

Agathe de Saint Père

Letter Transcript

Knowing full well your interest in this country, I am flattered that you wish to hear the details of my business endeavours and that you will be pleased to read about how I have single-handedly established a factory making linen, drugget, twill serge, and blankets. For this, I ransomed nine English men from their Indian captors at my own expense. I had looms built for them and have put them up in suitable quarters. The shortage of hemp and flax has forced me to gather nettles, which abound in our land. From it, we make a canvas. Not satisfied with these results, I was impelled, my Lord, by a thought I couldn't ignore: to collect bark in the woods. From it, I have made numerous blankets that are as good as wool. I dye them using woods of various colours. The bark is so plentiful that a single man can gather 400 lbs of it in a day. We also have Illinois cattle that we find north of Detroit, and which yield more wool than our sheep. From this wool, we make strong serge thread. I enclose for you, my Lord, a sample of this material.

The climate here is so good that it nourishes not only textile crops but also large trees. It imbues these trees with a sugar which the habitants collect to make sugar loaf, as in the Caribbean Islands. Brown sugar, syrup and sugar candy. To my knowledge, they make more than 30,000 lbs of it around Montréal.