

The Franchevilles' House

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François Francheville owned his family's two-story stone house on rue Saint-Paul and a 160 acre farm outside of the city, which all became Thérèse Francheville's once Francheville died in 1733.¹ With no children, Thérèse developed a new relationship with her husband's fortune and former partners in ironworks. Although it ultimately closed after two years, this led to her engagement in multiple commercial activities such as advancing capital to merchants needing funding.² White women, especially white widows, were significant agents of the economic life in New France.³ Notably, the direct source of the Francheville fortune (both the husband's and the wife's) was fur trading. Despite political losses with the Treaty of Utrecht and English opportunism, French governors (often merchants themselves) enabled the French to keep their dominance in the fur trade, and Montreal was its centre.⁴ While Montreal was founded as a religious mission,⁵ commerce was the essence of this society. The Francheville house stood in the merchant quarter of the town, between rue Saint-Joseph (now Saint-Sulpice) and rue Saint-Amable.⁶ (fig. 1) Yet, the biggest symbol of this economic climb was made through the presence of Marie Joseph Angélique, a black enslaved woman working in the house.

As leaders and social climbers of New France society, the Franchevilles "required" slave labour for the family's business as visible proof of their "self-made" wealth.⁷ However, this did not mean that enslaved people in the colony sat idly by; they performed various domestic and outdoor tasks, which often included harsh physical labour. Every executed chore meant more free time for the slave owner to engage in economic or leisure activities, and in the case of Thérèse, a mistress of a house, this was substantial.⁸

Native people were the most common workforce in New France. The Francheville household held three enslaved people in 1731, two were *panis* (indigenous),⁹ and one, Angélique, was a black woman who had been born in Portugal.¹⁰ She was forced to cross the Atlantic Ocean to New England (probably Hudson Valley) with her Flemish master, before her acquisition by François Francheville in 1725.¹¹ A census in 1731 noted a total of 142 enslaved people (both *panis* and black),¹² within an urban population of 1000 people.¹³ A black person, especially a black woman, was priced higher on the slave market than an enslaved *panis* because their "rarity", immunity to European diseases, and sexualization in the northern colony positioned them as a luxury item and symbolized the economic and colonial reach of the owners.¹⁴

Two of Francheville's partners had a link to Royal funds, which means that the Franchevilles had access to the French Crown.¹⁵ In 1689, King Louis XIV had officially allowed colonial settlers to bring black enslaved people to farm stolen lands.¹⁶ Still, the King was initially suspicious of this request – one which came from local administrators – because he falsely assumed that the cold climate would lower the chances of black survival.¹⁷ Even though enslaved people were part of the colony since its very beginning,¹⁸ the Crown and its close followers were skeptical, which is why Angélique's European birth is not unexpected in an imperialist household.

The Saint-Paul Francheville house was similar to the adjacent ones.¹⁹ (fig. 2) It had proximity to the St. Lawrence River, a kitchen, a parlour and a pantry on the first floor, bedrooms on the second one, and a store in the basement.²⁰ The house was enclosed by the port and the hospital Hôtel-Dieu, and each was a core site of the city.²¹ (fig. 3) Each Francheville conducted their business out of this building. It would have been an active office full of visitors, one that Angélique would have been restricted to, and the supposed origin of the eventual fire on

10 April 1734.²² Although Montreal was a strict and divided hierarchy, the reality was physical closeness between classes.²³ Proximity was also a key characteristic of northern slavery which created the constant surveillance of the enslaved, as well as the conditions for physical assaults, isolation, and invisibility.²⁴

After François's death and Thérèse's decision to sell Angélique to one of the richest men in New France, Sieur Cugnet, Angélique was accused of threatening to burn her and all French people.²⁵ The widow then sent Angélique to a relative. Together with her partner Claude Thibault (a white servant), Angélique managed to flee for two weeks by frozen water ways before their subsequent recapture and her ultimate return to the St-Paul house.²⁶

