Book Review and Synopsis:
A Treasure Trove of Facts about “Les Filles du roi”
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Yves Landry, in his book, Les Filles du roi au xviième siècle (The King’s Daughters in the 17th century), published by Leméac in 1992 and subtitled, Orphans in France, Pioneers in Canada, provides a detailed view of his subject from the eye of the demographer. This work is a marvellous introduction to the history of the Filles du roi (King’s Daughters), women who were sponsored by the King of France, Louis XIV, in the mid-17th century, to travel to New France for the purpose of marrying some of the huge majority of male colonists and to settle in Canada.

Landry’s book is written in French (436 pages), and provides a critical analysis of previous research on the King’s Daughters, while presenting his own findings in a well-balanced and fascinating, albeit technical description of who they were, where they were from, whom they married, and of the families they raised. He presents reams of data in the form of figures, tables, and graphs, and concludes with a brief bibliography of each Fille du roi. This book is a real treasure trove of general information for the genealogist and history buff, though it will not provide many specifics regarding your ancestor.

There are many definitions of who was a King’s Daughter; depending on the author (historian, genealogist or demographer), the particular definition could produce a different total number of Filles du roi who settled in Canada, including or excluding your ancestor in the process. Two sources of information might be used in this process: the writings of contemporaries in the 17th century, and parish registry data.

The author notes that from 1634 to 1662, a private administration ran the colony of New France. But in 1663, the King took over the operation of Canada. Although the Queen of France had sponsored some young women to settle in Canada in 1654, no other concerted effort by the royal government had been made in this regard until 1663.

Landry describes how the term “Fille du roi” is first seen in the writings of Marguerite Bourgeoys in around 1697-1698. It was not repeated until historian Étienne-Michel Faillon used it in 1853. The term derives from “enfants du roi” (children of the King), which was used in 17th century Canada to refer to children without parents (orphans) who were raised at the King’s expense.

Historian-authors in Quebec such as Sulte, Groulx and others in the early 20th century used the term to distinguish girls who were raised, recruited and transported to New France at the expense
of the State (as opposed to those who arrived at their own cost). In 1935, Caron had the total number at 732; in 1950, Malchelosse put it at 857.

In 1952, Gustave Lanctôt, the historian of the *Filles du roi*, established that the King’s Daughters were only women who arrived in Canada between 1663 and 1673. He counted a total number of 961 *Filles du roi*. Landry states that Lanctôt didn’t limit their number to those who were originally from Paris and Normandy, as had previous authors.

Lanctôt’s definition included a dowry gift from the King at marriage for the woman in the sum of 50 *livres* for girls of ordinary social origin, and 100 *livres* for “demoiselles” (those of higher social class).

In 1972, genealogist Silvio Dumas defined the *Filles du roi* in terms of who was “not” included in the group, according to author Landry. He excluded widows with children, those of Canadian origin, those who arrived outside the period of 1663-1673, those who arrived with parents or whose trip was financed by a parent, and those recruited by the *Companie des Indes occidentales*. He calculated a total of 774 King’s Daughters including some women who voyaged to Canada without public aid.

Dumas’ list of *Filles du roi* was utilized and embellished by Elmer Courtois and Joy Reisinger in their widely known book, “The King’s Daughters”, published in English in 1988.

The author relates that in 1983, Marcel Trudel gave a more restricted definition of a King’s Daughter: she was an orphan, of high social level, recruited by the State (in need), with a royal grant at marriage. However, the detailed work by Yves Landry (1991), analyzing the data of the P.R.D.H. study and historical writings, has provided the most reliable definition to date (i.e. as of 1995).

In his book, “*Les Filles du roi au xviième siècle*”, published in 1992, Yves Landry defined a *Fille du roi* as a woman, single or widowed (including widows with children), who arrived in Canada between 1663 and 1673 inclusive, and who is presumed to have benefited from royal aid in her transport to and/or settlement in New France. They were identified and unified as a group. Landry does not require documentary proof of the State financial assistance for the woman to qualify as a King’s Daughter. The presumption of being a *Fille du roi* depends on the year of arrival, the freedom to contract marriage, and the absence of private aid.

