de Vouzy..."³⁰

²⁶ Her place and date of birth and parents' names are all completely unknown to us. Her reported age at the census of 1667 was 53 years; at the census of 1681, it was 70 years. She was therefore likely born in the early 1610s. She could not write or sign her name.

²⁷ (1) At the census of 1667, Jean's reported age was 34 years; in 1681, it was 50. (2) At his confirmation at Sillery on 1 May 1662, François' reported age was 27 years; at the census of 1667, it was 33 years; in 1681, it was 48. (3) Neither Jean nor François' baptism is found in the Gallardon or Épernon parish registers or in the reconstructed registers of Notre-Dame de Québec, leading us to believe that they were born elsewhere in France before their parents' emigration.

²⁸ Falardeau, Émile, *Catalogue des mariages faits en la Nouvelle France depuis la maison et chapelle bruslee a Kebec*. Manuscript (facsimile available at the American-Canadian Genealogical Society, Manchester, NH), 1924 (p. 3).

²⁹ Tanguay, Cyprien, *À travers les registres*. Montréal: Librairie Saint-Joseph, 1886 (p. 25).

³⁰ Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BanQ), parish register, Notre-Dame de Québec.

This speculation about the exact date of Marie's baptism translates for us into uncertainty about the exact date of the Peltier family's arrival in New France. They were presumably still in France in 1635 for the birth of François Pelletier, and had surely arrived in the colony by the time of Marie Peltier's baptism, in either April 1637 or April 1638. With these assumptions about their appearance in New France in mind, let us consider the vessels that arrived at the colony from France during the two-year interval between François and Marie's births.

First, from 11 to 28 June 1636, between three and eight ships anchored at Québec³¹. Among these was the *Saint-Joseph*, as well as two other vessels, all three of which had departed the previous 8 May from Dieppe³², in Upper Normandy³³. This fleet had been sent by the Compagnie des Cent-Associés (Company of One Hundred Associates, also known as the Company of New France), the commercial enterprise responsible for the exploration and development of the French colony.

The next year, during the first half of the month of July 1637, three vessels are known to have arrived at Québec. These include the *Nicolas*, which had sailed from La Rochelle, as well as two other ships, which had left from one or another port in Normandy. They had all likewise been dispatched by the Company of New France³⁴.

Beginnings in New France

Whatever the route of their journey, wherever their port of embarkation and whenever their arrival in the colony, it is certain that by the summer of 1637, Nicolas Peltier, Jeanne de Voisy and their two young sons, Jean and François, had all arrived at the so-called *Habitation* of Québec. Established by Samuel de Champlain in 1608, and later reclaimed by the French in 1632 after a three-year English occupation, the bastioned *Habitation* served as a residence for about 200³⁵ colonists and craftsmen, and was a meeting place where Indians and Frenchmen came together to trade furs and other goods.

On 12 November 1639 at Québec, notary Martial Piraube drafted a document wherein Nicolas Peltier, fellow carpenter Pierre Pelletier and mason Jean Éger presented their evaluation of the timber frames of the house of the late Guillaume Hébert: They were all of a common opinion that it was uninhabitable.³⁶ Given this early date (1639), it may be that this Pierre Pelletier was some relation

³¹ Campeau, Charles, *Navires venus en Nouvelle-France*, www.naviresnouvellefrance.com.

³² A letter from Dieppe City Hall, dated 16 March 2004, notes: "Despite our research in the parish registers of Dieppe's two churches (Saint-Jacques and Saint-Rémy), we have found no trace of any sons born to Nicolas Peltier and to Jeanne de Vousy..."

³³ Campeau, *op. cit.* A fourth ship, the *Nicolas*, departed from either La Rochelle or Dieppe and appears to have made a stop at Tadoussac before arriving at Québec on 2 July 1636.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ (1) Trudel, Marcel, *La Population du Canada en 1663*. Montréal: Fides, 1973 (p. 1): In 1627, the population of the Saint Laurence Valley numbered only 127 individuals; in 1645, 300. (2) Gingras, Henri, i.c. (Guy Laviolette), *1541-1974 Cap-Rouge*. Saint-Romuald: Éditions Echemin, 1974 (p. 15): In 1637, the entire colony numbered just 60 families, of which 47 were concentrated in the area of Québec City.

³⁶ BanQ, Martial Piraube registry, 12 November 1639.

of Nicolas', perhaps even his younger brother, baptized in Gallardon in 1603. Whatever Pierre's connection to the Peltier family, this affidavit, which he did not sign but to which he put his mark, constitutes his sole appearance in the archives of New France³⁷.

During the first eight or nine years following their arrival in Canada, Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy lived at the *Habitation* and Nicolas worked there as a carpenter. At the same time, their household continued to grow. In 1645, the family settled in nearby Sillery, a *seigneurie* of mostly untouched forest, where Jesuit priests ministered to the numerous Montagnais, Huron and Algonquian Indians who lived there.

In 1637, the Jesuits had established a mission in Sillery in an attempt to render the nomadic tribesmen of the area sedentary, and, at the same time, to teach them agriculture and religion. At first, the few Montagnais and Algonquians who responded to the Gospel had lived with the Jesuits, but by 1643, the mission included some thirty-five families, most of which lived in small cabins around the Jesuit house. By the end of the 1640s, many more Indians, including Hurons from the west, had settled in Sillery, seeking protection from the hostile Iroquois³⁸.

