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APPRENTICESHIP INDENTURES: A KEY TO ARTISAN LIFE IN NEW FRANCE

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Individual apprenticeship indentures from New France have been published to evoke the pre-industrial and frequently romanticized past of French Canada.[1] The single contract for craft training is little more than a colourful fragment. Collectively, however, apprenticeships tell another story; a story which can be compiled from the information contained in some six hundred notarized contracts made between 1647 and 1760. It is a story worth telling for it challenges the traditional belief that the economy of New France was undermined by a chronic and universal shortage of skilled labour.[2] The surviving indentures show that the French apprenticeship system made a remarkable adaptation to conditions in Canada and became, next to immigration, the major source of skilled hands for the colony. The existence of such a vigorous institution in New France forces one to reconsider the question of the colony's commercial vitality, an issue which divides the economic and neo-nationalist historians of French-Canada.

Very little stood in the way of change in the apprenticeship system. In the absence of guilds and an exclusive caste of master craftsmen, apprenticeship was free to respond to the needs of the labour market. Craft masters in the colony had neither the corporate organization nor the legal power to control the number of admissions into their particular trade. *Métier libre,* the free exercise of manual trades without requiring a certificate of mastery, became a principle of government in Canada for all but the surgeons. French civil law and custom were the only restraints on apprentice and master and they were far from being crippling. The text of the indentures followed a traditional French pattern. The legal status of the apprentice was still that of his master's ward. In this state of guardianship the apprentice was not free to bind himself or his goods by contract nor to travel about without his master's permission. Since fugitive servants were a problem in New France the *Conseil Souverain* enacted laws in 1663, 1667, 1673 and 1679 against runaway employees. These laws extended to apprentices and many Canadian notaries made sure, at the time of contracting, that the apprentice knew the legal penalties for flight.

Within these limits, the contracting parties were free to set their own terms. The cost, duration and conditions of training could be highly individual. No institution prescribed the terms; the state was content to limit itself to upholding the contract *after* it had been concluded. This freedom allowed the institution of apprenticeship to suit itself to time, place and personality. The single constant was that the master was obliged to train the apprentice as best he could in all that pertained to his trade.

The major change in the institution in New France was in the relationship of apprentice to master. If one accepts the characterization of apprenticeship in contemporary France as a relationship in which the apprentice was exploited for the bentfit of the master,[3] then it must be admitted that in Canada the situation had been reversed. An apprentice was a useful assistant to his master and the competition of certain trades in the colony for apprentices led to a rapid improvement in the conditions of service. Free training, without any fee being paid to the master, became the rule in New France. In France the master was customarily repaid for the training in cash or goods as well as by service. If the decline of the master's fee in Canada were due to a lack of capital one would expect a large increase in the period of service so that the apprentice could make up the deficiency in the payment with skilled labour for the master. This was not the case. In central and south-western France the average period of apprenticeship was two years while in Paris it was five or six years.[4] In the English colony of New York custom and the law tended to maintain the seven year minimum established by the Elizabethan Statute of Artificers.[5] In New France the median term was three years.

RECIPIENTS OF PAYMENTS IN APPRENTICESHIP CONTRACTS IN NEW FRANCE

Notarial file	Payment to master	No payment	Payment to apprentice	Total known
Audouart, Becquet & Basset 1654-1697	2	10	6	**18**
G. Rageot of Quebec 1667-1691	2	14	8	**24**
F. Genaple of Quebec 1683-1709	3[1]	9	15[2]	**27**
A. Adhémar of Montreal 1681-1713	20[3]	28	10[4]	**58**
L. Chambalon of Quebec 1692-1716	8	35	25	**68**
J-E. Dubreuil of Quebec 1708-1734	21[5]	78	40	**139**
J-C. Raimbault of Mtl. 1727-1737	3	18	1	**22**
F. Comparet of Mtl. I. 1736-1755	3	10	16	**29**
C. Barolet of Quebec 1734-1759	0	15	60	**75**
Total	62	217	181	460

1. All are personal servants sponsored by members of the upper classes
2. Seven are apprentices to masons
3. Fourteen are apprentices to shoemakers
4. Five are apprentices to masons
5. Six are apprentices to shoemakers, five are apprentice-seamstresses, and three are apprentices to joiners

The trend in New France in favour of the apprentice did not stop at training without cost in most trades. By the first quarter of the eighteenth century, masters had assumed the obligation to *clothe* as well as feed and shelter the apprentice. Cash payments were frequently given *to the apprentice* in place of clothing. Free apprenticeship training was not unknown in France but payments to the apprentice were almost unheard of. A good number of the payments to apprentices in New France even exceeded thirty *livres* a year, which was an adequate allowance for clothing. Certain craftsmen were making payments that approached the wage of an unskilled or household servant. The increasing

value of the apprentice as his skill developed was often recognized by ascending yearly payments. Substantial money payments were most often given to mature apprentices serving more than three years. Masons, metalworkers, joiners and, in seventeenth century New France, carpenters were particularly generous to their apprentices. Masons may well have felt obliged to increase their payments to compensate for the physical demands of their occupation and the low social rank of its practitioners.

