

THE COMPOSITION AND DIVISION OF THE ESTATE
OF
CHARLES DE COUAGNE

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A THESIS
in
The Department
of
History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Canada

March, 1975

ABSTRACT

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This essay is a study of the estate of Charles de Couagne. Using notarial deeds and minutes, an analysis is formulated of his fortune: how it was made, its composition during his life time and at his death, and its division.

The methodology and the exploitation of notarised documents for empirical results are emphasized. An evaluation of de Couagne's social and economic status is derived and his position within the structures of New France's society at the turn of the eighteenth century is established. Consequently, an understanding of the nature of colonial society is the essential purpose of the study.

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INTRODUCTION

Charles de Couagne had arrived in New France by 1676¹ from Clion, France.² At this time he was already using the surname of de Couagne instead of his family name Renaud.³ It has been suggested that a military custom in France at this period consisted of dropping the family name and using a surname.⁴ He was described as the maître d'hôtel of Governor Frontenac when he married Anne Mars⁵ of Quebec City, the daughter of Simon Mars, himself a member of an old merchant family of La Rochelle.⁶ Even by 1685 de Couagne would have been considered among the more well-to-do⁷ families in Montreal, for he was able to have a servant, Catherine, as

¹His first recorded business transaction is found in the minutes of the royal notary, Bénigne Basset in 1676. "Obligation de François Bailly le 6 octobre 1676" A.N.Q.M., Greffe Bénigne Basset.

²Cyprien Tanguay, Dictionnaire Généalogique, (Québec: Eusèbe Senecal, 1871) III, 269.

³Ibid., VI, 537.

⁴André Corvisier, L'Armée à la Fin du XVII^e Siècle, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1964), p. 851.

⁵Cyprien Tanguay, Dictionnaire Généalogique, III, 269.

⁶Archange Godbout, Emigration Rochelaise en Nouvelle France, (Québec: APQ, 1970), p. 160.

⁷William Eccles, Canadian Society During the French Regime, (Montreal: Harvest House, 1968), p. 65.

part of his household⁸ and pay her between eighty and one hundred livres annually.⁹ In 1685 Anne Mays died; de Couagne remarried in the same year. His second wife, Marie Godé, was the daughter of a Montreal carpenter.¹⁰

This essay intends to establish an empirical framework in which an analysis of de Couagne's social and economic status can be made. What is under consideration is how de Couagne, a merchant in New France, earned his wealth and what exactly was his financial standing at selected points in his life. It is expected that such an analysis will indicate his status within the society of New France and how he and his wealth fitted into the socio-economic hierarchy of the colony at the turn of the eighteenth century.

The basic documentation used were notarial deeds and minutes from which were selected all transactions to which de Couagne was a party. A similar selection was carried out both with the judgements of the Sovereign Council or Superior Council of the colony and certain private archives such as those of the Sulpician Fathers and the Baby Collection. These documents were then classified under business transactions, marriage contracts, last wills, estate inventories and papers dealing with the division of de Couagne's estate. The taxonomy

⁸ Benjamin Sulte, Histoire du Canada Français, (Montreal: Wilson et Cie. 1882), V, 69.

⁹ William Eccles, Canadian Society During the French Regime, p: 65.

¹⁰ Cyprien Tanguay, Dictionnaire Généalogique, III, 269.

set up to organize these sources was intended to be revelatory of the merchant's financial standing at the most significant moments of his life.

The methodology was then systematically applied. A typology was drawn up of his recorded transactions to establish the annual volume of business that passed through his hands. The making of his money was described and characteristics of de Couagne's entrepreneurship were revealed. The total value of de Couagne's estate was established as accurately as possible based on his final inventory in 1706 and the division of his estate in 1732. It was formulated in such a way as to provide fruitful points of comparison with the first inventory of de Couagne drawn up just after his second marriage in 1685. The correlation established between de Couagne's marriage contracts, last wills and division of estate was intended to expose certain customs and values ingrained in New France's society and found in legal form in the colony's law code, the Coutume de Paris.

Problems did present themselves in this study of de Couagne's estate: cultural values and value of property. However, instead of acting as major obstacles they suggested new areas of research beyond the limits set of this paper. This research would be initiated on other members of his family using basically the technical and conceptual framework used in the present essay.

CHAPTER I

MARRIAGE CONTRACTS AND LAST WILLS AS INDICATIONS OF WEALTH

A fruitful base for the comparative analysis of personal fortune should be able to be found in marriage contracts.

"Il est d'un grand intérêt économique et social de comparer la répartition des biens entre des personnes jeunes à celles des patrimoines laissées après les décès."¹ In de Couagne's first marriage contract only indications of wealth seem to be disclosed. The dowry of the bride is clearly stated, 2500 livres of which 1500 were in merchandise from her father's store in Quebec City. De Couagne endowed his wife to the extent of 500 livres worth of furniture and 500 in cash.² It is probable that it was at this point that de Couagne became an independant merchant instead of chief domestic aid to Governor General Frontenac. Many of his business transactions from the point of his marriage on describe him.

¹Adeline Daumard, "Problème de Méthode en Histoire Sociale", R.H.M.C., (Paris: 1964), p. 291.

²"Contrat de Mariage de Charles de Couagne et Anne Mars le 19 novembre 1680", A.N.Q.Q., Greffe Pierre Duquet.

as Charles de Couagne, "marchand bourgeois de Montréal."³

Furthermore, the newly-wed couple would appear to have moved to Montreal immediately after their marriage and de Couagne's leaving the Governor General's household.

A comparison to other endowments would be feasible for an evaluation. The non-existence of such an index is a definite lack in the research on New France⁴ and remains to be set up. A restricted sample of marriage contracts drawn up from just before de Couagne's first marriage to just after, was taken from the minutes of the notary Claude Maugue, with whom de Couagne had dealt extensively. This selected sample furnishes certain comparative data. (See Table 1). The value of the index is limited in that the material levels of the several social groups involved cannot be established. However, all people selected were inhabitants of the town of Montreal. Six of the twelve contracts selected had parties involved in commerce. All contracts were drawn up common as to property. Endowments on the part of the future husband were often in the form of furniture, livestock for a certain fixed value and money. The fiancée's dowry was usually in cash.

³"Marché entre Charles de Couagne, marchand bourgeois de Ville - Marie et François Couturier le 19 mai 1695", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Claude Maugue.

⁴"Obligation pour 229 livres, 1 sol, 6 deniers entre Charles de Couagne, marchand bourgeois de Ville Marie et Jean Réaume, voyageur le 6 octobre 1698," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Jean Baptiste Pottier.

⁴The French historian Adeline Daumard did formulate an index based on endowments listed some 125 years later in France. See Adeline Daumard, La Bourgeoisie Parisienne de 1815 à 1848, (Paris: 1963), p. 106.

TABLE 1

A SAMPLE OF MARRIAGE CONTRACTS BETWEEN 1679 - 1687^a

NAMES	PATERNAL ORIGIN	SOCIAL GROUP	ENDOWMENT	DOWRY
Jean Malhot Jeanne Millot (Sept. 9, 1683)	Jean Malhot (Tradesman)	Merchant	4000 livres	5000 livres
Charles de Couagne Marie Godé (June 25, 1685)	Charles de Couagne (Tradesman)	Merchant	4000 livres	300 livres
Charles Lemoine Jeanne Dufresney (Dec. 6, 1683)	Charles Lemoine (Seigneur of Longueuil)	Son of the Seigneur of Longueuil	300 livres yearly for 10 years	
Charles de Couagne Anne Mars (Nov. 19, 1680)	Charles de Couagne (Tradesman)	Merchant	1000 livres	2500 livres
Antoine Hatanville Jeanne Gadols (Jan. 2, 1683)	Nicolas Hatanville (Merchant in Paris)	Merchant	1200 livres	3000 livres
Jacques Hubert Marguerite Godé (Nov. 23, 1681)	Nicolas Hubert (Merchant)	Merchant	1200 livres	200 livres
Joseph Loisel Jeanne Langlois (April 7, 1682)	Louis Loisel	Tradesman	(200 écus) 800 livres	Parents' House

^a Marriage Contracts 1679 - 1687^a, A.N.Q.M., Greffe Claude Maugue

TABLE 1--Continued

NAMES	PATERNAL ORIGIN	SOCIAL GROUP	ENDOWMENT	DOWRY
Joseph Huet Catherine Sicot (Nov. 26, 1679)	Michel Huet (Artisan)	..	600 livres	750 livres
Jean Leroy Madelaine Courlemarcha (June 6, 1680)	Simon Leroy	..	400 livres	200 livres
Nicolas Lepilleur Marie Campot (Nov. 1, 1684)	Nicolas Lepilleur (Parisian Artisan)	..	250 livres	300 livres
Nicolas Demers Marie Jetté (Nov. 22, 1679)	André Demers	Tradesman	200 livres	300 livres
Lambert Leduc Jeanne Décaris (Jan. 10, 1681)	Jean Leduc	..	100 livres	200 livres
Pierre Girardeau Françoise Hachin (May 5, 1687)	Louis Girardeau	..	100 livres	60 livres
Jacques Vige Marie Morin (July 25, 1679)	Simon (Shoemaker)	Artisan	50 livres	100 livres

De Couagne's contracts rank near the top of this index. Among these contracts de Couagne's is the only one specifying an endowment of 500 livres in goods to be chosen from the King's Vessels.

De Couagne's second marriage contract with Marie Gode is missing from the preserved notarial records. However, its date, June 25, 1685, notary, Claude Mauge, and certain essential features of its contents are mentioned in the first inventory of de Couagne's estate,⁵ taken shortly after his second wedding on July 30, 1685.⁶ The first inventory of de Couagne's estate was to establish his property at that point in order to protect the interests of Jacques Charles et Marie Anne aged four and two respectively at the time of Anne Mars, their mother's death. They were to be adopted by the new de Couagne household. Both de Couagne and Marie Gode were the children's official guardians. This paucity of information presents a strong contrast to Marie Gode's second marriage contract on November 11, 1712, to Pierre Derivon, six years after de Couagne's death. Her second marriage contract lists her financial standing and clearly

⁵"Inventaire des Biens de Charles de Couagne le 7 aout 1686", A.N.G.M., Greffe Claude Mauge.

⁶"Mariage de Charles de Couagne et Marie Gode le 30 juillet 1685", Montréal, A.N.Q.M., Registre Paroissial Notre Dame de Montréal, p. 146.

distinguished between the "biens propres and conquêts immeubles" that she was to administer for the surviving de Couagne children.⁷

"Biens propres" were les
immeubles echus . . . par succession
en ligne directe ou collaterale, ou
par donation en ligne directe."⁸

"Conquêts immeubles" were "des
immeubles acquis à titre onereux,
c'est-à-dire par achat ou par
l'exercice d'une profession ou
d'un metier."⁹

De Couagne gave 4000 livres as an endowment to his second wife and she contributed a dowry of 300 livres only.¹⁰ The dowry of de Couagne's first marriage, of which 500 livres was to be from goods imported from France on the King's Vessels, also suggests a change of career on de Couagne's part. For, if he and his new wife were to remain in the Governor General's employment most of their belongings would have been furnished by de Couagne's employer, Frontenac.

⁷"Contrat de Mariage entre Marie Gode et Pierre Derivon, Sieur de Budemont, le 11 novembre 1712", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

⁸Yves Zoltvany, "Esquisse de la Coutume de Paris", R.H.A.F., December, 1971, p. 368.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰In a contract settling some of de Couagne's debts after his death, the now disappeared marriage contract is referred to again. See "Réédition de Compte de Jacques Gaudry dit Bourbonniere des affaires entre lui et feu Charles de Couagne, le 6 decembre 1706, Montréal, A.P.C., (Collection Baby), M.G. 24, L. 3, Vol. 39, p. 270.

These belongings, imported or not, would not have to be paid for in cash. Furthermore, Simon Mars, de Couagne's father-in-law and an established merchant from La Rochelle now living in Quebec City moved to Montréal in 1685. This would have provided de Couagne with a link to the Montreal group of merchants if and when he would want to exploit it. Simon Mars would have opened channels of credit to de Couagne. However, the study of such family relationships is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus although the dowry of his first marriage may have contributed to his affirmation as a merchant instead of a domestic aid, his second contract did nothing of the kind. Nor was the Gode family part of the social group of merchants in Montreal. Indeed, Nicolas Gode, Marie Gode's father was a carpenter.

