

Marguerite Maclin (c 1647- 1733)
A Child Sent to Montréal to Marry a Settler

© Susan McNelley

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The Habitant Farm, Painting by Cornelius Krieghoff, 1856.
The National Gallery of Canada, PD-US

In 1658, Jeanne Mance, founder and administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu in Montréal, and Marguerite Bourgeoys, the settlement's first teacher, returned to France on a recruitment mission. Jeanne Mance needed more nurses and Marguerite Bourgeoys needed teachers for the growing population of the colony. They returned to Montréal in the fall of the following year on a plague-ridden ship, bringing a small group of would-be settlers, as well as assistants for the hospital and school. Marguerite Maclin was among the former group and a special case. She was the daughter of Nicolas Maclin and his wife and was from the Ville de Sézanne-en-Brie. In 1659, both of her parents were deceased. Marguerite was still a child, not more than twelve, when she was entrusted to the care of Marguerite Bourgeoys and sent across the Atlantic to marry a settler.

Marguerite stayed with the schoolteacher until her marriage to the habitant Jean Chicot on October 23, 1662. Jean Chicot, the son of Guillaume Chicot and Jeanne Fafart, was born on October 28, 1627, on the Île de Oléron, an island off the west coast of France. At the time of their marriage,

Jean was thirty-five years old and a seasoned combatant against Iroquois marauders. He was more than twice the age of his young bride who, according to census records of Montréal, was born about 1647. Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, Governor of the Island, and Marguerite Bourgeoys, then Superior of the Congregation of Notre Dame, were present for the wedding and signed the church register as witnesses. Neither spouse was able to sign the marriage record. Apparently, Marguerite Maclin had not learned to write, even though she had spent three years with Marguerite Bourgeoys and her teaching sisters before her marriage. Marguerite and Jean Chicot had two children before his death at the Hôtel-Dieu in 1667.

Jean Chicot first appears in the records of the settlement in 1651, eleven years before his marriage to Marguerite Maclin. In May of that year, Iroquois warriors ambushed Chicot and Jean Boudart, another settler, while the two were working near the latter's cottage. The Iroquois massacred and beheaded Boudart on the spot. Catherine Mercier, Boudart's wife, was carried off and cruelly tortured before being killed several days later. Jean Chicot was partially scalped but survived the attack. A dozen years later, in January of 1663, Governor Maisonneuve established the Sante-Famille Militia, consisting of 139 able-bodied settlers divided into 20 seven-man squadrons. Chicot, as a corporal, headed the eighteenth squadron. In 1666, he more than likely participated with other Montréalers along with the Carignan-Salières Regiment in the battles to subdue the Iroquois. Many of the soldiers had been wounded and/or suffered from exposure to intemperate weather in these campaigns. Perhaps Chicot was one for whom the lingering effects of combat duty hastened his untimely death at the Hôtel-Dieu on June 8, 1667. He was just short of forty years old.

On August 8, 1667, two months after her first husband's death, Marguerite, not more than twenty and mother of an infant and a toddler, married the carpenter Nicolas Boyer in Montréal. Nicolas, son of Étienne Boyer and Perrine Peineau, was baptized on September 29, 1637 in Le Poiré-sur-Velluire in the Vendée region of France. This couple had ten children, six of whom grew to adulthood and married. In the census of 1681, Marguerite and Nicolas were living in Montréal with a houseful of children; they had 8 horned cattle, one firearm, and 30 arpents (about 25 acres) of land. Nicolas died on May 24, 1714; Marguerite spent her last 19 years as a widow, dying on June 20, 1733, when she was in her mid-eighties. She had survived the plague on the Atlantic crossing, long and desperately cold winters, the terrors of Iroquois attacks on Montréal Island,

periodic food scarcity, epidemics, and the deaths of two husbands, four children, and many grandchildren.

Both the church and civil authorities of New France encouraged large families and Marguerite Maclin and her children obliged. Marguerite was grandmother to at least 109 children. Among her children, son Jacques Boyer and his wife Anne Cecire, had 20 children, including two sets of twins. Sadly, most of their children died in infancy; only four children of this couple grew to adulthood and married. Son Nicolas-Antoine Boyer, who married Marie-Louise Payet *dite* St-Amour, had 18 children. Marie Boyer, wife of Charles Gervais, and Marie-Marguerite Boyer, wife of André Senecal, each had 16 children.

Variations on the family name of Marguerite Maclin: Masselin, McLean.

Variations on the family name of Jean Chicot: Cicot, Chiquot, Sicot, Sicaud, Sicotte.

Variations of the family name of Nicolas Boyer: Bouhier

Sources:

For more information on Marguerite Maclin, the other settlers, and life in early Montréal: McNelley, Susan. *The Women of Ville-Marie: Pioneers of Seventeenth Century Montréal*, Etta Heritage Press, 2022.

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The list of men who comprised the Militia of the Sainte-Famille is found in *Memoires et Documents relatifs a L'Histoire du Canada*, published by La Societe Historique de Montréal. Montréal: Imprimé par Duvernay, Frères. 1859. Google Books. Web. Accessed 11 Apr 2019.