Using parish registries and notarial records, Landry has listed 770 women as *Filles du roi* (with biographies) in his book. Of these, 751 also were in Dumas’ listing. Landry found 23 of the King’s Daughters in Dumas’ book in error, either because of duplications, falling outside the 1663-1673 period (as for example, Marie Mazouer, who immigrated in 1662 and married Louis Garneau), arriving with a husband or employer, or because she was Canadian.

Landry’s primary source of information was the P.R.D.H. (“Programme de recherche en démographie”), which covers 1621-1765, with over 300,000 civil records from 122 parishes.
concerning 200,000 individuals in 45,000 families (24,608 individuals in the 17th century). 737 of the *Filles du roi* listed by Landry settled in Canada; 33 others arrived there, but either returned to France, died, or remained without marrying.

Some of these women were recruited and transported at the King’s expense; others came to the ports of La Rochelle or Dieppe on their own, and were integrated into the group; and again others were neither recruited nor transported by the King, but arrived between 1663-1673 and their settlement was facilitated by colonial administrators (less than 100, during 1664, 1666 and 1672).

Landry began his count from civil records beginning after the first ship arrived (June 30th) in 1663, until the end of 1674. Women who arrived with a spouse or with a parent who remained in Canada were not included in the group. Thus, the three Raclos sisters are *Filles du roi*, because their father, who accompanied them on their voyage, returned to France during the same year of his arrival in Canada.

Landry admits that two categories of women have not been counted: those who remained single and were not mentioned in civil records (as witnesses, for example) until after 1674; and those who died in the voyage to Canada (on average, 10% of those who travelled to New France died during the crossings at that time). Thus, he estimates the true number of King’s Daughters at around 850 when these women are added to the total.

The number of arrivals according to Landry’s research are as follows: 1663: 36; 1664: 15; 1665: 90; 1666: 25; 1667: 90; 1668: 81; 1669: 132; 1670: 120; 1671: 115; 1672: 15; and 1673: 51. Almost one half of the *Filles du roi* arrived during 1669 to 1671. This follows the demobilization and settlement of 400 of the Carignan-Salières Regiment’s soldiers and officers in Canada in 1668.

Landry notes that the King’s Daughters of 17th century Canada were of diverse cultural backgrounds, contrary to the assertions of some authors. However, certain characteristics were dominant in the group, according to his research. Nearly 80% were from either Paris, Normandy or the West of France. Almost 50% came from around Paris (Ile de France); most of those arrived in New France in 1665, 1669, 1670 or 1671. Only 6% were from countries other than France, and only 2% were Protestant (despite the 123 departures of *Filles du roi* [out of 770] from the port of La Rochelle).

Two-thirds of the King’s Daughters were of urban versus rural origins, though only 15% of the population of France at the time lived in cities. One half of the urban King’s Daughters were from Paris. Thus Landry concludes that immigration of the *Filles du roi* could be said to be connected to the mobility of urban dwellers where word spread quickly of the emigration to Canada. These numbers can be compared to the two-thirds of male settlers of known origin in Canada at that time who arrived before 1680 and were from rural areas.
The author notes that two women in particular, Mme. Bourdon and Mme. Estienne, acted as recruiters of women as Filles du roi, concentrating on the Hôpital général de Paris during the 1669-1671 migrations. The very great majority of the King’s Daughters were from extreme poverty. It’s likely they left France because of financial difficulties, whether they were orphans from the Hôpital général de Paris or their parents sent them off.

Landry’s findings assume that 58% of King’s Daughters would have spoken Central French (from the Ile de France); only 26% spoke semi-patois, and 16% only patois. Compare this to the distribution among the general population of France: one-fifth; one-fifth; and three fifths, respectively.

Given the high marriage and birth rate, and the traditional role of the mother in raising and educating the children, Landry concludes that the King’s Daughters could have contributed to the acceleration of the assimilation, making Central French the common speech of Canada.