Both Anne Mar's and Marie Gode's marriage contracts with de Couagne were formulated as "common as to property", (Communauté de Biens) as opposed to separate as to property. (Séparation de Biens) the only other possibility of the period.¹¹ According to the Adeline Daumard, the vagueness of first marriage contracts was customary within the context of the Ancien Régime in France; this ambiguity, based on custom appears to be the case with de Couagne's first marriage contract in New France. Probably his second one was similar as the outline of the de Couagne-Mars estate was not drawn up

¹¹ François Joseph Cugnet, Traité Abrégé des Anciens Loix Coutumes et Usages de la Colonie du Canada, (Quebec: Chez Guillaume Brown, 1775), p. 79, offers a detailed explanation of the traditional marriage contract.

until after his second marriage. On the other hand, custom also dictated that the marriage contract of a widow, as opposed to a widower or newly wed individual, would furnish a description and estimate of her material value.¹² The latter would be necessitated by her new role and responsibility in the administration of the estate. Marie Godé's second wedding contract to a member of the nobility, Pierre Derivon, does present a description and outline of her material status. In this outline reference was again made to her first contract which formed part of the minutes of the notary, Claude Maugue. They were married separate as to property. The Sieur de Budémont handed over goods, furs and titles for a total of 7418 livres, 13 sols, 4 deniers, as well as 7555 livres as a wedding present.

The marriage contract as a legal entity under the Coutume de Paris put a very strong emphasis on family interests, paternal authority and legitimacy. It follows that the Coutume was not only the legal vehicle for values in New France, but also a reflection for certain primordial elements of its culture. "La Coutume régissait les Canadiens en tous les actes de la vie, de la naissance à la mort."¹³ The administration of all property acquired before and after marriage ~~was~~ theoretically characterized by the domination

¹² Adeline Daumard, "Problemes de Méthode en Histoire Sociales" Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine, 1964, p. 292.

¹³ Marcel Trudel, Initiation à la Nouvelle France, (Montréal: Holt, Rinehart et Winston Ltée, 1968), p. 233.

of the husband and the lack of authority by the wife under the common as to property contract. Although all material goods including real estate belonged legally to both parties, the husband could sell and mortgage their common possessions without his wife's consent as long as his theoretical aim was to better the material level of the marriage. The married male had authority over all property with the exception of what the Coutume termed biens propres, property inherited by the wife because of a former husband's or family member's death. Here he was free to dispose of the interest or profit resulting from the investment of such goods but the consent of the wife was necessary for him to dispose of the goods' capital.¹⁴

Furthermore, if married under the common as to property contract, a married woman's potential interests in business were limited in that her husband's consent had to be obtained for any potential transaction. Indeed the Coutume implied that married women were to be protected from their lack of commercial experience unless their spouse countersigned as to the contrary. In day-to-day practice female participation was frequent as any study of notarial records in New France clearly reveals. Under the separate as to property contract, common in the case of a widow's remarriage, the woman assumed paternal authority and male rights. Indeed the succession

¹⁴ François Joseph Cugnet, Traité Abrégé des Anciennes Loix, Coutumes et Usages de la Colonie du Canada, p. 1010.

of the estate would be totally in her hands specially if the children from the first marriage were minors. Marie Gode's second marriage contract emphasizes her role of administrator of the de Couagne estate for herself and for the de Couagne children. It implies that she was to have its usufruct (the right to exploit the estate's benefits), a clause which would have been spelt out in her missing first contract between her and de Couagne.

Upon the death of one of the married parties the survivors (and other family members) had three choices available to them as to the remaining estate: accept it as it was, accept the estate with the aid of an inventory or renounce it completely.¹⁵ The first choice was evidently taken if the estate was greatly indebted. Moreover, if the married couple had no children, they had the right to contract the don mutual; this codicil in the marriage contract stipulated that the surviving party would have the usufruct of all or a certain portion of the community during his life span regardless of the estate's debts. After the survivor's death the estate would be dissolved and the creditors paid. Another codicil, the don entre vifs was theoretically forbidden. This was the transferring of property from one live member of the marital community to the other. In reality it was used by prominent merchants such as Charles Aubert de La Chesnaye who by signing over property to his spouse and (or)

¹⁵Yves Zoltvany, "Esquisse de la Coutume de Paris".
Revue d'Histoire d'Amérique Française, December, 1971, p. 379.

Children hoped to avoid its seizure in the case of debt.¹⁶

Furthermore, the children of the deceased father could refuse the estate and upon the death of the mother divide up her original dowry. It follows that the potential existed to save something from the patrimony even if the father died loaded with debts.

Theoretically, the marriage contracts of de Couagne should have offered a solid base from which to compare the kinds and values of goods accumulated by him at the point of his marriages to his financial status at death. In reality only suggestions of his financial worth can be determined at this stage. Anne Mars received 1000 livres from de Couagne of which half were in form of imported goods. Marie Gode's exact dowry and wedding present are unknown although she received at least 4000 livres in cash and stock. This would indicate a 400% increase which probably reflected a change in the merchant's economic status. Moreover, the presence of Jacques Bizard and Pierre Gadois, at the de Couagne-Gode wedding indicate that de Couagne already enjoyed a certain social prestige. The former was major and the latter, armurier of the island of Montreal.¹⁷

Consequently, de Couagne's marriage contracts are of little use for the precise calculation of his estate at the

¹⁶ Claude de Ferrière, Dictionnaire de Droit et de Pratique, (Toulouse: 1779), I, 478.

¹⁷ "Mariage de Charles de Couagne, marchand bourgeois de Montréal et Marie Gode", A.N.Q.M., Registre Paroissial Notre Dame de Montréal 1674 - 1689, p. 146.

moment of his two marriages. However, they strongly suggest a changed economic status between 1680 and 1685: the larger second wedding present on his part indicates a greater affluence. A year later de Couagne's inventory establishes his increased wealth. Moreover, both marriage contracts point out important cultural values of the period formulated in their legal form. The Coutume de Paris was intended to uphold family values; marriage contracts form but one element of this intention. It was to protect property and to guarantee a certain inheritance to the surviving members of the marital community. It is within the context of this mentality and the legal framework of the Coutume that de Couagne built up his estate.

Two dominant features of the period can be found in de Couagne's last wills. The primordial purpose of wills was either to reward followers or to donate certain sums or properties to the Church; for the Coutume de Paris regulated inheritance laws to the extent that an individual's last will was really a formality and for the purpose of donations only. "Père et mère ne peuvent par donation faite entre vifs par testament ou ordonnance de dernière volonté, ou autrement en quelque manière que soit avantager leurs enfants venans à leur succession les uns plus que les autres."¹⁸ De Couagne formulated two last wills: one when extremely sick in Quebec

¹⁸Claude Ferrière, Commentaire sur la Coutume et Vicomte de Paris, (Paris: Cochart, 1788), II, 320.

City on May 3, 1704, dictated to Florent de la Citière,¹⁹ notaire royal and the other just before his death in Montreal on August 22, 1706. The latter was witnessed by a notaire royal of Montreal, Antoine Adhémar.²⁰ Their contents as summerized in Table 2 confirm that de Couagne was far from living in penury.

Those individuals that drew up a last will in New France were still subjected to several restrictions. De Couagne could not leave any of his estate to a mistress or illegitimate child. The Coutume decreed that with the exception of minor donations, half of his estate should go to his wife and the other half to his legitimate children. As in other sections of the Coutume, family obligations came first.

Donations to the Church were part of the Ancien Regime mentality transplanted to the New World. The marchand bourgeois, bourgeois being used in the sense of an established town inhabitant, was neither of the nobility characterized by its relative osivity in France, nor of the peasant class characterized by its labquing of the earth. Many French historians emphasize that the deeply Catholiç society of the Ancien Regime never fully approved of the bourgeois way of life based on the earning of monetary profit by any means feasible.

¹⁹"Testament de Charles de Couagne, le 3 mai 1704", A.N.Q.Q., Greffe Florent de la Citière.

²⁰"Testament de Charles de Couagne, le 22 aout. 1706", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

TABLE 2

THE TWO LAST WILLS OF CHARLES DE GOUAGNE

FIRST WILL		SECOND WILL
Date	May 3, 1704	August 22, 1706
Notary	Florent de la Citière	Antoine Adhémar
Place	Quebec City	Montreal
Particular Requests	1. To be buried in the cemetery of the Recollet Fathers. 2. Antoine Adhémar was to be executor.	
General Assumptions	1. All debts to be paid from estate. 2. A Roman Catholic burial.	1. All debts to be paid from estate. 2. A Roman Catholic burial.
Legacies	1. 60 livres for burial costs. 2. Two lots on the corner of Saint Pierre and Notre Dame Streets to be given to the Recollet Order. 3. 100 livres were to be given to the Brothers of the Congregation. 4. 195 livres were to be given to a former servant, Le Chapelle who now lived on the Seigneurie of Repentigny.	1. 500 livres were to be given to the Recollet Order. 2. 100 livres were to be given to the parish of Notre Dame. 3. 100 livres to be given to the poor house at Hôtel Dieu. 4. 100 livres were to be given to the poor of the parish of Notre Dame. 5. 100 livres were to be given to the Sulpician Order.

Il est d'ailleurs remarquable de constater qu'au dix-huitième siècle (alors que longtemps le vieux débat sur le prêt et l'usure est dépassé sur le plan d'activités quotidiennes) moralistes et théologues ne cessent de s'interroger sur le gain illicite...pour beaucoup de ces moralistes le commerçant reste le dernier dans l'ordre du salut bien après l'homme du plaisir.²¹

Consequently as a way of winning acceptance, last wills dictated by members of this occupational group usually included donations to religious orders; moreover, charitable donations as such formed one element of the religious mentality of the time.

De Couagne appears equally generous in his second will towards the Church as in his first. His first will donates 355 livres and two lots in the town of Montreal. His second will donates 900 livres. The fact that Antoine Adhemar was the notary responsible for the execution of his estate appears perfectly logical as the latter was the notary most familiar with his business transactions. De Couagne's wills appear to indicate a certain material ease. As legal documents they emphasize the importance of the family unit and its right to an inheritance if an estate existed. Consequently an analogy may be drawn to his marriage contracts. All four documents represent a certain affluence. How much affluence is the next problem under study. The inventories of de Couagne's estate, in contrast to his last wills and marriage contracts, lend

²¹Robert Mandrou, La France au XVII^e et XVIII^e Siècles, (Paris: P.U.F., 1967), p. 163.

themselves to comparative quantification. Moreover, his commercial activities can also be evaluated empirically.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE AND ACTIVITIES OF DE COUAGNE AS A MERCHANT

In New France, the practice of trade by itself did not delimit a stratum of society. It did however, define an area of common interests for the men engaged in it. It was a way of making money and a way of life: an economic activity practiced by many social groups in the colony, not a social condition. Indeed, more and more historians writing about colonial North America are emphasizing the union between commerce, the professions and political power.¹ The American historian, Virginia Harrington, points out that it would be difficult to find an important colonial family in New York in this period who was not engaged significantly in commerce in at least one of its branches.² An analogy can be formulated with New France. In comparison to the relatively rigid class structures with their associate privileges in Europe, class barriers for the earning of wealth were more supple in the New World.

¹Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

Virginia Harrington, The New York Merchant, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935).

A study of de Couagne's enterprises through notarial records reveals a definite pattern in his business actions; he was a merchant, fur trader, property owner and financier. When he arrived in New France, de Couagne was not an engage - a contracted worker. Whatever his reasons for leaving France, the decision taken needed a certain mentality: one of adventure and of ambition. He was engaged in the fur trade from the beginning and does not appear to have first established his practice as an over-the-counter general merchant, a practice which eventually could have furnished the necessary capital to then enter some aspect of the fur trade. Indeed the contrary seems to have taken place. His business opportunities were limited by the prevailing economic conditions. Indeed general economic development in New France at the end of the seventeenth century was impeded by its small population, the sporadic Iroquois wars, and the lack of external markets. Until card money came into common use in the late 1680's the colony was continually short of a means of exchange. It follows that de Couagne had none of the advantages enjoyed by businessmen after 1713 who were favoured by long years of peace, a growing population, an outlet for wheat at Louisbourg and the establishment of the St. Maurice ironworks and shipyards at Quebec by means of State subventions. However, the fact that he lived in a less diversified economy permitted him to take advantage of New France's staple, the fur trade. Such specialization was to his advantage as will be pointed

out in detail.