Conversely, payments continued to be made in New France to masters of very profitable or highly respected trades and for training in less than two years. Merchants were invariably well paid for instructing apprentices and silversmiths, gunsmiths and armourers could demand some compensation for their troubles. Seamstresses were paid in order that their female pupils might return home as quickly as possible. Shoemaking was the most popular craft in New France from 1680 to 1730. This popularity increased the bargaining power of the shoemakers, who rarely gave clothes or money to their apprentices. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries shoemakers could claim a payment from the apprentice or his sponsor and this payment increased with each reduction in the period of service. In Montreal at the beginning of the eighteenth century, for example, one paid six bushels *(minots)* of grain for two and a half to three years of apprenticeship. For two years of service the apprentice paid double the amount of grain and only one year of apprenticeship cost 100 to 120 *livres.*[6] These few trades resisted the general trend in Canada in favour of the apprentices.

In most cases clothing allowances tended to increase and, as a further incentive to good and loyal service, many apprentices were promised a new outfit, some tools or a small cash bonus upon the completion of their time of service. Clothing allowances and graduation outfits had also become common in New York in the 1720's but it is not known whether the trend went as far as it did in Canada.

In New France craft training had ceased to be a privilege. The decline of the master's fee in most trades opened apprenticeship to the poor. The material rewards of the master were usually limited to the labour performed by the apprentice in the workshop and in the house. In eighteenth-century New France the mature apprentice serving more than two years could expect a clothing allowance or its cash equivalent and, possibly, some extra reward at the end of his term of service. A few apprentices could even hope for a proper salary. In contrast with the

situation in France, apprenticeship in Canada had become a very profitable arrangement for the apprentice.

There is, moreover, good reason to believe that working conditions had improved for the Canadian apprentice. Apprentices were customarily bound to obey their master in all that was commanded of them. Although the phrase "apprenti serviteur" was frequently used in the contracts, many apprentices were exempted from servile tasks. Paying apprentices in France and Canada could demand this dispensation as a matter of course. In New France the idea that an unpaid apprentice was obliged to serve his master only in tasks related to his trade seemed to be taking hold in the eighteenth century. This is implicit in indentures which list the apprentice's duties *outside* the master's craft. If such obligations had been taken for granted it would not have been necessary to list them. The cutting and carrying of firewood, the fetching of water and, particularly in the Montreal region, farm labour were often added to the general terms of service.

The idea that an unpaid apprentice was excused from servile duties appeared in a case heard before the royal court in Montreal in 1734. The wife of a shoemaker, who was then absent on a trip, put her son into apprenticeship for eighteen months with a tailor. The tailor promised the boy a vest and hooded coat *(capot)* at the end of his term and the tailor assured the mother that her son would not be asked to sift flour or carry water. When, after two and a half months, the boy's father had returned and the agreement was to be put into writing, the mother demanded that their son be also exempted from work in the woods. The tailor replied that such work would be his only recompense for training and that the boy "en qualité d'apprenti, . . . devait entrer du bois." The mother insisted that either her son's duties be limited to tailoring or she would place him elsewhere on better terms. At this the exasperated tailor said that he was not her valet and he asked to be released from the agreement. The court dismissed the case and the father's request that the tailor be compelled to train his son.[7]

It could be argued that the favoured position of apprentices in New France is proof that there was a labour shortage in the colony. Craftsmen, it might be said, would not have offered training on such good terms unless they badly needed helpers. One can accept this argument to some degree. There is a psychological factor to be considered. It was the individualism among Canadian artisans that allowed any labour shortage to work in favour of the apprentices. The same

spirit of independence infected the journeymen. Few Canadians cared to be a journeyman, an employee of another artisan. The history of certain artisans suggests that they accepted the rôle of journeyman or employee only until they had acquired the capital to set up their own business. Their ambition was to be self-employed or, in Canadian terms, a master craftsman and there was no legal barrier to this ambition. Because of this urge there was a particular shortage of journeymen in Canada and apprentices provided an alternate and cheap source of labour. An apprentice, after a year or two of training, was capable of performing as a journeyman.