The relationship between Angélique and Thérèse is a complex one to recover. In the trial documents assessing Angélique's culpability for arson, Angélique stated that after François's death, Thérèse stopped mistreating her.²⁷ This would imply that the white female slave owner's brutality towards Angélique came from the presence of her husband in the house and his relationship to the enslaved woman. The institution of slavery in any location meant sexual objectification and violence inflicted on black females.²⁸ In the Caribbean, there is clear evidence that white males preferred brown-skinned women over white women, to which white women responded with resentful rage against the already abused women.²⁹ Other than violence, it is also noteworthy that upon her arrival and baptism, the enslaved woman became Marie-Joseph Angélique, a similar name to Thérèse's only child who died a few months after birth in 1719.³⁰ Could Thérèse have believed Angélique to be a form of surrogate child? If so, was the abuse also influenced by a sense of betrayal? Renaming was also a crucial aspect of slavery that reinforced the power of the owner over the identity of the enslaved; as a mark of enslavement, it reminded them that their lives were not their own.³¹

On the day of the fire, April 10th, the two women reportedly had a furious exchange, which ended in Thérèse taking a walk and attending mass.³² The Governor's letter to the King indicates that at seven in the evening, a fire "caught in the roof of the house of widow Francheville located at the river's edge."³³ Forty-six houses were "consumed," which mainly belonged to prominent merchants, as well as the important building housing Hôtel-Dieu where Thérèse herself had been born.³⁴ Since the roof was recorded as the source of the fire (near the second floor where the bedrooms would have been), it can be hypothesized that the fire may have been started in that area of the house. However, a factual answer is implausible because the trial and the surviving documents were biased.

Today, the St-Paul house has been rebuilt multiple times and is part of the Old Montreal neighbourhood. This area known for its expensive restaurants and galleries is marketed as a representation of the culture of the metropolis and as having "European-style hospitality presented in a vivacious Québécois manner."³⁵ Galerie LeRoyer is a useful site to visualize the deliberate aestheticization and hidden history, one that privileges charm and European cultural ties over trade routes and racial oppression. (fig. 4) Canadian Slavery is not widely known or accepted,³⁶ and a slave owning white woman is even less likely to be acknowledged and studied. The St-Paul house represents the ideology of New France and the white male and female merchants who had a strategic hand in Transatlantic Slavery.

¹ Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal* (Toronto, Ontario: HarperCollins Canada, 2011), p. 168.

² Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 165.

³ Agathe de Saint-Père, for example, made vast profits on her husband's fur trading. She also made loans and was in charge of a dye and weaving workshop. See Madelaine Doyon-Ferland, "Saint-Père, Agathe de," Dictionary of Canadian Biography (date of last access 20 March 2020)

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/saint_pere_agathe_de_3E.html

⁴ The Franchevilles were part of the bourgeois social class, a middle standing between aristocracy and the poorer workforce. This position would have meant connections to clergymen, magistrates and military groups which facilitated their economic lives. Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," pp. 142-44.

⁵ Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 141.

⁶ Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 137.

⁷ Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 164.

⁸ Afua Cooper explains the sanctioned patriarchy in settler society that required a strict hierarchy of roles. See Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 166.

⁹ Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 7.

¹⁰ This high number of enslaved people is not uncommon for a merchant household since they owned a large majority of the enslaved population. See Marcel Trudel, L'Esclavage au Canada Français: Histoire et Conditions de l'Esclavage (Quebec: Presses Universitaires Laval, 1960), p. 126; Portugal was also the first European country to initiate the slave trade, so Angélique's birthplace is not surprising considering its large black population. See Afua Cooper, "A New Biography of the African Diaspora: The Odyssey of Marie-Joseph Angélique, Black Portuguese Slave Woman in New France, 1725-1734," Sisters or Strangers? Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History, eds. Marlene Epp and Franca Iacovetta (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2016), pp. 24-27.

¹¹ Cooper, "A New Biography," p. 23.

