

Francois Seguin, the Canadian Pioneer  
(1644-1704)

(Complement to an Article published in the Memoires, Volumn 2, pages 219 and following, on the descendants of Francois Seguin in Presqu'ile, Canada)

The French fatherland of the Seguin is the country of Bray, the most typical corner of Picardie. Bray is in the shape of a trapezoid, from Boncourt (commune of Noailles, Oise) to Saint-Vaast-d'Equiqueville, and beyond Neufchatel (Seine-Inferieure). The large base of the trapezoid stretches for 85 kilometers. The width of the trapezoid is 15 kilometers. (1)

Topographically the region is a trench which is enclosed between two chalky hills: the northeast slope and the southwest slope: this latter slope is more sharply outlined and dominates all the lands about for about 100 ~~feet~~ meters, these out-swellings of earth engird this valley, making it a place inappropriate for agriculture. In addition, the populace is forced to live precariously on the backs of the hillsides. With this indentation as a center, all around it are clustered the villages, which are the places of origin of the Seguin. On the map of the State proper we note about twenty little villages whose names have the suffix "en-Bray" attached to them: Ons-en-Bray, Hodenc-en-Bray, Gournay-en-Bray, Auchy-en-Bray, Rouvray-en-Bray, Saint-Genevieve-en-Bray, Fontaine-en-Bray, Neufchatel-en-Bray, etc. (2)

There is still found a number of families Seguin in the entire region of Beauvais. They are the relatives of our Canadian branch. Almost exclusively land-owners, our French homonymes live by preference at St-Aubin-en-Bray, Ons-en-Bray, Hodenc-en-Bray, and the ancestral village of Cuigy-en-Bray, all communes of the canton of Coudray-Saint-Germer, parceled out from the ancient seigneurie of Ons-en-Bray in the district of Beauvais. Unfortunately, the Spanish invasion which devastated this region in 1636, left only vestiges of the region's archives, thus rendering very difficult all researches anterior to the visit of the sons of the Iberian Peninsula.

On 14 July 1643, in the very heart of Bray, in the little church of Cuigy-en-Bray, the marriage of Laurent Seguin and Marie Massieu was celebrated. Adrien des Melliers and Denis Tournant served as witnesses to the union. "Lord" Pouchard, priest vicar of the parish, gave the nuptial blessing to the newly wed couple. The husband is noted to be a "clerk". At this epic in royalist France, one calls a "clerk" or "lay clerk" (in opposition to ecclesiastical clerk) a man who has had a certain amount of learning and who performs the functions of scribe, notary, and school-master in the parish. The "clerk" sings at the music lectern during religious ceremonies, aids the cure in part of the parish's administration, ~~he~~ straightens out the church's accounts, and often ~~he~~ draws up the acts of baptism, marriage, and burial. The very lectern before which Laurent (Seguin sang over three centuries ago still is used. (3)

The following year, 4 July 1644, at St. Aubin-en-Bray, a village neighboring Cuigy-en-Bray, had their first born, Francois, baptised. This last named became the Canadian ancestor of the families Seguin, ~~and~~ and principally of those of Presqu'ile de Vaudreuil and de Soulanges. Francois Boudin and Jehanne Dufour were the god-father and god-mother of the infant. According to the custom, the baptised inherited the name of the one who held him at the baptismal fount.

(1) Faucoaux, C., Geographie de L'Oise, Beauvais, 1957, n. 7; (2) Larrarent, A. de, Traite de Geologie, Paris, 1900, Vol. I, p. 89; (3) Notes of Abbe Dubos, cure of Thibivilliers.