In an acute shortage of skilled labour craftsmen would have taken on several apprentices at a time to increase their output and their profit. Despite the fact that the law put no limit on the number of apprentices per master, Canadian artisans rarely had more than two apprentices at one time and their terms were usually staggered so that each apprentice was at a different stage of training. Stonemasons sometimes had as many as three apprentices in service. This compares favourably with La Rochelle where, in the 1660's and 1670's, some shipwrights had as many as four or five apprentices in training. In Canada, moreover, masters and not journeymen provided most of the instruction. On the other hand, the quality of training in Canada may have been inferior since there were no craft organizations to maintain a standard of skill and government regulation of quality was restricted to the food trades. Colonial craftsmen often performed a variety of functions and only a minority were proficient specialists. In New France versatility or non-specialization was the hallmark of seventeenth-century craftsmen and rural artisans.

The age of Canadian apprentices at the time of contracting also indicates that the lack of skilled workers has been exaggerated. If the need for artisans had been desperate boys would have been put into training as soon as possible. The number of juvenile apprentices, children under the age of ten, was negligible in New France. These were foster children who, by accident, were indentured to an artisan who was willing to provide craft training as well as food and a home. The serious apprentices who were learning their first trade were from 13 to 19 years of age. On the average, they were 16 or 17 years old. Although Canadian apprentices tended to be a shade younger than their peers in La Rochelle, they were older than those indentured in Paris and New York. The quality of apprentices in New France, as indicated by the age at which they were apprenticed, had not fallen.

It is impossible to establish the total number of craftsmen in New France or to say precisely where and when the apprenticeship system was fully satisfying domestic needs. The system got into its stride only after 1670 but despite this there are some one thousand apprenticeship indentures from the period of 1648 to 1759 in the notarial archives. This may not seem impressive when one considers that the cumulative population of New France over the years was about 100,000 persons. Yet the notarized apprenticeships are the tip of an iceberg.

Underneath the notarized apprenticeships one must assume the existence of the traditional father-to-son craft training. Traditions were weakened in New France but there remained a desire to have at least one son carry on the family trade. In a contract made at Montreal in 1673 the master, a thirty-two year old brazier, made his apprentice promise to train one of the brazier's sons in his craft if the master died or become incurably ill.[8] In addition to this extensive family tradition, there was an unknown number of holograph indentures and casual learning relationships which are referred to incidentally in notarial and court records. The fee schedules of Canadian notaries allowed them to charge one *livre* for each recorded apprenticeship and half price "pour ceux dont il n'y aura point de minute."[9] It appears that there was an equally large or greater number of apprenticeships that were unrecorded for the most part.

Our knowledge of craft training within the colony depends very much on one well-documented segment, the apprentices indentured before notaries, those whose contracts remain in the surviving files. Unrepresentative though this group might be, it has a singular interest for the historian. It was the dynamic element among all the apprentices. By choice or by necessity, these apprentices were freed from the conservative family system. For the vast majority, whether orphaned or not, it was a departure from the paternal occupation. Only a handful of the orphaned apprentices were put into the trade of their late father. In the choice of a career they were not bound by tradition.

The orphan apprentices in the recorded group were a minority. Since they could not be trained by their father or a close relative, they were forced out of the family system. The small proportion of orphan apprentices in New France is yet another confirmation of the vitality of the institution in Canada. The enthusiasm of an apprentice of necessity for his trade would not, one imagines, be great. The first concern of his guardians was to find him a new home and he was likely younger

than other apprentices. The younger the apprentice the longer was his service; age rather than the craft was the greater determinant for the duration of apprenticeship.

Almost a quarter of the apprentices in seventeenth-century Canada lacked one or both parents. Such orphan apprentices increased proportionately in the eighteenth century. The sharpest rise was in the period 1710-1740 when well over a third of the apprentices had lost one parent, — usually the father, or both parents. This increase was probably attributable to the war, the famine and three smallpox epidemics that struck New France in the early eighteenth century.[10] The proportion of apprentices from incomplete families declined thereafter. There was, however, no return to the low level of the seventeenth century. In La Rochelle the number of orphan apprentices was always high. Barely more than half of those apprenticed in this French seaport in the same period had the benefit of a living father or both parents. In New York City, from 1695 to 1727, the fatherless and orphaned apprentices increased from a third of the total to just under half. In comparison with New York and La Rochelle, the apprenticeship system in New France was less dependent on these unhappy recruits.

