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# Je Me Souviens

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AMERICAN FRENCH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
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78 Earle Street  
P.O. Box 830  
Woonsocket, Rhode Island 02895-0870  
Phone (401) 765-6141  
Fax (401) 597-6290.

Website: [www.afgs.org](http://www.afgs.org)  
Inquiry E-mail [info@afgs.org](mailto:info@afgs.org).  
Editor: [JMSEditor@afgs.org](mailto:JMSEditor@afgs.org).

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# President's Message

By Jan Burkhart

Fall is upon us. Here in New England, Mother Nature is once again painting the landscape with yellow, orange, scarlet and gold. It is always amazing to me how beautiful fall can be. The crisp air, rustle of leaves as you walk through them, apples of all kinds being sold everywhere and the geese and birds preparing for their long trips to winter headquarters. Everything is preparing for the long cold days ahead.

We are no different. We may be doing fall cleaning in the house and in the yard. Some folks are stacking logs for those cozy nights in front of the fireplace. Of course, summer clothes need to be stored away and heavier clothes brought down from their storage spaces.

Well, this is also a time to begin thinking of your winter genealogical projects. Perhaps you will want to organize your notes and photos. Maybe you want to finally begin a narrative about your ancestors. Holidays are a good time for visits and a good time to get answers to questions. Long winter evenings are a good time to write letters to relatives and update them on your research. They are also a good time to create a disaster plan!

What would happen to your important work if there should be a flood, fire or other disaster? Is your work backed up and stored someplace other than your home? If, God forbid, you should become incapacitated or even pass away, is your family aware of your wishes concerning your research? If you have decided where your research is going to go, have you notified someone in your family? Even more importantly, have you notified the person to whom you are giving your research to make sure they will accept it?

Please make a plan to protect the labor of love that you have started. As Martha Stewart would say, "It's a good thing".

# Author's Guidelines

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*Je Me Souviens* publishes articles of interest to members of the American French Genealogical Society and people of French Canadian and Acadian descent. Articles dealing with history and genealogy are of primary interest, although articles on related topics will be considered. Especially desirable are articles dealing with sources and techniques, i.e. "how-to guides," related to specifics of French Canadian research.

All manuscripts must be well-documented (i.e. with sources) and well-written material on French-Canadian or Acadian history, genealogy, culture or folklore, but not necessarily limited to these areas. However, there **MUST** be a French-Canadian connection to what you submit. They can be of any length, though we reserve the right to break down long articles into 2 or more parts.

We prefer a clear, direct conversational style. A bibliography is desirable, and documentation is necessary for genealogical and historical submissions. Please use endnotes, rather than footnotes. All articles should be single-spaced and left-justified. Do not use bold, italics or underlining for headings.

All submissions must be in electronic form. Any word processing file will be accepted but we prefer .txt, .doc, and .rtf files. Please no PDFs. All illustrations and photos should be submitted as JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) files. You may also submit printed black-and white photographs for publication. These photographs should be labeled with the submitter's name and contact information and the caption for the photo, preferably on the back. We are not responsible for loss or damage to originals and they may not be returned.

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# Members' Corner

Welcome to our new Members!

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# Notarial Records - A Marriage Contract Examined

By Ann Mordelle

[Note from Editor: This article is being reprinted with permission of the author. ©2010 Anne Morddel. The author is the writer of The French Genealogy Blog seen at <http://french-genealogy.typepad.com/genealogie/>]

We have all ready touched a bit on the subject of the French marriage contract in the post about dowries, but thought it might not hurt to look at one in detail. Firstly, let us remind all that a French marriage contract, historically, has never been a pre-nup. A modern pre-nuptial agreement is a kind of insurance, meant to protect the assets of one or both parties should the marriage end in divorce. Marriage contracts have existed in France for hundreds of years. For most of that time, France has been a Catholic country, where marriages did not end in divorce. For the French, the marriage contract is closer to the British idea of articles of incorporation. Two individuals, members of different organizations, each with assets deriving from those organizations, are joining together to form a new corporate entity. Its success or failure was determined by its ability to produce and support and endow with assets new members. As we have written before: the French think of marriage the same way that Americans think of business.

An example of a contract was written in 1901, on the ninth of September. The couple was married in October. The contract usually comes before the marriage. Sometimes, it may be the day before; we know of one that was written two years before. A reader writes of seeing some coming two weeks after the wedding. The groom is aged twenty-six, a farmer, living with his parents. The bride is twenty-three and also lives with her parents. They are from neighbouring villages in Normandy. Both sets of parents are present at the drawing up of the contract. More, the groom's



parents are "acting for him and in his name" and the bride's are "contracting the agreement for her and in her name, because of the donation they are going to make". The couple opt for the regime dotal, which groups together all that the wife is bringing to the marriage, either on her own or as gifts to her, into one category as her property.

The contract then goes on to list every conceivable type of possession the bride might have -- furniture, property, money, bank shares, railway shares -- current and future, and says that she will retain full rights over it all to do with as she wishes. She will also keep all of the income and her husband is not to touch it. The bride cannot touch the shares either, but only receive the income and she is to approve any expenditure of it the groom may wish to make. This absolute right extends to whatever she may inherit one day.

The next point states that she be allowed to make a donation *inter vivos* of any of her own property to any of her future children or grandchildren, without having to ask her husband's permission. Then, that the marriage forms a company in terms of acquisitions, each owning half of all, and that, when one of the couple shall die, the other shall have the right to usage (l'usufruct) of the home and all its furnishings exactly as it was, until his or her death.

The couple's individual belongings are listed. The groom has two suits, some clothes, underclothes and jewelry valued at five hundred francs, and he has fifteen hundred francs in savings, dear boy. His father is giving him a sum of seven thousand francs, once the marriage actually takes place, of course. The bride's parents are giving her a stunning trousseau (seen in part above): six sheets; thirty-six blouses; thirty-six pillow covers; twenty-four tea towels; forty-eight handkerchiefs!! Also included are a bed, mattresses, a mirror, pillows, nightstand, wardrobe, a parasol and an umbrella. The whole lot was valued at three thousand francs, and they gave her another five thousand in cash. (Note that the groom need not list in detail his clothing, but the bride's list details not only the house linen, but also every one of her undergarments. Was this not embarrassing and humiliating, one wonders?)

People were modern in 1901 and there is a clause anticipating the possible dissolution of the company (not marriage) that states that the bride will keep all that she brought to and acquired personally during the marriage, especially her jewelry and any linen marked with her initials. However, should she wish, she may accept three thousand in cash if all has grown too tatty. The surviving spouse gets to choose from the communal property which bits will constitute his or her share. The bride gets to do the choosing if the company is dissolved. Should the company produce children, their inheritance comes from the community property, and the survivor's share is proportionately reduced, though he or she retains the use.

The notaire wrote that he read various and appropriate articles of the Code Civil to all present so that everyone knew the law. He gave the young folks a certificate confirming the contract, which they would then present to the *officier d'état civil* who records the marriage. (He would note in the record that the marriage was under a contract, the contract type, date and the name of the notaire.) Everybody signed.

Although the wording refers to the rights and decisions of the bride and groom, it is clear that they had no part in the decisions as to the contract. In truth, in this case, even the groom's parents seem invisible. Yet, all in all, this is a fairly ordinary marriage contract, with many of the paragraphs being standard, as is the listing of the trousseau and even its price seems to be standard, hovering at three thousand francs for a good century. Perhaps one would dread meeting the bride's parents in court and perhaps forty-eight handkerchiefs is a bit much, but otherwise this is a good representation of how most French marriages began. Marriage contracts are invaluable sources of genealogical information and the detail of daily life.

### **Where to look for a marriage contract**

Parish records rarely state if the married couple had a contract. One would not have expected one for the very poor; one would expect one for anyone with any money. Civil records will state in the registration of the marriage if there was a contract, giving the date of the contract and the name of the notaire.

If it is over 125 years old, it should be in the departmental archives. Notaires are supposed to turn over to the archives all of their records of that age. Some do, some don't. Requesting an old contract from a notaire is costly and slow, because he or she will charge for their writing to the archives and requesting the copy of their old file. Spend a little time hunting in the departmental archives and you can have it more quickly and cheaply.

If you know the date of the marriage, begin searching notarial archives just prior to that.

If you do not have the name of the notaire, almost certainly it will be one in the town where the couple married or where one of them lived. One did not go to an out of town notaire for a marriage contract.

\*Addendum: Gilles Dubois does the same with an 18th century marriage contract on his blog *Carnet Web de Généalogie*.

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Note: The author is the writer of The French Genealogy Blog seen at <http://french-genealogy.typepad.com/genealogie/>

# Bouldoc to Bolduc through Louis Boulduc

B: Yan J. Kevin Bolduc

[Editor's note: This is the second part of this article. The first part may be found in the Spring 2011 issue. Also see author's note in that issue.]

[...] this symbol indicates that material has been left out of this translation.

Jean-François Boulduc  
20 February 1728 – 18 August 1769

In a previous article on the Boulduc dynasty devoted to Gilles-François Boulduc<sup>111</sup>, we have indicated that when he married Catherine-Aymée Millon, in 1734, Jean-François, their son, born February 20, 1728, was already six years old. He was therefore his natural born son, which is clarified in his baptismal extract of the Archpriestal Saint-Séverin Parish Church in Paris. This excerpt is annexed to a form of "last survivor" rental clause dated 2 June 1734 established in favor of the young Jean-François<sup>112</sup>.

We previously had no studies concerning him except for two short notes, one from G. Planchon<sup>113</sup> stating that he had obtained the staying power of his father's Royal Apothecary charge, the other of M. Bouvet<sup>114</sup> indicating that he had received the exclusive rights of 30,000 pounds in 1756, and the enjoyment of a non-constructible land situated at Marly, near the watering fountain, on 20 November 1764.

Our research undertaken in the Central Parisian Notaries Repertory in the National Archives gave us a list of seals<sup>115</sup>, to include one affixed to the domicile of Jean-François after his death on Boucheries Street, Parish Saint-Sulpice, when his Property

Inventory<sup>116</sup> started on 26 August 1769. The inventory was established at the request, on one hand, of Jacques-Louis Courdoumer, Squire and Wardrobe Valet of the King, living on Boucheries Street, executor of Jean-François Boulduc's Will, First Apothecary of the King, and on the other hand, of Master François-Simon Chastelier, lawyer at the Parliament, Honorary Commissioner at the Châtelet, as the single heir of the deceased, his cousin-german. There was, therefore, no direct descendant of Jean-François, and no marriage contract was found.

[...] Jean-François Boulduc had acquired a house with garden and dependencies in the village of Marly-le-Roi, on Abreuvoir Avenue, by an Act drafted at Versailles by the Parisian Notary René Poultier on 23 August 1764, at the price of 18,000 pounds, including 2,000 pounds of furnitures<sup>125</sup>. [...]

The property had about two acres and was enclosed within walls, and consisted of a house between a court and a garden, with a first floor, two stories, four rooms per floor, shed, stable with a house for the gardener and a servant, a vegetable garden, a greenhouse and a small building behind the garden with fruit trees. But all was in a very poor condition and required extensive repairs.

The Inventory created in Marly in August 1769, exactly five years after the acquisition of the property by Jean-François Boulduc, helped us discover its location. There were 12 rooms, certain ones decorated with many paintings, wardrobes, offices, a kitchen, dining room, billiard room, a "company room", a wine cellar. This one was generously supplied in bottles: 2 drums (of 114 to 140 l.) of Bourgogne de Tonnerre wine, 2 drums of the same wine but from the last harvest, many bottles of white wine of Tonnerre, of Malaga, of ratafia, etc. Boulduc knew how to receive! The small house behind the garden served as a Royal Apothecary laboratory. It included various pharmaceutical utensils worth 245 pounds: furnaces, stills, funnels, bottles, flasks, mortars, scales, weights, and stoves for jams<sup>126</sup>. Drugs and compositions were stacked in two rooms on the first floor of the house. The number of jars containing drugs was impressive: 300 jars of "glass crystals" (200 l.t.), 200 jars of the "animal and coral realms" (600

l.t.), 1,500 "shells" (1,000 l.t.), 1,340 jars of the "vegetable realm" (800 l.t.). All the goods came to 5,316 pounds.<sup>127</sup> The Inventory specifies yet that the effects of Boulduc "which were in Versailles (...) were brought to the house in Marly", which confirms that he shared his Royal Apothecary activities between the two places.

[...] The Inventory has no indications relating to any publications by Boulduc, who was not a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences. Having a sure taste for natural sciences, he had subscribed to the purchase of a thousand drawings on sciences, arts, trades and products.<sup>132</sup> He had possessed a remarkable Natural History collection, and an avid amateur Conchologist, he had a beautiful collection of shells.<sup>133</sup>

Jean-François Boulduc had achieved an enviable Apothecary career under Louis XV and his Court, but he never reached the scientific reputation of his father and grandfather.

Michel Depène still lived on Boucheries Street in 1783. Indeed, on 26 July of that year, he declared before the Châtelet Notaries that he owned a House with shop and a boutique in the back on Boucheries-Saint-Germain Street on the census of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, taxed at 19 sols parisais.<sup>134</sup>

Thus concludes the study of this famous Parisian Apothecaries dynasty. Since attaining, by Pierre Boulduc his great-grandfather, the level of Master Apothecary in 1636, until the death of Jean-François, one hundred and thirty-three years had passed. Four Apothecaries of the Parisian community succeeded each other from father to son, of which three were Royal Apothecaries, and two were members of the Royal Academy of Sciences. His great-uncle Louis Boulduc, Procurator of the King at the Provostship of Quebec, is the source of the Canadian branch of the family. on the East bank of the Marché-aux-Poirées, and was the twelfth from Fers Street going up towards Cossonnerie Street.