Four socio-economic groups of origin (based on the father’s profession) were represented among the Filles du roi: nobility & bourgeoisie; tradesmen; farmers; and the “humble” occupations. Landry estimates that only 12% of the King’s Daughters fell into the first group, again contrary to earlier writings. This figure is comparable to the percentage in the general population of France, and slightly less than that in the population of Canada at the time.

Landry describes how the general lack of money and personal goods among Filles du roi demonstrates the importance played by the royal aid in their settlement. Royal aid consisted of the cost of the voyage, assistance upon arrival, and a royal dowry on marriage.

The author notes that only 250 of the 606 known marriage contracts (or 41%) of the King’s Daughters mention a royal dowry. Almost all of them were in the sum of 50 livres, and two were 200 livres. About three-quarters of King’s Daughters of known upper socio-economic origins received only a 50 livres dowry.

The dowry was an important part of the royal aid given to some of the Filles du roi, according to Landry. Almost all were in the amount of 50 livres. Of the seven higher dowries (100 livres or more), six were given to “demoiselles” (higher social origins). Author Landry assumes that dowries were paid in goods, given the rarity of money in the colony.

Most dowries were granted between 1669 and 1671 (244 of the 250), years when recruits of Mme. Bourdon and Mme. Estienne arrived; these were mostly from the Hôpital général de Paris, an orphanage.

Women who arrived with fewer possessions were more likely to receive a royal dowry at marriage. However, social class or origin did not determine the likelihood of a dowry. According to Landry, the Intendant of the colony, Jean Talon seemed to equalize the level of wealth among the newlyweds through this practice.
Landry’s research reveals that the average age of single *Filles du roi* on arrival in Canada was 23.9 years; for widows, it was 32.5 years. Only half of these women were between 18 and 25 at immigration. However, 96% of the *Filles du roi* were between 16 and 40 upon settlement in New France.

A total of 718 of the *Filles du roi* were single on arrival; 38 were widows (though Landry believes that many failed to declare their true status for fear of rejection); and 14 were of unknown status.

Another aspect studied by Landry was literacy among the King’s Daughters. Using notarial records, he determined that only 24% could sign their name, a rough estimation of literacy. The *Filles du roi* were on par with average French women in this regard, and had a higher rate of literacy than that of female Canadians (21%). Yet as a group, the *Filles du roi* undeniably were disadvantaged by a low level of education, contrary to popular belief.

Though subject to error because of ambiguities in the records, Landry found that 56.7% (387 of 663) of *Filles du roi* who provided information had a deceased father upon immigration; 19% had a deceased mother; and 11.3% were complete orphans. Thus 64.4% were orphaned of at least one parent. This percentage was even higher among women recruited by Mmes. Bourdon and Estiennes from Paris in 1669-1671.

Overall, Landry notes that this was a much higher rate of paternal mortality than for the average French woman at the time. The author writes that this would account for the intense poverty of the *Filles du roi* as a group. (The maternal mortality was likely much higher than appears in the records, because of the method of recording at the time). More orphans received royal dowries at marriage than other King’s Daughters.

Landry does not agree with the assertion that all King’s Daughters immigrated to Canada voluntarily with the only goal to take a husband. Many sought to escape miserable conditions in France. Though most did so voluntarily, at least one instance of coercion existed according to contemporary correspondence cited by the author.

Also, Landry points out that some may have been incited to immigrate by family ties to other immigrants who preceded, accompanied or followed them to Canada. One in ten King’s Daughters were related to someone in New France; however, this percentage was low compared to the general French immigrant population, among whom two in three were related to a Canadian (pre-1700), demonstrating the isolation of the *Filles du roi* as a group.

At least 32 of 770 King’s Daughters made it to Canada and did not marry, according to Landry’s findings. At least eight of these had the promise of a royal dowry, showing their status as *Filles du roi*. Landry presumes that the vast majority of these women returned to France, probably the same year they arrived.