Roland Mousnier, in *Paris au XVIIe siècle,* has claimed that apprenticeship was a means of social advancement, particularly for servants sponsored by their former employers.[11] The notarized apprenticeships of New France offer only partial confirmation of this. A few Canadian servants were sponsored as apprentices to a gunsmith, armourer or locksmith by French officials and officers. The gesture had little meaning in a country where free training was common. The social movement in Canadian apprenticeships, based on the occupation of the father or sponsor and that of the master, was up from the lower levels and down from the top. There was no consistent movement upward. The children of rural "habitants", who were quite numerous, tended to go into masonrywork, metalworking and other humble trades. One can find the sons of merchants and armourers entering lesser occupations such as carpentry and surgery. Popular crafts, shoemaking for example, drew apprentices from all social levels. The one group in New France that benefited most, socially and economically, from apprenticeship was that of the mature and independent young men who had some money in their pockets. They could pay for training in the shortest possible time in the most lucrative and honourable trades.

The distribution of apprentices among different crafts ought to be a trustworthy indicator of the shape and evolution of the economy.

It has been said already that the apprentices indentured before notaries were no longer bound by family tradition in their choice of a future occupation. They could enter those trades which had the best prospects, — the trades that satisfied a need in the colony. It was proverbial that "un métier ne vaut rien, qui ne nourrit pas son maître" and few would be witless enough to choose a trade that would not earn their daily bread.

What the apprenticeship contracts reveal about the economy of the Laurentian valley is both predictable and surprising. Unfortunately, there were no indentures from Detroit and those made at Trois-Rivières and Louisbourg were too few to enter into any major generalization. The occupations represented in a sample of 615 apprenticeships made at Quebec and in the Montreal area have been presented in a chart to permit a percentage comparison between the two places. Montreal and Quebec both acted as service centres for the rural population. In the seaport of Quebec a fifth of the apprentices were being trained in barrelmaking. In the 1720's and 1730's Quebec's export trade in staves, flour, biscuits and peas increased the demand for apprentice-coopers. Of the 75 apprentices indentured before the Quebec notary Claude Barolet in 1734-1759 forty-seven were apprenticed to coopers and on very advantageous terms. Maritime trades such as those of pilot-navigator, pulleymaker and shipwright were also represented. Yet there is only one apprentice shipwright among the 352 indentured at Quebec and he was bound to his brother in 1701. The great shipbuilding programme of Intendant Hocquart in the eighteenth century left no imprint on the notarized apprenticeships. Perhaps the Crown was importing or training in the royal shipyards all the shipwrights that the colony needed. Shipbuilding in the private economy, judged from the apprenticeships seen, seemed moribund for the children of shipwrights were entering other trades.

CRAFT PERCENTAGES IN APPRENTICESHIPS BY REGION

Craft or Trade	QUEBEC (352 indentures, 1648-1760)	MONTREAL (263 indentures, 1657-1760)
Armourer/Gunsmith	2.2%	4.9%
Blacksmith	1.9	14.4
Locksmith	6.5	nil
Nailsmith	1.6	nil
Silversmith	.8	.3
Toolmaker	5.9	3.8
Versatile metalworker	4.2	4.1
ALL METALWORKERS	24.7	28.8
ALL FOOD PROCESSERS	2.2	.7
Shoemaker	15.6	22.0
Tanner/Currier	.2*	1.1
Tailor/Seamstress	5.1	5.3
Weaver	nil	3.8
ALL CLOTHING/LEATHER CRAFTS	19.8	32.6
Mason/Stone-cutter	11.6	8.7
Carpenter	2.5	1.9
Cooper	19.8	1.5
Joiner	9.3	17.1
Joiner-Turner/Turner	2.8	nil
Joiner-Sculptor/Sculptor	nil	1.9
ALL WOODWORKERS	36.3	23.6
Barber-Surgeon/Surgeon	1.1	1.1
Barber-Wigmaker/Surgeon-Wigmaker/Wigmaker	1.9	3.4
Merchant	.2	.7

* tanner-shoemaker

Crafts peculiar to Quebec group: Baker, Butcher, Barber-Wigmaker, Farrier, Goldsmith-Jeweller, Joiner-Turner, Locksmith, Nailsmith, Navigator-Pilot, Pulleymaker, Roofer, Roofer-Chimneysweep, Shipwright, Turner.

Crafts peculiar to Montreal region sample: Brazier, Carpenter-Cartwright, Joiner-Sculptor, Miller, Sculptor, Surgeon-Wigmaker, Weaver, Wooden shoe maker.

Crafts common to both but not listed: Cartwright, Saddler, Tinsmith.