The Peltier Children

As noted earlier, Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy had brought with them to New France two sons, Jean and François. At Québec, four more children were born and baptized:

- 1) Marie Peltier, baptized 3 April 1637 or 1638. Godfather: Pierre Laporte, agent for the Company of New France. Godmother: Marie Giffard, daughter of Robert Giffard.
- 2) Louise Pelletier, baptized 10 May 1640. Godfather: Pierre de Launay, agent for the Company of New France. Godmother: Louise Couillard, wife of Olivier Le Tardif.
- 3) Françoise Pelletier, baptized 13 April 1642. Godfather: Jean Bourdon, Seigneur of the Seigneurie d'Autray. Godmother: Françoise Pinguet, daughter of Henri Pinguet.
- 4) Jeanne Peltier, baptized 19 March 1644. Godfather: Father Gabriel Druillettes. Godmother: Louise Azarue.

In addition, at the Saint-Joseph Mission at Sillery, two more children were later baptized:

- 1) Geneviève Pelletier, baptized between 4 May and 25 July 1646³⁹. Godfather: Jean Juchereau de Maure. Godmother: Jeanne Boucher, wife of Thomas Hayot.
- 2) Nicolas Peltier, baptized 2 May 1649. Godfather: Nicolas Goupil, carpenter. Godmother: Anne Convent, wife of Jacques Maheu.

³⁷ Trudel, Marcel, *Catalogue des immigrants*. Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1983 (p. 91).

³⁸ (1) Lamontagne, P.-A., *Histoire de Sillery, 1630-1950*. Sillery: s.l., s.e., (pp. 8-9); (2) Bernier, André, *Le Vieux Sillery*. Québec: Ministère des affaires culturelles, 1977 (pp. 18-19).

³⁹ The exact date was omitted in the original parish register of Notre-Dame de Québec, where the act was recorded.

The Peltier daughters all married and established families in the area of Sillery, whereas the sons traveled broadly and eventually settled in more remote corners of the colony. François Pelletier and his younger brother, Nicolas Peltier, went on to take brides from the Montagnais nation of the Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean region, also known as the *Domaine du Roi*, or King's Domain, the name applied to the series of trading posts found throughout that vast territory. Let us take a closer look at the three Peltier brothers, Jean, François and Nicolas.

Jean Peltier (c.1633-1692)

On 21 August 1662 at Sillery, eldest son Jean Peltier married Marie-Geneviève de Manovelly, originally from the city of Mortagne, in the old French province of Perche. Her father had been "master of water and forests" there, as well as a minister to both Louis XIII and Louis XIV, at Paris⁴⁰. Jean and Marie-Geneviève went on to have one son.

In February 1664, Jean Peltier and younger brother François Pelletier appeared before the Sovereign Council of Québec, apparently without having been called upon to do so, "as a result of the calamitous accusation made against them of having traded intoxicating drink to the Indians."⁴¹ The brothers had come to demand "prompt justice" so that they could leave right away "on the hunt." They put to the Council that the governor had never restricted the trade of alcohol and that, moreover, Denis-Joseph Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux, a Royal Councilor then and there present, had himself traded alcohol to Indians, which they offered to prove with witnesses. At this point, the Council had heard enough. For the "insolence" of having accused Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux, in open council, of illegal activities, the brothers were sentenced to one hour of prison, thereby delaying their departure on the hunting expedition that they had been so eager to undertake.

During the 1660s, Jean Peltier and his family lived in Sillery, where he had received a concession of land. The national census of 1667 reported that he had 25 *arpents*⁴² of cleared and arable land, that he owned two heads of cattle and had two servants in his employ.

Early in the next decade, Jean moved with his family closer to Montréal, to the Seigneurie d'Autray⁴³. Widowed sometime before November 1681, in November 1692, at the nearby Seigneurie de Saurel, Jean and his son, Jean-François-Xavier Pelletier, were victims of the Iroquois.

⁴⁰ Jetté, René, *Dictionnaire généalogique des familles du Québec des origines à 1730*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1983 (p. 888). Jetté indicates that Marie-Geneviève's surname was "Manovely de Réville, as her father, Charles, was lord of the Réville estate in France, but her signature reads "Marie geneviefve DeManovelly" (BAnQ, Romaine Becquet registry, 13 October 1669).

⁴¹ *Jugements et délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France, tome I*. Québec: Imprimerie Côté et compagnie, 1885 (pp. 114-116).

⁴² An *arpent* is an old French unit of land area, approximately equal to 39,000 square feet (9/10 of an acre), or it could be a unit of length equal to one side of a square *arpent*, about 200 feet.

⁴³ BAnQ, Becquet registry, 15 January 1671. In the contract, he is identified as "Jean Peltier *habitant* d'Autray."

François Pelletier Antaya (c.1635-c.1688)

Middle son François Pelletier, who later bore the second surname Antaya⁴⁴, was an experienced *coureur de bois*⁴⁵, knowledgeable of Indian languages and skilled in their ways of the forest. As a fur trader, he dealt with Indians from as far east as the Domaine du Roi to as far west as the Great Lakes. He was later Seigneur of the Seigneurie d'Orvilliers and therefore the first landed aristocrat of his family.