Among the remaining 738 by Landry’s count, only one died in Canada without marrying after age 50 (compare this to 100 in 1000 Canadian women who never married, or 70 in 1000 French
women, at that time). Thus, the author concludes that a very high percentage of the King’s Daughters married after their arrival.

Marriageable men outnumbered available women between six and fourteen times in Canada up to 1670, according to Landry. By 1679, this ratio had decreased to two to one. Landry theorizes that the *Filles du roi* played a fundamental role in the functioning of the matrimonial marketplace in Canada. 737 King’s Daughters married one time; 181 married twice; 35 married three times; and two married four times. The last first marriage of a *Fille du roi* occurred in 1677, only four years after the last contingent had arrived in Canada. By 1673, 656 first marriages and 25 second marriages had been recorded among the 737 King’s Daughters who married.

Another striking statistic in Landry’s research relates to how quickly these women made their choices of a spouse and married after arrival. The average interval between arrival and first marriage in the 1663-1673 period was 4.7 months. From year to year, the average varied from one month (1673) to 8.5 months (1667).

With these statistics, Landry proves that the previously reported interval of only a few weeks between arrival and marriage does not represent the average for these women. Nevertheless, Landry shows that 80% were married within six months of their immigration. His conclusion: these women obeyed the official and financial pressures exerted on them to marry quickly.

By comparison, female immigrants to Canada from 1632 to 1656 married on average within one year after their arrival, according to Landry. *Filles du roi* who arrived between 1669-1671, who were well supervised and often had a dowry, tended to find partners sooner (3.6 months) than other King’s Daughters (5.6 months). Landry’s study shows that the youngest ones, and those of higher social class origins, took longer to marry than did the other *Filles du roi*.

Marriages were also connected to the seasons and the Roman Catholic calendar, as noted by the author. Nine out of ten marriages of *Filles du roi* occurred during the months of September through November, corresponding to the Canadian norm. Landry demonstrates that this pattern fits into the constraints of the agricultural season and restrictions of the religious calendar in Canada at the time.

Landry also describes how the *Filles du roi* resided initially at reception centers in Quebec City, at the *Hôtel Dieu* hospital, and at houses of the Ursuline nuns and of individuals such as Mme. La Peltrie and Anne Gasnier, following their arrival in the colony. Sixty-eight percent of their marriages took place nearby at the church of *Notre-Dame-de-Québec* or in its chapel. Thus, notes the author, there was an attempt to honor the French tradition of marriage in the wife’s parish of residence. Five of six marriages of the King’s Daughters were celebrated in urban parishes; only 15% took place on the Ile d’Orléans and Côte de Beaupré, 14% in the Montreal area, and 3% in Trois-Rivières and Champlain.
The husbands of these wards of the King had been residing in the colony for an average of four years. The author notes that this sign of stability (in a transient population) was important to the Filles du roi, who often asked of a prospective husband whether he had an established home.

However, Landry describes how the King’s Daughters dispersed throughout the colony after marriage, with few (10%) settling where they had just married in Quebec City. More than half of the couples settled in a different parish within a radius of 40 km or more from Quebec City, including the Ile d’Orléans. The areas around Montreal and Trois-Rivières attracted 26% and 12% of the newlyweds, respectively. But only 16% of the Filles du roi founded their new homes in the major towns of the colony, whereas 83% had had urban marriages.

The first official act in the nuptial process for the Filles du roi was an oral promise of marriage called a declaration of “fiançailles” (fiancées). At least 65% of the King’s Daughters did so; perhaps as high as 92% of those in Quebec. It served to reinforce the fragile link between betrothed in their brief relationship, according to Landry.

Next came the marriage contract. Though not a necessity, 82% of the Filles du roi entered into one with their husbands for their first marriages (most did so prior to the religious ceremony), as opposed to only 65% of couples during the earlier 1632-1662 period. King’s Daughters had marriage contracts in only 62% of their second marriages, closer to the colonial norm. Why such a high percentage for their first marriages? Landry speculates that a desire to confirm the choice so quickly made, and provide as much opportunity to become acquainted as possible, likely provoked this trend.