Masons and stonecutters were important to Quebec, where one apprentice in ten entered their ranks. Since the popularity of the masons rose when that of the carpenters declined it appears that in Quebec there was a growing preference for stone construction in the late seventeenth century long before Indendant Dupuy's ordinance of 1727 made it mandatory in the towns. A similar trend occurred in Montreal in the early eighteenth century. The threat of fires was undoubtedly a factor but the construction of stone fortifications at Quebec, Montreal, and Crown Point also visibly encouraged apprenticeships in masonrywork.

Quebec, as befitted a capital, was more receptive to specialists and artisans in luxury trades. Here one finds a goldsmith-jeweller among the masters. Montreal and Trois-Rivières, however, could take pride in their apprentice-sculptors. In Quebec it seems that the family system or, more particularly, the Levasseurs provided most of the wood-carvers. Fashion was a great stimulus to wigmakers in eighteenth-century New France and they no longer had to double as barbers and surgeons.

Montreal was decidedly less urbane. The rhythm in the indenturing of apprentices in this town was strongly marked by the agricultural seasons whereas Quebec had a more stable pattern. Apprenticeships in Montreal declined during ploughing and sowing, the grain harvest, and threshing. The crafts in which apprentices were being trained had a strong rural flavour: weaver, miller, *sabotier,* carpenter-cartwright and tanner. Montreal depended less on imported clothing and a third of the apprentices in that region went into leather and clothing trades. From 1737 to 1751 Pierre Fontigny, a weaver at Pointe-aux-Trembles on Montreal Island instructed eight apprentices in the manufacture of linen cloth *(la toile)* and homespun *(l'étoffe du pays).*[12] Despite the Canadian vogue for mocassins and Claude LeBeau's statement that there were no shoemakers in Canada,[13] shoemaking, until the 1730's, was the most popular craft in New France, especially in the Montreal area. It is noteworthy that female apprentices were restricted to tailoring; this was one tradition that was not overthrown.

Certain patterns in the choice of trades by apprentices are not easily explained. The building trades were very important in Canada but relatively insignificant in La Rochelle. This seems natural since the housing needs of the colony, because of its newness and rapidly growing population, were greater. Yet can this explanation be extended to

cover the joiners, who made doors, windows and cupboards, and who trained 9% of the apprentices in Quebec and 17% of the Montreal Island apprentices? The answer may lie in a considerable production of furniture by Canadian joiners. The high number of apprentice blacksmiths and gunsmiths in Montreal may be due to the needs of agriculture and the fur trade as well as Montreal's proximity to the military frontier of New France. One is, however, hard put to justify the preponderance of locksmiths in Quebec; were the Québecois more wealthy or less trusting that the Montréalais? It would be pedestrian to attribute this anomaly to the security needs of the government and local merchants.

There was an internal logic at work in the choice of trades. Each notary may have had a different clientele but the distribution of crafts in apprenticeships passed by notaries of the same region in a related period is often very similar. Joinery is the most important craft in apprenticeships of Jacques David (1719-1726) and François Comparet (1736-1755) of Montreal Island. Eleven trades are represented in the apprenticeship files of the Quebec notary Gilles Rageot (1666-1692) as opposed to twelve for François Genaple (1682-1709) of the same city. Yet ten of these trades are common to both groups of documents. The internal logic of these patterns, I would suggest, is supplied by the varying needs of the colonial society. The distribution of trades is a reflection of these needs; needs to which the apprenticeship system was responding.

But was the apprenticeship system capable of satisfying these wants? There are indications in the apprenticeships that the colony's requirements in skilled labour were being met. There was a decline in payments to masters of preferred trades in the eighteenth century when the apprentice served for two or more years. Master's fees remained in force for apprentices who would work only at the craft and wanted to stay with the craftsman just for the time necessary to acquire his skill. The monopoly of the most profitable and respected trades had been broken. After 1730 the shoemakers could not exact a payment from an apprentice serving an average term.

There is a suggestion in the payments to apprentices in the eighteenth century that an adequate supply of artisans had been established. Before 1720 the annual payments to apprentices which exceeded the value of a clothing allowance were in the range of 40 to 100 *livres*. After 1720 the payments levelled off at 40 to 60 *livres*. The salaried

apprentice did not disappear; some indentures after 1730 contained an explanation why, in this case, wages would not be paid to the apprentice.[14] The value of wages in excess of a clothing allowance was, however, reduced. The democratization of apprenticeship was not reversed; free training with food, shelter and clothing was available in most trades for the adolescent or mature apprentice serving three or more years. In seeking a constant factor to explain the continued accessibility of apprenticeship in New France, the problem that craftsmen had in retaining journeymen appears to be a more plausible explanation than does a chronic and general deficiency of skilled labour.