In November 1659, François accompanied Jesuit priest Charles Albanel on a journey from Québec to the mission-trading post at Tadoussac. While the exact details of their voyage and stay there are unknown, according to the *Journal des Jésuites*, on 24 April 1660 at Québec, "... arrived from Tadoussac Father Albanel, who, before his departure from Tadoussac, had married a Frenchman named François Pelletier with a Christian Indian woman [named Dorothee], without publication of bans or notice given to the parents, the bishop or the governor, which caused a great stir."⁴⁶ François' marriage to Dorothee produced no children and lasted only a year. In April 1661, she died at the Hôtel-Dieu (hospital) at Québec, "after having received all the sacraments of the Church," and her body was buried in the cellar beneath the hospital.⁴⁷

Later that same year, following his participation in a summer expedition to Hudson Bay⁴⁸, François returned to Sillery and on 26 September 1661 married Marguerite Morisseau⁴⁹, originally from the parish of Saint-Pierre de Roye, diocese of Amiens, in the French province of Picardy⁵⁰. They went on to have ten children.

Residing first at Sillery, about 1669, François and his growing family moved some 120 miles upstream, to the Seigneurie de Saurel (today the city of Sorel-Tracy), found at the mouth of the Richelieu River, some twenty-five miles northeast of Montréal. He had received a concession of land there from Seigneur Pierre de Saurel, former captain of the noted Carignan-Salières Regiment, sent to New France in 1665 to quell the Iroquois hostilities.

François' connection to Captain de Saurel dated to at least July 1666, when François was among the three hundred French and Indians whom Saurel led on an expedition against the Iroquois who

⁴⁴ The origins of this name are unknown but may be Amerindian. The first known recorded instance of this name dates to 22 August 1667, when it appeared in the Becquet registry written as "Nontayé."

⁴⁵ (1) Tremblay, Victor, *Histoire du Saguenay*. Chicoutimi: Société historique du Saguenay, 1938 (p. 122); (2) A *coureur de bois*—literally, "runner of the woods"—, was any individual who engaged in the trade of fur without permission from French authorities. They operated throughout New France during the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

⁴⁶ *Journal des Jésuites*. Québec: Léger Brousseau, 1971 (pp. 268, 281).

⁴⁷ BAnQ, parish register, Notre-Dame de Québec, 13 April 1661.

⁴⁸ Tremblay, *op. cit.* (pp. 122-123).

⁴⁹ BAnQ, parish register, Notre-Dame de Québec, 26 September 1661.

⁵⁰ (1) Jetté, *op. cit.* (p. 888): According to census data in New France, she was born about 1643; (2) A letter from the Association diocésaine d'Amiens (dated 4 February 2003) notes that the parish registers of Saint-Pierre de Roye, housed at the Archives départementales de la Somme, begin only in 1690.

had killed two officers from his regiment and captured four or five others. Likewise, it was François who returned to Québec ahead of the expedition to announce the prisoners' liberation⁵¹.

On 22 October 1675, François and Marguerite purchased the Seigneurie d'Orvilliers (later called the Seigneurie d'Antaya), an estate sitting on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River across from the Seigneurie de Saurel. It measured 1½ miles along the River by 3 miles inland, and included Haystack Island (Île-aux-Foins) as well as the islets situated between the Island and *terra firma*⁵².

During the latter third of the seventeenth century, François and Marguerite participated actively in the fur trade. Even after François' death about 1688⁵³, Marguerite continued to hire and send trappers west to the Great Lakes to trade with the Indians there⁵⁴.

Not all of François Pelletier Antaya and Marguerite Morisseau's children and grandchildren remained in the area of Antaya or Saurel. Some ventured west, to the Great Lakes; others settled along the Upper Mississippi Valley. They married with the native peoples and founded families of their own. They lived as trappers, traders, soldiers, interpreters and guides. Some perpetuated the name Pelletier; others, Antaya.

Nicolas Peltier the Younger (1649-1729)

The youngest of the Peltier children was, like his father, named Nicolas Peltier. He was reportedly the first Frenchman to settle permanently in the Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean region and to adopt the ways of its people⁵⁵. Often identified in religious and civil records as "Colin Peltier," in the Montagnais language, he was also known as "Nicolachich."⁵⁶ Some of his early descendants later became tribal chiefs⁵⁷.

In September 1672, Nicolas obtained authorization from Governor Frontenac to leave on a winter-long trading expedition to the Domaine du Roi⁵⁸. Returning to Québec City the following spring, on

⁵¹ *Journal des Jésuites, op. cit.*, (pp. 346-348).

⁵² BAnQ, Becquet registry, 22 October 1675.

⁵³ The last mention of François in the archives of New France is at the wedding of his daughter, Marguerite, to Charles Boucher, 7 May 1685 in Sorel. On 1 August 1688, Marguerite Morisseau entered into an agreement with *voyageur* Jean Beaugrand. In the contract, she was identified as "the widow of Fran. Pelletier Ontaya of Orvilliers."

⁵⁴ (1) BAnQ, Adhémar registry, 1 August 1688. (2) Langlois, Michel, *Dictionnaire biographique des ancêtres québécois, tome III*. Sillery: La Maison des ancêtres et les Archives nationales du Québec, 1999 (p. 468): On 1 August 1688, Marguerite Morisseau hired Jean Beaugrand and François Couttu, who promised to travel west to collect and return with furs and pelts belonging to the late François Pelletier. She in turn promised to pay them 450 pounds.