I thank Mme Colette Charlot for kindly having addressed to me the reproduction of this Register.

## NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

111. C. WAROLIN, "La dynastie des Boulduc, apothicaires à Paris aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, Gilles-François Boulduc (20 février 1675-17 janvier 1742)", *Rev. Hist. Pharm.*, 2002, n° 335, p. 439-450.

112. AN, MC, XIV, 288, 2 June 1734. Rental regulations to Jean-François Boulduc. This rent of 21 l. 8 s. 6 d.t. was drawn by the Provostship of Merchants and Aldermen of Paris at the last 14 (*sic*), averaging to the sum of 300 *tournois* pounds. The baptistery extracts of the baptism records of Saint-Séverin, annexed to the rental regulations, is as follows:

"Year 1728, Wednesday February 25<sup>th</sup>, was baptized Jean-François, born 20<sup>th</sup> of the same month, natural son of François Boulduc, Bourgeois of Paris, and Catherine Millon, his father and mother, the Godfather being Mister Jean-François de Bruyère, Squire, living on Saint-Joseph Street, Parish of Saint-Eustache, the Godmother being Damoiselle Anne Le Breton Demonville, daughter of deceased Mister Demonville, Bourgeois of Paris, living on Saint-Joseph Street, Parish of Saint-Eustache. The father is absent. The said child was presented to us by Mr. Grégoire, surgeon and "*midwife*", whom declared having delivered the baby at his place on Petit Pont Street, of same Parish. Signed in the official Act of Delabruière, Le Breton, Grégoire, and with the vicar Thomas.

Collected in the original the present extract by myself, undersigned depositary priest of registries in said Church, in the absence of the regular depositary and in Paris, this 11<sup>th</sup> December 1733."

113. G. PLANCHON, "Dynasties d'apothicaires parisiens: les Boulduc", *J. Pharm. Chim.*, 1899, 6<sup>th</sup> series, p. 474-475.

114. M. BOUVET, "Les apothicaires royaux. Les apothicaires de Louis XV. Quartier d'avril", *Rev. Hist. Pharm.*, 1930, n° 70, p. 202.

115. AN, Y 13 542. Seals affixed on 18 August 1769 after the death of Jean-François Boulduc, in an apartment on the first floor of a house on Boucheries Street, Saint-Sulpice Parish. The next day they were also affixed on the country house he owned in the village of Marly.

116. AN, MC, XLV, 537, 26 August 1769. After-death Property Inventory of Jean-François Boulduc, who died 18 August 1769.

[...]

125. AN, MC, XXXIII, 553, 23 August 1764. Sale contract of the house at Marly. By the Châtelet of Paris sentencing of 8 May 1765, the House with its garden and dependencies was awarded to J.-F. Boulduc, and by the deeds of 27 July, 22 August and 7 October of the same year, the due principal and interest were paid and registered.

126. Property Inventory of J.-F. Boulduc at Marly, *op. cit.*, see note 6, f<sup>os</sup> 15 and 15 v<sup>o</sup>.

127. Property Inventory of J.-F. Boulduc at Marly, *op. cit.*, see note 6, f<sup>os</sup> 20 and 21 v<sup>o</sup>.

[...]

132. Property Inventory of J.-F. Boulduc, science drawings, *op. cit.*, see note 6, f° 26.

133. DUREAU, *Bull. Soc. Hist. VI<sup>e</sup> arrondissement de Paris*, 1898, t. 1, p. 78 and 80. Has been cited by G. Planchon (see note 3).

134. AN, S 2840, Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Boucheries-Saint-Germain Street, 26 July 1783.

### ABBREVIATIONS

AN National Archives, Paris.

MC Minutier Central of notaries at the National Archives.

BN Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

BIUP Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de Pharmacie of Paris.

ARS Royal Academy of Sciences, archives of the Academy of Sciences, Paris.

### About the Author

Yan J. Kevin Bolduc ([yanbolduc@hotmail.com](mailto:yanbolduc@hotmail.com)) writes:

The purpose of this work is to freely share the wealth of the BOLDUC heritage to everyone interested. I have compiled them in honor of my father's memory, Joseph Réginald O. Bolduc, Physiologist (PhD ès Plant Physiology, Purdue University), who had wanted to know more during his life. He was the son of Wilfrid Bolduc and Lucienne Deslongchamps. All translations from the original French texts are done by myself, and are liberal efforts prone to corrections or modifications. Each word or expression was translated under reserve, according to context, while trying to maintain as accurately as possible the original intent of the authors. All notes, comments and anecdotes in brackets are from me.



# Can You Identify this Family?

By Judith L. Sweaney and Barbara Parmenter

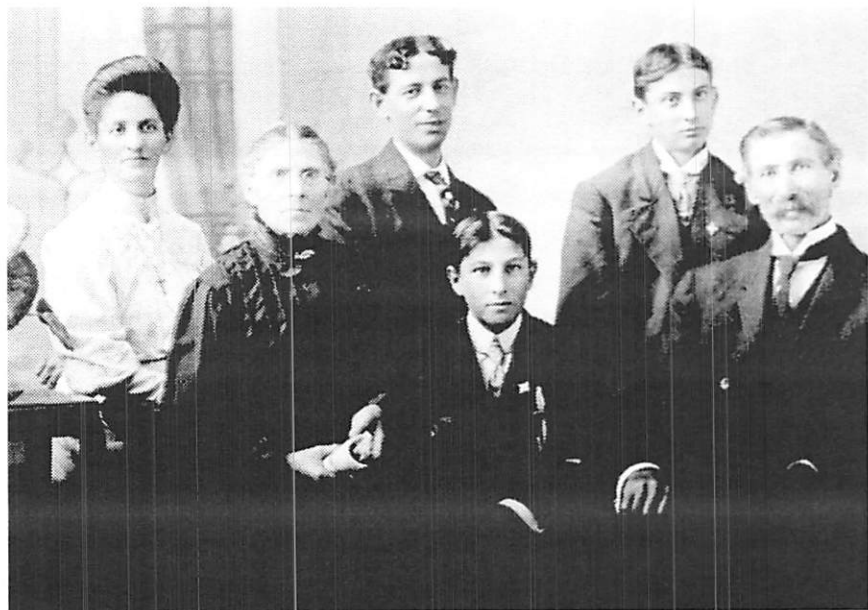
Marie Rosalie Bessette was born 7 Oct 1858 in Shefford County, PQ. She was the daughter of Antoine Bessette born c.1818 in PQ and Marguerite Melancon born c.1826 in PQ. Antoine Bessette and Marguerite Melancon were married on 8 Jun 1845 at Cantons de l'Est, Knowlton, Brome, PQ.

Marie Rosalie Bessette married Francois Xavier Roy on 17 Jan 1876 at St- Anne-de- Stuckely, La Rochelle, Shefford, PQ. In 1878 when their son Francois Xavier Roy, later to be known as Frank King, was about 9 months old they relocated from Waterloo, Shefford, PQ to Plainville, Norfolk, MA

We are hoping that someone can help us positively identify the picture that we believe to be of the Antoine Bessette & Rosalie Melancon Family. Other children in the family were: Marie, Philomene, Marguerite, Honore, Antoine JR, Mederise, Isabelle, Edouard, Magloire and Existe Alfred.

The picture was taken by a photographer in Waterloo, Shefford, PQ. We believe it was taken in the late 1870's or early 1880's. (The Photograph Studio was "Ethier" in Waterloo, PQ, if we remember correctly).

If you have any information related to this photo, please contact either of the authors at [judy@sweaneys.com](mailto:judy@sweaneys.com) and [bparmenter@verizon.net](mailto:bparmenter@verizon.net).



Do you know this family?

## Come Ride With Me

**Lorraine Dube**



ISBN 13 Hardcover: 978-1-4568-2426-6

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Lorraine Dube was a survivor, but this time was different. Why has God spared her from the terrible cancer with its endless surgeries and infections, only to leave her suffering from such intolerable pain? Writing this book became her therapy. She recounts her life story from her happy childhood through her often rocky adult years, all with a purpose. She wants her grandsons to know that they too are survivors...like their *Mamère*. Her message: Life is sometimes like a scary roller coaster ride, and nothing is impossible. While this heartfelt story was written for her grandchildren, its universal mes-sage of survival against the odds will make all readers laugh, cry and count the blessings in their own lives.

First-time author Lorraine Dube was raised by loving, Catholic parents of French Canadian ancestry and further nurtured through 12 years of Catholic education. Her happy carefree childhood hardly prepared her for the life challenges ahead, or did it? By age 23 she was a widow with three small children, one of the many scary rides on the roller coaster of life, all leading up to her scariest ride of all. She battled an invasive, life threatening cancer and won, beating all the odds. Her strong faith, sense of humor, and downright stubbornness saw her through life's roller coaster rides, with their twists and turns, and ups and downs. Her life story makes it apparent to the reader that she is a survivor in the truest sense of the word. Fasten your seat belt for *Mamère's* wild ride.

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# Kid Lavigne

By Lauren Chouinard

I am not a boxer. I've never had any interest in stepping into a ring. I'm too slow and while my only experiences of getting hit were the result of 12 years of playing rugby, I'm fairly certain I never had what it takes to go toe-to-toe in a squared circle. I am however, a huge fan of the fistic arts. I grew up in the racially ravaged 1960s inner city of Chicago's south side, just a few blocks from the first home of Muhammad Ali, then Cassius Clay. I got the boxing bug from two people: my mother and Mr. Vesely. My mother, all five foot two inches of her, was a sports fanatic, mainly boxing, football, baseball and hockey. I learned at an early age that we had boxing royalty in the family tree. My mother was a second cousin of George "Kid" Lavigne, lightweight champion of the world from 1896-1899. Her father served as a sparring partner for the Kid. Mr. Vesely was the father of one of my best friends, Keith. Mr. V was an ex-middle weight having fought while in the Marines. Several Friday nights each year Mr. V would take Keith, me and another best bud, Art, to the American legion hall in the neighborhood to watch fight films, eat fried chicken and drink Cokes. And we watched a lot of film of fighters from bygone eras. There was Jess Willard vs Jack Johnson, Willard vs Jack Dempsey, Dempsey vs Tunney, Tony Zale fights, Rocky Graziano and Marciano, Two-Ton Tony Gallento, Max Baer, Joe Louis, Jake LaMotta, and on and on.

I had been thinking of writing a book about this mythical cousin for several years. When I began to do the research I found that George "Kid" Lavigne, aka the Saginaw Kid, was much more than a world champion. The more I read and the deeper I went I began to realize this was a book about one of the greatest fighters of all time. As anyone who has dabbled in genealogical research will attest to, a good story becomes so much better when the main

character is a flesh and blood relative. I remembered how I felt as a boy when mom told me about our family being related to a world champion boxer. I am just as excited in my late 50's, but also more cautious and skeptical, a product of several decades spent rubbing elbows with humanity. Mom had always said we were second cousins to Kid Lavigne but I needed in my heart to be sure we were related and although I didn't doubt my mom's veracity, I allowed for the possibility that someone had sold her a bill of goods way back when and she proudly and innocently passed it along.

So the search for "cousinship" became the search for a common ancestor. I had Kid Lavigne's lineage back to the 1620s in France but there were blank spots on the map on my side of the family beyond my great, great grandfather Jean Baptiste. I kept running into a vacuum in the early 1800s and couldn't make the connection between the two lines. After months of research, a few hours here and a few there, I gave up and resolved to pay a professional researcher to get the proof of ancestry I needed. Then one day while searching some ancestry websites I found the American French Genealogical Society. I became a member and sent in a research request for two five generation pedigree searches, one for Kid Lavigne's line and one for my line, hoping I would triangulate back to an unknown target, the common ancestor. Three weeks later the results arrived.

I nervously attacked the envelope and pulled out the contents, quickly scanning the handwritten charts each with 31 names going back five generations. I looked at Kid Lavigne's chart first noting that the lineage was a perfect match to the one I already had in my possession. I noticed an asterisk or star hand scribbled above the name of Joseph Lavigne. I then looked at the chart for my great grandfather and again noticed the star drawn above the name Joseph Lavigne. He was our common ancestor and the final evidence that I had hoped to find. Kid Lavigne and I were related beyond a shadow of a doubt. I rushed into the other room to tell my wife who had patiently listened to my ramblings for months about ancestral details and frustrating dead ends. "I found him!" I said over and over. "I found the common ancestor. It's Joseph

Marie Poudrette Lavigne born in 1755 in Montreal. He married Marie Angelique Ranger dit Laviolette in 1774 and died young at 44 in 1799." One of Joseph's sons was Jacques, Kid Lavigne's grandfather and another was Jean Baptiste, my great, great, great, great grandfather. What had been very murky and uncertain for many years was now crystal clear and of course, Mom was right as always, second cousins we were [editor's note: specifically the author and Kid Lavigne were third cousins, 3 generations removed].

