

## ANCESTRAL ATLANTIC CROSSINGS DURING THE 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY



### ANCESTRAL CROSSINGS BY THE NUMBERS

My ancestral research includes 46 ancestors that migrated from France to Quebec. Of the 46 ancestors, 36 crossed the Atlantic during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and 9 crossed the Atlantic after 1700. I have been able to identify crossing details for just over 1/3 of these ancestors in addition to some of their in-laws. This is because the maritime records for the French ancient regime have not survived. And the passenger lists that have survived or have been re-constructed are not complete. Some of my direct ancestors departed France from La Rochelle and some departed France from Dieppe. It is likely that the majority of my ancestors and forefathers departed from La Rochelle as this was the main departure port prior to 1700.

### FRANCE DEPARTURE PORTS

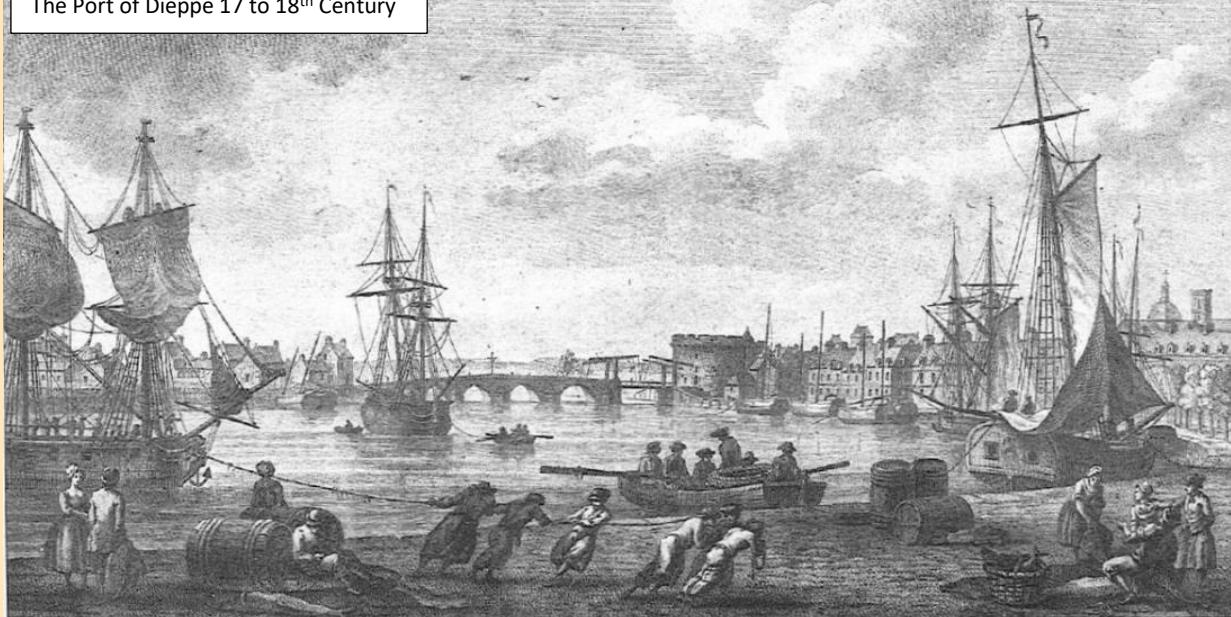
The Port of La Rochelle 17<sup>th</sup> Century



The Port of La Rochelle 21st Century



The Port of Dieppe 17 to 18<sup>th</sup> Century




The Port of Dieppe 21st Century



## CROSSING TIME

My ancestors crossed the Atlantic in ships powered only by sail, as a result there was significant variability in the crossing times. **Typically**, the crossing took at least **2 months**.

The **shortest** recorded crossing during the French regime was **27 days**. In 1687, L'Arc-en-Ciel (The Rainbow), a 100 Ton ship carried "Troops Franches de la Marine" to New France. The ship was part of a royal sponsored squadron of six ships that transported 12 companies or 600 troops to subdue the Iroquois. My ancestor Pierre Jamme dit Carriere (a soldier) crossed the Atlantic on this ship.

One of the **longest** crossing times that my ancestral research uncovered was for **111 days**. In 1663 L'Aigle d'Or (The Golden Eagle) and Le Jardin de Holland (The Garden of Holland) were 2 Caravelle type ships (300 Tons) sent by the King to New France. The ships left the port of La Rochelle on June 3, 1663 and arrived at Quebec on September 22, 1663. The bad weather, poor hygienic conditions and epidemic sickness transformed this journey into an extremely difficult experience. Of the approximately 300 passengers and crew that departed, 66 died at sea, 75 seriously ill disembarked at Plaisance in Newfoundland, and only 159 passengers reached Quebec. There were 35 young women on board the ships, the first contingent of Filles du Roi  (Daughters of the King). The king sponsored these women to migrate to New France and they become the "Mothers of Quebec." My ancestress Catherine Fievre was one of these courageous young women.

## SHIP DESCRIPTIONS

The ships that carried my ancestors across the Atlantic were very small in comparison to the ships used today. The 17<sup>th</sup> century ships ranged in size from 100 to 500 tons. Average size was 200 tons. The Queen Mary 2 cruise ship used for the transatlantic crossing today (7 days) is more than 150,000 tons. Obviously, there are no pictures available for the 17<sup>th</sup> century ships, but there are many images. The pictures below illustrate the size difference between today and the 17<sup>th</sup> century ships.