The King’s wards also distinguished themselves in the observation of Church rules regarding the three weeks of publication of the banns prior to marriage. This requirement was waived in just less than one in every two marriages for the Filles du roi, as compared to one in four marriages prior to 1663.

Not all contemplated marriages took place. Fifteen percent of the King’s Daughters who signed first marriage contracts did not marry their intended (highest during 1669-1671), according to Landry, three times the rate for the period 1632-1662 and twice as high as for second marriages for the Filles du roi. And another 13% of these women did not marry following a second try at a first marriage. The author concludes that such data highlights the instability of the pre-nuptial relations of this group. The shorter the period to make the choice, the higher the rate of cancellation.

Most of the husbands in the first marriages of the Filles du roi were born in France (95%). Only 3% were Canadian-born; but then, only 10% of the males in the colony were born there, notes Landry. Yet there was a high degree of cultural mixing in the choice of spouses. For example, whereas half of the wives were from the region around Paris, only 8% of the husbands hailed from that area (among persons of known origin). Only 18.7% of spouses were from the same region, as compared to a rate of 33% among Canadian couples generally before 1680.
Landry’s statistical analysis shows that the choice of a partner was made without much regard to place of origin (whether region of origin, or rural versus urban origin), social class, literacy, or language spoken, in contrast to established trends. It is possible, though not confirmed, that as many as almost half of the couples had difficulty comprehending each other! The author questions his own data on that point, but nevertheless it tells us something of the nature of these matches.

The author examined the difference in ages of the spouses. The average age of a *Fille du roi* at marriage was 24, and that of the husbands was 28.5. This difference in age was greater than that seen in marriages in France on average, but less than that of Canadian marriages of the period. The King’s Daughters of noble origin immigrated and married at an earlier age (average 24.4) as oppose to others (27.7).

Landry concludes that his data shows the tremendous pressure on the *Filles du roi* to marry quickly, especially during the 1669-1671 period. He theorizes that these findings highlight the state of anticipation of the population, the dearth of females in Canada, and the predisposition of the King’s Daughters to their mission. One could add that the government and religious community in the colony may also have been predisposed to this result.

In all, the author again reveals how important the *Filles du roi* were to bringing a balance between the genders in the marriageable population of New France. Without their arrival, Landry notes that the lack of available females would have had a far more disastrous effect in the survival of the French colony than the Iroquois threat.

Certain sections of “*Les Filles du roi au xviième siècle*” are highly technical, containing formulae and pedantic discussion best left for the academic demographers. But in his section on fertility rates among the King’s Daughters, Landry points out how his data refutes the claims of Baron Lahontan that many of the *Filles du roi* had been prostitutes in France. The author notes that the high level of fertility shown by the *Filles du roi* excluded the possibility, because prostitutes were shown to suffer low reproductive rates as a result of venereal disease.

The *Filles du roi* were slightly more prolific in child-rearing than women in France, and slightly less so than Canadian-born women of the time. This causes Landry to conclude that more favorable sanitary and nutritional conditions in the colony resulted in a higher level of health and reproductive capacity among the *Filles du roi* as they adapted to their surroundings.

The author found that 71% of the children born to the King’s wards entered the world between 1670 and 1685. In all, there were a total of 4459 births to *Filles du roi* from 1664-1702. Baptismal and later records (especially the census of 1681) were used to track these births. Over 100 births per year occurred during 1669-1687 alone. One-third of the first-borns of the *Filles du roi* were conceived during the period of November through January; in other words, within a very few months of the profusion of autumnal weddings that took place shortly after the arrival of these women in the colony.
Landry found that a *Fille du roi* had on average 5.8 children during her lifetime (after statistical correction), at a time when New France was sparsely populated. The author also noted that the average *Fille du roi*’s marriage lasted 23.5 years. In couples who lived at least to age 45, Landry found that a *Fille du roi* who married between the ages of 20-24 had an average of 8.5 children, and one who married between 25-29 had an average of 5.7 children. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule: Catherine Ducharme and her husband Pierre Roy dit Lambert beat the average; they had 18 children over their 27 year marriage!