⁵⁵ Tremblay, Victor, *Ici ont passé... le monument du Coteau du Portage*. Chicoutimi: Société historique du Saguenay, 1937 (p. 16).

⁵⁶ Hébert, Léo-Paul, *Le troisième registre de Tadoussac*. Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université de Québec, 1976 (p. 171).

⁵⁷ Société historique du Saguenay (SHS), *Saguenayensia*, Jan.-Mar. 1982 (p. 22).

⁵⁸ (1) Tremblay, *Histoire du Saguenay. Op. cit.* (p. 152); (2) See also: Domey, Claire Tremblay, *Ilinishu, enfant des bois*. Montréal: Rayonnement, 1959. Inspired by *Histoire du Saguenay*, Domey fictionalizes the life of Nicolas Peltier the Younger and his son, Charles, dubbed Ilinishu in the novel.

22 June 1673, he received permission from Monsignor Laval to wed Madeleine Tegouchik, a Montagnais⁵⁹. This permission came under the condition that Nicolas “reside with his wife, not in the woods among the Indians, but in a house among the French, and that their children be raised according to French customs and in the French language.” Despite these provisions, in September 1674, and again in the summer of 1676, Nicolas embarked with his wife on trading expeditions to Lac Saint-Jean⁶⁰.

When Madeleine died in March 1677⁶¹, Nicolas was left to care for their fifteen-month-old daughter. On 3 June of that same year, at the Saint-Charles Mission on Lac Saint-Jean, he wed Françoise Ouebechinokoue⁶², an Algonquin with whom he went on to have eleven children.

In 1678, thanks to the close local ties he had forged by having married into the families of Madeleine Tegouchik and Françoise Ouebechinokoue⁶³, Nicolas established his own trading post deep in the Domaine du Roi, 189 miles north of Lac Saint-Jean. His bastioned fort, consisting of three small houses, sat to the south of Lac Nekoubau, at the juncture of three important trade routes connecting Lac Saint-Jean, Baie James and Rivière Saint-Maurice. He operated there until at least 1693.⁶⁴

On 5 August 1715 at Québec, Nicolas married for a third and final time, taking for his bride Marie Outchiouanich, daughter of Jean-Baptiste Nanabesa, chief of Tadoussac⁶⁵. She would later tutor Jesuit priest Pierre-Michel Laure in the Montagnais language and assist him in the translation of prayers and the creation of a Montagnais dictionary and grammar book⁶⁶.

Ultimately, Nicolas settled along the northern shore of the Saguenay River, today within the municipality of Saint-Fulgence across from Chicoutimi, at a place that still today bears his name, L’Anse-à-Peltier (Peltier’s Cove).

Nicolas Peltier’s Land in Sillery

Having now finished our brief treatment of the lives of brothers Jean Peltier, Francois Pelletier Antaya and Nicolas Peltier the Younger, let us return to the story of their parents, the founding couple of the Peltier family in New France, Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy.

⁵⁹ Archives de l’Archidiocèse de Québec, 12 A, registre des insinuations ecclésiastiques, A:77.

⁶⁰ Tremblay, *Ici ont passé... le monument du Coteau du Portage. Op. Cit.* (p. 17).

⁶¹ Larouche, Léonidas, *Le second registre de Tadoussac, 1668-1700*. Montréal: Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1972 (p. 114): She was buried at Tadoussac 24 March 1677.

⁶² *Ibid.* (p. 86).

⁶³ Bouchard, Russel, *Le Saguenay des fourrures, 1543-1859*. Louiseville: Imprimerie Gagné, 1989 (p. 133).

⁶⁴ Tremblay, *Histoire du Saguenay. Op. cit.* (pp. 152-153).

⁶⁵ BAnQ, parish register, Notre-Dame de Québec.

⁶⁶ (1) Dragon, Antonio, *Trente Robes Noires au Saguenay*. Chicoutimi: Société historique du Saguenay, 1971 (p. 285); *Rapport sur les missions du diocèse de Québec et autres missions qui en ont ci-devant fait partie*, Mar. 1864, no. 16. Québec: Léger Brousseau, 1864 (p. 46).

On 12 September 1645 at Fort Saint-Louis in Québec City, acting under the authority of the Company of New France, Governor Montmagny conceded to Nicolas Peltier fifty *arpents* of land on the Côte Saint-François-Xavier in Sillery.⁶⁷ According to the land grant, the bounds of this concession began along the bluff, at a distance of 120 feet from the Saint Lawrence River, and continued inland to a distance of twelve 72 feet from the “grand chemin de Kebec au cap Rouge,” the road connecting these two places (today Laurier Boulevard). On its southwest side, the concession abutted a tract of ungranted land, and on its northeast side, it abutted the land of the Mères Hospitalières, a religious order that operated a hospital in Sillery.

Given that Nicolas and Jeanne’s daughter, Geneviève, was baptized in Sillery in mid-1646, it is likely that the Peltier family moved there from Québec at about the time this concession was made.

Later, on 29 March 1649, at their office in Paris, the directors of the Company of New France ratified the concession made to Nicolas Peltier three and a half years earlier. At the same time, they specified that in order to keep his land, Nicolas would have to pay an annual rent of six *deniers*⁶⁸ for every *arpent* in his possession⁶⁹.