George "Kid" Lavigne was one of eleven children, nine boys and two girls, born to Jean Baptiste Poudret Lavigne and Marie Agnes Dufort. Only five of the children survived. They came to the U.S. in 1868 from St. Polycarpe, a village about 40 miles southwest of Montreal. They moved to Bay City, Michigan where Jean Baptiste worked in a sawmill and Agnes ran a boarding house. In 1880 they moved upriver a few miles to a town that no longer exists, called Melbourne, just across the river from Saginaw, Michigan. Billy, George's older brother, worked as a bellhop in a swanky hotel in Saginaw. In early 1884, while on his way home from work, he stumbled upon a black barber giving boxing lessons in a makeshift ring next to his barbershop. The barber was Charles A. C. Smith an accomplished heavyweight who had moved to Saginaw with his mother in the mid-1860s. Billy was hooked and began taking lessons from Smith. Billy brought a pair of boxing gloves home and he and George began to spar. It wasn't long before it became apparent that young George had some natural talent as a fighter. One day while sparring, three French-Canadian lumberjacks who were boarding at his mother's house began making fun of George who was only a bit over 5 feet 3 inches tall. Billy challenged the men to lace up the gloves and go a few rounds with his little brother. They accepted the challenge and within a few short minutes each ended up face down in the dirt after a savage burst by the little man. A fighter was born.

As a teenager George worked in a sawmill as a "cooper," building barrels to ship salt, a secondary commodity produced by many mills in the area. He built a strong upper body with one source reporting that he had the arms, back, and neck of a heavyweight.

George would get his first professional bout in September, 1886, against a young protégé of C. A. C. Smith, Morris McNally. Much to Smith's surprise, the Kid KOed [knocked out] him in the first round. He fought seven more bouts in the next four months knocking out his first five opponents in the early rounds and winning the other two. In early 1887 he was to fight a scrappy, well-traveled fighter by the name of Pike Johnson. This was clearly a fight that George was not expected to win. He had Johnson wobbly by the fourth and easily won the eight round battle. "Happy days, kid," shouted Billy after the match. "You're made now." That's when they started hailing George as the Saginaw Kid.

The Kid didn't fight another bout that year and fought only three times in 1888. His next contest would be one that would define his early career. On March 1, 1889 he would fight one of the toughest little men in the Midwest from St. Paul, Minnesota, George Siddons. The fight started just after midnight at Old Man Putnam's Roadhouse just outside Saginaw. After more than five hours of fighting and the pre-dawn glow tinting the horizon, news circulated that the police were on their way as prizefighting was illegal in Michigan. Both corners decided to call it a draw at the finish of the 77<sup>th</sup> round. Lavigne's face was so swollen that he said he could not see for three days. But just nine days after the fight the indefatigable Lavigne would win another bout in Manistee, Michigan. At the Kid's insistence a rematch was made with Siddons and they fought another long battle of 55 rounds on April 26<sup>th</sup>. The fight was a draw but the "newspaper decision" clearly went to Lavigne who claimed his first title as featherweight champion of Michigan. Newspaper decisions by the sportswriters in attendance were common during a time when prizefighting was illegal in most states and fights were often prearranged to a conclusion of a "draw" or a "no decision" when no knockout occurred.

By now, Lavigne was having a harder time finding willing opponents in the Midwest, fighting only once in 1890. It was time to spread his wings and Billy got him some action on the west coast in San Francisco and Portland in 1891 and 1892. This was a

big step up for the Kid and again he wasn't expected to win against the journeymen competition he would face out west. But true to form, he did. He knocked out the well-respected pride of San Francisco, Joe Soto, in 30 rounds and went long distance with Jim Burge, fighting with an injured right hand from the 5<sup>th</sup> round on until the referee declared a draw in the 50<sup>th</sup> round.

Several fights in 1894 and 1895 galvanized the Kid's reputation and put him in line for a shot at the world title. He fought one of the most puzzling of boxing's characters from any era, Australian champion Albert Griffiths whose ring name was Young Griffo. Griffo was not known for his hitting ability but for his ability to avoid being hit. Boxing lore has it that Griffo would go to local watering holes and win drinks by boasting that he could place one foot on a handkerchief and "bob so swiftly that no one could knock a cigar out of his mouth," while never lifting his foot off the hanky. Lavigne fought Griffo twice in those two years with both being called draws although Lavigne was acknowledged to have gotten the better of Griffo in the second fight. So elusive was Griffo that in Lavigne's own words, "It would have required an adding machine to total up the number of haymakers I wasted on the air."

The Kid won the American lightweight title in New Orleans when he knocked out a very tough Andy Bowen in the 18<sup>th</sup> round in December 1894. Bowen had plenty of grit having been one of the contestants in the longest fight in gloved boxing history when a year earlier he fought Texas Jack Burke to a marathon 110 round draw that lasted seven hours and nineteen minutes. A month later, Bowen defeated another tough fighter, Jack Everhardt, in a mere 85 rounds. About halfway through the fight it was clear that Lavigne had the upper hand. In the 18<sup>th</sup> he ended it, dropping the beaten Bowen with a right hand. Bowen's head hit the canvas with an awful crack. Bowen had argued earlier not to put padding between the canvas and boards of the ring surface. He felt the padding would slow him down. Bowen never fully regained consciousness and died the next morning at his home. Lavigne and his entourage were jailed and charged with murder. The coroner later cleared Lavigne ruling that the unpadded wood surface of the

ring was the cause of death. The impact on Lavigne and the New Orleans fight scene would have lasting effects.

And perhaps the one fight that truly “made” Kid Lavigne was fought in December of 1895. It was called “the greatest fight of all time” by the early boxing historians. It would be the first of two epic battles with Joe Walcott, the black fighter known as the “Barbados Demon.” Walcott was another man that few boxers in any weight class wanted to face in the ring. He was shorter than the Kid, stocky, with very long arms, and virtually no neck. He was also a welterweight who would have to come down in weight to match Lavigne for what was being billed as the American lightweight championship at 133 pounds. So confident were Walcott and his manager that they agreed to a 15 round fight in which Lavigne would be declared the winner if Walcott did not knock him out. What followed in Maspeth, New York was a savage battle with Walcott bloodying Lavigne as they stood toe-to-toe trading blows without pause over the early rounds. Lavigne was taking such a pounding that John L. Sullivan, the most famous of heavyweights and a personal friend of the Kid’s was yelling from ringside for the fight to be stopped. In the 8<sup>th</sup> round Walcott scored with a right hand that caused Lavigne’s ear to swell to an unimaginable proportion.

By every measure, Lavigne was looking at imminent defeat. His left eye was a mess and his left ear kept swelling, ballooning to the size and color of a large ripe tomato. Walcott continued to work the ear until in the 11<sup>th</sup> he raked the laces of his glove across it and it burst, showering Lavigne with a torrent of blood. As the Kid would later report, “There was a whole comic opera chorus in my head. When Walcott finally burst the ear, the songs stopped, the pain went and the ear shrank.” With a good measure of relief from the deflated ear, he began to land thunderous body shots that were taking a heavy toll on Walcott in the 12<sup>th</sup>. Lavigne was known to be such a hard hitter that the body blows took the fight out of his opponents leaving them more vulnerable as the match progressed. The crowd now sensed the fight turning. Lavigne kept pressing in the 13<sup>th</sup> and in the 14<sup>th</sup> he dropped Walcott with a right hand and had him holding on by round’s end. He battered Walcott from



rope-to-rope in the 15<sup>th</sup> and by the end of the round Walcott was out on his feet and had to be led back to his corner by his trainer. In a 1955 *Ring Magazine* article, eighty year old Joe Woodman, who witnessed the fight surmised, "No man ever displayed greater fortitude."

The reigning world lightweight champion in the early 90s was Jack McAuliffe although his claim to that title is disputed to this day, with many concluding that Kid Lavigne was the first champion of the gloved era. McAuliffe had retired in 1893 and had anointed Lavigne as his successor. However, there was one man standing in the way by the name of Dick "Iron Man" Burge who hailed from England. The Brits thought their man unbeatable as he had fought and beaten everyone in his weight class and some middle and heavyweights to boot. They would meet in June of 1896 at the National Sporting Club of London that opened its doors in 1891. It would be the first world championship bout at any weight class to be held in the prestigious London club. When Lavigne and his manager Sam Fitzpatrick arrived in London and visited the National Sporting Club they were nearly laughed out of the place. Lavigne appeared so small and cherubic that the press said he looked like a "school boy," and the sporting men of London concluded that he could not possibly be the same fellow that defeated the Barbados Demon.

The pre-fight weigh-in was a fiasco as Burge, a natural welterweight, was said to have been as much as 15 pounds heavier than the agreed upon 135 pound limit. The manager of the club told Lavigne that the fight should not be billed for the world lightweight title given Burge's inability to make weight, a tremendous disadvantage to Lavigne. "I insist on its being for the championship," Lavigne responded. "I don't care if he weighs a ton. I'll lick him." And the fight was on. From the opening bell Lavigne rushed so fast to begin his onslaught of Burge that he crashed headlong into a ring post opening a cut over his eye. The two traded blows in the early going with Burge getting the best of Lavigne through the end of the eighth round. As was typical in most of Lavigne's fights, he began to get the upper hand as the fight wore on. In the 16<sup>th</sup> he dropped Burge twice to the

astonishment of the British aristocrats and commoners in attendance. In the 17<sup>th</sup> he continued his barrage of savage body punches that set up the right to the jaw that ended it. Lavigne was world champion!

He would fight 13 times over the next three years defending his world championship seven times. Like many fighters of all eras, he let fame and fortune get the best of him, shirking the rigorous training routine that made him the relentless hitter with herculean stamina and unparalleled capacity to absorb punishment. He also had a "love for the bottle." Whiskey, that is. He would lose for the first time in 1899. While still the undefeated lightweight champ, he was prodded into fighting a friend, Mysterious Billy Smith, by his brother Billy Lavigne. Smith was a feared welterweight who was known to be a rough and dirty fighter. The fight was billed as being for the welterweight championship of the world. Lavigne was not in shape for the bout and he was soundly beaten by the very crafty and bigger Smith. Billy, seeing that the Kid was taking a merciless beating, jumped into the ring in the 14<sup>th</sup> round and the referee stopped the fight awarding a technical knockout to Smith. Ever the optimist when the cards were down, the Kid still felt he was "coming on" and if the fight went on he would ultimately outlast Smith for the victory. Billy saw it differently. The Kid never quite forgave his brother for stopping the bout and didn't talk to him for two years. This bout would be a harbinger of things to come and would mark a turning point in the Kid's career.

But, even with the loss in a higher weight class, he was still the lightweight champ. In July of 1899 he would fight Frank Erne, an unremarkable but steady fighter whom he had fought to a 20 round draw the year before. Again, he was not the Kid of old. Many, including Lavigne himself, would later say that his two fights with Walcott, the second one, in which he scored a technical knockout in the 12<sup>th</sup> round when Walcott refused to come out of his corner, and as epic and grueling as the first, took their toll on him and he was never quite the same afterward. He would lose the championship to Erne in another 20 rounder this time the decision being in favor of Erne. He would spiral downward at this point,

travelling to Paris in early 1900 to "paint the town," he was arrested in June for pummeling a young French woman and was sent back to the U.S. by the French authorities. Later that fall he checked into a sanitarium near Cleveland for four weeks to deal with his drinking problems.

The Kid fought seven more times over the next ten years with a few additional, short exhibition bouts mixed in. He won three and lost four. After losing to Jimmy Britt, whom he battled with a broken arm in a comeback attempt in 1902, he went into a deep depression and as reported by the *National Police Gazette*, "went insane" and ended up in a sanitarium in San Francisco. After recovering he sailed for Paris for a long break. He began to dabble in other pursuits, opening a boxing school in Paris in 1903 that lasted for a few years before returning to the states and marrying Julia Drujon in 1905, a native of Paris, whom he met when touring Europe after winning the championship in London. Later in 1905 the Kid opened an establishment in Detroit called "Kid Lavigne's Triangle Café." It was a saloon by another name. His drinking was still very much a problem and being the proprietor of his own "thirst parlor" didn't help. In 1912 while training for another comeback he hit rock bottom again when Julia called the police, charging him with "creating a disturbance in his house," which no doubt translated into physical abuse related to intoxication. A newspaper columnist of the time wrote, "He was such a wreck from drink that he was sent to St. Joseph's retreat in Dearborn."

Lavigne decided to get into some other line of business "because he fears that being around it all the time will keep him in the line of drinking more than is good for him." He planned to open a school of boxing in Dayton, Ohio but instead opened one in Saginaw. While continuing to stay abreast of the fight game his last job would find him in the employ of Henry Ford. Henry's vice-president was a hard-nosed ex-sailor and boxer by the name of Harry Bennett. Bennett was Henry's enforcer and union-busting right arm. Bennett handpicked his crew and hired many ex-boxers to ensure the rank and file towed the line. The Kid worked for Ford from 1916 to the year of his death in 1928, the last several years as a nightwatchman making \$5 per day.

Lavigne's last gift to the boxing world was a series of 15 columns he would write for the *Los Angeles Times*. The 14<sup>th</sup> column was published the week before he died and the 15<sup>th</sup> posthumously the week after. He died in Detroit on March 9, 1928 of heart disease at the age of 58. He was survived by his second wife Flora whom he had married in 1923. His first wife Julia had passed away in 1922.

Many words describe this great champion of boxing's first golden age. He was shy, humble, soft spoken, honest, and generous outside the ring. Inside the ring he was aggressive, savage, relentless and indomitable. The Kid went 13 years and 46 fights without a loss. He never ducked another fighter, taking on all comers and was often outweighed by his opponents. The Kid never avoided a black challenger either, unlike John L. Sullivan and other white pugilists of the era. It has been stated often by sportswriters and boxing historians of the time that if Lavigne had not succumbed to the ravages of "John Barleycorn" at the peak of his career and had continued to train as he did for his championship winning bout in London, he may have remained champion for ten years and retired undefeated. Through his many ups and downs he lost several fortunes living in the moment. In the last years of life he lived modestly and in his hallmark way, humbly. After his death many called him one of the greatest of all time at any weight class. He was inducted into the Ring Boxing Hall of Fame in 1959 and the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1998.