The author explores all aspects of the reproductive life of these women in his book. For example, he notes that a mere 24 illegitimate births took place among all of the *Filles du roi*, which resulted in a rate of 0.54% as compared to a level of 1% among the French population of the time (0.93% among Canadian women).

On the other hand, 1 in 18 King’s Daughters were pregnant at the time of their marriages in Canada, similar to the rate for 17th century Canadian and rural French women. Landry points out that, rare as it was, prenuptial conception was more common among the women who married at an older age (often widows) and those who married noblemen, probably as a result of the longer period of courtship seen in these groups.

Landry writes that the *Filles du roi* gave birth to 46% of their first-born children before their first anniversary of marriage, with an average of less than 13 months between the two dates. This was a smaller interval than among French women, though not as short as their daughters and granddaughters would experience in later years. The interval was longer for King’s Daughters arriving during 1669-1671, suggesting, according to the author, that conditions at the orphanage where the majority of these women were recruited (the *Hôpital général de Paris*) altered their fertility.

Although one may be tempted to skip over the statistical studies in his book, the explanations that Mr. Landry provides regarding the methods of collecting data or estimating dates according to accepted demographic practices could be helpful to the genealogist. The descriptions of 17th century record-keeping and the life experience and habits of the time also can be very instructive.

The section of this tome pertaining to mortality rates is also illuminating. Dates of death are often absent from the vital records, and Landry provides estimates for us (as he did for dates of arrival in the colony). In this instance (17th century Canada), Landry found that a date of death is estimated to be half way (50%) between the date that the person was last recorded as alive and the first record mentioning that the person was deceased, if that interval is less than five years. Regardless of age, as the interval lengthens, the date of death approaches the date of the first record declaring her demise: for a 5-9 year interval, 62.5%; for a 10-year interval, 75%.

Landry assumes that if the person was not mentioned in the 1681 census, she had died. This results in a large number of statistically-produced deaths of *Filles du roi* for the preceding period of his study. In all, the deaths of these women spanned from 1666 to 1747. The first death was that of Anne Labbé in early 1666; the last was that of Anne Rabady in September 1747 (aged 93-
The longest-lived King’s Daughter was Jeanne Amiot, apparently aged 107 at her death in 1745.

Almost two-thirds of the group died in the first 30 years of the 18th century. Landry calculates that the average age of a Fille du roi at death was 62.2 years. He has determined that life expectancy for the Filles du roi at birth was 42.5 to 45 years. But, at age 20, a King’s Daughter had a life expectancy of 61.4 additional years! This was an exceptional duration of life for the 17th century.

Landry compares this statistic to known European life expectancy figures, and concludes that only women of old ruling class families in Geneva had a longer life expectancy at age 20. This rate even surpassed that of ruling classes in the rest of Europe; some did not reach this level until the late 19th century!

However, it must be noted that contemporary Canadian-born women had a similar life expectancy at that age, as Landry acknowledges. Nevertheless, Landry surmises that a selective process had taken place with the Filles du roi, and through the recruitment of the Filles du roi, their survival of the harsh Atlantic crossing and the settlement on inhospitable lands, they had adapted to and benefited from their new environment. Canada then had a very low population density, which lessened the spread of epidemics (in contrast to Europe), and the people enjoyed plenty of fish, game and clean water which no doubt assisted in this statistical accomplishment.

Few records survive that indicate the causes of death for this group of women. But the author does note that some of the years in which a large number of Filles du roi died coincide with known deadly epidemics (typhus in 1687, 1718; influenza in 1700; yellow fever in 1711) or a similar trend of death in the general population by unknown cause (in 1708, 1715).

Yet the year of the highest number of deaths of King’s Daughters, in 1728, does not find a reflection in the rest of the Canadian populace. And a 1703 smallpox epidemic did not take a significant toll among Filles du roi. Landry speculates that prior exposure to this disease in France may have been the saving factor for these women.