Finally, on 28 April 1650, the concession was recorded at the registry of Québec. The registrar noted that Nicolas would have to work and cultivate the land in his possession, “in order to satisfy the intentions of the King,” or he would forfeit his property and render the concession null and void. The day on which the annual rent fell due was also specified: the feast of Saint John the Evangelist, two days after Christmas.⁷⁰

From this time forward, per his agreement with the Company of New France, Nicolas worked his land as a farmer, all the while continuing the trade of carpenter. We might imagine him, axe in hand, his wife Jeanne and sons Jean and François by his side, cutting and clearing his concession of trees, brush and stumps before applying his energies to constructing a home for his family.

From Carpenter to *Habitant*

By the time of his arrival in New France, Nicolas Peltier was already a master-carpenter. In that capacity, in November 1647, he framed the steeple of Notre-Dame de la Paix Church in Québec City⁷¹. For this, he received 1,500 pounds, plus another 30 pounds for the *vin du marché*⁷². The

⁶⁷ (1) BAnQ (Université Laval), Bien des Jésuites, cote E21 S66 SS3, localisation 7A 011 02-02-004B-01, contenant 1960-01-038\186; (2) In this case, 50 *arpents* equals 45 acres; (3) A *côte* is a hill or bluff.

⁶⁸ A *denier* was equal to one twelfth of a *sou* (halfpenny). It took 20 *sous* to make one pound.

⁶⁹ BAnQ (Université Laval), Bien des Jésuites, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Roy, Pierre-Georges, *Bulletin des Recherches historiques*. Lévis: Société des études historiques, 1901 (p. 271).

⁷² The *vin du marché* was a gratuity offered to workers and artisans beyond their regular salary.

next year, Nicolas installed the roof of Fort Saint-Louis, the governor's residence⁷³, and over the next decade, he was hired to construct and maintain various houses and barns in the area.

On 13 October 1649, Marie Forestier, mother superior of the Mères Hospitalières in Sillery, dispatched mason Gilles Barron and carpenter Nicolas Peltier to inspect and repair a house and out-buildings belonging to Anne Gasnier de Monceaux. These structures sat on the Côte Saint-François-Xavier in Sillery, on a tract of land neighboring that of Nicolas Peltier. Gasnier de Monceaux had purchased the land and buildings the previous month from the Mères Hospitalières, who had abandoned them some five years before, due to the rising Iroquois threat. Gasnier de Monceaux maintained that this abandonment had caused "great decay" to the structures and that they were in need of serious repair. Mother Forestier agreed, and sent Barron and Peltier to inspect them and undertake their restoration.⁷⁴

The next year, on 5 April 1650, Nicolas Peltier negotiated a contract with Mathurin Trut, whereby he agreed to pay Trut 320 pounds for two years' service.⁷⁵ The following 28 October, along with fellow master-carpenter (and recent son-in-law) Nicolas Goupil, he hired himself out to Jean-Paul Godefroy to construct a house measuring 55 feet by 24 feet, for 1,500 pounds.⁷⁶

Later, on 1 May 1653, Jacques Sévestre hired Nicolas, for 125 pounds, to work with André Renault to complete a barn begun by Renault and Jean Boyet⁷⁷. Finally, on 27 December 1657, Pierre Niel hired Nicolas to frame the walls, windows and timber-frames of a house measuring 20 feet by 30 feet, all for the price of 250 pounds.⁷⁸

Ultimately, by the late-1660s, by which time he had already reached his seventieth year, Nicolas had begun to withdraw from his trade and appears in no more contracts.⁷⁹ He became instead a genuine *habitant*, a French-Canadian farmer, cultivating the soil and raising his livestock. *Habitant*, as Québécois author Claude-Henri Grignon once had a character say, was "the most honorable title in all of New France!"⁸⁰

⁷³ Richardson, A. J. H. *et al.*, *Quebec City: Architects, Artisans, and Builders*. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1984 (p. 455). Richardson put a question mark after the year: "(1648?)."

⁷⁴ Scott, Henry Arthur, *Une paroisse historique en Nouvelle-France: Notre-Dame de Sainte-Foy, tome I, 1541-1670*. Québec: J.-A. K.-Laflamme, 1902 (pp. 261, 518-520).

⁷⁵ (1) Langlois, Michel, *Dictionnaire biographique des ancêtres québécois, tome IV*. Sillery: La Maison des ancêtres et les Archives nationales du Québec, 1999 (p. 91). (2) BAnQ, Audouart registry, 5 April 1650.

⁷⁶ BAnQ, Audouart registry, 28 October 1650.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 May 1653.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 December 1657.

⁷⁹ Upon his arrival in the colony, Nicolas appears in parish registers and in notarial contracts as either "Master Nicolas Peltier" or as "Nicolas Peltier, master-carpenter." In two Becquet contracts dating to 1669, the notary calls him, "Master Nicolas Peltier, *habitant*," in one, and "Nicolas Peltier, master-carpenter *habitant*," in the other. Starting later that same year, he is identified as simply "*habitant*."

⁸⁰ Serge Turgeon as Léon Dalbran in the television series *Les Belles Histoires des Pays d'en haut*.

Indian Encounters

In Sillery, as noted earlier, French Jesuit priests operated a mission for area Indians. Given the number of Indians living in Sillery and the proximity of their lands to that of the Peltier family, there is little doubt that they had regular and close encounters with one another. The following are but three such encounters.