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### **About the Author**

Lauren Chouinard was formerly employed as the Human Resource Director for the city of Eugene, Oregon and is now retired. He is currently writing a biography of his cousin Kid Lavigne. Lauren's e-mail address is *chou1990@comcast.net*.

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# Struggles with my “Genus” Research

By Fran Genus Tivey

It was in May of 1995 that I first visited the American French Genealogical Society. Of course, on my first visit I had not done my homework of gathering together the documents of my family members, but I had remembered some of the stories that were told to me. My Dad, Francis, died when I was a young girl so I knew very little. He was French and his family was from Canada. His father was born in Ontario and his grandparents were Joseph and Olive Gardner. Also, I knew that my Dad's maternal grandmother came from the Ross family in Rimouski. But the real reason I went to the library was to research my French surname Gemus. I was devastated when I found out that no one at the American French Genealogical Society had ever heard of the name Gemus.

I found everyone so helpful, one member introduced me to the blue Drouin Collection and there in the book was my name “Gemus”. But there were only a few marriages listed, none of which I recognized. I was then told to look in the back section of the blue Drouin book and there I saw the marriage of my great grandparents, Joseph Gemus and Olive Desjardin. This had to be mine. The marriage took place in Prescott County, Ontario. I was then told that this could also be another problem doing my research because library didn't have much information in this area. I was able to find that marriage in one of our repertoires' titled “Curran, Prescott County.” St-Luc was the name of the parish. The parents of Joseph were Joseph and Marie Dube. Researching further for Joseph and Marie Dube, I found that there wasn't any marriage listed for this couple. So I hit my first brick wall.

I was hooked on genealogy; I needed to continue to search so I decided to research in the Rimouski section. As I started to look in the repertoires I found it exciting to see names of my Ross ancestors but disappointed that there were none of my Gemus ancestors. In March of 1997 AFGS purchased the Drouin Film Collection. Everyone was very excited with the new addition to the

library. Just think, we could view the films and see for the first time the actual records of our ancestors in every church in Quebec including French Ontario.

With the help of the Drouin films I started my search for the birth of my grandfather Francois. It took me months to do, because I had to look in every church in Prescott County. After that I continued to search the area and copied every name that was or looked like Gemus. It didn't matter to me how it was spelled, when I saw a name I thought might be mine I copied it. Slowly I began to put my family together using 3X5 index cards [before my first computer]. It was to my advantage that Gemus is not a common name. Can you imagine searching every Boucher?

In my research I noticed the change in the spelling of the name from Gemus to Genus. Slowly my research took me back to my first ancestor who came to New France and settled in Montreal, Quebec. There was the marriage of Jacques Genu to Marie-Helene Gailen in Jul 20, 1727, St-Joseph de la Riviere-des-Prairies, Montreal. According to the marriage document Jacques came from St-Maclou in Rouen, Normandy. With help of the Family History Center I was able to go back to a marriage of my 8<sup>th</sup> great grandparents Francois-Charles Genu and Germanie Lemoule. This marriage took place on Dec 17, 1647 in Notre-Dame de la Supposition, Ranne, Orne, Normandy

### **Story of the Genus Maison**

After many years, I found that I had documented all my ancestor's births, marriages and deaths but I wanted to continue to research more. Genealogy, history and geography go hand in hand. I always loved studying geography and United States history while in school. Knowing the history that took place when your ancestors were alive opens up a whole new world. You begin to understand what kind of life they lived, and it gives your research a soul. Usually I knew where the towns and churches were in which the acts of my ancestors took place. At this time in history, my studies were in Vaudreuil but there was one place I needed to find. It was called Quinchien. AFGS had but one repertoire pertaining to the history of Vaudreuil, "Vaudreuil la deuxieme naissance 1973"



written by Guy Lafond. It notes that my Genus were one of the founding families. Quinchien is mentioned in the first and second marriages of my fourth great grandfather Joachim Genus. Again no one at the library could help me. They never heard of this town and being that I was the only person at AFGS with this name, I knew I was still on my own. This is where the computer came in handy.

I needed to find out where this place was. I went online to Google. There I typed in "Genus + Quinchien" and I was taken aback by what I saw. It was a house, a house of my ancestor Joachim Genus; a house that he had built in Quinchien.

This is located on the website of "Service des Arts et de la Culture" in the village of Vaudreuil-Dorion. Fortunately they had a contact tab and I sent off an e-mail to Denise Clement. She was extremely helpful, and supplied me with a beautiful booklet about the house. Of course it was written in French.

It just so happened that AFGS had a student intern at the library that summer. Caroline Mandler asked if we needed any help with translating French documents into English. I approached her with a paid job to translate the booklet. She was receptive. I don't know who was more thrilled, she or I.

Now that this booklet was translated, I wanted to share it with everyone. What better vehicle to use than the "Je Me Souvien." I needed permission from the director of the "Service des Arts et de la Culture", Michel Vallee in order to publish it. At the same time I needed to be in touch with the author Michel Belisle [ethnologist]. Both were very receptive. Michel Belisle has been extremely helpful. He is very interested in the fact that I am a Genus descendant who contacted him. He feels that I am representing one of the oldest families who took part in the making of the town of Vaudreuil.

I am truly indebted to him. If it were not for his tenacity and fortitude, the truth of the Genus home would have never been found. Below is part of an email he sent to me explaining how he changed the history of Vaudreuil-Dorian.

“My interest in Joachim Génus’ house came from my concern to correct some wrongs information’s about the house. This house was first classified in 1972 by the Quebec Government as Estienne Desloges house, built around 1725. In 1982, I was working at the Vaudreuil Museum and preparing an exhibition on that house (you can see some of exhibits panels at page 23 of the booklet). Looking for information I began to check land titles of the house and discovered some names and dictation errors; the historian report mentioning lot 37 for the house, but that house was built instead on the 38. I went further in my research and publish a report with the proper information’s; the report was given to the Quebec government and to the town of Dorion who owns the property of the House. After that, I work for many organizations and in 2004 the town of Vaudreuil-Dorion ask me to produce that booklet, because I have a great knowledge of the history of Vaudreuil-Dorion - since, I have published a book of over 400 pages on the history of the town-.”

My research in genealogy and history took me many years to compile and it was much more complicated than I described, but in the end I’m very proud to say my name is “Genus”.

#### About the Author

Fran Tivey is Head of the Microfilm Collection at the AFGS library and was instrumental in the association between AFGS and the Family History Library, and the designation of the AFGS as a Family History Center.

# Génus Valois Brunet

By Michel Bélisle

[Note from the Editor: This booklet was translated for Fran Tivey from the original French by Caroline Mandler. Permission to print this translation has been granted by the director of Service des Arts et de la Culture, Michel Vallee.]

## **1796: In the heart of the Bay of Vaudreuil**

This house off the old coast of Quinchien has become, over the course of the years, one of the reference points of our collective past. Milieu of life for the Génus, Valois, and Brunet families, witness of the beginnings of our municipal history, it is numbered among the gems of the patrimony of Vaudreuil-Dorion, with Saint Michael's Church, the Trestler house, and the old Saint Michael's School (The Regional Museum of Vaudreuil-Soulanges).

Upon its acquisition in 1970, on the occasion of the creation of Valois Park, its historical past and its architectural qualities incited the municipal authorities of the time to save it for future generations. The studies undertaken by the government of Quebec on its history and its architectural potential would lead, in 1972, to its being classed under the title of cultural good, thereby recognizing the house as a beautiful example of architecture in the French spirit.

At a time when our municipality is soaring without precedent, both demographically and economically, it is important to affirm our identity, to create links of belonging with our past, to make it known...as much to residents as to tourists.

The safeguarding of this building, the Génus house, now being assured, the City of Vaudreuil-Dorion wishes to offer to its citizens, thanks to an understanding with the Minister of Culture and Communications of Quebec (MCCQ), this brochure concerning the architecture and the history of the house and of those who inhabited it over the centuries and preserved it for posterity.

Happy reading and above all have a great visit!

The Mayor,  
Réjean Boyer

### **A Very Old Inheritance**

Well before the names of Vaudreuil and Dorion, the land where the house Génus would be built was known under the name of Quinchien. The small Quinchien River – in Algonquin “Quenechouan” – which runs alongside Saint Michael’s Church - had thereby given its name to the band of riverside land comprising of the area between the small tributary of the Ottawa and the Pointe des Cascades. Interspersed with small rapids, Champlain brings it up in his big journey through the Ottawa Valley in 1613: “We passed a chute, which is called by the natives of this country Quenechouan which is full of stones and rocks, where the water runs at great speed...” The chute described by Champlain is that of the Pointe de Quinchien, near the road and railway bridges of Dorion.

### **On the Coast of Quinchien**

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, upon the lordly concession authorized by Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis of Vaudreuil, this riverside zone conserved its American Indian name. The coast of Quinchien was the envy of all because it was situated at the confluence of the incredibly rich route of fur traders, the river of the Ottawa and the strategic military route of the Cataracoui River, the Saint Lawrence to the French. The Marquis established his domain there, the fiefdom of Kinchien, today the Cité des Jeunes. This fiefdom was united by the channels to the mission of the Île aux Tourtes, founded by the Abby René-Charles de Breslay in 1704 to welcome the Nipissings, American Indians originating from this Lake Ontario.

### **Concession in the Bay**

The Marquis of Vaudreuil and his sons, Pierre and François-Pierre, never put much effort into developing the municipality of Vaudreuil; the growth of the coast of Quinchien didn’t occur until around the 1720s, as indicates the Confession and census of 1725

which presents a portrait of the first concessionaires of the lands. On the other hand, the documents of the time of the Vaudreuil family are not very explicit regarding the real occupation of the lands, because several, conceded by ticket, never saw their occupants.

### **One of the Most Beautiful Lands on the Bay**

The lands of the first concession coming from Cèdres are thin bands 3 arpents wide with a depth ranging from 30 to 40 arpents; they grant access to the river of the Ottawa, the only means of communication at the time. Advantageously situated not far from the market town of Vaudreuil and its new church that would be built in 1787, plot number 38 would be the object of several transactions by Joachim Génus. On July 11, 1781, the census of the municipalities of Vaudreuil and Rigaud identify him as owner of lots 37 and 38. Then, after a bequest of these lands to his son Antoine and his wife, he repurchased in 1795 two patches of land on lot 38. The first, one-and-a-half arpents wide located between the public path and the river, on which he would construct his house, and the second, situated on the other side of the road, measuring one arpent wide by one arpent deep, for the construction of his buildings. The land he acquired despite his being 61 years old is not his first, since he previously had lands near Cèdres, in Vaudreuil and several others in the row in Petit Brûlé, in Rigaud.

### **Family Man and Man of the Church**

Born the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1734, Joachim Génus was the son of Jacques Génus and Marie-Anne Galien, of Rivière des Prairies. His first marriage was at Sainte-Anne du Bout on the island on April 8, 1755, to Marie-Anne Ducharme, daughter of Jean and Marie-Anne Trottier, of the coast of Saint-Paul in Montreal. This union produced four children: Marie-Anne, who would marry Amable Lalonde on April 14, 1776; Amable [the second daughter, not to be confused with the husband of the first daughter], married first on February 16, 1778 to François Lalonde and second on October 13, 1800, to Jean-Baptiste Lefebvre; Joachim, married to Françoise Lalonde on January 26, 1782 and Antoine, married to Marie-Louise Petit on February 16, 1795.

Some years after the funeral of Marie-Anne on September 12,

1774, Joachim got involved in his parish; in 1777 he was named churchwarden at Saint Michael's Church of Vaudreuil. This year, he would remarry, in Vaudreuil on November 17, joining his destiny to that of Véronique Ranger, daughter of Thomas and Marie-Anne Tabeau. This second marriage resulted in no children.

“Land that, from 1725 on, was Divided into Parishes Possessed by Jacques Desloges...”

The den of the mutations of the municipalities of Vaudreuil and Rigaud, realized from 1781 to 1872, under the rule of Lord Michel-Eustache-Gaspard-Alain Chartier de Lotbinière, informs us about the first concessionaire of plot number 38. In this document that enumerates the different censitaires [those who paid dues in order to be allowed to vote] of the “first concession coming from Cèdres,” this “...land that, from 1725 on, was divided into parishes possessed by Jacques Desloges...” is mentioned, more specifically Jacques Poirier dit Desloges, by verbal concession of the Marquis of Vaudreuil. The Desloges heirs, owners of plots 37 and 38, would then sell, on February 8, 1745, to François Robidou, a cobbler originally from the Rivière des Prairies. In 1764, the latter and his wife Marie-Anne-Thérèse Lehoux dit Laliberté would donate to their children said land, in order to assure the subsistence of their heirs. Marie-Anne-Thérèse Lehoux sold, on August 29, 1768, the property of 3 arpents minus a bit by 40 to Joachim Génus; the property included a barn “on posts”.

