
THE ANCESTRAL COUPLE

PIERRE MERCIER DIT CAUDEBEC AND ANDRÉE MARTIN

When Pierre Mercier dit Caudebec arrives in Quebec in 1665, New France is in a process of profound transformation. The King of France, Louis XIV, projects to establish a settlement in Canada based on agriculture. A royal government replaces the Companies to administer the colony. A Governor and an Intendant assume this function. The Sovereign Council administers justice. The arrival of the Carignan-Salière Regiment puts an end to the reign of terror imposed by the Iroquois. The arrival of the «*Filles du Roy*», the natalist policies of the Intendant Talon, the expansion of the «*Régime Seigneurial*», the arrival of the «*colons engagés*» and of the soldiers who decide to settle in the Saint-Lawrence Valley doubles the population in seven years. The population of New France passes from 3215 to 6700 inhabitants.

The Sovereign Council of New France

*The Highest Court of Justice of the colony.
The Intendant sits as president, assisted by the bishop, the governor
and five to twelve councillors.*



Crédit photo: Tableau de Charles Huot (1855-1930), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Québec

Pierre Mercier dit Caudebec was born in Normandy in 1644 in Barneville-sur-Seine, some 30 kilometres west of Rouen. He is the son of Nicolas and Jacqueline Tienneau Picard. His surname of Caudebec probably comes from the fact that he lived in the city of Caudebec-en-Caux. At the age of 21, he signs an employment contract for New-France. He works at the beginning as a farm laborer and later as a domestic.

In 1669, Pierre signs a marriage contract with Jeanne Labbé of Île d'Orléans, a marriage which never took place. That very same year, the promised lady will marry a widow already installed on a partially cleared land. A few years later, he leaves for Acadia where he will start a family with Andrée Martin.

The wedding is celebrated on April 24 1679. Pierre is 33 years old and Andrée is 30. Mother of six young children, she is the widow of François Pellerin, a pioneer in Beaubassin. This village was situated near the actual border between New-Brunswick and Nova-Scotia.

At that time, the inhabitants of this region are perturbed by the high rate of mortality amongst the men and the domestic animals. Jean Campagna is accused of their death by sorcery. At his trial, Andrée accuses him of being responsible of the death of her late husband. Her testimony is corroborated by numerous witnesses amongst whom her husband Pierre. The accused was acquitted.

In the census of 1686, Pierre, aged 40, and his spouse Andrée, 37 years old, are the parents of 10 children aged from two months to 16 years. Four of them carry the family name of Mercier: they are Joseph, Magdeleine, Alexandre and Marie-Joseph. They own a gun, a few acres of land, six cows and four pigs. Later, two more children, Guillaume and Agnès, will be added to the already numerous family. The children born from the first marriage will bear the name of Caudebec, Codbec or Cod'bec.

Future census will demonstrate that the economic situation of the family has improved. However, around 1700, a question of morality concerning his brother-in-law will put pressure on the family to leave Beaubassin. After an attempt to establish in Gaspésie, they leave to go cultivate excellent agricultural land on the Côte-du-Sud. Joseph, the eldest, being without doubt required to defend the region against the English, did not follow the family to Saint-Pierre-du-Sud. There is a possibility that he established himself in Gaspésie.

«The land of Pierre, lots 47 and 48, is the second east of the line of division between the seigneuries of Bellechasse-Berthier and of Rivière-du-Sud» in a zone vindicated by the Seigneur of Rigauville and the Seigneur Couillard de l'Espinay. Alexandre and Agnès, the youngest, will inherit their parent's lots. Alexandre and his wife Josephte Godin-Saindon take possession of the family property in 1716 with the obligation to keep, to nourish and to care for the parents until their death. The fire at the presbytery of Saint-Pierre-du-Sud in September 1748 has destroyed the death certificates of Pierre Mercier dit Caudebec and of his spouse Andrée Martin.

Their descendants are few in number. Only Alexandre and maybe Joseph have had boys to continue the lineage of the Mercier dit Caudebec or Codbec that we meet today in the Lower St-Lawrence region, in Gaspésie and on the North Shore. They represent approximately 1% of the Mercier of North America.

References:

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