This brief study indicates that private apprenticeship, including family training, was the main source of craftsmen within the colony of New France. By free adaptation to colonial circumstances, without government intervention, craft apprenticeship had become a strong Canadian institution that was capable of serving the needs of the colonial society. It perpetuated and diffused basic skills. The apprenticeship system was evidently answering the needs of New France in the building trades, woodworking, leatherwork, toolmaking, food processing and, eventually, clothing as well as certain luxury trades. It multiplied the coopers of Quebec who were producing an exportable commodity. The economy of New France in the early eighteenth century was advancing beyond the primitive stage. Judged by the maturity of its recruits, the generous terms of service, the low proportion of orphan apprentices, its flexibility and the large number of surviving indentures, the institution of apprenticeship was in good health in Canada. One might even say that it was in better health than apprenticeship in Paris or colonial New York.

How then does one reconcile our knowledge of this flourishing system for training artisans with the repeated complaints of senior, French administrators about the rarity of skilled labour in New France?[15] These complaints led Joseph-Noël Fauteux to conclude in 1927 that "Pendant toute la durée du régime français, la rareté de la

> main d'oeuvre, surtout de la main-d'oeuvre expérimentée, reste la principale pierre d'achoppement contre laquelle viennent se briser la plupart des tentatives industrielles."[16]

After examining an even wider range of sources, Jean Hamelin's conclusion in 1960 was essentially the same: "quel que soit le secteur de

> l'économie de la Nouvelle-France qu'on considère, la pénurie de main-d'oeuvre en général et de Gens de métier en particulier

apparaît comme la pierre d'achoppement contre laquelle se butent les quelques *initiatives* prises, dans le domaine économique par les intendants, les commerçants ou les particuliers."[17]

Because of the particular interests of the colonial officials, their correspondence is not a satisfactory source for evaluating the entire economy of New France. The royal officials who made these complaints were often those who wanted to diversify Canada's economy by establishing new industries. New industries meant new skills and this brings to light the great deficiency of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship, however flexible it might be, could only perpetuate existing skills. Crown officials were often seeking trades that were neither established in or traditional to the colony. A small and dispersed colony could not support a wide variety of trades or many specialists.

Even when a traditional skill was needed for a royal project, the local supply of artisans, which was related to the needs of the civil society, was usually inadequate. This was evidently the problem in 1715 when private individuals were forbidden to employ masons so that work on Quebec's fortifications and the Intendant's Palace might be completed.[18] If the quantity of craftsmen were sufficient, the quality of their work might be unacceptable. In 1739 when Intendant Hocquart was looking for workers for the royal shipyard, he reported "J'ai fait faire le recensement des charpentiers établis à Québec, il s'en est trouvé environ 50, il y en a 20 de fort bons." He was reluctant to divert them from private work and though they promised to train men for the Crown, Hocquart ordered a dozen carpenters from France.[19] Most royal officials found it easier to bypass the slow apprenticeship system and to import the craftsmen they needed. The responsiveness of the apprenticeship system depended on private persons recognizing a need and deciding to act.

The cost of the colonial craftsmen was also objectionable to the royal officials in Canada. Because of the higher cost of living in New France it was natural that salaries would be very high by French standards. Before one uses the high cost of skilled labour in New France to affirm that there was a widespread scarcity of artisans, one would have to show that workers' salaries went beyond anything that could be justified by the cost of living in Canada.

In assessing the commercial vitality of New France, a distinction must be made between the internal, domestic economy and the industries sponsored by the Crown. These industries were the primary concern

of the administrators, whose correspondence has guided economic historians in the past. The setbacks suffered by many of these enterprises cannot be blamed on a general shortage of skilled labour in the colony. They were laudable in ambition but frequently premature. Ironworks and shipyards were established before the colony had developed the necessary skills, the secondary industries and the market to support them.

The internal economy has been revealed only in part by the apprenticeship indentures but what has been revealed suggests that one cannot characterize the entire economy of New France by the problems of the officially-sponsored industries. There is an indication that Canada was moving towards self-sufficiency in essential skills and that the native artisan community was nourished by a vigorous apprenticeship system. Jean Hamelin's picture of New France as an economic invalid, though extensively documented, seems exaggerated. There appears to be, in the case of the craftsmen, some truth in the belief of the neo-nationalist historians that Canada, before the British conquest, had a "normal" or balanced society with its own successful commercial class.[20] The artisan community was not, to use Guy Frégault's expression, a "great commercial middle class" but it was a native business class that prospered. If one cannot affirm the existence of a colonial *bourgeoisie,* one can say that French-Canada has a very old *petit-bourgeois* tradition that began with the artisans and shopkeepers of New France.