### **Joachim Génus, Militia Captain**

Joachim Génus was a militia captain on the coast of Quinchien in the parish Saint Michael of Vaudreuil. Regularly, since 1770, he trained the parishioners in the militia in the handling of arms and in other important works. An old institution that left to us the French regime and which took back the Britannic Isles, the militia, at the time of Joachim Génus, was an army of volunteers used to defend the country. Charged with the duties of a militia captain, Joachim would be mandated by the honorable René-Amable de Boucherville, road surveyor of the district of Montreal, to trace the alignments of the roads and lines of surveying of several large works in the construction of the bridges. This work obligated him

to create, on July 13, 1792, a statement on the public paths and bridges of the municipality of Vaudreuil and Rigaud.

### **An Important Actor in the Municipal Life**

The municipal life differed very much from that of today. The municipal society of the time was principally composed of the lord and his censitaires/tennants who evolved in a closed world, centered on the culture of the land and on the development of the colonization. This one-way world, from which the lord benefited largely, was governed by a system of laws and duties contained in the act of concession of the municipality to its owner. The militia captain played an important role here, just like the parish priest and the notary. Each year, on May Day, Joachim and his militia of Vaudreuil would go to plant the maypole in front of the lordly manor on Quinchien Point (today, the site of the Dorion manor). This celebration, which inaugurated in some sense the season of seeds, marks the attachment of the censitaires to their lord. On this occasion, the militia captain directed the fire of the militia at a stripped spruce. They shot black powder at it until it was completely blackened.

Given the importance of his job as a militia captain, Joachim Génus had the right to a bench in the parish's church. It is situated near that of the lord of Lotbinière, in the direction of the Saint Louis Chapel. The priest, at this time, is Jean-Baptiste Deguire, the same one that constructed the church in 1783.

### **In Search of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Farm House**

The different works in research on the structure of the Génus house before its restoration provided several pieces of information on the manner of construction at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Joachim Génus would construct his house on the front land belonging to Antoine Génus, his son, between the Quinchien path and the Outaouais River. This man, already 62 years of age, would integrate into the construction of this house both techniques from his heritage and some that were avant-garde, brought by the conquering Englishmen.

In the summer of 1796, under the administration of Lord Dorchester, Joachim Génus establishes the foundations of his future home. On a French thirty-square foot map, he erects a fairly

deep basement, being on terrain “to which the water sometimes comes up in the spring as soon as it floods...”

Made of Potsdam sandstone, a center wall split the room, and was connected to beams.

This type of foundation marks a certain evolution compared to the buildings in the French spirit, in that the importance of their elevation above the ground was better adapted for the snowy and windy winters of the bay.

### **Carpentry of Walls, Piece Over Piece**

Joachim Génus constructed the walls out of large pieces of yellow pine chopped with a broad-axe. Very common in the region, yellow pine is very resistant to decay. Each end of the pieces of wood is cut in the form of a dovetail or dog's head. The amelioration of heating methods at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, principally thanks to the use of stoves, would permit him to build many works: double French windows and massive doors.

### **Chimneys on Alternate Sides...**

In the inventory of the goods of Joachim Génus' son, in 1830, there are several stoves, one of which uses palm-tree oil and one of which is three-tiered, that are mentioned. These stoves are joined with rectangular chimneys, situated in the extension of the gabled walls. Those of the Génus house are said to be “on alternate sides” because they are distributed on each side of the roof, a tradition that, in fact, originated in Perche (France). The walls of the time are covered in paneling of boards lain vertically, to fight against the cold and infiltrations.

### **Faithful to the Traditions of the Old Mother Country: A French Framework**

Given that his house would be built over a very heavy roof structure, Joachim Génus gives a certain inclination toward the interior of the walls' slope. This technique, called “giving fruit to the wall,” from his European ancestors, has the goal of ensuring a greater rigidity for the walls to receive the pressure of the roof structure.

And what a roof structure! ...The structure of this roof is a



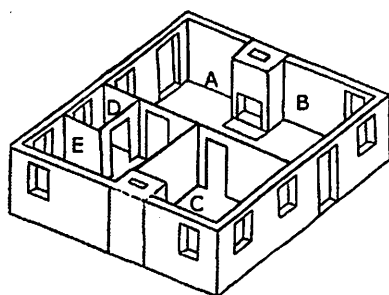
beautiful example of the French construction tradition. Massive and with a complex assembly, which was no longer fashionable at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, of we compare it to the light, English style that Sir Jean-Joseph Trestler would have constructed two years later by the Quinchien rapids. Joachim's roof structure model uses triangular roof trusses composed of crossed rafters and a punch joining the center of a scythe entering, joined to the crossed rafters. The bracing or support of the space between the roof trusses is ensured by Saint Andrew's Crosses. The assembly used is a mortise and tenon joint and a ledger.

This roof, like all in the French style, goes a bit beyond the outer walls.

### **A Typical Interior Construction**

The orientation of the house in the direction of the dominant southwestern winds plays a major role in the placement of the rooms. This is constituted in a fashion such that the cold northeast winds hit the gabled wall on the side of the kitchen, so that the principal bedroom and the common room have a southern exposure.

The position of the rooms and the original construction are both known to us, thanks to the inventory of goods of Joachim Génus the son: on the first floor they mention a kitchen (a), a contiguous room (b), in the southwest corner, a large room – the living room – (c), a work office (d), and another room “at the back of the house” (e). The hearths are nonetheless still used, those in the kitchen being larger; a wooden trammel (a sort of gallows where they suspended cauldrons for cooking), andirons, a poker, and a fire shovel are also listed here. At the heart of the kitchen hearth, we see the traces of an ancient bread oven whose chapel (the oven) went through the exterior wall on the eastern gabled wall.



- A Kitchen
- B Room
- C Large room/living room
- D Office
- E Bedroom

Figure 1. The House Floor Plan. Isometric view of the first floor. The Large room (C) and the bedroom (E) are situated next to Saint Charles Street. Drawing by Michel Bélisle.

The furniture described in this inventory is typical of its time, including several tables and chairs, a small buffet, a large paneled armoire, a bed garnished with a bolster and pillows, an oak butter churn, chandeliers...as well as tin spoons, a latrine bucket, and even an old boat in the basement.

The attic of Joachim Génus' time is used for the stockpiling of grains; no room is mentioned here.

### **The Large Armoire, Found?**

Certain pieces found in the course of the restoration of the house could be elements of the large paneled armoire described in Joachim Génus' 1830 inventory.

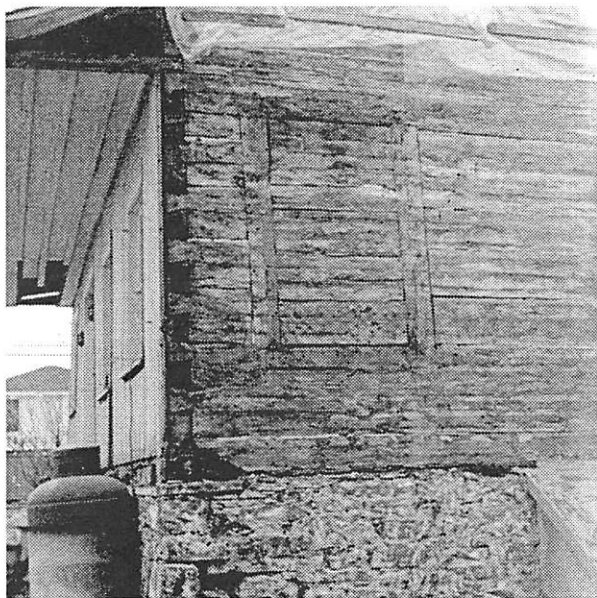


Figure 2. The dovetail assembly of the wall is revealed, as well as a window which had been masked in the northeastern gabled wall. Collection of the Ministry of Culture and of Communications of Quebec in Montérégie.

### **Joachim Enlarges his Property**

Following the construction of his house, Joachim would buy several other patches of land to complete his domain; on November 26, 1796, he acquires land from Charles Boyer, then in January 1797, a patch of land belonging to his son Antoine on the south side of his land and on May 14, 1799, another arpent of land from Antoine. These transactions complete the purchase of the lands surrounding his residence.

Joachim the Son, Militia Lieutenant in Vaudreuil, Would Inherit... On the 26<sup>th</sup> of the month of May 1797, Joachim and Veronique Ranger establish their will at their residence, in the “back of the house” room located to the northwest. Joachim leaves to his son Joachim, among other things, “all the parts of land acquired from Antoine Génus...with the house and other buildings constructed upon it.” To this first testament, Joachim would add a second, in January 1807, in which he confirms the legacy to his son Joachim

“for him and having cause...the joy nonetheless reserved to Veronique during her life...” These last wishes were dictated by Joachim Génus, of sound mind and body, in presence of the Honorable Chartier de Lotbinière, executor of wills, and Jean-Baptiste Deguire, priest.

### **The Difficult Years**

Joachim's last years would be marked by the most insidious disease for a man of his quality; in September 1812, his wife Veronique has to borrow money (at six percent interest) from Jean-Joseph Trestler, of the largest house in the rapid, for “different merchandise and other effects that were advanced to him...” In this document, it is specified: “Joachim Génus in dementia for about three years,” constant trouble for the person in charge of the Quinchien coast militia. On November 20, 1813, the priest Jean-Baptiste Deguire performs the funeral rites of Joachim Génus, militia captain, deceased at the age of 79; the inhumation took place beneath the church.

### **From the Génus to the Valois, a Lifestyle in Evolution**

On December 15, 1830, at the study of the notary Joseph-Octave Bastien de Vaudreuil, the grandsons of the militia captain, François and Joachim, cede the property to Joseph Valois, a Vaudreuil farmer. Originally from Pointe-Claire, Joseph and Adelaide Jamme dit Carrière, his second wife, move into their new house in the Bay with their three children: Marie Audie, Joseph-Romuald, and Marie Esther Rachel. Two births occurred: that, brief, of a stillborn boy in 1832 and the other of Narcisse-Joseph-Ludger, on December 23, 1833.

The happiness of the little family is nonetheless clouded, on October 19, 1835, by the death of Adelaide; she was only 27 years old. Joseph gets married, for the third time, on February 25, 1840, to Archange Pilon, who gives birth to Marie-Louise on December 7, 1840.

Apart from the births which come to brighten the family life, the house is not submitted to any modifications; the inventory of the goods between Joseph Valois and the late Adelaide Jamme dit

Carrière on April 8, 1839, some time before the third marriage, reveals no new construction, the attic still being reserved for stockpiling grains, harnesses, and a multitude of tools.

The grand event of the era of Joseph Valois happens in the home of his neighbors; Robert Unwin Harwood and his wife Louise Josephte de Lotbinière who construct the second lordly manor. The superb edifice is soon at the heart of the patriotic demonstrations of 1837, led by relatives, the brothers Joseph-Eustache and Narcisse Valois, from the village.

### **A House in the Taste of the Day**

The third child of Joseph Valois, Joseph-Romuald, receives, in 1852, the property by legacy of his father. This legacy comprises, in return, the subsistence and the housing of his father and mother for the rest of their days. Some years later, Joseph-Romuald proposes to and, on February 10, 1857, marries Adele Vinet, of Vaudreuil. From this union, a son will see daylight, Joseph-Jean-Jacques, on January 30, 1868.



Figure 3. The Valois house in 1925, an open porch staircase encircles the building. Source: P.G. Roy, *Old Manors Old Houses*, 1927.

Joseph-Romuald would proceed with the final works to enlarge the house, notably with the addition of a summer kitchen, after the

year 1865. This would improve upon the inhabitability of his house for the summer season. The summer kitchen permits the centralization of the kitchen work around the great heat in an adapted space. Joseph-Romuald's is constituted of a square in pieces over pieces, whose angles are inserted into runner posts: this is the technique of assembly of piece over piece with runner tenons, a French construction tradition.

Around the 1870s, he pierces the roof with four small Victorian windows with curved pediments to light up the rooms in the attic. This new addition led him to move the door of the principal entrance, the construction of a staircase in the kitchen only slightly modifies the access to it. This new entrance is in the taste of the day, in the neoclassical spirit, with its glass side windows and its glass fanlight above the door.

From each side of the front walls, the slant of the roof extends to form a dripstone that would protect the porch staircases...

In 1877, Joseph-Romuald leaves his house to his wife Adele Vinet. The life at the house of Joseph-Romuald would now, again, be in mourning; this time, with regard to his father Joseph, deceased following an accident in 1881.

Joseph-Romuald passes away in the month of May, 1917. In 1920, Lady Adele Vinet in turn leaves the house to Joseph-Jean-Jacques, her only child.

### **The House of the Beautiful Summers**

Following the edification of the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific railway bridges, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the construction of the Galipeault and Taschereau bridges, in 1925, facilitates the expansion of the vacation on the territory of Vaudreuil and Dorion. This development would transform the riverside lands of Quinchien into rest places for city-dwellers. The access to the artificial lakes, the development of beaches, and the publicity on the well-being of these vacation places seduce the urban populations. Boarding houses are constructed, such as Chateau du Lac, and later the Royal Manor, in Vaudreuil Bay. The rural

houses are transformed; the lands of Joseph-Jean-Jacques Valois do not escape this phenomenon – chalets are built here... When, in 1931 and 1933, Joseph-Jean-Jacques Valois sells the property to Patrick Brunet, a grocer from Montreal, this including, in addition to a garage, two chalets.

This acquisition by Patrick Brunet, originally from Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, marks the end of an occupation of the house by the Valois families for more than 101 years.

The first chalet, red and white, was called the Little Valois House. Joseph-Jean-Jacques Valois stayed there before it was rented to the Monarque, Landreville, Grégoire, and other families.

