

Brief Bibliography for researching French-Canadian Housing and Furniture

Diane Wolford Sheppard© 20 November 2013, FCHSM member

Questions have periodically been raised on social media¹ and during FCHSM meetings about the styles of houses that our ancestors lived in and the kinds of furniture that they used during the 17th and 18th centuries. Since social media and questions raised in a Society meeting do not lend themselves well to an annotated bibliography or to a printable reference, I decided that a short bibliography was appropriate. The following books and internet sources provide you with information about housing styles and furniture in various French-Canadian communities. Under normal circumstances, I would list internet sources with the books, but it is often helpful to look at pictures to determine whether you want to purchase or borrow a book on inter-library loan for more information.

Most houses in Michigan and the Great Lakes built during the French and early British regimes used one of three methods of construction: *Poteaux-en-terre* (posts in the earth) construction, *Piece-sur-piece* construction, and *Poteaux-sur-sole* (post on sill) style. Each style is defined in the books cited below, as well as on Wikipedia.org.

For Michigan, the site that best illustrates the styles of homes used in Michilimackinac and Détroit during the French and early British regimes can be found at the Mackinac State Historic Parks on the Colonial Michilimackinac Link. If you click on the photo gallery, you will see a number of illustrations of building exteriors and interiors. <http://www.mackinacparks.com/photo-gallery/index.aspx?l=0,1,19,28>. Most of the houses in Michilimackinac and Detroit were built in what is known as the *Poteaux-en-terre* (posts in the earth) style of construction as illustrated below:

***Poteaux-en-terre* (posts in the earth) Construction**



Photo courtesy of Colonial Michilimackinac, 0149CM.

¹ Two of the more recent questions were posed by FCHSM member, Janice Fouchia Lekich.

Piece-sur-piece Construction



The Navarre Anderson Trading Post in Monroe, Michigan is the oldest wooden residence still standing in Michigan. It is the most complete example of French-Canadian *piece-sur-piece* construction and has been restored to 1797. The photo on the right illustrates the placement of upright and horizontal logs on interior walls.²



The building in the background was constructed using the *piece-sur-piece* method of construction. Photo courtesy of Colonial Michilimackinac, 0131CM

² http://www.co.monroe.mi.us/government/departments_offices/museum/individual_historical_sites.html.

***Poteaux-sur-sole* (post on sill) style of Construction**



Holy Family Church in Cahokia, Illinois. The parish was founded in 1699 and is the oldest continuously operating parish in the United States. The log church was built in 1799. The church was built in the *poteaux-sur-sole* (post on sill) style. The spaces between the upright logs were filled with stone and mortar chinking.³

Brief Bibliography

This bibliography should be considered a starting point, rather than a comprehensive bibliography. Most of the books listed contain extensive bibliographies.

Books published by the Mackinac State Park Commission can be purchased directly from the commission. A printable order form and list of books can be accessed from their website: <http://www.mackinacparks.com/history/index.aspx?l=0,1,4,36,390>

Many of these books can be purchased from used book sites such as:

www.amazon.com; <http://used.addall.com/> or http://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchEntry?cm_sp=TopNav-_-Results-_-Adv

Armour, David A. *Colonial Michilimackinac* (Mackinac Island, Michigan: Mackinac Island State Park Commission: 2000).

Evans, Lynn L.M. *Keys to the Past – Archaeological Treasures of Mackinac* (Mackinac Island, Michigan: Mackinac State Historic Parks, 2003). This book contains color illustrations of some of the items that have been excavated from the Michigan State Historic Park Site.

Lambert, Phyllis and Alan Stewart, editors, *Opening the Gates of Eighteenth-Century Montréal* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, unknown date). This volume contains chapters on Fortifications, Town, and Buildings and contains a number of maps, drawings, and other illustrations.

Lessard, Michel, *Antique Furniture of Québec – Four Centuries of Furniture Making* (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd: 2002). This 543 page book contains hundreds of full color illustrations. The list price on this book was \$85, but used copies can be purchased for as little as \$12.49 (as of 20 November 2013, based on a search done at www.add.com).

³ <http://www.holyfamily1699.org/HistoricLogChurch/>; Ron Katz and Arielle de la Tour d’Auvergne, *French America – French architecture from colonization to the birth of a nation* (New York: French Heritage Society, 2004), 43; <http://www.holyfamily1699.org/>.

- Lessard, Michel and Huguette Marquis, *Complete Guide to French-Canadian Antiques* (New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1974). This book contains line drawings and black and white photographs of furniture and other household items.
- Lessard, Michel and Huguette Marquis, *Encyclopédie de la Maison Québécoise – 3 Siècles d’Habitations* (Ottawa: Les Éditions de L’Homme, Division de Sogides Ltée: 1972). This paperback book is 728 pages long and contains hundreds of black and white illustrations. French text.
- Katz, Ron and Arielle de La Tour d’Auvergne, *French America – French architecture from colonization to the birth of a nation* (New York: French Heritage Society, 2004). This “coffee table” book contains dozens of full color illustrations of French and French-Canadian homes and their interiors. It covers all of the United States.
- Kent, Timothy J., *Ft. Pontchartrain at Detroit: A Guide to the Daily Lives of Fur Trade and Military Personnel, Settlers, and Missionaries at French Posts* (Silver Fox Enterprises, 2001). This is the most comprehensive book to discuss all aspects of life in Détroit during the French Régime. The two volume set contains the following chapters: Introduction; Historical Overview; Canoe Transportation; Provisions, Cooking, and Eating; Hunting and Warfare, Trapping, and Fishing; Buildings, Hardware, and Furnishings; Furnishings of the Church, Vestments, and Activities of the Priest; Woodworking, Metalworking, and Masonryworking; Farming and Gardening; Clothing; Sewing, Laundry, and Cleaning; Grooming and Medical Treatments; Recreation, Trade and Commerce. The book also contains black and white illustrations and numerous appendices which include translations of various documents related to the history of Détroit during the French Régime. Timothy J. Kent is a FCHSM member.
- Moogk, Peter, *Building a house in New France – An Account of the Perplexities of Client and Craftsmen in Early Canada* (Markham Ontario and Allston, Massachusetts: Fitzhenry and Whiteside Limited: paperback edition, 2002). This book contains a number of black and white illustrations and maps.