The notaries de Couagne dealt with were mainly from the town of Montreal: Bénigne Basset, Antoine Adhémar, Claude Maugue, Pierre Raimbault and Pierre Cabazie. A small percentage of his affairs were recorded in the minutes of notaries from Quebec City: Pierre Duquet and Louis Chambalon. This would indicate that his business transactions occurred mainly in the Montreal region, a logical phenomenon as New France's fur trade activities were concentrated within the town.

The period of de Couagne's commercial activities peaked between 1695 and 1704. Chronologically this was from just before Frontenac's death to what appears to be a slow withdrawal from business on de Couagne's part before his own death. Moreover, these several hundred notarial deeds recording a variety of business transactions cast a revealing light on the manner and spirit in which de Couagne conducted his affairs. He dealt with people of all ranks. Unlike the marchand forain who sent his profits back to France, de Couagne reinvested his in New France in the form of loans, monetary or goods. It would seem logical to affirm that the continuous extension of credit from de Couagne to other individuals would be determined by his debtors completing the terms of their contract in a satisfactory manner, or being forced to by a ruling of the Sovereign Council. Furthermore, the fact that de Couagne concentrated his transactions in different kinds of loans

would indicate that he found them profitable. De Couagne appears to have worked exclusively for himself and was not responsible for his decisions to a joint colonial company or metropolitan group in France. Although several glimpses are offered in de Couagne's arrêts de comptes, it is impossible to determine the merchant's long or short term profits and losses without his ledgers. On the other hand, a qualitative and quantitative explanation is possible based on the known economic conditions in New France.

De Couagne's business transactions fall into three main categories--categories which will serve to delineate his particular commercial methodology: an obligation, a constitution de rente and a transport.

The merchant's dominant choice of investment was in obligations as the charts' annual divisions clearly show. (See Table 3). In reality it was an extension of credit on a short term basis. The notarial document stated the obligation and the fee attached, usually 5 to 10% interest. It states clearly what money was to be paid, how the sum in question was to be paid and the time limit involved, usually within twelve months. The eighteenth century Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce of Savary des Brulons gives the following definition of an obligation:

Acte par lequel on s'engage de faire quelque chose
...L'acceptation d'une lettre de change est une
espèce d'obligation qui va par corps faute de
payement.³

³Savary des Brulons, Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce, (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1723) II, 886.

TABLE 3
DE COUAGNE'S ANNUAL FINANCIAL TURNOVER

YEAR	OBLIGATIONS	CONSTITUTION DE RENTES	OTHER TRANSACTIONS	TOTAL
1680	88/ 0/ 0	.	205/ 0/ 0	293/ 0/ 0
1681	225/ 8/ 6	400/ 0/ 0	1908/ 0/ 0	225/ 8/ 6
1682	112/ 2/ 6	.	600	2308/ 0/ 0
1683 ^a	504/ 1/ 0	.	400/ 0/ 0	712/ 2/ 6
1684	1172/ 11/ 8	.		904/ 1/ 0
1685	4123/ 8/ 6	.		1172/ 11/ 8
1686	118/ 18/ 10	2700/ 0/ 0	875/ 0/ 0	7698/ 8/ 6
1687	1262/ 19/ 9	.	150	268/ 18/ 10
1688	2786/ 12/ 4	.		1262/ 19/ 9
1689	12316/ 19/ 4	.	894/ 0/ 0	3680/ 12/ 4
1690	3797/ 8/ 3	.	720/ 0/ 0	13036/ 19/ 4
1691	10552/ 19/ 9	.	3415/ 0/ 0	7212/ 8/ 3
1692	7752/ 13/ 8	.	142/ 7/ 8	10695/ 7/ 5
1693	20456/ 5/ 11	.	1833/ 7/ 0	9586/ 0/ 8
1694	10938/ 9/ 10	1200/ 0/ 0	376/ 19/ 2	22033/ 5/ 1
1695	3576/ 10/ 5	2150/ 0/ 0	7403/ 2/ 9	20491/ 12/ 7
1696	9248/ 1/ 11	500/ 0/ 0	8322/ 11/ 2	12399/ 1/ 7
1697	7937/ 9/ 9	8200/ 0/ 0	-5832/ 7/ 6	11624/ 14/ 5
1698		2800/ 0/ 0	5071/ 11/ 5	15809/ 1/ 2
1699				

^aAs it is highly unlikely that de Couagne withdrew from commerce for precisely a twelve month period it is possible to deduce that certain notarial documents have not been preserved.

TABLE 3--Continued

YEAR	OBLIGATIONS	CONSTITUTION DE RENTES	OTHER TRANSACTIONS	TOTAL
1700	13675/ 1/ 0	1600/ 0/ 0	8656/10/ 8	23931/11/ 8
1701	9124/10/ 4	3750/ 0/ 0	10504/17/ 8	23379/ 8/ 0
1702	31783/ 2/ 0	18560/ 0/ 0	5092/12/10	55435/ 4/10
1703	4190/ 1/ 4	2329/10/ 0	4016/ 4/ 6	10525/14/10
1704	14752/14/ 5	5080/ 0/ 0	5466/ 6/ 4	25199/ 0/ 9
1705	2134/ 1/ 5	1511/18/ 0	-711/ 6/10	2925/ 0/17
1706	5185/ 6/ 1		1952/11/ 2	7137/17/ 3

The form of loan extended by de Couagne was intended mainly for the purchase of merchandise from him (on credit) by another merchant or voyageur. Sometimes it served to consolidate a person's debts to a third party from whom land or grain, or other produce, had been bought. Consequently de Couagne's obligations reflected the categories of economic importance in colonial New France: the dominant fur trade, agricultural produce and land.

The obligations were drawn up in a standard formula. Two or more voyageurs for example would engage themselves to reimburse merchandise worth a certain sum of livres. Their voyage would be undertaken in the near future whose date would be approximately fixed.⁴ Upon their return, payment would be made: de Couagne stipulated payment in the form of furs not in money, either for a fixed sum or for a certain percentage (30 to 50) of the voyageurs' exchange with the Indians depending on the number of people involved in the contract. Consequently, he would make a profit as a wholesale merchant and as a creditor. Most obligations for single large sums were drawn up in the Fall and Spring which would coincide with the arrivals and departures of the canoes. This is when de Couagne recorded payment of

⁴"Conventions entre les Sieurs Juchereau, de Couagne, Hubert et Duclos, le 2 octobre 1698," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

debts can be found as well; their sums would be financed by his own receipt of payment from other individuals involved in the fur trade. During the winter months the obligations lent out were for much smaller sums and tended to be the balance of payment for farm equipment and personal items.

If divided into trimesters (Table 4) de Couagne's greatest financial turnover occurred between May and September which would offer the best travelling conditions for the voyageur canoes. His two peak years 1695 and 1702 emphasize this increased activity. In contrast to the fall months, September to December, most of his May to September obligations are for large sums. From January to May, there is no analogous consistency in the value of his transactions. However, from September to December, the number of his obligations increases together with the number of constitutions; their values on the other hand decrease significantly. Consequently, not only do the number of people transacted with increase as well, but also, the purpose of his loans diversifies from merchandise for the fur trade to personal credit for other purposes.

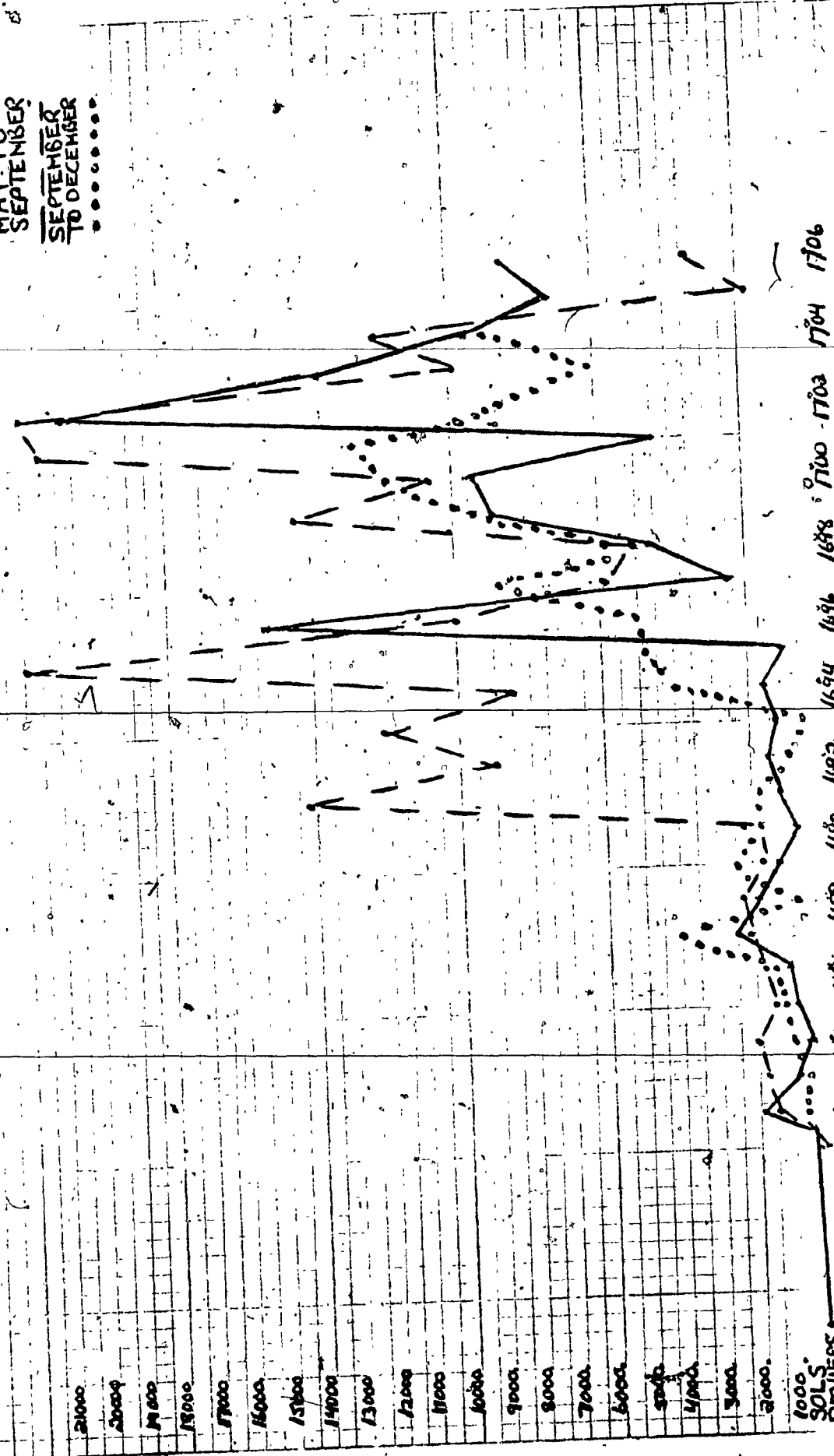
If de Couagne's debtor was unable to pay, his obligation was transformed into two other possible forms of credit: the constitution de rente⁵ or the

⁵"Constitution from Geoffroy Lefebvre, le 3^e janvier 1703," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

TABLE 4

KEY: JANUARY
TO MAY
MAY TO
SEPTEMBER
SEPTEMBER
TO DECEMBER
.....

THE COMPARATIVE VALUE OF DE COUAGNE'S TURNOVER IN TRIMESTERS^a



1000.
SOLS
DENIERS
LYRES 1876 1878 1880 1882 1884 1886 1888 1890 1892 1894 1896 1898 1900 1902 1904 1906
YEARS

^a These statistics are a breakdown of de Couagne's annual financial turnover.