### **The Grand Porch**

The exterior aspect of the Génus house is modified by the covering of the porch on the face of the southwest gabled wall. Its cover then rests on a series of columns that gives a very rural allure to the residence. The metamorphosis of the house of Patrick Brunet is completed by the posing of a rendering, siding materials popularized by the Arts and Crafts architectural style developed in England.

### **A 135-Year-Old Interior**

The interior construction stays relatively unchanged, apart from the summer kitchen, since the construction by Joachim Génus in 1796. The room to the northeast is occupied by the Brunet couple and the adjacent office now serves as a bathroom. The wall separating the large room – living room – from the old room is opened by the creation of an arch creating a double living room. The children occupy the rooms above.

### **Mr. Brunet's House**

For the Brunet family, the Génus and Valois house has become a summer house.

The children of Patrick and Albertine were young adults at the time of the purchase of this house. During the week, Mr. Brunet returned to Montreal to work at his grocery store which was

situated at the corner of La Gauchetière and Ste-Elizabeth.

The beautiful season saw the family's arrival. The four children of Jeanne Brunet-Lemieux remember: "From 1939 to 1970, this was our childhood and our adolescence...we went there for the whole summer, from June 24<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>." Camille's daughter also happily remembers the vacation days spent in the house. The other grandchildren also came there occasionally: "Grandpapa and Aunt Pauline came at the beginning of May and stayed until mid-October."

Like several vacationers of the era, the Brunet family needed help in maintaining places. In addition to Mr. Lemieux, Jeanne's husband, who largely contributed, they received aide from exterior people: "We remember Pierrette, Thérèse, Aline, and Georges with pleasure."

### **The Pleasures of the Wave...**

The summers spent in the house of their grandfather left imperishable memories in the family:

"We often bathed at the water's edge. But since the beach was not made of sand, we wore rubber shoes. We sometimes used the Vidals' raft. This raft, which had a basket in its center, allowed the youngest to paddle in complete safety. Annually, we went to the Hudson to profit from the sandy beach."

### **The Island**

The property of the Brunets included an island on which a small house had been erected. The first having been destroyed in a fire in 1964, Mr. Brunet had a second one installed, which was moved at the expropriation in 1970.

An idyllic place, visits were the source of rapture. The grandparents remember: "It was an adventure to row there, for us. We spent hours there, reading, picnicking, searching for the rabbits that Uncle Lucien (Brunet) had introduced...It was also our refuge."

### **Some Activities**



Behind the garage, to amuse the children, Patrick Brunet had constructed a henhouse. "We went to look for the lift of the Coop on the side of the railroad, and in the autumn we went to carry the chicken to a farmer."

Wild rhubarb grew; it was dependable!

The grandchildren hunted earthworms that were used for fishing. This sport gave joy to many; bullheads, sunfish, perches, walleyes, basses, muskellunges, etc...were available.

The escapades at Dorion, nearby, gave rhythm to the days of the youngest: "On bicycle, we would look for the 'trunk' twice a day at the old and new post office near the railroad." Going to look for visitors on the train was a great joy. To eat an ice cream in front of the train station also. On Sundays, they had fun changing church for mass: Ste-Trinité, St-Michel, or St-Jean-Baptiste.

Special events brightened up life at the Brunet house: the parade of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste with its fireworks, the lottery, the holiday of Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue on July 26<sup>th</sup>, the pleasant chore of gathering leaves on Thanksgiving... Wednesdays brought Uncle Robert Brunet and Thursday evenings his brother Maurice, an optometrist receiving clients in his office on the rue St-Charles.

Patrick Brunet regularly busied himself in his garage where he had his workbench. "The garage was decorated with puzzles that he had made during the winter."

### **The Final Years**

Patrick Brunet keeps the property in the family heritage for sale in January 1965 to his two daughters Jeanne, wife of Irénée Lemieux, and Pauline, single. They would keep it until its purchase by the city of Dorion on March 13, 1970.

### **The House Beneath the Trees**

With the purchase of the house from the Brunets and that of the Vidals in 1970, the city of Dorion creates Valois Park where it favors water sports and resting places, one of which is a

playground built for children. This municipality, then the new City of Vaudreuil-Dorion, born from the fusion in 1994, would hold large assemblies there, on the occasion of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste, on the snowy day...

One of the first actions taken after the acquisition of the Valois house by the city of Dorion would be to proceed with its classification by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Quebec. Witness of life back then, the Génus, Valois, and Brunet residence would be declared very cultural by the provincial government on June 28, 1972, following the decree in Council Number 1833; this recognizing the house as a beautiful example of French architecture, especially for its imposing roof structure with ridge tile bracing.



Figure 4. The restored house, 2004

### **One of the Jewels of the Architectural Heritage of Vaudreuil-Dorion**

The restoration of the edifice is undertaken from 1972 with the view to returning it to its original state, by taking off all that the Valois and Brunets had added to the house: dripstone, porch, neoclassical door frame, summer kitchen, dormer windows... They effectuate a

gutting – they strip the structure naked – to bring the edifice to its original state noting, as archaeologists do, all of the actions and photographically documenting all of the interventions to reconstitute, if need be, the edifice in its different eras.

This type of restoration, qualified as stylistic because it presents the building in its original workmanship, was very valorized by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the time. The result of these

different works has allowed the home of Mesdames Jeanne and Pauline Brunet, its final proprietors, to be brought back to the time of the Lord Michel-Eustache-Gaspard-Alain Chartier de Lotbinière, proprietor of the municipalities of Vaudreuil and Rigaud, and its proprietor the militia captain Joachim Génus.

### **Witness of the Origins of a Community**

Advantageously situated in the Bay of Vaudreuil, on the rue Saint-Charles, the Génus house constitutes one of the rare witnesses to the architecture in the French spirit of the 18<sup>th</sup> century offered to the population of our region.

This house has been dedicated to the promotion and the emphasis of cultural activities, and consecrated House of Arts and Culture by the City of Vaudreuil-Dorion, on June 29, 1998.

### **Credits**

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Text, historical and iconographic research: Michel Bélisle

Research collaboration: Denyse Lemieux, Louise Lemieux, Nicole Brunet

Collaboration of Ministry of Culture and Communications of Quebec: Sylvie Blais and Bernard Hébert, Advisers in Cultural Development

Supervision: Michelle Dupuy, Director of Arts and Culture, City of Vaudreuil-Dorion

Revision: Helene Jasmin

Graphics and impressions: Infografilm

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## A Woonsocket Family

By Lisa Rowan

Woonsocket is carefully perched in northern Rhode Island. Built with no trace of a grid pattern, its streets twist and turn, to be severed a number of times by the Blackstone River, a tangle of railroad tracks, and, at its northern border, the Massachusetts state line. For modern visitors and passersby, the empty buildings and quiet streets are striking.

The residents of Woonsocket are not unkind: Cautious, friendly faces who call out to one another in a diner at suppertime, ordering the fish and chips not because it is the Friday special but because it is Lent, and Woonsocket is a very Catholic place. When the wind blows, it whips around leftover rock salt from the bitter cold winter.

Woonsocket was once a bustling industrial city, a major nucleus of French Canadian life in the United States. My mother's family played a role in Woonsocket's textile industry in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. I wondered why stories of small-town fame had not been passed down to younger generations.

Most of those stories were buried in Woonsocket.

### Textile beginnings

Rhode Island was no stranger to the textile industry during the colony's early years. Cotton was reported as being imported into Providence from Spain in the mid 1780s.<sup>1</sup> In 1814, James Arnold built a small cotton mill for yarn manufacturing; it was called Lyman Mills.<sup>2</sup> The town grew into a slow boom, according to S.C. Newman, who said that from 1825 to 1830 "the place, through [sic] small, exhibited signs of becoming a place of business and activity." Then, Newman said it was a sixteen-year period of growth until the publishing of *A Numbering of the Inhabitants* in 1846.<sup>3</sup>

One year after that slim volume was published, rail service to Providence and Worcester ran through Woonsocket<sup>4</sup>, and by 1860, Woonsocket boasted 135 cotton factories containing 766,600 spindles, 26,000 looms, and more than 12,000 employees.<sup>5</sup> Woonsocket was a New England manufacturing powerhouse, specializing in cotton. Wool was a close second, especially the more tightly woven worsted variety.

A majority of those 12,000 able bodies tasked with running the city's many mills were immigrants. Woonsocket's immigrant population grew slowly, in line with the advancement of industry in the city. A vast majority of Woonsocket's immigrant community was composed of French Canadians, who began to arrive in the city in the 1820s and 1830s, a few families at a time.<sup>6</sup> When Newman's book was released in 1846, it showed only 332 French

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Writers' Project, *Rhode Island: a Guide to the Smallest State* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1937), 70.

<sup>2</sup> S.C. Newman, *A Numbering of the Inhabitants: Together with Statistical and Other Information, Relevant to Woonsocket, Rhode Island* (Woonsocket, Rhode Island, S.S. Foss, 1846), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> A canal was constructed in the mid 1820s, but was abandoned within ten years of its completion in 1828. Bessie Bloom Wessel, *An Ethnic Survey of Woonsocket, Rhode Island* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931).

<sup>5</sup> Federal Writers' Project, 70.

<sup>6</sup> Marie Louise Bonier, *The Beginnings of the Franco-American Colony in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, (Worcester, Mass.: Assumption College, 1997) (originally published in 1920), 95.

Canadians in Woonsocket—77 of them already naturalized Americans.<sup>7</sup> But those first few hundred came from Quebec, for the promise of an even better life in America than they imagined for themselves in France or Canada. James Smyth, a historian of the area's Catholic churches, described the first immigrants:

The descendents of these first French Catholic settlers in Canada have crossed the Lawrence in great numbers, within the past 30 years, from the Province of Quebec, and have established homes for themselves in every one of the New England States; but in no place have they prospered better or made more lasting progress than in this city of Woonsocket.<sup>8</sup>

Marie Louise Bonier explained in her book on the city's development—it can be considered the Bible of Woonsocket's early years—that “the actual emigration movement of French Canadians to the U.S. in large numbers dates from 1861. Lack of manpower [in the U.S.] menaced the growth of industry.”<sup>9</sup> That manpower had been forced into the Civil War, and recruiters traveled through Quebec to lure replacement workers southward. The recruiters must have been convincing; after the war, the number of emigrants from Quebec to New England tripled.<sup>10</sup>

Adjustment to life in New England wasn't necessarily easy, and the language barrier proved to be an issue in the mills. “In the factories and in public service offices, absolutely no effort was made to understand them and to write their names correctly,” Bonier wrote of the French Canadians.<sup>11</sup> Varied spellings and pronunciations became common in Woonsocket as Americans butchered French names.

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<sup>7</sup> Newman 96.

<sup>8</sup> James W. Smyth, *History of the Catholic Church in Woonsocket and Vicinity* (Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Charles E. Cook, 1903), 117.

<sup>9</sup> Bonier 90.

<sup>10</sup> From 1875 to 1890. Ibid, 91.

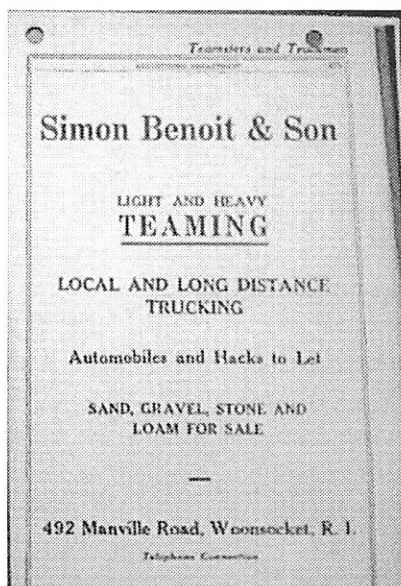
<sup>11</sup> Ibid 111.

French Canadian culture proved to be more than name-based, as the concept of “la survivance” was strong throughout the community, which clung dearly and steadfastly to aspects of French life.<sup>12</sup> Bessie Bloom Wessel, who studied ethnic groups in Woonsocket in the 1920s, put it this way:

In this latter group [French Canadians] there is a vigorous resistance to that type of Americanization effort which would destroy or disregard the values in culture, convenience, and control which depend upon the preservation of the French language and tradition.<sup>13</sup>

### The Benoit family

The Benoit family, into which my great-grandmother was born, can be viewed as a typical French Canadian family in Woonsocket.<sup>14</sup> Simeon Benoit was born in 1827 in Saint-Hyacinthe, on the Yamaska River in Quebec. He later moved to Saint-Aime to start a family with wife Elizabeth Blanchard. Their son Simeon—who was much more often known as Simon—was born on December 8, 1856, and made his way to Woonsocket in December of 1885. He was a man of diverse business skills,



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<sup>12</sup> “La survivance” is a phrase that was popular with French-speaking New England mill workers to express their determination to maintain their culture at a time when assimilation was strongly encouraged. Referenced throughout Wessel and Bonier.

<sup>13</sup> Wessel 228.

<sup>14</sup> Appearing on this page is an advertisement for the trucking company that Simon and Philippe Benoit would later own and operate. Rhode Island Business Directory, 1922.

owning and operating a “pre-prohibition” liquor store along with, some years later, the Globe Coal Yard.<sup>15</sup> Simon was naturalized in the Providence Court of Common Pleas on October 16, 1902.<sup>16</sup> By that time, Simon and Delvina Valois had three daughters and a son.