According to the *Journal des Jésuites*, in August 1646, a cow belonging to a "Mr. Nicolas" escaped from its pen and wandered into a nearby wheat field belonging to some local Indians. There it grazed, and in so doing, destroyed some portion of the valuable commodity. The Indians discovered the animal, and in compensation for what it had eaten and otherwise ruined, killed it on the spot.⁸¹ According to H. A. Scott, the identity of the cow's owner is most likely Nicolas Peltier, whose land in 1646 was closest to that of the Indians. Nicolas brought the matter before the court, where the value of the cow was estimated at seventy-five *francs*, and where those responsible for its slaughter were ordered to pay Nicolas six beaver pelts, worth about ten *francs* per pound⁸².

A little over a year later, in September 1647, it was not the Indians who transgressed the law, but rather Jeanne de Voisy, Nicolas' wife. Following the investigation into a report of "disorder" at Sillery made to Governor Montmagny, Jeanne was found guilty of having traded two bottles of *eau de vie* (distilled alcohol) to two Indians, which on this occasion had resulted in a drunken brawl and the stabbing of both men involved. Jeanne was ordered to pay a fine of 100 pounds and to relinquish the 400 *grains de porcelaine* (porcelain beads, or wampum) that she had received for the spirits. From this 100-pound fine, one third went to the Jesuits, while the other two thirds were divided equally between the Ursulines and the Hospitalières, two orders of nuns who also tended to the Indians of Sillery.⁸³

The third incident is conceivably more serious than the killing of an errant cow or the illicit trading of spirituous liquors. According to the *Journal des Jésuites*, in May 1651, two Iroquois attempted to raid the Peltier home.⁸⁴ Ostensibly, Nicolas was able to repel their attack and he and his family escaped unharmed.

⁸¹ *Journal des Jésuites. Op. cit.* (p. 62)

⁸² Scott, *op. cit.* (pp. 203-206).

⁸³ Archives du Séminaire de Québec, P29/73, "Rapport de Marsolet et sentence du gouverneur," 13 September 1647. One of the injured Indians spoke of the *eau de vie* that he and the other had purchased from "the wife of Master Nicolas Peltier and from a young man living with them." This "young man" is not named in the report and his identity remains a mystery.

⁸⁴ *Journal des Jésuites. Op. cit.* (p. 152).

Daughters' Weddings

Starting in 1650, and during the next thirteen years that followed, Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy undoubtedly had much occasion for joy and parental admiration as they celebrated the weddings of each of their daughters⁸⁵:

- 1) Marie Peltier married Nicolas Goupil in Québec City on 17 October 1650. They had two children, but after Goupil's death, in 1655, Marie wed Denis Jean and with him had twelve children.
- 2) Louise Pelletier married Jean Hayot in Sillery on 17 November 1653. They went on to have ten children⁸⁶.
- 3) Françoise Pelletier married Jean Bériau in Québec City on 17 August 1654, but widowed soon after, she married Sébastien Liénard on 11 October 1655 in Sainte-Foy and with him had thirteen children.
- 4) Jeanne Peltier married Noël Jérémie de la Montagne in Québec City on 29 January 1659; he was an interpreter and agent in the *Domaine du Roi*. They went on to have fourteen children.
- 5) Geneviève Peltier married Vincent Verdon in Sillery on 5 November 1663 and was pregnant with their second child when he died in 1665.⁸⁷ In August 1669, she married Thomas Lefebvre, an interpreter and fur-trader with whom she had twelve children.

Nicolas Peltier's Land in Sillery, Continued

In 1653, in order to allow the residents of the Côte Saint-François-Xavier to come together as a community and to better resist Iroquois attack, the Jesuits established a fifty-*arpent* common in Sillery. Of these fifty *arpents*, forty-five were divided equally among the eighteen inhabitants of the Côte, giving them 2½ *arpents* apiece to plant gardens and to build barns and stables. The remaining five *arpents* were reserved for a bastion-fort, built by the residents themselves. In 1654, the Jesuits distributed houses and dwellings within Fort Saint-François-Xavier to the *habitants*, and to maintain their rights to these *habitations*, they had to "maintain home and hearth" and to "undertake the necessary functions for the defense of the place." Nicolas Peltier and his son, Jean Peltier, were among those who maintained their rights to their portions in 1663.⁸⁸

On 22 March 1660, Jesuit Superior Jérôme Lalement confirmed in a signed affidavit that on 29 March 1649, the Company of New France had ratified the concession made by Governor Montmagny to Nicolas Peltier on 12 September 1645.⁸⁹ Lalement described the boundaries of the property as "a line on the high side to separate the land presently belonging to Thomas Hayot," and "on

⁸⁵ The daughters were aged 12, 13, 12, 14 and 17 years, respectively, at the time of their weddings. Each waited between two and five years before having her first child.

⁸⁶ On 1 May 1664 at Sillery, Nicolas Peltier was godfather to their daughter, Louise; likewise, Marie-Geneviève de Manovelly was her godmother.

⁸⁷ On 16 February 1665 at Château-Richer, Jeanne de Voisy served as godmother to their first child, Jeanne.

⁸⁸ Trudel, Marcel, *Le terrier du Saint-Laurent en 1663*. Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1973 (pp. 272-273).