¹² Finding the exact enslaved number is perplexing. Louise Dechêne states that 241 enslaved people lived in Montreal in 1731, in "The Growth of Montreal in the 18th Century," Canadian History before Confederation, eds. J.M. Bumstead (Georgetown, ON: Irwin-Dorsey, 1979), p. 165. However, Afua Cooper mentions 142 enslaved people due to recent re-editing of the 1731 census. See Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 144.

¹³ Roland Viau, "The Times and Trials of Distinctive Colony 1702-1760," History of a North American City, eds. Dany Fougères and Roderick Macleod (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), p. 170.

¹⁴ Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 11.

¹⁵ Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 158.

¹⁶ Mackey, "Done with Slavery," p. 27.

¹⁷ Mackey, "Done with Slavery," p. 27.

¹⁸ Nelson, "Slavery, Geography and Empire," p. 3.

¹⁹ Rue Saint-Paul was one of the principal streets, the other one was Rue Notre-Dame. See Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 142.

²⁰ Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 169-170.

²¹ Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 159.

²² Journal of Sister Véronique Cuillerier, Relation of 1734, transcribed by Ghislaine Legendre, 10 April 1734, Orig. MS. 1A4 / 3, N.D., 336-337, Archives des Religieuses Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph de Montréal, Montreal, Canada.

²³ Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 147.

²⁴ Nelson states that enslaved people in Montreal would have been under greater surveillance than in the Caribbean, because of the physical proximity of the white owners in their daily lives. See Nelson, "Slavery, Geography and Empire," p. 81. Due to their indoor restrictions, Nelson also argues that the domestic nature of their work "invisibilized" the enslaved population. This facilitated the white slaver owners' ability to subject the enslaved to physical and mental abuse. See Nelson, "Slavery, Geography and Empire," p. 15.

²⁵ Cooper, "A New Biography," p. 32.

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- ²⁶ Cooper, "A New Biography," pp. 31-33.
- ²⁷ Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 166.
- ²⁸ Nelson, "Slavery, Geography and Empire," p. 67.
- ²⁹ Hilary McD. Beckles, "White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean," Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader, eds. Verene Sheperd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2000), p. 664.
- ³⁰ The child's name was Marie-Angélique Francheville. See Cooper, "The Hanging of Angélique," p. 168.
- ³¹ Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 55.
- ³² "The Fire, Saturday, April 10, 1734," Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History: Torture and Truth (date of last access 20 March 2020)
<https://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/angelique/montrealbrule/10avril1734/indexen.html>
- ³³ Beauharnois de la Boische, Charles and Gilles Hocquart, Letter to the King, October 9 1734. General Correspondance, ol. 61, fol. 131-139, Archives Nationales, Fonds des Colonies, Série C11A, France.
- ³⁴ de la Boische, Hocquart, "Letter to the King."
- ³⁵ Gregory B. Gallagher, Top 10 Montreal & Quebec City (New York: Dorling Kindersley, Ltd., 2014), p. 165.
- ³⁶ Mackey, "Done with Slavery," p. 18.