Delvina, sometimes known as Delima, came from another large French Canadian group, the Valois family. She was born on March 23, 1861 in St. Robert, Quebec, where her parents, Jean-Baptiste and Elizabeth Pepin had most likely married. A great many family members with the Valois and Benoit names could be found in Woonsocket and the surrounding areas. Tom Allaire, a volunteer at the American-French Genealogical Society in Woonsocket, explained that French Canadian family confusion is due to more than just size of the family. “The French loved to change their names,” he explained one day as he pored over the Drouin records with me.<sup>17</sup> He showed me examples of “dit” names, or second (and sometimes third) family names that could be used interchangeably. When we spent a morning tracing the Benoit side of the family back to France, I saw this in my own family. For example, the names “Lariviere” and “River” were both used, but the transition between names is easy to follow. In my own family tree, “Lariviere” was used interchangeably with “Chapdelaine.” The French Canadian inclination to intermittently change names was somewhat simplified as Woonsocket’s cotton and wool mills grew. Many last names were botched, and as a result, completely reinvented.

With the French Canadians came their strong Catholic faith. The first Roman Catholic mass in Woonsocket was held in 1828, with just ten men present.<sup>18</sup> Once an Irish Catholic parish was built in 1844, French Canadians were welcomed into St. Charles Borromeo

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<sup>15</sup> “Simon Benoit, 75, old resident, dies,” *Woonsocket Call*, December 24, 1932, 1.

<sup>16</sup> National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, D.C.; Index to New England Naturalization Petitions, 1791-1906 (M1299) Microfilm Serial: M1299; Microfilm Roll: 39; Ancestry.com, <http://www.ancestry.com> (Accessed January 20, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Tom Allaire, personal interview, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, March 19, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Wessel 217.



Church; not until 1870 would the French Canadians in Woonsocket have their own priest.<sup>19</sup>

Precious Blood parish was formed in 1872, with services held in Harris Privilege Hall on North Main Street.<sup>20</sup> Plans were put into place to build a church. Land was acquired the following year, and the cornerstone was laid in 1874. Severe weather during construction flattened the church roof and knocked its walls to the foundation, but the congregation was not disheartened—the church was finally dedicated on Sunday, July 17, 1881.<sup>21</sup> Simon and Delvina certainly joined Precious Blood upon their arrival in Woonsocket, and a listing of activities in Delvina's obituary many years later made it clear that the couple was dedicated to both their Catholic faith and their francophone heritage. Among her groups were memberships to St. Ann's Sodality and the Union of Prayer at Precious Blood Church;<sup>22</sup> she was also a member of the popular St. Jean Baptiste d'Amerique and of Les Artisans Canadiens-Francais.<sup>23</sup>

### The Friedrichs sons

Simon and Delvina's daughter, Marie-Louise, would tie the family to the Friedrichs men, three brothers who came to Woonsocket to make waves in the textile industry. The youngest of the set, Auguste Henry Friedrichs, arrived in Woonsocket directly from Europe, unlike many immigrants who landed in Canada before traveling south to New England. He was born in Belgium on June 24, 1884, named after his father, Auguste Pierre, and

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<sup>19</sup> Bonier 480.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Smyth 121.

<sup>22</sup> "Obituaries: Mrs. Delvina Benoit," *Woonsocket Call*, \_\_\_\_\_ 1946.

<sup>23</sup> Les Artisans Canadiens-Francais was established in 1876, one of several similar groups with the aim to "unite Catholic francophones of North America and to promote the French language and Catholic Church through social gatherings." Alberta's Francophone Heritage, [www.abheritage.ca/francophone/en/people/cultural\\_alliance\\_nationale.html](http://www.abheritage.ca/francophone/en/people/cultural_alliance_nationale.html) (Accessed March 27, 2011).

grandfather, Nicholas Heinrich.<sup>24</sup> After going to school in Roubaux, France, he attended Ecolo Manufacturiere in Verviers, Belgium.<sup>25</sup> He traveled to Rhode Island around 1900. There, he met James [Friedrichs], who had arrived in the summer of 1894 and had been naturalized just before Auguste's arrival.<sup>26</sup> Gustave Adolphe, two years younger than James, had arrived in Woonsocket in 1896 after studying the science of textile dyeing at the Polytechnic Institute at Verviers in Belgium. He worked as a boss dyer at the River Spinning Company, where James soon served as the superintendent.<sup>27</sup> In 1900, James and Gustave lived together as boarders in the home of the clothing salesman on Front Street.<sup>28</sup> James married Bertha Levesque that year; Gustave would marry Ernestine Cote in 1904.<sup>29</sup>

By 1905, James and Gustave were ready to open their own manufacturing operation, the small Friedrichs Dyeing Company. The factory took up only the rear part of a building. Then, Gustave and highly prominent Woonsocket businessman Charles A. Proulx founded Woonsocket Dyeing & Bleaching Company.<sup>30</sup> Gustave was also one of the founders of the Liberty Tool & Gauge Works

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<sup>24</sup> Letter sent by Jules Elias from England to Philadelphia detailing family history research completed in Europe. 24 November 1969.

<sup>25</sup> John St. George Joyce, *Story of Philadelphia* (Rex Printing House, Philadelphia, 1919), 519.

<sup>26</sup> James was born on November 25, 1874 in Belgium. He traveled to the United States on the Friesland from Antwerp in early July 1894. He was naturalized on January 31, 1900 in Providence. United States passport application for a naturalized citizen, James Fredericks, September 14, 1914; HeritageQuest.com, <http://www.heritagequest.com> (Accessed February 22, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> "Recent shock proves fatal to Friedrichs," *Woonsocket Call*, Friday, May 31, 1929, 1.

<sup>28</sup> 1900 U.S. Census, population schedule, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Enumeration District 169, sheet 4, H. Choquette household; HeritageQuest.com, <http://www.heritagequest.com> (Accessed February 5, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Gustave married Ernestine Coté on September 3, 1904, and in due time had five daughters: Jeannette, Beatrice, Gabrielle, Ernestine, and Francis; and a son, Gustave Jr. "Recent shock proves fatal to Friedrichs," *Woonsocket Call*, Friday, May 31, 1929, 1.

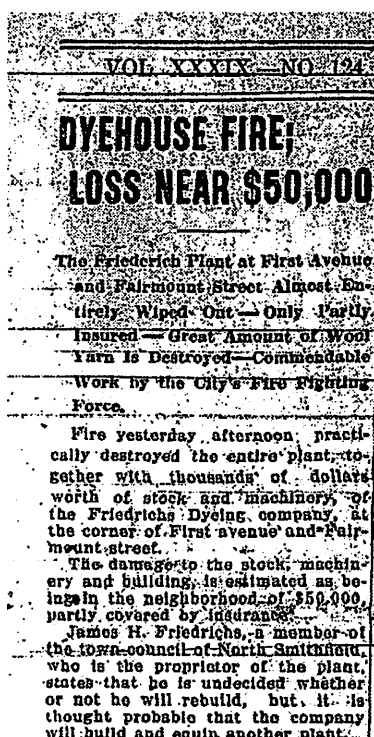
<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

on Bernon Street, and became one of the city's dominant real estate owners.

Their connections to the textile industry stretched past Woonsocket and south of Rhode Island all the way to Philadelphia, where Auguste was soon sent to start another business.

Auguste married Marie Louise Benoit on May 17, 1907, in a Catholic ceremony at the Church of the Precious Blood.<sup>31</sup> August Jr. was born soon after, and was a toddler when the family of three moved to Philadelphia with Marie Louise's brother, Philip, in tow.

Auguste and Gustave became the majority co-owners of Janero Dye Works, located at Edgemont and Lehigh Avenues in north Philadelphia.<sup>32</sup> The family lived nearby in a rented house on Colwyn Street, and Philip Benoit presumably contributed to the household by earning a wage in his brother-in-law's factory.<sup>33</sup> Auguste became well known in his new city. The *Story of Philadelphia*, published in 1919 with a section dedicated to short biographies, included a list of Auguste's activities: he was a member of the Pennsylvania Academy for the Fine Arts, the Elks, the Knights of Columbus, and the Cosmopolitan Club.<sup>34</sup> The latter was a local organization of men involved in the textile industry. They kept a low



<sup>31</sup> Marriage certificate for Auguste Friedrichs and Marie Louise Benoit, Church of Precious Blood, Woonsocket, R.I.

<sup>32</sup> Joyce, 519. Auguste's brother-in-law, Gustave Prevost, was also an owner.

<sup>33</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, population schedule, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Enumeration District 1103, sheet 6, dwelling 1333, August Friedrichs household; Ancestry.com, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (Accessed February 22, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Joyce 519.

profile and in most cases, the organization is mentioned only in passing in Philadelphia newspapers from the time. While Auguste was setting up shop in Philadelphia, his brothers were expanding their manufacturing activities back in Rhode Island.

### **The fire and the war**

Everything changed in October 1911. The Friedrichs Dyeing Company at First Avenue and Fairmount Street—a business had expanded but was only partially insured—caught fire on October 24. The *Woonsocket Call* provided much detail in the following day's edition:

The fire was discovered about 3:15 o'clock in that part of the dyehouse which was in the corner of the building bordering on Fairmount Street, near the Blackstone River Bridge. There being no sprinkler service, the flames spread rapidly and in a moment it was seen that the plant was threatened...In what seemed like an instant to the help in the plant, the rear part of the long, one-story wooden structure was enveloped in flames, which belched forth in huge tongues that fiercely ate their way in the highly combustible woolen yarn and made short work of the wooden building.<sup>35</sup>

James, who had been running the factory on overtime to complete a large pile of orders, was in his office in the building when the fire broke out. He grabbed as many important documents as he could before rushing out of the building, joining the plant's 40 employees on the street to watch the building burn. The main manufacturing part of the building collapsed within a half hour, leaving only the smokestack. Every firefighter in the city assisted in quelling the flames.

"If the company continues in business," The *Woonsocket Call* determined, "it will necessarily have to build another plant and secure practically all new machinery."<sup>36</sup> Damage to machinery, the building, and stock was estimated at \$50,000. The only part of the building that remained was the front facade along First Avenue.

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<sup>35</sup> "Dyehouse fire; loss near \$50,000," *Woonsocket Call*, October 25, 1911, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

James told the press that he wasn't sure whether he would rebuild, but the company would probably "build and equip another plant."<sup>37</sup>

James and Gustave did rebuild, forming a larger plant called the Fairmount Dye and Print Works. From the time of the fire onward, the Friedrichs family was closely watched by the local media. One of the most interesting mentions of the family in the *Woonsocket Call* appeared in October 1914. The *Call* presented a lengthy article upon James' return from a trip to Europe. In order to rescue his mother from the throes of the World War, he traveled by boat to Belgium. In order to do so, he submitted a passport application on September 14, 1914, using the Americanized version of his name: Fredericks. Congressman Ambrose Kennedy was his witness.<sup>38</sup>

The ship first arrived in Plymouth, England, where it was detained for several weeks due to a suspicious load of copper in the ship's hold. James was able to move on to Holland, Germany, and Belgium, where he described his people as "a broken-hearted, downcast people. Families...are scattered."<sup>39</sup> James was unable to locate a sister in Belgium.

While abroad, James was given a proclamation signed by the commander in chief of the German Army, Otto von Emmich. "In this paper," The *Call* wrote, "The movement of troops through Belgium is regretted, but Belgium is urged to allow such action. The country is promised remuneration for all foodstuffs taken on the march and Germany urges consideration of the horrors of war." James was offered a large payment for this persuasive proclamation when he returned to the U.S. via New York.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. At the time of the fire, James was living in the adjacent town of North Smithfield and was a member of the town council.

<sup>38</sup> United States passport application for a naturalized citizen, James Fredericks, September 14, 1914; HeritageQuest.com, <http://www.heritagequest.com> (Accessed February 22, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> "J.H. Friedrichs back from Europe." *Woonsocket Call*, October 26, 1914.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

While in Belgium, James was able to speak with Joseph Rogister, the president of the Woonsocket Spinning Company, who had departed Woonsocket a year prior for a long stay in Europe. There had been no contact from the president and his wife since the war had started. James was forced to leave his homeland quickly, though, for he was suspected to be a German spy.<sup>41</sup>

James arrived in Verviers to learn that his mother had left several weeks prior to go to Holland. After placing a newspaper advertisement, James was able to locate his mother, who had coincidentally already booked a ticket on the Rotterdam to travel to the U.S. James accompanied his mother on the trip, after which she visited for an extended period with her daughter, Mrs. Emile Dewitt, in New Jersey.<sup>42</sup>

## **Taxes**

Woonsocket's tax records from the year 1900 through 1918 are readily available at the Woonsocket Harris Public Library. While the families discussed in this volume were frequent investors in real estate and business, tax records were available for nearly all parcels of land owned.

In analyzing each year's property and other assessed value, it was perhaps most interesting to examine the records listed for the Friedrichs Dyeing Company and James Friedrichs, as displayed below:

### **Friedrichs Dyeing Company, James H. Friedrichs, First Avenue<sup>43</sup>**

Year	Real Estate Value/ Land and Buildings	Tangible and Intangible Personal Value	Total Value
1906	6900	2500	9400

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Assessment and Collection of a Tax Upon the Real and Personal Estate by the City of Woonsocket, with the Valuation and Tax on Each. Printed by Order of Said City, 1900-1918 (Accessed at Woonsocket Harris Public Library, local history reference section, March 18, 2011).

1907	6000	1500	7500
1908	6500	1500	8000
1909	6350	2000	8350
1910			No records available
1911	6000	2500	8500
1912	5400	2500	7900
1913	7200	3500	10,700
1914	7200	7000	13,100
1915	6100	6200	12,300

Gustave's name was attached to many more parcels of land than James, given his penchant for real estate. But there is no clear explanation for a gain of \$50,000 in 1917. One can only assume that it accounts for the value of James' portion of the Dye Works that Gustave may have bought after his brother's death.