"transport",⁶ The constitution de rente acted as a permanent recognition of debt. It was a fixed sum of money lent out without a date for repayment. However, an interest was to be paid annually on it. These rentes were perpetuelles and rachetables. The way the principal was to be paid was specified; however, the creditor could never demand its payment. The borrower would pay annually a certain rate of interest established by royal decree, "le denier de l'ordonnance".⁷ In other words, royal legislation would fix a maximum rate for interest at specific periods beyond which any charge would be considered usurious and illegal. He would often guarantee his credit by mortgaging his furniture and other possessions in the contract. De Couagne's rentes vary from 8 to 15% in their rates.

The transport was another way of forcing payment in the case of a bad debt:

Se dit d'un acte...par lequel on cède à quelqu'un le droit, la propriété ou l'interet que l'on a quelque chose soit meubles ou immeubles...Il se fait des transport d'obligations, de promesses de billets, de sommes liquidées par des arrêts de parties et de comptes ou par des jugements d'arrérages dues etc. les uns

⁶"Transport de Jean Petit sur Etienne Nachen, le 6 fevrier 1704," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

⁷Pierre Goubert, Familles Marchandes Sous l'Ancien Régime, (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1959), p. 34.

purs et simples sans garantie⁸ et les autres portant promesse de garantie.

In such transactions between merchants the debtor guaranteed the payment either by engaging himself to fournir and faire valoir or by guaranteeing all costs that collection of the debt could occur. De Couagne was eventually forced to pay 2196 French livres to Martin Delisle, a merchant at Tours, as well as court expenses for a previous debt.⁹ For justice distributed by the Sovereign Council was an expensive procedure.¹⁰ De Couagne himself, when chased by creditors made use of their device.¹¹

In New France, a Catholic colony, the existence of usury was theoretically forbidden. In reality it existed, openly practiced without dissimulation even by officials of the Church. The Sulpician Fathers, the seigneurs of the island of Montreal had lent 9530 livres to de Couagne at 10% annually. The latter had given them some 9670 livres

⁸ Savary des Brulons, Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce, p. 1809.

⁹ "Transport par Charles de Couagne aux Sieurs Peine de Quebec, Tochet de La Rochelle, et Delisle de Tours, 1700 - 1703," J.D.C.S., V, 66 sqq.

¹⁰ Jacques Mathieu, "Les Causes devant la Prévôté de Québec," Histoire Sociale, Vol. 3, (avril 1969), 101.

¹¹ "Transport à Jacques Darbel, le 17 mars 1705," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

in rentes¹² as collateral. Furthermore, on obligations drawn up as arrêts de comptes the merchant would claim at least 5% interest. Although a constitution paid a certain rente a year as interest it was nevertheless considered a non-usurious loan as the principal would be repaid at the borrower's whim.

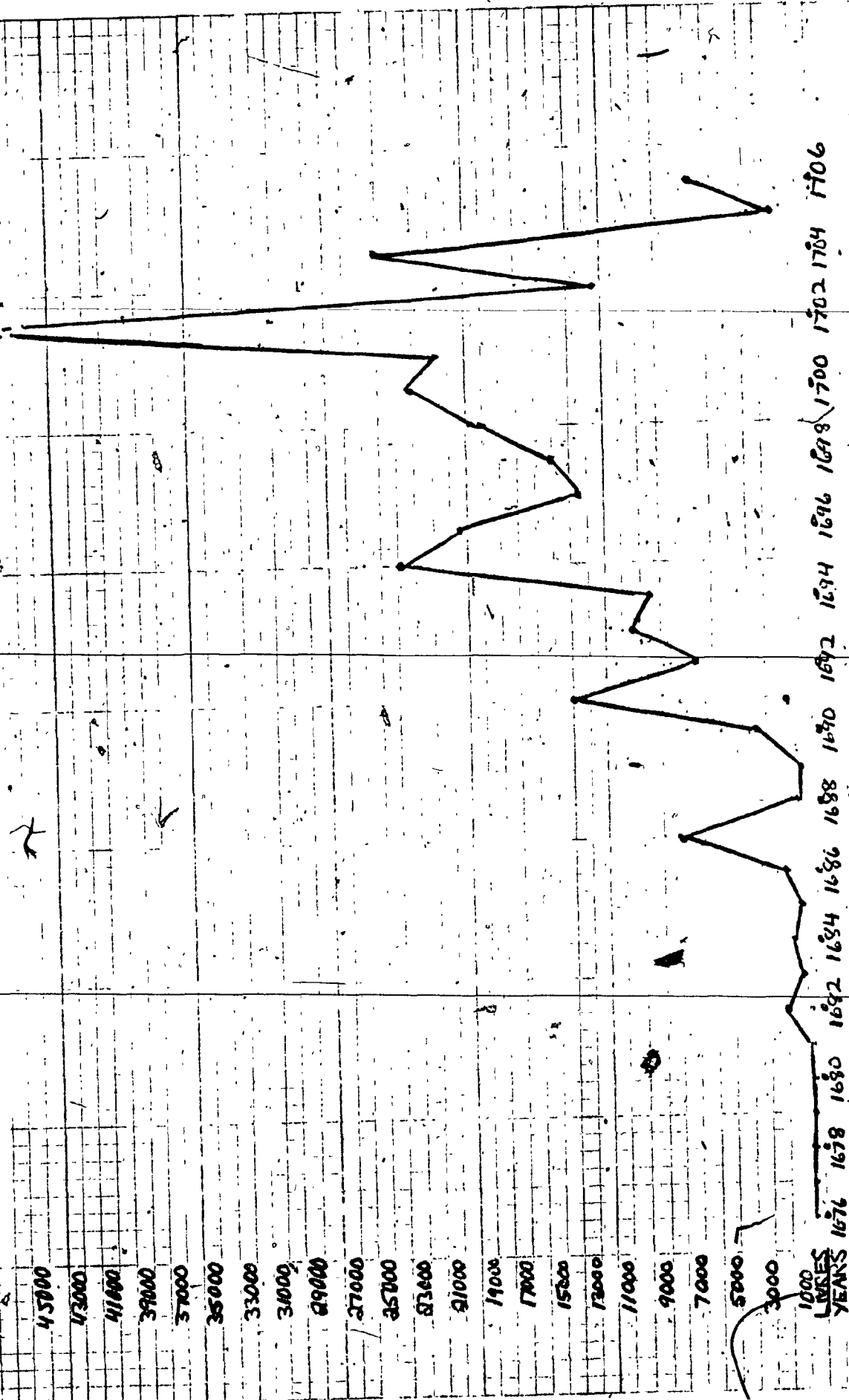
Table 5 permits a comparative quantification of de Couagne's recorded financial transactions on a yearly basis in graph form. One might question that his greatest financial turnover coincides with the saturation of the beaver market in France at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Also de Couagne's most extensive granting of credit coincides with the confusion surrounding the Compagnie de la Colonie formed in 1700 to act as administrators of the fur trade for this particular period in New France.¹³ De Couagne was not totally oblivious to this economic conjecture. His obligations at the beginning of the eighteenth century are extended to many different individuals mainly habitants and artisans. The great majority (although a couple of exceptions exist) were for sums below six hundred livres and credited for farm tools, land, and the balance of a previous account. Individuals known to be in the fur

¹²"Inventaire de de Couagne, le 28 aout 1706," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

¹³Guy Frégault, "La Compagnie de la Colonie", Le XVIII^e Siècle Canadien, (Montréal: Editions H.M.H., 1968), p. 42 - 281.

TABLE 5

DE COUAGNE'S ANNUAL FINANCIAL TURNOVER^a (57351/12-IVRES)



^aThese statistics are drawn from the notarial records.

trade such as Pierre Cardinal or Jacques-Hubert Lacroix, both voyageurs signed obligations for balance of payment only;¹⁴ they are to pay in cash within a year, and not in beaver skins for a certain specified value.¹⁴ The relative peace with the Iroquois Indians was another factor contributing to de Couagne's prosperity. Furthermore, it is probable that de Couagne, because of his previous access to credit through Simon Mars and resultant social intercourse with the colony's administrative and military elite also involved in the fur trade, made use of certain influence peddling that could not be recorded.

A typology of the contents of de Couagne's different kinds of transactions does more than provide an understanding of his particular money-lending activities. Certain business habits of the period may be discerned in the contents of his obligations and transports as well as in cases involving him as a creditor and debtor presented to the Sovereign Council. De Couagne made frequent use of des lettres de change a kind of extended letter of credit and exchange in his dealings with the King's Storehouses and with his

¹⁴ See "Obligation a Pierre Cardinal", le 12 juillet 1701," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

Also "Obligation a Jacques-Hubert Lacroix, le 15 fevrier 1700," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

contracts with French merchants in Bayonne,¹⁵ La Rochelle,¹⁶ and Paris.¹⁷ At this time in France this was the most pragmatic form of monetary exchange. The Intendant Bignon in France affirmed in his annual report of 1698 that "presque tout le commerce se fait par lettres de change actives ou passives".¹⁸ For de Couagne this would be the most convenient form of exchange due to the following: communication delays across the Atlantic, the difference values of the French and Canadian livres and the fact that lettres de change were paper currency and colony lacked hard coin.

De Couagne in his occupational role of a merchant followed a definite form of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship may be defined as the integrated sequence of actions taken by a groups or individuals operating as individual business units, such actions being modified by contemporary economic and social forces. This systematic activity is most evident in his role as creditor furnishing merchandise or money to other people involved directly in the fur trade. Such entrepreneurship was recorded in an account book in which were written all his transactions, bills of exchange,

¹⁵"Autorisation à payer à Pierre Dubroc, marchand de Bayonne, le 25 octobre 1696", A.N.Q.Q. Greffe Louis Chambalon.

¹⁶"Ratification de Vente de Charles de Couagne par Pierre Dollire, marchand de Paris à Hilaire Bourguine, marchand de La Rochelle, le 20 septembre 1705", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Louis Chambalon.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Pierre Deyon, Amiens-Etude Sur la Société Urbaine au Dix-Septième Siècle, (Paris: Mouton et Cie, 1967), p. 102.

his assets, etc. De Couagne, according to his estates' inventories collected books. It is highly probable that he as other merchants of his period was influenced by Le Parfait Negociant of Jacques Savary.¹⁹ This text served as the commercial manual of the period. Its pervasiveness on business customs is emphasized by the fact of its passing through seven successive editions from 1675 to 1713 in France.²⁰ It suggested two kinds of account books: journals and ledgers. Journals gave a chronological listing of day to day transactions. Ledgers were books in which transactions were grouped to show the entire story of a merchant's dealings with debtors and creditors.

Land speculation on a small scale made up one of the elements of de Couagne's entrepreneurship. The merchant bought and sold land on the island of Montreal and on the south shore, in the area that is now Boucherville and Sorel. His titles seem to indicate that land bought outside of the town of Montreal was leased out to be developed by a farmer who would pay an annual rent to de Couagne.²¹ Pierre Roberge

¹⁹Pierre Deyon, Amiens-Etude Sur la Société Urbaine au Dix-Septième Siècle, (Paris: Mouton et Cie, 1967), p. 103.

²⁰Jean Meuvret, "Manuels et Traités à l'Usage des Négociants aux premières Epoque de l'Age Moderne," Etudes d'Histoire Economique, (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1961), p. 231.

²¹In 1697 Adhémar drew up the title of sale for land that was leased out to Pierre Meunier for 25 livres annually. "Vente à Pierre Meunier, le 1 juillet 1697," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

paid a rent of 30 livres yearly for land in Laprairie.²² Sometimes land served as a mortgage for an unpaid obligation. Francois Lenoir was to pay 200 livres annually on land forfeited because of his own unsuccessful speculation in the fur trade.²³ Lots and houses within the town's limits were bought and sold on a speculative basis.²⁴ De Couagne and another merchant, Antoine Defresne, even attempted to defraud a certain Mademoiselle de Roybon; they were acting as procureurs for the lady in question who wished to sell one of her houses on St. Vincent street.²⁵ This particular transaction was never realized. De Couagne and Defresne were attempting to sell the titles at a higher sum than agreed upon with the owner. Thus they intended to pocket their own margin of profit as well as commission. The fact that de Couagne was asked to act as procureur for the wealthy spinster, as well as for the Intendant Champigny²⁶

²²"Constitution, le 4 avril 1699", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar

²³"Constitution, le 6 fevrier 1698", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

²⁴"Vente à Pierre Roy pour 720 livres, le 12 juillet 1697", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

²⁵p.G. Roy "Vente par Mlle. de Roybon," B.R.H. 1919 XXV, p. 277.