A final verdict on the economy of New France must await a thorough investigation of the private and domestic commerce of the colony. The source for such a study will be the notarial archives where, in addition to apprenticeship contracts, one will find records of partnerships, business transactions, the hiring of employees, estates and debts. Without such a study, no overall assessment of the economy of New France is possible.

NOTES

1 *Bulletin des recherches historiques,* Vol. 31 (1925), p. 51; Vol. 32 (1926), p. 541; Vol. 34 (1928), p. 663-4; Vol. 37 (1931), p. 496-9; Vol. 48 (1942), p. 287; Vol. 50 (1944), p. 157-8.

2 J-N. Fauteux. *Essai sur l'industrie au Canada sous le régime français.* (Québec, 1927), Vol. I, p. xii. J. Hamelin. *Economie et Société en Nouvelle-France.* (Québec 1960), p. 123. M. Trudel. *Introduction to New France.* (Toronto 1968), p. 203.

[3] M. Marion. *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France . . .* (Paris 1969), p. 22-3. P. Quef. *Histoire de l'apprentissage.* (Paris 1964), chaps. 6-7. H. Sée. *Economic and Social Conditions in France during the Eighteenth Century.* (New York 1931), p. 123-6.

[4] R. Mousnier. *Paris au XVIIe siècle.* (Paris 1961), p. 236. R. Toujas. "L'Apprentissage à Castelsarrasin et à Moissac de 1643 à 1661" in *Bulletin philologique et historique du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques,* Année 1958-1959, p. 332-9; "L'Apprentissage à Moissac de 1662 à 1715" in *Ibid.,* Année 1959, p. 508-513. See documentary bibliography (La Rochelle & Pons) below.

[5] S. McKee. *Labor in Colonial New York 1664-1776.* (New York 1935), p. 71-2. McKee states that the law enforced a four year minimum term from 1674 until 1711 when the seven year minimum was imposed. This minimum was, according to McKee, maintained until 1731 and subsequently revived in 1784. *The Collections of the New-York Historical Society for 1885* (Vol. 18), p. 474 gave 1725 as the year when the seven year minimum was repealed. My own research indicates that at New York the average term of apprenticeship was six years in 1695-1708 and 7.7 years in 1718-1727. Such long terms would have made apprenticeship unattractive and this may have contributed to the demise of apprenticeship in New York in the late eighteenth century.

[6] Archives Judiciaires de Montréal, Greffe d'Antoine Adhémar, *passim.*

[7] Archives de la Province de Québec, NF 21 (Juridiction de Montréal), Vol. IV, fo. 117-118, 127vo-128vo; Vol. VIII, fo. 6-7vo.

[8] AJM, Greffe de Bénigne Basset, 1 nov. 1673.

[9] *Edits, Ordonnances Royaux . . .* (Québec 1854), Vol. I, pp. 101, 611.

[10] J. Henripin. *La Population canadienne au début du XVIIIe siécle.* (Paris 1954), p. 15-6.

[11] R. Mousnier, *op. cit.,* p. 234.

[12] AJM, Greffe de François Comparet, *passim.*

[13] C. LeBeau. *Avantures . . . ou, Voyage curieux et nouveau.* (Amsterdam 1738), Vol. I, p. 66.

[14] APQ, Greffe de Claude Barolet, 21 oct. 1754; 9 avril 1755. AJM, Greffe de J-C. Raimbault, 11 août 1733.

[15] These complaints are all from the celebrated C11A series of the Archives des Colonies in Paris. This was the general correspondence from Canada to the Ministry of Marine, which administered the colony for the French Crown, and in this series are found many of the dispatches from the senior colonial administrators in New France. Their observations on the labour situation have been reprinted in Fauteux and, in part, in Hamelin.

[16] J-N. Fauteux, *op. cit.,* Vol. I, p. xii.

[17] J. Hamelin, *op. cit.,* p. 123.

[18] P-G. Roy. *Inventaire des ordonnances des Intendants . . .* (Beauceville 1919), Vol. I, p. 145.

[19] Public Archives of Canada, M.G. 1, C11A (transcript), Vol. 71, p. 121-2.