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Plate List

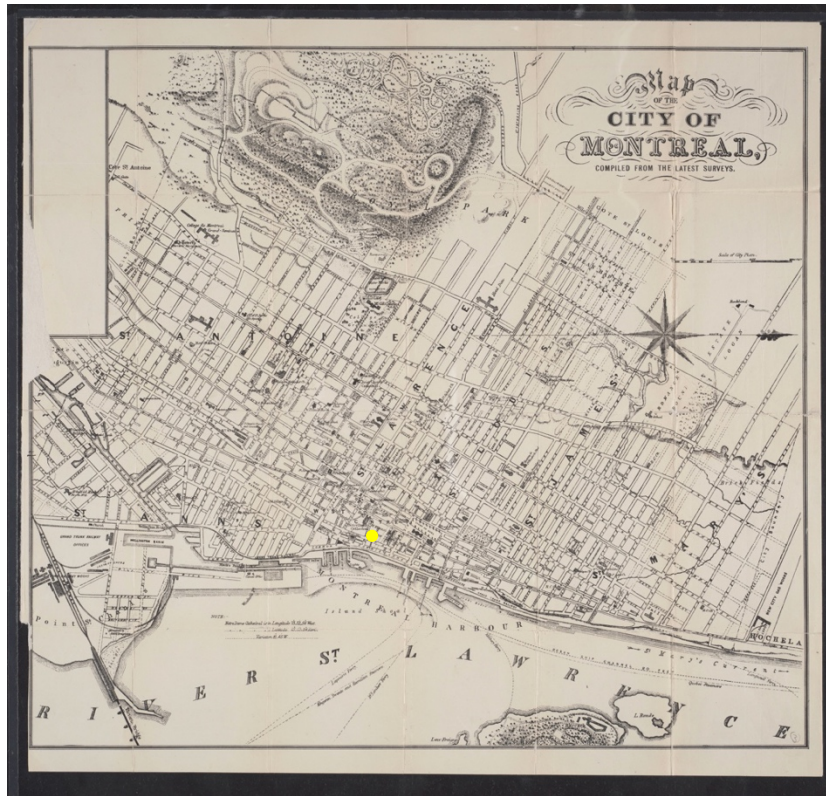


Fig. 1: Dawson, Samuel Edward, Map of the city of Montreal: compiled from the latest surveys (1888), Rare Books McGill University, Montreal, Canada.



Fig. 2: John Vesey Kirkland, A Street Scene Drawing of St. Paul's Street from Dalhousie Square in Montreal (1839), Graphite on Vellum Paper, Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, Canada.



Fig. 3: James Pattison Cockburn, Hôtel Dieu, Montreal (1829), Aquarelle, Feather and Ink on Vellum Paper, Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, Canada.

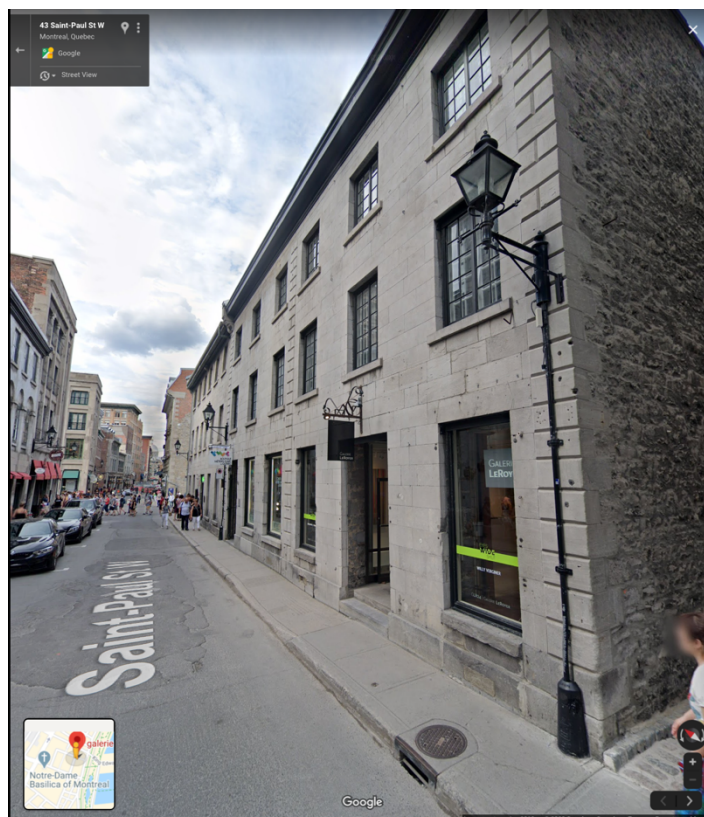


Fig. 4: Galerie LeRoyer, Google Maps Street View Screen Shot (2019), Digital Image, Google, Montreal, Canada.