²⁶"Traité entre de Couagne et l'Intendant, le 23 juillet 1701", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

and other individuals²⁷ suggests that he must have had the necessary contacts and knowledge for the buying and selling of land at a profit.

De Couagne did buy the seigneurie of La Chenaie²⁸ on option from one of the most powerful businessmen in New France,²⁹ Charles Aubert de La Chesnaye. De Couagne not only granted several strips of land using his title of seigneur,³⁰ but he also furnished the necessary farming equipment from his boutique. Then six months later he decided not to complete the act of sale with La Chesnaye. The seigneurie was eventually sold by La Chesnaye for the same sum agreed upon with de Couagne, 6000 livres, to two other merchants in New France, Raymond Martel and Augustin le Gardeur de Courtemanche.³¹

In his consistent role as an active middleman in the fur trade de Couagne may be evaluated as having exhibited foresight in his refusal of the title of seigneur, regardless of the prestige that accompanied it. A seigneurie

²⁷ "Vente de terre, le 1 avril 1698," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

²⁸ "Vente de La Chesnaye a de Couagne, le 6 octobre 1699," Louis Chambalon, pièce détachée.

²⁹ Yves Zoltvany, "Aubert de la Chesnaye 1632 - 1702", C.H.A. 1969, p. 11.

³⁰ "Bail à ferme, le 30 octobre 1699," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

³¹ "Vente de la Seigneurie de La Chesnaye, le 7 décembre 1700," A.N.Q.Q., Louis Chambalon, pièce détachée.

needed ample time and investment to be developed profitably. The merchant's energies were canalised in the furnishing of supplies and credit for the fur trade. Definite examples of business shrewdness can be picked out of the formulations of certain of his business transactions. In 1701 his oldest daughter, Maryanne Mars-de Couagne was to be married to Jacques Leclair, a La Rochelle merchant. Her dowry of precisely 6893 livres, 5 sols, was to cancel all existent debts between her father and Leclair, including those in the first inventory of the de Couagne estate.³² The fact that his oldest daughter's dowry was far superior to his own endowment to either of his wives indicates de Couagne's increasing financial ease. Furthermore, he had four other daughters to furnish with dowries as well.

A partial evaluation of the business competence of de Couagne may be formulated by a study of other people's dependence of his savoir-faire. First of all he played the role of maître d'hôtel for Frontenac, that is to say the Governor General's chief domestic aid in his household. This would be a post of some importance requiring definite organisational talents. On several occasions he was asked to act as procureur for the buying or selling of a congé, of a lot or the recovery of a debt. Such representation occurred not only for merchants and other settlers in New

³²"Convention, le 9 septembre 1701," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

France but also for other individuals in France who had commercial links with the colony.³³ In 1686 the merchant acted as a reference for the founding of a training school for teachers on property beside the Saint Pierre river.³⁴

Moreover, a few years earlier in 1684, de Couagne became marguiller³⁵ of the Sulpician parish of Notre Dame which at that time contained the town of Montreal within its borders. As one of the wardens of the parish responsible for its administration de Couagne must have been well known and respected by its members. For the position of curator, then as now, was one of prestige in the parish although no salary was attached to it. In the judicial records of the Sovereign Council de Couagne is repeatedly recipient of the sum under dispute. This reinforces the fact of his business know-how: the terms of the particular contract were drawn up in such a way that he was always a safe creditor in the case of bankruptcy or death³⁶ involving the other party.

³³P.G. Roy, le 29 avril 1680, J.D.C.S., II, p. 391.

³⁴P.G. Roy, "La Fondation d'une Ecole de Maîtres," B.R.H., 1922, XXII, p. 38.

³⁵P.G. Roy, "Marguillers de la Paroisse de Notre Dame," B.R.H., 1913, XIX, p. 276.

³⁶"548/1/5 de Charles Testard, succession le 21 mars 1689," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhémar.

At this point a definite sketch of de Couagne can be drawn. His occupational role was that of a merchant. De Couagne's social role was mobile: procureur, moneylender, creditor to a succession, councillor, educator, curator, tradesman... certainly he displayed characteristics associated with entrepreneurship.³⁷ Some risk was involved in his notarized dealing with voyageurs. His business would have had to have been conducted energetically for success because of competition from other merchants. He was personally responsible for the stock in his boutique as well as signed titles. His suppliers were merchants in France. De Couagne's decisions to invest in money-lending were calculated ones and calculated successfully as his financial turnover must have been positive to be repeated annually; his deeds reveal that he would relend money or furnish supplies for barter with the Indians to the same people dealt with previously. It would appear logical to assume that the terms of the original contract were completed to the satisfaction of both parties. De couagne's titles on the island of Montreal point out a certain foresight for future expansion of the town and of his warehouses. Underlying these determinants of entrepreneurship were organisational skills: the selection of appropriate goods, de Couagne's sales of produce and furs to the King's Warehouses. Consequently, the preceeding

David McClelland, The Achieving Society. (Toronto: Collier Macmillan, 1961), p. 207.

study of de Couagne's recorded business transactions reflect much more than a considerable financial turnover and a margin of profit that permitted the merchant to continue his money-lending activities. De Couagne may also be evaluated in the role of an entrepreneur.

CHAPTER III

DE COUAGNE'S ESTATE IN 1686 AND 1706

The estate at death of a person may be analyzed as representative of his life style.³ The different elements of the estate were formed by the former's socio-economic role. A calculation of a dead individual's worth was frequently¹ required in the context of the Coutume de Paris in New France. This was evaluated by means of a post mortem inventory. Marie Gode had a final inventory drawn up of the de Couagne estate¹ not only because of the large number of business transactions whose terms were not yet completed, but also in order to establish her own actual material standing. Furthermore, de Couagne himself had the notary Claude Mauge draw up an inventory of the de Couagne-Mars estate in 1686,² having first married Marie Gode.³ The contents of both these inventories were classified and the total worth of each of these categories calculated. A comparison in percentage form was then drawn up as a basis for the analysis of any change.

¹"Inventaire des biens de Charles de Couagne, le 28 aout 1706," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

²"Inventaire de Charles de Couagne, veuf de Anne Mars, le 7 aout 1686," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Claude Mauge.

³Anne Mars died April 25, 1685. De Couagne remarried in July of the same year.

in de Couagne's socio-economic status. (See Table 6).

The comparative proportions of goods and deeds in the de Couagne estate are of major significance for the purposes of this monograph. They would reflect any change in his business habits as at this period in Canada, a merchant's house also served as his store, office and part or all of his warehouse. The ground floor was the boutique in de Couagne's case and the cellar, attic and rooms adjoining the ground floor all served as storehouses.⁴

Both inventories, first of all, omit the calculation of any cash on hand. This characteristic may be explained by the scarcity of hard coin in the colony or simply the minimal need for it in the de Couagne household. Moreover, as other historians of this period have noticed, it reflects certain business customs in early eighteenth century New France in that most financial transactions were paper ones only.⁵ From 1685 to 1706, the value of his estate's retail goods diminished from twelve to zero per cent which would indicate a total withdrawal from "over-the-counter" exchange. It is possible that the de Couagne sons gradually took on their father's role (see Appendix). By 1706, de Couagne, if the last inventory drawn up by Adhemar is accurate, dealt only with paper transactions. Indeed, eighty-eight per cent

⁴See description of de Couagne's house on St. Paul Street in his "Inventaire de Charles de Couagne, le 28 aout 1706", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

⁵Louise Dechêne, Habitants et Marchands au XVII^e Siècle, (Paris: Plon 1974), p. 189.

TABLE 6

DE COUAGNE'S ESTATE AT HIS SECOND MARRIAGE AND AT HIS DEATH

	1686	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ASSETS	1706	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ASSETS
Retail Goods	12653/10/10	12%	None	None
Personal Items	11076/11/9	11%	3188/0/0	1%
Obligations			£24440/0/8	48%
Constitutions de Rente	67958/17/1	71%	39211/18/3	16%
Créances ^a			59038/19/0	24%
Real Estate	6000/0/0	6%	31807/1/0	11%
Total Assets	97688/19/8	100%	258385/18/11	100%
Debts	32900/4/1	33%	53256/18/11	20%
Assets minus Liabilities	64788/15/7	67%	205129/0/0	80%
NET WORTH	64788/15/7	67%	205129/0/0	80%

^aA créance is a form of promissory note containing a written promise to pay the stated sum or a part of it on a specified date in a specified way.

of the value of his final estate is found in obligations, créances, and constitutions de rente. In 1686 only 71% of his estate was in the form of obligations, rentes and créances. Claude Maugue did not take the time to categorize these different promissory notes as the purpose of the first inventory was to establish de Couagne's material standing at that moment. There was to be no division of the estate in the near future. The over 180000 livres in 1706, lent out in the form of obligations and créances proved to be very difficult to collect after his death. Some 4000 livres were audited as bad debts as late as 1732.⁶

Liabilities formed thirty-three per cent of de Couagne's estate in 1686 and twenty per cent in 1706. This would seem to indicate that he manipulated his own debts in such a way as to borrow on a short term basis only and in a calculated fashion. Or, payment was forced by his Bayonné and La Rochelle creditors just before his death. Only one recorded debt of 15000 livres remained to be paid to Bourque, a merchant at La Rochelle.⁷ It is not surprising that all his debts are in the form of obligations with the exception of one small constitution de rente of 400 livres payable at twenty livres annually. If any of de Couagne's ledgers or journals had survived, his balance sheets would be able

⁶See the "partage" of the Gode-de Couagne estate later in this Chapter.

⁷"Inventaire, le 28 aout 1706, et. al." A.N.Q.M. Greffe Antoine Adhemar.

to be seen in detail.

The calculation of de Couagne's real estate was precise in the case of his 1686 inventory. His lot was then worth six thousand livres. When his house at 16 St. Paul Street was bought in 1687, it was worth 1100 livres.⁸ By 1732, his house and lot was worth some 24160 livres, 18 sols, a rise of some 350 per cent of its original value. Antoine Adhemar in his evaluation of de Couagne's final estate made no mention of his real estate. However, de Couagne's fixed assets in real estate, at the time of his estate's division, were worth 31807/1/0.⁹ (See Table 7). Since this is the only time the value of his property is established these assets were added to the value of his final inventory. In addition to the notarised documents used, other sources list certain lots in the town of Montreal that belonged to the de Couagne heirs.¹⁰ This raises the problem whether part of Charles de Couagne's real estate was divided before its official recording. This is highly probable. It would explain partially why the estate had diminished so much in value by 1732.

⁸"Vente d'une maison rue St-Paul par Claude Tardy à Charles de Couagne, le 14 octobre 1687," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Claude Maugue.

⁹"Partage, le 31 mai 1732", A.N.Q.M., Guillet de Chaumont.

¹⁰Antoine Roy (edit.), L'Aveu et Dénombrement de Montréal en 1731, A.P.Q., 1943.

Edouard Z. Massicotte, "L'Incendie du Vieux Montreal en 1721," Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Journal, April 1915, XII, p. 39.

TABLE 7

DE COUAGNE'S ASSETS IN REAL ESTATE

YEAR	LOTS	VALUE	HOUSES	VALUE
1732	1. Lot on St. Paul.		1. House at 16 St. Paul.	24160/18,
	2. Lot on St. Sacrement.	100 l.	2. House on St. Sacrement.	4894/ 3
	3. Lot on St. Sacrement of 142 "toises" in surface.	1282 l.	3.	
	4. Lot on Notre Dame in a triangle of 122 "toises" by 16 ^a .	1120/0/0	4.	
	5. Land on end of island.		5. House on end of island.	250 l.
TOTAL VALUE OF LOTS AND HOUSES: 31807/1/0				

a. Transaction en Pierre Derivon et les Sieurs de Couagne
le 31 mai 1732." A.J.M., Greffe Guillet de Chaumont.