[20] The neo-nationalist hypothesis, developed by Maurice Séguin and Michel Brunet with assistance from Guy Frégault, is that the economic inferiority of French-Canadians is a direct result of the British conquest. They believe that New France had a "normal" society with an active commercial class but that this class was, at the time of the conquest, devastated by inflated currency and the loss of traditional sources of goods and credit. The ascendancy of the English-speaking merchants was therefore a foregone conclusion. Jean Hamelin has questioned the existence of a Canadian *bourgeoisie* in the French régime and Fernand Ouellet blames the decline of the Canadian fur traders in the 1770's on their aristocratic and non-capitalist mentality. Ouellet suggests that those who were involved in commercial undertakings in New France had the same non-mercantile outlook and could not be described as middle-class. At this stage of research, Ouellet's theory seems applicable to the artisans in New France. They preferred to be their own masters, they hesitated to go into partnerships, and they tended to invest their money in real estate rather than in the expansion of

their business. The debate between the neo-nationalist and economic historians has been summarized by Serge Gagnon in his article "Pour une conscience historique de la révolution Québecoise" in *Cité Libre*, No. 83 (janvier 1966).

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

A. New France

The following is a list of the Canadian notaries in whose files apprenticeship indentures were found. The duration of the notary's practice is indicated and the total number of contracts of apprenticeship is given in brackets. The files that were only sampled, without making out a detailed card for every indenture, are marked with an asterisk.

(1) Quebec Region — Archives Judiciaires de Québec (now in the custody of the provincial archives of Quebec)
Guillaume Audouart, 1647-1663 (3)
Claude Barolet, 1728-1760 (75)
Romain Becquet, 1665-1682 (4)
Nicolas Boisseau, 1731-1744 (1)
Louis Chambalon, 1692-1716 (69)
Jean-Etienne Dubreuil, 1708-1734 (139)
François Genaple, 1682-1709 (27)
Paul Lanoullier des Granges, 1748-1760 (13) *
Claude LeCoustre, 1647-1649 (1)
Gilles Rageot, 1666-1692 (24)
Jean-Claude Panet, 1745-1775 (5 at least before 1760) *
Note: All of the above were town notaries. The files of several rural notaries were examined without success.

(2) Louisbourg — Archives des Colonies, série G 3, cartons 2037-2041
Claude-Joseph Desmarest, 1728-1737 (1)
Jean-Baptiste Morin, 1749-1758 (4)

(3) Montreal Region — Cour Supérieure, Service des Archives
Antoine Adhémar, 1681-1714 (61)
Jean-Baptiste Adhémar, 1714-1754 (more than 40) *
Guillaume Barette, 1709-1744 (2)
Bénigne Basset, 1657-1699 (11)
René Chorel de Saint-Romain, 1731-1732 (2)
François Comparet, 1736-1755 (29)

Jacques David, 1719-1726 (27) *
Nicolas-Augustin Guillet de Chaumont, 1727-1752 (6) *
Michel Lepallieur, 1702-1733 (35) *
Claude Maugue, 1677-1696 (11) *
Charles-Jacques Porlier, 1733-1744 (7) *
Joseph-Charles Raimbault, 1727-1737 (22)
Pierre Raimbault, 1697-1727 (10) *
Simon Sanguinet, 1734-1747 (2)
Nicolas Senet, 1704-1731 (9) *
François Simonnet, 1737-1778 (97 in French régime) *
André Souste, 1745-1769 (4 in French régime) *

(4) Trois-Rivières Region — Archives Judiciaires de Trois-Rivières

Jean Le Proust, 1751-1761 (2)
Pierre Petit, 1721-1735 (1)
Hyacinthe-Olivier Pressé, 1736-1746 (1)
Note: Though these were the only apprenticeship indentures listed in the registers of the Trois-Rivières notaries, others will probably be found among the "engagements." No apprenticeships were found in the Detroit notarial documents transcribed for the Public Archives of Canada.

B. France

(1) La Rochelle — Archives de la Charente-Maritime
de Beauchamps, 1692-1699 (11)
Jacques-Antoine Chameau, 1741-1759 (8)
Jean Drouyneau, 1652-1683 (153 before 1670)
André Girard, 1721-1741 (42 before 1727)

(2) Pons — Archives de la Charente-Maritime
Guillaume Bounin, 1650-1668 (25)

C. New York — New York Historical Society

"Indentures of Apprenticeship, Feb. 9th 1694/5 to Jan. 29th 1707/8" (abstracts of indentures including 91 craft apprenticeships) in Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1885 (Vol. XVIII), New York, 1886; p. 565-622.

"Indentures of Apprentices, 1718-1727" (abstracts including 164 craft apprenticeships) in Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1909 (Vol. XLII), New York, 1910; p. 111-199.

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