⁸⁹ (1) BAnQ (Université Laval), *Bien des Jésuites*, *op. cit.*; BAnQ, Audouard registry, 22 March 1660.

the low side, another line that separates it from the land [formerly] belonging to the Reverend Mères Hospitalières, presently belonging to [Denis-Joseph Ruelle d'Auteuil] Monceaux," noting that the land extended from the Saint Lawrence River to the Chemin de Québec au Cap-Rouge.

Father Lalement continued:

[...] having been asked by the said Peltier to give him confirmation of the said concession of fifty *arpents*, and moreover to make to him a donation of the surplus of fifty *arpents* within the said boundaries of the said concession, in accordance with the promise that the late Reverend Father Jean de Quen, then Jesuit Superior and tutor of the said Indians, had made to him in May 1659, in light of the said concession signed in the name of the commissioners of the Company [of New France] on 29 March 1649, with the act of distribution of 12 September 1645; and being otherwise assured of the said promise, we have accorded and accord by these presents to the said Peltier confirmation of the said fifty *arpents* bound as above, under the conditions and charges carried by the said concession for the annuity and quitrent, to wit, of six *deniers* per *arpent*; moreover, we have made to him and make to him by these presents donation of the said surplus of fifty *arpents* comprised within the said boundaries, under the same charges and conditions as the others, who have taken concessions in the expanse of the said Seigneurie des Sauvages [*i.e.*, Sillery] since 1651, at a rate of twelve *deniers* per *arpent* for annuity and quitrent, payable the [feast of] Saint John the Evangelist, 27 December, at our house in Sillery [...]. We have given and give by these presents the right to fish to the said Peltier vis-à-vis the said concession, on the Saint Lawrence River, provided that the said lessee take or cause to be taken his grain to the mill, [that he] permit the said Indians to take wood from the said concession, and [that he] reside there and clear his land incessantly; failing which, the landlord will be permitted to retake full possession of the said lands, without other process and without reimbursement [...].

By the autumn of 1660, Nicolas had acquired a second tract of land in Sillery, a little farther downstream, and he now possessed well over 100 *arpents*⁹⁰, not including his share of the common adjacent to Fort Saint-François-Xavier. According to Marcel Trudel, this second, lower parcel consisted of an unknown quantity of land, but, like its neighbor, possibly measured three *arpents* along the Saint Lawrence by about twenty deep. The date of concession for this property is likewise unknown, but, according to the October 1660 land grant of an abutting parcel, Nicolas' land sat to the northeast.⁹¹ It is unclear what became of this second tract of land.

⁹⁰ According to Marcel Trudel (*La Population du Canada en 1663, op. cit.*, p. 242), in 1663, Nicolas possessed 213 *arpents* of land on which he paid annuity and quitrent.

⁹¹ Trudel, *Le terrier du Saint-Laurent en 1663, op. cit.* (p. 266).

Nicolas' other, upstream parcel, which included the 1645 concession and the 1659-1660 donation cited above, ran four *arpents* (800 feet) along the Saint Lawrence River and extended inland nearly a mile from the River to the road leading from Québec to Cap Rouge (today Laurier Boulevard), a distance of about twenty-five *arpents* (5,000 feet).⁹²

The census of 1667 reported that Nicolas Peltier was 77 years old (he was really 71), that Jeanne de Voisy was 53 years old, and that son Nicolas Peltier, who lived with his parents, was 18 years old. They all lived on the Côte Saint-François-Xavier, and had in their employ a servant named Pierre Cartier, also aged 18 years.

On 20 August 1669, Denis-Joseph Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux, representing the rights of François Pelletier Antaya, signed a rental agreement with Nicolas Peltier for a house and a barn belonging to François, "for the time and space of two years, beginning the twenty-third day of May last past and ending the same date the said two years finished." That is to say, Nicolas had occupied this house since May 1668 and had the right to live there until May 1670.⁹³

Because of this rental agreement with son François and Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux, on 13 October 1669, Nicolas and Jeanne were able to rent their property on the Côte Saint-François-Xavier to eldest son Jean Peltier and his wife; the contract was for a period of five years. According to the lease agreement, the Peltier land abutted that of Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux on one side and that of François Pelletier Antaya on the other; it extended from the Saint Lawrence River to the Chemin de Québec au Cap-Rouge; it included about twenty-five *arpents* of arable land, as well as a house, a barn and stables; and it provided fishing rights on the Saint Lawrence River. In exchange, Jean and his wife agreed to pay 35 bushels of wheat, ten bushels of peas and one barrel of salted eels per year⁹⁴.

Two years later, on 11 October 1671, with Jean Peltier having moved with his family from Sillery to the Seigneurie d'Autray, Nicolas and Jeanne rented their property on the Côte Saint-François-Xavier to Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux, for which they received 30 bushels of wheat and sixteen bushels of peas per year⁹⁵.

