

Poissant Huguenot Migration from Marennes, France

John Fisher / Poissant #2

Years ago I completed researching all my Huguenot Poissant family in Marennes, France. Recently I was interested in the Catholic Poissants that also lived in Marennes and attended the St Pierre de Sales church. I began with the earliest records in 1584 and found the 1st Poissant in 1585. My original plan was to end the search about 1684 when my ancestor, Jacques Poissant departed for Quebec. Once getting to that time, my interest changed to the period after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in October 1685, when the Huguenots were forbidden to practice their religion. My question was, what happened to all of Jacques cousins and their family? Did they leave France immediately as I had always read about in books about the Huguenots, or did they leave over time, or did they convert to the Catholic Faith? The Huguenot Temple records in Marennes stopped in 1683. Incidentally the Poissant's of Quebec descend from Jacques Poissant, a soldier of the Franche Marine, Company of De Noyan who arrived in New France at Quebec City on 12 November 1684. His abjuration or renouncement of the Huguenot faith took place on Palm Sunday, 15 April 1685 at Pointe-aux-Tremble, Montreal, Quebec. This was just 6 months before the Edict of Nantes was revoked.

Register or Year Grouping	Images
1584 - 1603	239
1603 - 1612	147
1612 - 1626	135
1622 - 1640	201
1631 - 1647	316
1641 - 1654	277
1650 - 1660	233
1660 - 1668	163
1669 - 1674	182
1674 - 1682	270
1683 - 1692	359
1693 - 1699	333
1693 -	049
1700 - 1710	520
1711 - 1720	469
1720 - 1730	384
1730 - 1739	250
1739 - 1748	349
1748 - 1759	397
TOTAL	5,273

Extracted from the Charente Maritime Archives at:
<http://extranet.cg17.fr/archinoe/registre.php>

Interior of St Pierre de Sales



Since most images were of 2 pages in a register, I have scanned approximately 10, 546 pages from 1584 to 1759.

The first Poissant record was seen in 1585.

A total of 200 Poissant Acts were found; an average of 1 found for every 53 pages. However sometimes there were hundreds of pages between finds.

So many Huguenot Jacques Poissants:

When I first started into my genealogy I believed that there was only one Jacques Poissant. Later I discovered that his father was also named Jacques, and his father had 2 sons named Jacques in his 1st

marriage with Suzanne Guichard. And then I found that his father had a nephew named Jacques. This gave us 5 Jacques Poissant Huguenots.

And many Catholic Jacques Poissants:

I have found a definite 5 Jacques Poissant in the Catholic registers and there may have been 7 altogether, since it is difficult to prove their relationships. There were 31 entries where Jacques was either baptized, was a parent or godparent, or had signed the act.

And so there were 10 to 12 people in Marennnes, France names Jacques Poissant in the 1600's. I'll no longer get too very excited whenever I see another Jacques Poissant named somewhere.



Reformed Church (Calvinist Temple) at Marennnes, France

OK, so what happened to the Poissant Huguenots?

After the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685 we find a few of them in London, in the Spitalfields and Threadneedle districts. Since the Poissants were all Master Tailors, or Master Glovemakers or Master Shoemakers, it makes sense that they would migrate to the clothing commercial district in London. However, they disappear after 5 years or so, except for one family that was in Canterbury, just south of London, until at least 1725.

In Marennnes, many of the Huguenots went to the St Pierre de Sales Catholic Church. They showed up in many baptisms, marriages and burials. They were easy to detect because Huguenots used names like Abraham, Judith, Esther, Samuel, Isaac etc and Catholics favored names like Jean, Pierre, Marie etc. They both used names such as Jacques, Elizabeth, Marianne, Marie etc.

After 1705 only a couple Calvinist Poissants were found, there were all gone from Marennnes within 20 years of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Where did all these Huguenot Poissants go?

The Huguenot Temple re-opens at Marennnes: (315 images and 630 pages researched)

On January 30, 1757 the registers at the Huguenot Temple in Marennes begin again with the baptism of Isaac, the son of Michel Martin and Susanne Douteau. After researching up to the year 1792, I had found only 8 Poissant records for Michel, Elizabeth and Anne Poissant who seem to descend from Poissants who previously attended the Catholic church at Marennes and I do not see any evidence that they were previously Calvinists or Huguenots.

I have found no evidence that any of the Huguenot Poissants returned to Marennes up to the year 1792.

Summary:

This latest research was a lot of work and took a lot of time, but it was definitely worth the effort. I have learned so much more about the Poissants and about the Huguenot and Catholic branches. However, I never did tie the two families together. Many of the Catholic Poissants were either Saulniers (Salt merchants or workers) or Fishing Boat Masters or fishermen.

It is ironic that 100 years ago it was assumed that Jacques Poissant, the father of Jacques Poissant the immigrant and soldier, was assumed to be a Saulnier or Salt Worker, especially because the immigrants soubriquet or nickname was The Salt; E.G. Jacques Poissant dit LaSaline. His father was actually a Sergeant Royal in the Lower Court of Marennes.

A Sad Note: It was a bit disheartening as I was searching through thousands of pages to see a baptism followed quickly by the burial of that same child, again and again and again. Sometimes a married couple would give birth to 4 or 5 children and lose them all by age 7. Life was not easy in those days.

All of my Poissant / Fisher research can be found on my website at
http://www.johnfishersr.net/Poissant_Fisher.htm