The Filles du roi were not as affected by digestive tract (summer heat) illnesses as were French women of the time, whereas respiratory tract diseases resulted in a higher number of deaths among the group in late autumn-early winter. More than one quarter of the Filles du roi were buried the same day of their death, reflecting a high likelihood that epidemics played a significant role as a cause of death, according to Landry.

For this last hypothesis, the author assumes a faithful adherence to religious practices (the “Rituel de Québec”) which restricted the time of burial except for cases of death by contagious disease. Landry’s description of the practices of the period is another benefit that this book provides to the reader.
In two-thirds of the marriages, the author found that the husband of the *Fille du roi* died first, a higher percentage than in France. Even when of equal age, the man died first twice as often as did the woman. The average age at widowhood was 51.1 years for a King’s Daughter. The importance of this statistic, Landry points out, is the lightened burden of the widow, supporting only an average of 1.5 dependent children under age 15 by that time in her life.

Unfortunately, one-fourth of the *Filles du roi* lost their husbands when they were between 30-45 years old, during maximum responsibility for young children (an average of 3.6 dependent children). In the extreme, Landry cites the case of Marie Hatanville, who had 11 dependent children living with her in 1685 when her third husband died. But wait! A few months later she married again... to a widower with seven dependent children of his own!

On average, at least one spouse had been married previously in roughly one in four marriages of the King’s Daughters, according to the author. Landry shows us that the adoption of step-children was not a deterrent to remarriage in this society: 86% of widows were under 40 years old, and three-quarters of those remarried while responsible for five or more children. And the custom of waiting one year prior to remarriage was often violated by the *Filles du roi*.

Mr. Landry concludes his book by stating that “(t)he demographic study of the *Filles du roi*, settled in New France during a brief 11-year period, admirably serves as a... study of the assimilation of immigrants, for an era where there is a paucity of such works.” But for genealogists, it provides a window into the world of our ancestors. It demonstrates precisely why this group of women stand out so significantly as founders of the French-Canadian population. On the other hand, this treatise disproves old myths about their background and nature, and questions the accuracy of some contemporary writings pertaining to their history.

It confirms the high number of orphans (of at least one parent) among the *Filles du roi*, yet shows the high rate of illiteracy among them. Throughout the book, we see how the harsh conditions of poverty of their early lives in France influenced their capacity to survive and adapt remarkably well to the conditions of the new world.

The intense pressure to marry quickly and the brief courtships resulted in altered nuptial practices (*fiançailles*, marriage contracts, banns), and consequences such as low rates of illegitimacy and prenuptial conceptions, more annulments and higher levels of cultural mixing (in other words, a lower level of in-breeding).

Landry surmises that the Canadian environment impressed itself upon this group of women, by influencing their fertility and mortality rates. But he also points out that the change in their demographic behavior and the extent of their adaptation had a profound connection to the character of these individuals as well. The *Filles du roi* demonstrated the great capacity for recuperation under new conditions, notes Landry, permitting escape from their prior, limiting circumstances.

In addition to the very brief but helpful biographies of each *Fille du roi* at the end of this book, you may find a footnote mentioning an ancestor along the way that might add a previously
unknown tid-bit of information to your research. His book also provides a comparison of conditions in France versus Canada at the time, to enlighten us on the origins of our predecessors and the challenges that they faced in the young colony.

In summary, this book may be overwhelming in its technicalities, tables and graphs, but if you can weather the regular use of your French-English dictionary, you will greatly benefit from the reading experience in the end. And we can only hope that another book will follow with expanded information on the individual Filles du roi to satisfy our thirst for knowledge about our ancestors.

(Note: written in 1995, my wish came true with the publication of Peter J. Gagné’s two volume “King’s Daughters and Founding Mothers: The Filles du Roi, 1663-1673” in March 2001, by Quintin Publications. Also, this book by Yves Landry was republished in June 2013.)