De Couagne's financial status may now be approximately established based on a restricted sample of some twenty-one final inventories of merchants in New France who died in the same period. In 1706 de Couagne is classified as second highest on this endex drawn up by Louise Dechène.¹¹ The latter calculated 15 sols tournois to the livre (since her book was researched in France), whereas all de Couagne's titles and promissory notes are calculated 20 sols to the livre. (In other words the value of the livre at 20 sols and 12 deniers to a sol in New France, was used by the colony's notaries in their minutes and not the value of the French livre). This financial difference would not change de Couagne's high financial ranking. All the inventories calculated would change in the same ratio. This index also points out another particularity of de Couagne. Very few merchants would extend credit in the form of constitutions; de Couagne, on the other hand, did not shy away from this form of annual revenue. De Couagne increased his net worth from 64788 livres, 15 sols, 9 deniers, in 1686, to 205129 livres, 0 sols, 0 deniers, in 1706. Consequently, a major characteristic of the merchant's social status would be his comfortable material standing.

Certain characteristics of de Couagne's private life are suggested by these two inventories. By the end of his life span, his modus vivendi, if his final inventory is

accurate, was definitely austere; the de Couagne household particularly its furniture was worth some ten per cent less. Yet, Marie Godé had given birth to nine surviving children all of them minors at their father's death. This possible austerity, however, does not satisfactorily explain the ten per cent value drop. Antoine Adhémar may have grossly under-evaluated this section of the inventory. Other cases such as the forty per cent under-evaluation of the estate of François Etienne Cugnet can be found in New France history.¹² Or de Couagne's furniture was extremely old. Possibly a large quantity had been sold or mortgaged to settle debts in his complicated fortune. For in the 1700's several European creditors to de Couagne sent representatives before the Sovereign Council demanding payment from the merchant.¹³

De Couagne's wardrobe was simple and his house functionally furnished although with furniture of quality, of mahogany, that had to be imported from France. Very few household items in both inventories were made of silver or gold, both of which are traditional signs of wealth and luxury items permitted to themselves by historical elites. Also, de Couagne had a small library. In the last couple of years of his life, he appears to be very sick, a fact pointed out by personal statements in both his wills. (Indeed in his first will he states that he is on his deathbed.) A

¹² Cameron Nish, François Etienne Cugnet, (unpublished manuscript).

"Compte entre de Couagne et Charles Dudurot de La Rochelle," le 1 février 1704, Jugements du Conseil Soverain, IV, p. 935.

lifestyle of quiet withdrawal would not demand the same wardrobe or furnishings judged necessary at the moment of his marriage with Marie Gode, when the most active part of his career was beginning. This activity was reflected in the number and contents of his notarised transactions.

In 1732 the de Couagne succession was settled, some twenty-six years after his death. In the meantime, Marie Gode had remarried (November 19, 1712), and died (1731). Because the de Couagne children were all under the age of twenty-five at the time of their father's death, with the exception of Jacques Charles, they were considered as minors under the law; their mother was legally responsible for the administration of their fifty per cent of the estate until their individual majority was attained. (It was customary to wait until the youngest child would have attained his majority). Two other plausible explanations exist for the delay for the official division of the de Couagne estate. The final inventory of the estate emphasizes its complexity;¹⁴ simple pragmatism would dictate that its heirs wait until most of the titles were settled. Also it is highly probable that the missing de Couagne-Gode marriage contract provided for the usufruct of the total

¹⁴The complexity of de Couagne's estate is emphasized by Pierre Raimbault's appointment after the succession's inventory: "Commission au Sieur Raimbault fonction de procureur du Roi de la justice royale de...Montréal pour connaître de toutes les affaires du défunt Charles de Couagne, le 1 septembre 1706," Inventaire des Ordonnances, I, p. 19.

estate upon the death of one of the two members of the marriage community. For the accord between Pierre Derivon, Sieur de Budemon, Marie Gode's second husband and the surviving children of the de Couagne family states that their mother had administered and enjoyed the usufruct of the de Couagne succession.¹⁵

The final division of the de Couagne succession was based on a detailed list of some 131 sheets drawn up by the Sieur de Budemon on July 14, 1731, which estimated the contemporary value of de Couagne's estate at 55347 livres, 8 sols, and 7 deniers, of which money 5000 livres was from the original Mars-de Couagne succession.¹⁶

This estimation being some 150780 livres, 11 sols and 5 deniers, less than de Couagne's net worth at his moment of death, immediately raises the question what happened to the rest of his estate. It is plausible that Marie Godé used capital and income from the estate to bring up her children, as well as to live in the style to which she was accustomed, until her second marriage to Pierre Derivon in 1712. Furthermore, as in any balance sheet in accounting, part of the assets and liabilities shown may need to be audited as bad debts.

¹⁵"Transaction entre Pierre Derivon, Sieur de Budemon, veuf de Marie Godé et les Sieurs de Couagne au sujet des biens provenant de la succession du defunt Charles de Couagne et de la dite Godé, le 31 mai 1732," A.N.Q.M., Greffe Guillet de Chaumont.

¹⁶See "Transaction entre Pierre Derivon et les Sieurs de Couagne."

(This is shown to be the case for some 4000 livres of the total).

The actual partage is of value for the calculation of the final status of the merchant at the moment of his death as it presents a list of property remaining as part of his estate in 1732 with their later evaluation. (See Table 8). The merchant's estate was still heir to property worth some 31807 livres, 1 sol and 0 deniers. De Couagne's fortune in 1732 evaluated by de Budemon, René de Couagne, Alexis Monière, François de Francheville and Pierre de Couagne, all representing the surviving members of the de Couagne family, was calculated at 70535 livres, 1 sol and 5 deniers, and was broken down as follows:

25254/0/5	in <u>constitutions</u> and <u>obligations</u>
2795/0/0	in furniture
570/0/0	personal items of Marie Gode
31807/1/0	in real estate
10109/0/0	in cash

of this total sum de Budemon was given 16600 livres which included his wife's furniture, the lot and house on St. Sacrement Street and certain créances. 3935/1/5 were calculated as non-récupérable debts. This left some 49941/0/0 to be divided equally among the surviving children of de Couagne and Gode.¹⁷

¹⁷ Jacques Mathieu points out that the "Partage" explains the absence of family businesses that pass from father to son. Unless all the heirs formed a family company the careful division of a parent's estate would make the perpetuation of his fortune as a whole, difficult. Jacques Mathieu, "Un Négociant de Québec à l'Epoque de la Conquête," R.A.P.Q., 1970, XLVIII, p. 29.

TABLE 8

THE PARTAGE OF DE COUAGNE'S ESTATE IN 1732^a

PERSON	CASH	ACTIVE CREANCES & OBLIGATIONS, ETC.	REAL ESTATE	TOTAL
Jean Batiste de Couagne	2000 l. (30/16/0 to give to Pierre)	3700 l.	-land on rue St. Sacrement-1282 l. -part of lot and house on rue St. Paul-1372 l.	(8354 l.) (30/16/0 to be given to Pierre)
René de Couagne	1125 l. (14/10/0 to give to Nicolas)	1954 l.	-lot #6 rue St. Paul-1041 l. -lot #7 rue St. Paul-1274 l. -lot #8 rue St. Paul-1387 l.	(8338 l.) (14/10/0 to be given to Nicolas)
Nicolas de Couagne	14/10/0 from René 6/10/0	302/10/0	-part of the house on rue St. Paul- 8000 l.	8323/10
Pierre de Couagne	1050 l. 30/16/0 from Jean Batiste 9/8/0	4102/8/0	-lot rue Notre Dame-1120/5	8323/10

TABLE 8--Continued

PERSON	CASH	ACTIVE CREANCES & OBLIGATIONS, ETC.	REAL ESTATE	TOTAL
Alexis Lemoine Monière pour (Marie Joseph de Couagne) de Francheville	2500 l. 324/10/0 to be given to Poulin de Francheville		-part of lot and house on rue St. Paul-5120 l. -part of lot #2- 1028 l.	8640 of which 324/10 to be given to Poulin de Francheville)
Poulin de Francheville pour (Thérèse de Couagne)	2000 l. 300 l.	1548 l. 324/10/0 from Lemoine Monière 570/10/0	-lot #1-1030/5 -lot #3-1032/14 -lot #4-1217/11 -lot at end of island-300 l.	8323/10

^aSee the "Transaction entre Pierre de Rivon et
les Sieurs de Couagne."

Several conclusions may be drawn. The strictness of the Coutume de Paris in the minute equalization of a succession's division is prominent. All legitimate family members were equal before the law and none could be disinherited. De Couagne's grandchildren, living in France, that is to say the children of Jacques Charles and MaryAnne Mars-de Couagne, both dead, received the 5000 livres remaining from de Couagne's first marriage community. The actual 49941 livres was divided into six equal parts after an agreement was made with Pierre de Budemon. The some 70000 livres remaining of the merchant's investments and loans after twenty-six years, serves to emphasize his savoir-faire in the original transaction, as well as his second wife's efficient manipulation of his state of affairs. Furthermore, de Couagne's fixed assets in real estate located on the main streets of the town of Montreal once more point out his successful middleman role in the fur trade which furnished him with the necessary capital for investment. Then as now an individual's place of business and/or home held a certain social ranking. St. Paul and St. Sacrement Streets were the nucleus of the old town.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE OF THE SOCIETY OF NEW FRANCE

One way of assessing de Couagne's status and role within the society of New France is to consider the present status of the historiography on the subject. Four current interpretations, that is to say those of Eccles, Dechêne, Nish and Hamelin, will be put forward as possible models into which de Couagne's commercial activities can be incorporated. An attempt will be made by means of these models to give de Couagne a certain social ranking. This ranking will base itself on the following possible definition of status: status in all societies may be such that an individual's position is free so that he can move vertically and horizontally to others and they to him. This may be classified as an open status system. Or, the status system may be closed so that men cannot move from level to level, their own individual positions being so fixed that their careers are confined to one status and competition for any other status is not possible.¹ This ranking bases itself on the concept that a society characteristically has an ordered structure.

¹Melvin M. Turmin (edit.), Readings on Social Stratification, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), Introduction, p. XIII.

the term order used in the sense of a certain social and economic hierarchy. All four historians selected, accept this proposition.

William Eccles presents New France as an organic society² within which it was accepted as axiomatic that the function of the Crown was to govern, to maintain law and order and to protect the proper interests of all of its segments. In economic affairs it was taken for granted that the best interests of the consumer and not those of the individual producer must prevail. Government intervention was a normal phenomenon to maintain quality, fair prices and a proper reward for goods and services. This pervading concept of social responsibility was made manifest in the lengthy instructions given each Governor-General and Intendant upon appointment.

Furthermore, Eccles proposes that New France maintained part of its Ancien Regime heritage in its social structures: Canada's most significant feature at the upper end of the social scale was the aristocratic and military ethos that dominated it.³ Here he meant that the dominant values of the period would be derived from those considered members of this elite. In the context of New France, wealth would be an influential way of imitating a life style not secured by birth.

William Eccles, The Canadian Frontier, (Holt Rinehart Winston: New York, 1969), p. 75.

William Eccles, Canadian Society During the French Régime, (Harvest House: Toronto, 1968), p. 24.

Money would not be sought as an aim in itself, but to enable men to live in the life style of the social group they wished to enter. Consequently, for Eccles, an ambitious Canadian merchant would wish to be something more than prosperous; he would wish to bequeath to his sons a higher social status and a name distinguished for military valor or the holding of high office.

On the other hand, Louise Dechêne's analysis of Montreal society at the end of the seventeenth century⁴ is anchored in her interpretation of the relationship between production and trade. The distribution of goods resulting from this relationship would determine an individual's social and economic role. She adopts the staple theory of economic growth first presented by Harold Innis,⁵ meaning that the fur trade was the major determinant of economic development in New France. Social mobility in New France would be in proportion to an individual's savoir faire in exploiting it. "Ce n'est évidemment pas une société figée."⁶

However, recognition of status according to Dechêne was limited. The noblesse de la robe, a social order common in France where a title was bought, in comparison to the noblesse

⁴Louise Dechêne, Marchands et Habitants de Montreal, pp. 353 - 480.

⁵Melvin Watkins and Thomas W. Easterbrook (edit.), "A Staple Theory of Economic Growth," Approaches to Canadian History, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 49 - 74.