The Queen Mary 2 in Quebec City, Canada  
**Size:151,800 Tons Length:1,132 Feet Beam:131 Feet**  
 Passenger Capacity:3,064 Crew Size:1.253



The Bluenose II in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia  
**Size:191 Tons Length:161 Feet Beam:27 Feet**  
 Passenger Capacity: 12 Crew Size: 12



This ship is similar in size to some of the ships that carried my ancestors across the Atlantic.

<u>ANCESTOR</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>SHIP NAME</u>
Charles Allaire	1658	Le Taureau
Pierre Payette		
dit St. Amor	1665	Old Simeon
Antoine Roy		
dit Desjardins	1665	Old Simeon
Rene Binet	1665	Le Chat

It is not however similar in shape to the ships used in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The Bluenose II is a schooner. Most of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century ships used were Flutes or Caravles-see the images on the next page.

## SHIP IMAGES



**This image of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Fluyt can be found on numerous websites and publications. This enhanced color version was found at the Rochelaises Roots website.**



**This is a model of 17<sup>th</sup> century Fluyt.**

Many of the ships that sailed to New France in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were Fluyts. These ships weighed 200 to 300 tons and were approximately 80 feet in length.

## **CROSSING THE ATLANTIC DURING THE 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**

Imagine the sailing voyage on a small ship without the modern day comforts of an ocean liner. The following paragraphs are extracts from a detailed description of the Atlantic crossing published on the Franco-Quebec Commission on Common Places of Remembrances website:

**CRAMPED QUARTERS:** The place reserved for passengers was very limited. Everyone, a royal official, a missionary, religious/clerics, military officer, soldier, a hired man, a son of a family, a merchant, a clerk and a voluntary emigrant were squeezed like sardines. Because in addition to passengers the boat carried the provisions for the crossing, and live animals including such as pigs, sheep, chickens, oxen and horses. Each space was therefore used to its maximum.

**COLD and WET CONDITIONS:** The cold weather, mists and ice near Canadian shores and the harsh North Atlantic climate made life on board very difficult. The cold and the humidity were all the more biting on the ship because often one could not make a fire to warm up or to cook food for fear of fires. The passengers and crew then had to be content with cold meals. The straw mattresses and beds were soggy and merchandise was spoiled by the water that seeped all over the ship.

**DAILY LIFE:** During the crossing the for the passengers, the daily life is rather monotonous. When the weather allows it, life on board comes down to long walks on the deck, interspersed with board games or games of chance (cards, chess or dice), as well as music and singing. Some passengers were engaged in reading and writing. Otherwise, the time was spent chatting and observing other ships as they randomly encountered ocean encounters. So we had very few activities and we quickly became idle

**MEALS:** Usually three meals a day were served. At breakfast, we ate only cookies, which was excellent except that after a few weeks of navigation, it often happened that they were filled with little worms. As for lunch and dinner, they consisted of a soup made from rye or oat semolina, sometimes corn, beans or peas, to which fat or olive oil was added in such a way that everything is nourishing. Whenever possible the men tried to improve the daily menu with the products of their fishing: tuna, porpoise, shark, etc.

**DRINK:** To drink we have cider and fresh water as long as it was not too corrupt. Frequently the drinking water after 15 to 30 days of sailing was bitter, brownish in colour and filled with maggots. The nauseating odor made it necessary to plug one's nose to have the courage to drink it. On Sunday, an exceptional day, wine was put on the tables.

**HYGIENE:** The personal hygiene of the sailors and passengers left much to be desired. Fresh water was too precious to be "wasted" washing clothes or washing your person. We can then imagine the stench that reigned in the tween-decks where the ports (windows) are almost continuously closed. Parasites swarmed there.

**DISEASE:** Under these conditions, diseases developed easily. The most common and often fatal disease at sea was scurvy. The other ailments which also caused many deaths were typhus, measles, dysentery, smallpox, etc. The proximity in which we found ourselves, together with the lack of hygiene, cold and humidity, mean that these diseases spread quickly on ships and that 7 to 10% of passengers died before arriving in New France.



### **Sources:**

#### **Crossing The Atlantic During the 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

Franco-Quebec Commission on Common Places of Remembrance, "[Crossing the Atlantic in the 17th and 18th Centuries](#)" Bulletin No. 22 (October 2007) Accessed 12 January 2021

#### **Departure Ports From France**

Library and Archives Canada Website: [La Rochelle 17th Century](#) Accessed 10 September 2020.

Port of Dieppe Website: [Le Port](#) Accessed 05 May 2021

Port of De Plaisance Dieppe Facebook: [Port Dieppe 21st C](#) Accessed 05 May 2021

#### **Length of the Journey**

Navire Nouvelle France Website: [1687 and 1688](#) Accessed 09 January 2021.

Our Daoust Family Website: [Pierre Jamme Story](#) Accessed 28 December 2020.

Navire Nouvelle France Website: [1663](#) Accessed 14 September 2020.

Guy Perron Blog, "[The expedition of the L'Aigle d'Or for Quebec in 1663](#)" (March 10, 2020) Accessed 14 September 2020.

#### **Ship Descriptions and Images**

Wikipedia, Queen Mary 2: [Queen Mary 2 at Port of Quebec](#) Accessed 04 May 2021

Vacations To Go Website: [Queen Mary 2 Ship Statistics](#) Accessed 04 May 2021

Pinterest: [Bluenose II at Lunenburg, Nova Scotia](#) Accessed 04 May 2021

Tall Ships America Website: [Bluenose II Specifications](#) Accessed 04 May 2021

Rochelaises Roots Website: [Flute Ship 17th Century](#) Accessed 28 December 2020.

[Ship Model:17th Century Fluyt](#) Accessed 07 May 2021