⁹² In *Le terrier du Saint-Laurent en 1674, tome I* (Montréal: Éditions du Méridien, 1998, p. 260), Trudel hypothesizes that this plot of land consisted of 6 *arpents* of frontage by about 20 in depth. He describes it as having been "granted 22 March 1660 to Nicolas Peltier and to his son, François Pelletier Antaya (land registered to their names in the 1665 plan [drawn up by Jesuit priest Gabriel Druillettes]; in or before 1669, Nicolas sold his son's upstream portion to Denis-Joseph Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux; and on 27 October 1673, Nicolas sold to the same d'Auteuil-Monceaux his 4 *arpents* of frontage downstream from the portion that had belonged to François (ratification of this sale 2 April 1674)." This land was not "granted" 22 April 1660; that was the date on which Nicolas' ownership was confirmed.

⁹³ BAnQ, Becquet registry, 20 August 1669.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 October 1669.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 October 1671.

Sale of the Peltier Farm in Sillery

In the autumn of 1673, by which time they had already settled in the Seigneurie d'Autray⁹⁶, Nicolas and Jeanne undertook the necessary steps to sell their property on the Côte Saint-François-Xavier. The morning of 10 October, at their house at Autray, Nicolas signed an affidavit conferring power of attorney to his wife, giving her the "power and authority to govern and administer each and every possession" belonging to him⁹⁷.

As a result, the following 27 October, Jeanne was at Québec City to sign a sales agreement with Denis-Joseph Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux, who purchased the Peltier farm for the sum of 1,000 pounds.⁹⁸

Finally, on 2 April 1674, again at Autray, Nicolas ratified the sale of his land.⁹⁹

Final Migrations

Although the exact particulars of their subsequent travels and migrations remain unknown, according to notarial documents, in the autumn of 1675, Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy once more made their way to Québec City. There, on 31 October, they signed a contract with their daughter, Marie Peltier, and her husband, Denis Jean. For the sum of 120 pounds, paid by Denis-Joseph Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux, Marie and Denis accepted the sale of the Peltier farm per the purchase agreement signed on 27 October 1673 and ratified on 2 April 1674.¹⁰⁰

The next week, on 7 November 1675, while still at Québec, Nicolas and Jeanne received from Ruelle d'Auteuil-Monceaux "the sum of 700 pounds remaining from that of 1,000 pounds, price of the acquisition that the said Sieur d'Auteuil made from the said Peltier & de Voisy [...]."¹⁰¹

Land Grant in the Seigneurie d'Orvilliers

In the early part of the 1670s, while they lived in the Seigneurie d'Autray, Nicolas Peltier and his son, Jean Peltier, each received from Philippe Gauthier de Comporté a concession of land in the northeast neighboring Seigneurie d'Orvilliers. Gauthier de Comporté, a former lieutenant in the Cagnan-Salières Regiment, had received this fief on 29 October 1672 and would later sell it to François Pelletier Antaya and Marguerite Morisseau, on 22 October 1675. In the meantime, he made his donations to Nicolas and Jean.

⁹⁶ BAnQ: (1) Adhémar registry, 10 October 1673 and 2 April 1674; (2) Becquet registry, 27 October 1673; (3) Duquet registry, 31 October 1675; (4) Nicolas Peltier signed each of these contracts, in which he is identified as residing in Autray. Moreover, the Adhémar contract dated 10 October 1673 specifies that it was signed and dated at the house of Nicolas Peltier, in Autray.

⁹⁷ BAnQ, Adhémar registry, 10 October 1673.

⁹⁸ BAnQ, Becquet registry, 27 October 1673.

⁹⁹ BAnQ, Adhémar registry, 2 April 1674.

¹⁰⁰ BAnQ, Duquet registry, 31 October 1675.

¹⁰¹ BAnQ, Becquet registry, written in the margin of 27 October 1673 sales agreement.

On 23 March 1678 at Québec, Gauthier de Comporté drafted a confirmatory note, in which he stated,

I certify to all relevant parties having heretofore given a billet, whereof I gave by the said billet to *bonhomme* Nicolas Peltier an *habitation* of four *arpents* of frontage by forty of depth on the land that I have since sold to Sieur Antaya, likewise having given to Jean Peltier four *arpents* of frontage by forty of depth, all joining the Seigneurie d'Autray. All the same, I have given the contracts of concession thereof, I have also returned to them by the said written billet all the quitrent that they might owe, which was two live capons and forty *sous* per year, given that they were the first *habitants* of the said place until the day I sold the said land to the said Sieur Antaya¹⁰².

Death of Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy

It was there, above the Isles of Sorel, at the western extremity of Lac Saint-Pierre, that Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy spent the rest of their days in the company of their sons, Jean Peltier and François Pelletier Antaya, and many of their grandchildren. Nicolas appears to have lived past his eighty-first year; he died sometime before the national census of November 1681. Jeanne followed some eight years later, at the age of about 77, and was buried 12 December 1689 at the Seigneurie de Saurel.

Conclusion

Here ends this reflection on the lives of these brave and hardy pioneers, Nicolas Peltier and Jeanne de Voisy, born some four centuries ago in France. They survived famine, war and disease in their native country; embarked on an overseas voyage of great incertitude; and prospered in the hostile and otherwise unforgiving wilderness of Canada, where they ultimately succeeded in establishing their family. By the end of their lives, they had spent over forty years in New France.

In 1681, almost a half-century after their marriage, Nicolas and Jeanne's progeny included three sons, five daughters, over 70 grandchildren and even several great-grandchildren. A century after their arrival in New France, their descendants numbered nearly 1,000, making the Peltier family the tenth largest so-called *famille souche* (root family) in all of French Canada.

Last update
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¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 23 March 1678.