⁶Louise Dechêne, Marchands et Habitants de Montreal, p. 407.

de l'épée, a member of the nobility by birth, did not exist in the colony. Relatively few administrative and military positions could be determined whose appointments were not made in France. Few positions were open although Canadians could become officers in the Troupes de la Marine. Consequently, Dechêne, acknowledging her debt to Guy Frégault,⁷ emphasizes the existence of two major groups who composed New France's elite, the merchants and the noblesse de l'épée. Although commerce in the form of the fur trade served as a common meeting ground the two groups remained distinct. Both were interested in making money, but social mobility within the ranks of the elite was difficult. Moreover, the State appeared to favour the noblesse de l'épée in its administrative edicts and granting of conges.

For Cameron Nish the society of New France in the 1700's⁸ appears a far more amorphous entity than it does for either Eccles or Dechêne. He emphasizes that the connotations of such words as economy, society, etc., must be analyzed in the North American colonial context and not by consistent referrals to France. Since New France was administered on authoritarian lines it was moulded into distinct upper and lower echelons. However, the existent social system was not a closed status society.

⁷Guy Frégault, Canadian Society in the French Régime, (CHA Booklet: Ottawa, 1954), No. 3.

⁸Cameron Nish, Les Bourgeois-Gentilshommes de la Nouvelle France, (Montreal: Fides, 1968).

By means of emphasizing the relationship between privilege and commerce, Nish establishes criteria to define the existence of a bourgeois group. The paternalistic role of the State was positive: instead of slowing down the colonial economy through its massive bureaucracy, the metropolis encouraged its colony through subsidies and State enterprises. One social group only composed of titled members of the nobility, administrators, seigneurs and established merchants, dominated the functioning of the colonial economy. The links between the different members of this group was based on their access to capital, its associated privileges, power, and matrimony. To characterize their functions and classify these members, Nish called the "les Bourgeois-Gentilshommes de la Nouvelle France".

Jean Hamelin considers New France as an embryonic society only, having an administrative framework, but no dynamism.⁹ The colony's economy according to his hypothesis, lacked a commercial element capable of exploiting its natural resources; consequently, no capital accumulated to be re-invested in the colony. Skilled immigrants were rare and the temporary marchand forain was a common phenomenon. This weak and dependant economy was reflected in the colony's rigid social structures: the nobility and the plebians who were artisans, tradesmen and habitants. It was a closed status

⁹Jean Hamelin, Economie et Société de la Nouvelle France, (P.U.L.: Quebec, 1961).

system. Indeed, Hamelin blames the French regime for the non-existence of a French Canadian bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century which would have been capable of competing with the Anglo-Scottish elements in Canada.

It may now be affirmed that de Couagne, within the limits of research set out in this paper, does not fit succinctly into any of the four interpretations outlined. His entrepreneurship evidently manipulated the direct relationship between production and exchange emphasized by Dechêne. De Couagne as certain objects in his final inventory suggest probably lived comfortably, but modestly. His dishes and furniture were the same objects imported by members of the titled nobility from France.¹⁰ Many comparisons analyzing wealth, life style, values, social contracts, etc., would establish whether the only difference between de Couagne and a titled noble was one of birth. If the merchant and noblesse de l'épée groups were linked socially only, cases of intermarriage would be rare because little community of interests would exist. The problem must remain unresolved in the de Couagne case as a study of his complete family would be necessary.

Hamelin's analysis as a framework for de Couagne has to be almost completely rejected; for de Couagne's activities if they are to be studied accurately, have to be assessed in the colonial context and compared to other merchants of his time. Hamelin's study cannot be used for this purpose.

¹⁰ "Les Biens du Marquis de Vaudreuil," R.A.P.Q. 1957 - 1959, pp. 337 - 353, would offer a basis for comparing the listed items in de Couagne's final inventory of 1706.

Since de Couagne ranks financially second on a comparative index based on recorded wealth at his moment of death, Hamelin's hypothesis is of no value for this paper.

Eccles' interpretation does not establish what were the values of the aristocratic and military ethos that permeated his view of New France society. The earning of money is recognized as a means to the end of living in the life style of the recognized titled elite in the colony. Nothing in the sources available indicated that de Couagne ambitionned to become an officer in the Troupes de la Marine or be granted a noble title. His marriages and exploitation of the fur trade appear to be aimed at material improvement only.

De Couagne's milieu comes closest to the model of New France society presented by Nish, although a thorough study of the different members of the de Couagne family would be necessary before a final conclusion could be formulated. As in its mother country, France, the government of the dependant colony was centralized and paternalistic; this was symbolized in the vast authority given to the Intendent, Governor-General and Sovereign Council.¹¹ New France was a Roman Catholic colony permitting no religious dissent. It was an ordered society divided into the elite and masses, both orders consisting of several fluid occupational groups.¹²

¹¹ Andre Vachon, *The Administration of New France*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

¹² Yves Zoltvancy, *The Government of New France, Clerical or Class Rule*, (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Ltd., 1971).

In New France, it was relatively easy for an ambitious individual to move up the social scale. Four factors help account for this: the availability of free land, the economic opportunities provided by the fur trade, the presence of a large body of regular troops in the colony in which Canadians could obtain commissions as officers,¹³ and the royal Edict of 1685. The latter permitted members of the nobility resident in Canada to engage directly in commerce and industry. This engagement was not officially permitted in France until 1701, although members of the nobility were allowed to engage in the manufacture of glass, paper and the iron industry. It is highly unlikely that most members of the noblesse de l'épée¹⁴ in New France would have possessed the same items as their counterparts in France if such a permission had not compensated for their lack of revenue from real estate and other accepted traditional sources. Yet, luxury items such as wines, silks, pewter dished arrived yearly on the King's Vessels; these items cost proportionately more due to their importation. These items were found in the last inventories of merchants such as de Couagne and members of the nobility.¹⁵

¹³In France, commissioned marine or army officers were members of the noblesse de l'épée.

¹⁴"Arrêt du Conseil d'Etat, Qui Permet aux Gentilshommes de Canada de Faire Commerce, 30 aout 1685", Pierre-Georges Roy, Jugements et Deliberations du Conseil Souverain, (Québec), II, p. 1020.

¹⁵For a description of the furnishings of a member of the noblesse de l'épée house, see, "Les Biens du Marquis de Vaudreuil à Montreal," R.A.P.Q. 1957 - 1959, pp. 337 - 353. René de Couagne, one of the de Couagne-Godé children, helped with this inventory.

The fur trade set the pace for economic expansion in New France. Government intervention was necessary for maximum profit from its own involvement.¹⁶ The fur trade left a peculiar impact on society creating an excessive reliance on imports from France for most products of a non-food nature. Its pecuniary lure affected all social and occupational groups in the colony. Because consistent economic growth requires an ability to shift resources to satisfy the law of supply and demand, royal intervention was necessary to control the fur trade's pace and kind of development. Furthermore, since New France existed in theory, only to enrich France, the royal officials would regulate the staple product in such a way as to participate individually and profitably in its exploitation.¹⁷

Under the mercantile commercial philosophy that linked France and its colony, the economic purpose of New France was to supply what its motherland wanted and needed. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, the French demand was almost exclusively for furs and for beaver skins in particular. Because of this great demand and the fertile supply available

¹⁶ John F. Bosher, "Government and Private Interests in New France," Canadian Public Administration, 1967, V. pp. 244 - 257.

¹⁷ John F. Bosher, "Government and Public Interests in New France," Canadian Public Administration, 1967, V. p. 246.

"La Pacotille rapport ordinairement sept cent pour cent de profit,"¹⁸ according to one of the visitors to New France during this period. Although the precision of his overall estimation of profit would need to be determined, the fact remains, that if the fur trade would not have been a profitable staple on both sides of the Atlantic the economy of the colony would have been forced to diversify to another product (or products) in demand in the mother country. Or New France would have no economic reason for its existence.

The granting of a seigneurie was considered recognition of a certain social status. Such recognition was linked to the values of the Ancien Regime where only a certain elite were large landowners. Seigneuries were requested and granted for a variety of reasons. However, land speculation was rarely a purpose.¹⁹ Canada's population was small and a domaine became valuable only when settled and its rotures developed as de Couagne recognized after buying the seigneurie of La Chesnaye on option. Two equally strong checks on seigneurial speculation presented themselves: the existence of the quint tax and the retrait lignager as spelled out in the Coutume de Paris", the law of the colony. The quint was a tax paid to

¹⁸ Louis Armand de La Montan, Nouveaux Voyages de M. le Baron de La Montan Dans l'Amerique Septentrionale, (La Haye: Chez les Freres Honore, 1704), I, p. 70.

¹⁹ Richard Harris, The Seigneurial System in Early Canada, (Quebec: P.U.L.), 1966.

the State by the buyer of fief. It amounted to twenty per cent of the purchase's value. The retrait lignager meant that the heirs could buy back a fief if it had been sold for succession debts and the fief's new owner would be forced to accept the money.²⁰

The making of money in New France by all social groups was facilitated by a common access to different elements of the fur trade. This would suggest a plutocratic society where an individual's economic and social status was acquired by his access to wealth. Money and its earning was not aimed at buying a title in the noblesse de l'épée. Rather, wealth would be used to purchase the desired environment in an open status system. In this sense money may be conceived of as the means to imitate the modus vivendi of a social group to which admission was desired.²¹

Consequently, social stratification within the ranks of the elite and the common people was a relatively fluid one because of the new world milieu. De Couagne reflected this fluidity in his role of a merchant with its associated economic and social functions. At the moment of his death, he was among the wealthiest merchants in New France. It is probable that at his moment of penetration into the Montreal

²⁰ Claude de Ferrière, Nouveau Commentaire sur la Coutume de la Prévoté et Vicomté de Paris, (Paris: Cochart, 1770), Title VIII, Article 12.

²¹ Money would be used to purchase the environment of what was considered the upper ranks of society. Thomas Marshall, Citizenship and Social Class, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 93.

merchant circle de Couagne had little capital. However, he would have had the necessary contacts due to his father-in-law, Simon Mars.²¹ This hypothesis is suggested by the 400% increase in the value of his wedding endowment to his second wife. Also, as maitre d'hotel to Frontenac he moved in circles representative of the social groups that composed the upper echelon. De Couagne's own entry was secured through wealth earned as an entrepreneur in the fur trade and as a merchant. Although his own social mobility may not have been a series of calculated moves through marriage and influence-peddling, he was a member of a small affluent merchant group at the moment of his death. This social group, due to its potential purchasing power, was considered part of the colony's elite. As early as 1684, the Intendant Meulles summoned him to a meeting as representative of the merchant group in Montreal to discuss certain problems in the fur trade.²² Since titled nobility in New France was also permitted to engage in trade this social contact on de Couagne's part was reinforced by the upper echelons' members themselves. Marriage often intensified the commercial ties in New France; the de Couagne family in its links to the Moniere and de Francheville families can be used as an illustration of this phenomenon.²³ (See Appendix.)

²²"Sondage d'Opinion par l'Intendant de Meulles, le 4 octobre 1684", A.C., M.G. 1, p. 5.

²³"Accord entre Pierre de Budemon et les Sieurs de Couagne, le 31 mai 1732", A.N.Q.M., Greffe Guillet de Chaumont.

Marie Gode's second marriage to Pierre Derivon, écuyer and member of the nobility by birth was probably facilitated not only by her share of de Couagne's estate, but also by the social circles in which the de Couagne's would have circulated. Jean Batiste, the oldest de Couagne-Gode son, married into the nobility also. His wife was Marguerite de Gannes de Falaise.²⁴ The younger de Couagne became an engineer and captain at Louisbourg, a post usually reserved for members of the noblesse de l'épée. In 1769 he had a false geneological tree drawn up stating that the de Couagne family was originally one of the landholding seigneurs from the region of Tourraine.²⁵

As in any other society²⁶ the basic criteria for evaluation of an individual was his socio-economic role and associated activities. De Couagne's career was the reflection of an open status system in the New World in which he could move vertically and horizontally in his dealings as a financier towards all social groups in the colony. Great social mobility is indicated by his going from a maître d'hôtel to a leading merchant. New France, because of its staple-based

²⁴See "Appendix."

²⁵"Généalogie des Couagnes Seigneurs de la Roche, le 8 août 1769," A.P.C., M.G. 18, 06.

²⁶Elinor Barbor, The Bourgeoisie in Eighteenth Century France, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), Introduction.

economy needed skillful merchants who could provide the necessary goods and credit for the fur trade as well as other needs. Thus de Couagne's function as a wealthy and experienced merchant was of proven value over a long time period to the great number involved in the fur trade including New France's titled administrators, army officials, other merchants, etc. De Couagne's classification as a member of the colony's upper echelon emphasizes the interrelations between commerce, government and private interests in New France. Furthermore, de Couagne offers another case history in the study of the relationship between wealth, social status and privilege in New France.

CONCLUSION

This study of the estate of Charles de Couagne necessitated a particular empirical methodology. The framework drawn up had as its boundary moments in de Couagne's life when his estate was expected to be recorded: marriage contracts, annual valume of business, post-mortem inventories, etc.

De Couagne's marriage contracts and last wills were established as representative of a certain material ease although precise figures could not be determined in the case of his second marriage contract. The greater significance of these documents lay in their emphasis of the Coutume de Paris as a law code intended to uphold the legitimate family unit. An analysis of de Couagne's business transactions proved fruitful not only for an understanding of his particular entrepreneurship, but also for a demonstration of certain business techniques in New France at this period: the kinds of transactions, methods of payment, what social groups in New France were involved in the fur trade and with what groups de Couagne came in contact. De Couagne was shown to be specialized in money-lending although he did participate in land speculation and some over-the-counter trading. How particular this ~~was~~ to the merchant community of Montreal could not be determined as de Couagne was but one of several possible case studies.

Emphasis was placed on social role as the main determinant in social stratification. Furthermore, money-making was shown to be a potential disintegrator of the social orders existent in New France. Money-making was a way of life; New France's elite was not an aristocracy. The fur trade as the staple of the colony's economy contributed significantly to its fluid society. For in the environment of the American continent its wealth was open to ambitious individuals of both the upper and lower echelons of New France. Such social disintegration was taking place in the Ancien Regime as well, exemplified in the noblesse de l'épée and the noblesse de la robe. Moreover, marriage was also pointed out as a possible way of attaining or maintaining a certain social rank.

De Couagne's first marriage to Anne Mars certainly contributed to his penetration of the merchants' occupational group in Montreal. If de Couagne was already a wealthy man by 1685 he would not have been déclassé in marrying a carpenter's daughter, Marie Gode. This is emphasized by the presence of Jacques Bizard and Pierre Gadois as witnesses at his second wedding. De Couagne's second marriage also suggested a lack of social rigidity in New France. Moreover, his passage from maitre d'hôtel to the Governor-General to a well established merchant at his moment of death, indicated definite social mobility.

A precise calculation of the two inventories of de Couagne's estate was computed based on the accuracy of the notaried documents. Changes in the composition of the estate

were noted and used to explain possible changes in de Couagne's particular business habits. Both inventories affirm the existence of real estate. They also list in detail household items which would be another profitable point of departure to analyse social rank. In addition, de Couagne's different categories of books could be used to determine his interests in his leisure time, his level of education and possibly certain intellectual values in New France during his life span. The confirmation of the existence of real estate is detailed in the partage where contemporary values are given. The actual division of de Couagne's estate traces the marriages of the de Couagne children and points out their social mobility through matrimony. Both Jacques Charles and René de Couagne became prominent merchants. It may be deduced that their apprenticeship took place with their father during his lifetime. Furthermore, a merchant family would appear to have been founded by Charles de Couagne. "Les Couagne, marchands ne manquaient pas dans le Montreal du dix-huitième siècle. Mais Rene paraît avoir été le plus important en meme temps que le plus grand peut-être des marchands de Montréal."¹ This remains to be confirmed by further research. The trading, buying and money-lending of this merchant family could then be correlated to their social status within the ranks of those engaged in similar activities in New France.

¹ Antoine Roy, "Gouvernement de Montreal," R.A.P.Q., 1949 - 1951, p. 427.

Compared to the value of other contemporary estates, de Couagne could be classified as a wealthy merchant at the time of his decease.² Moreover, the same conclusion of affluence can be drawn from French standards of the period. Savary des Brulons, the chief formulator of commercial values and techniques of the period based his figures of the value of the estates of merchants after several years of successful practice. He stated that 10000 livres was the threshold of the commerçant, 50000 to 100000 livres that of a commerçant aisé and over 100000 livres that of a négociant.³ De Couagne never did succeed in pulling himself out of practice all together, although the pace of his activities certainly slackened the two years before his death. In the summer of 1706, his final estate was worth well over 100000 livres even without a list of his properties.

Thus de Couagne as an entrepreneur and part of the Montreal merchant group, built up a fortune of over 205000 livres in the social and economic context of New France. His savoir faire, revealed in the kinds and terms of his business contracts, together with the calculation of his material standing as revealed in his marriage contracts, estate inven-

²Louise Dechêne, Habitants et Marchands de Montreal. (Montreal: Plon, 1974), p. 389.

³Fernand Braudel, Ernest Labrousse, Histoire Economique et Sociale de la France, (Paris: P.U.F., 1970), Tome 2, p. 615. The calculation of 15 instead of 20 sols to the French livres only confirms des Brulons classification.

tories, last wills and division of estate establish his financial standing. His social standing, a far more amorphous position to assess because of its non-empirical nature, ranked the merchant's most frequent associations with those members of New France's upper echelon participating in the fur trade. Indeed de Couagne's mobility emphasizes what appears to be an open status system existent in the two levels making up New France society. Other people's dependence on his experience and opinions contributed to an evaluation of his social status.

The methodology used in this paper to establish de Couagne's financial standing could be fruitfully used for the construction of an index to measure the personal fortune of other selected merchants in the same time period in exactly the same way. The empirical result of de Couagne's material standing at selected moments in his life would be used as one point on the index for each category measured. Since this potential index would represent those individuals engaged in merchant activities in New France a clearer image would be formed of social stratification and mobility in the colony.

APPENDIX

THE GENEALOGY OF THE DE COUAGNE FAMILY^a

FIRST GENERATION

Charles de Couagne 1651-1706 + Anne Mars 1659-1685

Jacques Charles 1681-1718 (merchant)

+

Marie Anne Hubert

Marie Anne Hubert

Charles de Couagne + Marie Godé 1663-1728

Jean Baptiste 1687-1740 (military officer)	+	Marie 1688	+	René 1690- 1767 (merchant)	+	Nicolas 1691	+	Pierre 1683	+	Joseph 1694- 1694	+	Marie Joseph 1695-1743	+	Thérèse 1697	+	Suzanne 1698 (nun)
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Alexis Lemoine

Louise Pothier

Marguerite de Gannes

^aCyprien Tanguay, Dictionnaire Généalogique, (Québec: Eusèbe Sénécal, 1871), III, p. 269. This family tree indicating the spread of the de Couagne family is based on available printed sources.

APPENDIX-- Continued

SECOND GENERATION

Jacques Charles Mars-de Couagne + Marie Anne Hubert

Charles Sylvestre
1707

Louis
1709

François Marie
1711-1787

René
1714

+

Marie-Louise Lemoine Marie Louise Cartier

Jean Batiste Codé-de Couagne + Marguerite de Gannes

Marie Françoise
1722

Marguerite
1724-1759

Marie Anne
1730

Louise
1731

+

Georges de Gannes

Claude Drouet

Jean Lechelle

Louis Baby

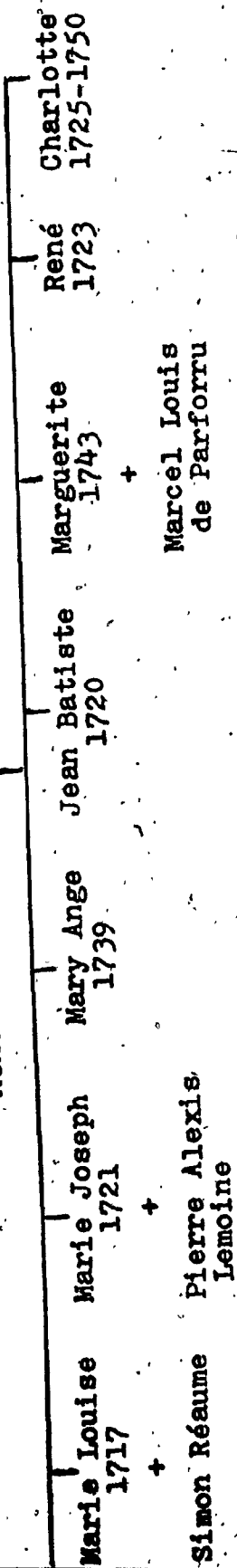
+

Jean Batiste Godfroy

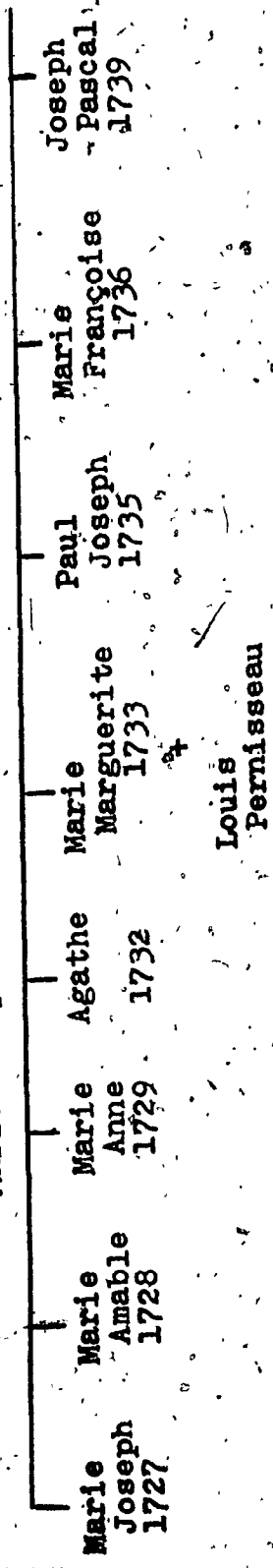
APPENDIX-- Continued

SECOND GENERATION-- Continued

René Godé-de Couagne + Louise Pothier



Marie-Joséph Godé-de Couagne + Alexis Lemoine Monière



APPENDIX-- Continued

THIRD GENERATION

François-Marie Hubert de Couagne + Marie Louise Lemoine

François Ignace 1739-1774	Louis 1740	Charles 1743	Catherine Louise 1744	Joseph 1751
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Angélique Daillebout	+	Marie Charlotte Trudel	+	Simon Evans
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René Hubert de Couagne + Marie-Louise Cartier

Marie Anne 1738	Marie Louise 1740	René François 1741	Charles François 1743	Louis François 1742-1744	Louis François 1745
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Louis Joseph
Riverin

ABBREVIATIONS

- A.E. L'Actualité économique
A.N.Q.M. Archives Nationales du Québec, Montréal
A.N.Q.Q. Archives Nationales du Québec, Québec
B.R.H. Bulletin des recherches historiques
C.A.N.J. Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Journal
C.H.A. Report of the Canadian Historical Association
C.H.R. Canadian Historical Review
H.S. Histoire Sociale
J.D.C.S. Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain
R.A.P.Q. Rapport des Archives de la Province de Québec
R.H.A.F. Révue d'Histoire de l'Amérique française
R.H.M.C. Révue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine
R.S. Recherches Sociographiques

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- A.N.Q.Q., Greffe Romain Becquet, 1662-1682.
A.N.Q.M., Greffe Hilaire Bourguine, 1685-1696.
A.N.Q.M., Greffe Pierre Cabazie, 1673-1693.
A.N.Q.M., Greffe Guillet de Chaumont, 1721-1737.
A.N.Q.Q., Greffe Louis Chambalon, 1692-1716.
A.N.Q.Q., Greffe Pierre Duquet, 1663-1687.
A.N.Q.M., Greffe Claude Maugue, 1677-1696.
A.N.Q.M., Greffe Jean Baptiste Pothier, 1686-1701.
A.N.Q.M., Greffe Pierre Rimbault, 1697-1726.

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