#### **Gustave (and Ernestine) Friedrichs, 986 Park Avenue<sup>44</sup>**

Year	Real Estate Value/ Land and Buildings	Tangible and Intangible Personal Value	Total Value
1912	11,850	500	12,350
1913	6660	500	7,100
1914	6660	6000	12,660
1915	6660	5000	11,660
1916	6660	800	7460
1917		50,900	50,900
1918		53,800	53,800

#### **Deaths and funerals**

Two years after being Woonsocket's wartime hero, James died suddenly. Upon his death on May 3, 1916, the *Woonsocket Call* took to listing each and every flower arrangement that was provided by a member of the community—with descriptions of the flowers. James was the proprietor of the Fairmount Dyeing Company as well as an owner of the newer Cumberland Worsted Company at the time of his death, which took place in nearby

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Slatersville.<sup>45</sup> The newspaper explained that, “At the grave in the Precious Blood cemetery a firing squad from the Twelfth and Sixth companies, C.A.C.R.I.N.G., in charge of Captain Shunney of the Twelfth Company, fired a volley over the last resting place of the deceased, which was a member of the United States Military Training Camp association.”<sup>46</sup> James’ pallbearers were all highly regarded politicians and businessmen.

Among the politicians was James’ own brother. Gustave served on Woonsocket Common Council for a single two-year term in 1915 and 1916. He later ran for mayor twice: in 1924 as an independent, and in 1928 as a Republican. Gustave called for the establishment of a business administration and advocated for the building of a textile school during his first campaign. In 1928, he stole the party nomination out from under current Mayor Hector Paquin. Paquin ran independent and held his seat.<sup>47</sup>

Auguste and the family sold Janero Dye Works after the war and opened Moreland Dye Works in Philadelphia. That mill was sold after Gustave Friedrichs’ death in 1929.<sup>48</sup> Gustave’s death and funeral proceedings were met with great attention from the local media, and the *Call* provided a near play-by-play of his funeral service at Precious Blood Church on June 3, 1929. Townspeople filled the church for a mass said by five priests at several altars.<sup>49</sup> 90 floral arrangements had been delivered, and delegations were present from the Lodge of Elks, for which Gustave had been a charter member, Alliance Franco-Belge, and from Cercle Marie Louise, a women’s group of which Gustave’s wife, Ernestine, served as president at the time.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> “Obsequies of the late J.H. Friedrichs,” *Woonsocket Call*, May 6, 1916.

<sup>46</sup> C.A.C.R.I.N.G.: Coast Artillery Corps, Rhode Island National Guard. Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> “Recent shock proves fatal to Friedrichs,” *Woonsocket Call*, Friday, May 31, 1929, 1.

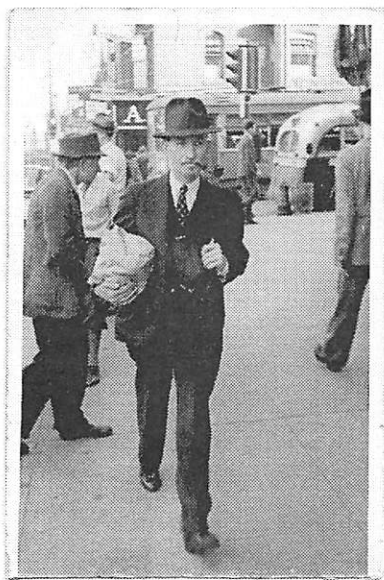
<sup>48</sup> “A.H. Friedrichs dies at age of 54,” *Woonsocket Call*, January 15, 1940, 1.

<sup>49</sup> “Throng joins in final tribute to G.A. Friedrichs,” *Woonsocket Call*, Monday, June 3 1929, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Marie Louise Bonier had founded Cercle Marie Louise, a women’s civic service organization. “AFGS Hall of Fame, Marie Louise Bonier,” American



His death was a complex one. First, Gustave had a weak heart, which had been diagnosed 30 years before his death at the age of 52. Gustave had traveled to Europe by boat “for his health,” but the S.S. Paris became lost in a fog for some time during his return trip, sending Gustave into a panic. Upon arrival, he was confined to his home at 986 Park Avenue, where pleurisy and kidney failure compounded his poor health.<sup>51</sup> He slipped into a coma a day before his death, and passed on May 30 in a Blackstone,



Massachusetts hospital. Gustave Jr., who had taken his father's place at the Woonsocket Dyeing & Bleaching Company during his illness, signed the death certificate.<sup>52</sup> The *Call* counted the death of his daughter Beatrice in a taxicab accident in 1927 among his health factors. “While he had been suffering from heart trouble previous to that time,” the newspaper wrote, “The shock of his daughter's death aggravated his condition.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Woonsocket, surviving**

The family's main representative would have to be Auguste, even if he was located elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> Luckily the community that he—and more so his wife—had been born into, was strong in Woonsocket. Well into

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French Genealogical Society, <http://www.afgs.org/hallfame031.html> (Accessed March 30, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> “Recent shock proves fatal to Friedrichs,” *Woonsocket Call*, Friday, May 31, 1929, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Return of a death, City of Providence, registered number 1854, May 30, 1929, Gustave Adolphe Friedrichs (Accessed via the American French Genealogical Society on March 19, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> “Recent shock proves fatal to Friedrichs,” *Woonsocket Call*, Friday, May 31, 1929, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Auguste is shown on this page in Philadelphia, 1930.

the 20th Century, Woonsocket was considered a “foreign city” because of its high number of French Canadian residents. On the 1920 census, more than half of Woonsocket’s respondents were of French Canadian descent.<sup>55</sup> Marie Louise Bonier wrote that in 1920, there were 5,000 French Canadian families in Woonsocket, a town of 30,000 total residents. A much smaller group of French and Belgian descent was present, numbering 2000 individuals.<sup>56</sup> These immigrants and their descendents were true to their heritage, and longtime Precious Blood pastor Father Charles Dauray was insistent that Anglicized names would be changed back to their original form.<sup>57</sup> While later generations would be confused during their genealogical research, the families affected were no doubt proud of their status as French Canadian or French/Belgian residents of Woonsocket.

Such pride almost derailed Bessie Bloom Wessel’s 1926 study of Woonsocket’s ethnic composition. Wessel conducted her research via surveys distributed in schools in several cities. Woonsocket was the only place where her surveys were rejected by parochial schools. And in a town as French-focused as Woonsocket, well more than half of all the city’s school-age children attended parochial schools.<sup>58</sup> Wessel called the situation peculiar, and it is difficult to argue against her. For the French-speaking community, although many of their homes were bilingual, attendance in public schools was a straight path to total Americanization. The 1930 census revealed that Woonsocket had the third-largest French-speaking population in the United States.<sup>59</sup> *La survivance* was still strong in Woonsocket.

But when it came to the economy, Woonsocket had all its stock in textiles, and the industry was changing. As the immigrant workforce slowly assimilated, tensions grew inside factories.

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<sup>55</sup> Wessel 228.

<sup>56</sup> Bonier 454.

<sup>57</sup> Bonier 113.

<sup>58</sup> Wessel 13

<sup>59</sup> Robert R. Bellerose, *Woonsocket* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Arcadia Publishing, 1997), 29.

Legislation helped the plight of the worker, like in 1913 when a 54-hour workweek was mandated.<sup>60</sup> Such mandates meant limited productivity for owners and managers.

The textile industry moved south in search of reduced expenses and cheaper wages, and Woonsocket felt the pain. Although worsted mills fared better than cotton manufactories, three mills closed in the 1920s, with Glenbrook Worsted Company and Clydesdale Worsted Company closing within a year of each other in 1926 and 1927.<sup>61</sup> The Social Mill, which had opened in 1818, also closed its doors in 1927.<sup>62</sup> While other companies tried to pick up the slack, there seemed to be a sense of denial in the community. N. David Bouley, who wrote prolifically about the area, wrote in the town's centennial history, "Despite the closing of many Woonsocket mills, all of which had long-provided employment for Woonsocket families, there were abundant signs during the 1920s that the city's overall industrial economy was in a healthy condition."<sup>63</sup>

No amount of optimism could save the city from the Great Depression. 80 percent of the city's mills closed, and by the late 1930s unemployment sat at 25 percent.<sup>64</sup> "The value of the city's manufacturers fell by almost half from 1929 to 1936, from \$81 million to \$43 million," wrote Gary Gerstle. "The number of jobs available in manufacturing shrank from 15,000 in early 1930 to 11,000 in 1935, a loss of almost 30 percent."<sup>65</sup>

The exodus lasted through the war and into the 1950s. In 1954 alone, more than 2700 textile jobs were lost, according to Martin P.

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<sup>60</sup> Bonier 536.

<sup>61</sup> N. David Bouley, *Woonsocket: A Centennial History*, edited by Marcel Fortin (State College, P.A.: Jostens Printing and Publishing Division, 1988), 78.

<sup>62</sup> Bonier 536.

<sup>63</sup> Bouley 78.

<sup>64</sup> Bonier 536.

<sup>65</sup> Gary Gerstle, *Working Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 96.

Crowley Jr. in the town's centennial history.<sup>66</sup>

## Remainders

Marie Louise was close to her parents well into adulthood. Simon had expanded his business in the coal yard to include trucking, and Simon Benoit and Son was established upon Philip's return to the area around 1918.<sup>67</sup> Simon retired in the late 1920s, allowing his son to take over the business. He fell ill in early December and died two days before Christmas in 1932. Services and internment no doubt took place at Precious Blood church and cemetery. The newspaper headline stated, "Old resident dies," not an insult but a nod to a longtime resident with strong ties to the town and the French Canadian community.<sup>68</sup>

After Gustave died, Auguste retired and returned with Marie Louise in Woonsocket. But in 1938, he returned to Philadelphia, where he agreed to supervise the construction of a new dyeing plant for the Durnley Worsted Mills. After the new facility was complete, Auguste stayed on as superintendent.<sup>69</sup>

When Auguste died in Philadelphia in January of 1940, news quickly traveled to Woonsocket, where it was given front-page treatment in the evening newspaper. Auguste had just visited Woonsocket for the New Year holiday, and appeared to be in good health. The newspaper could only note that his death came after a "short illness" that had put him in a Philadelphia hospital.<sup>70</sup> At the time, younger son Russell had been his assistant at the Durnley Worsted Mill. August Jr. was a chemist in the paint division of DuPont DeNemours Company in Philadelphia.<sup>71</sup> Auguste was buried in the family plot.

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<sup>66</sup> Martin P. Crowley Jr., *Woonsocket: A Centennial History*, edited by Marcel Fortin (State College, P.A.: Jostens Printing and Publishing Division, 1988), 145.

<sup>67</sup> "Simon Benoit, 75, old resident, dies," *Woonsocket Call*, December 24, 1932, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> "A.H. Friedrichs dies at age of 54," *Woonsocket Call*, January 15, 1940, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Auguste's wife survived her mother by only four years. Marie Louise was living with her brother Philippe when she died on July 12, 1950 of hypertensive heart disease, arteriosclerosis, and cerebral hemorrhage. While census records never show her with an occupation, the Record of Death from Woonsocket shows her occupation as a kinker, a mill job that she may have performed on an occasional basis during busy periods.<sup>72</sup>

Philippe and his family would stay behind in Woonsocket to run the trucking company, but the Friedrichs family scattered throughout New England. Russell, my grandfather, served in the Coast Guard for three years during World War II off the coast of Alaska, where he would say the water was so cold that if you went overboard, no one went in after you. He lived in Lakewood, New Jersey, after the war. August Jr. eventually settled there. But this story ends in Philadelphia, which Russell decided was home after meeting his future wife in Lakewood.

In Woonsocket, a few of the factories have been turned into condominiums. Otherwise, the town is quiet.

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<sup>72</sup> Copy of the Record of Death, Woonsocket, R.I., Marie Louise Friedrichs, August 21, 1950.

# Louis Genereux and Odile Gagnon

By George Buteau

My maternal great-grandparents, Louis Genereux and Odile Gagnon, were born eleven months apart and had lived less than 20 miles apart in the Province of Quebec (QC) but were not to meet until after they had both moved to Woonsocket, RI with their respective families around 1859. Louis was born in St. Cuthbert, Berthier County, QC on December 3, 1849, the eighth child of Paul Genereux and Adelaide Baril. He was baptized the very next day in St. Cuthbert parish church. Odile was born on November 11, 1850 in Sorel, Richelieu County, QC to Clement Gagnon and Isabelle Lavallee and was baptized two days later in St. Pierre parish church.

We can trace Louis Genereux's ancestry back to his fourth great-grandfather, Pierre Genereux, who came to New France in September of 1686 as a soldier with the Franche-Marines sent by the French crown to help protect the inhabitants from the Iroquois. Pierre's actual date and place of birth are unknown but his marriage record states that he was from the diocese of Limoges, France. When Pierre Genereux was recruited, he would have been between the ages of 16 and 25, which would place his birth between the years of 1661 and 1670. Some Genereux researchers have identified the parents of Pierre Genereux as Pierre Genereux and Anna Plaza. Although not one of the major research works such as Jette, PRDH and Drouin has identified this couple as the parents of Pierre Genereux, the originator of this claim has said that he learned of their identities from a source he did not originally document and that he has since been unable to relocate. Another Genereux researcher believes that Pierre's real surname may not have been Genereux and may never be known. He suggests that Genereux probably represents a "Nom de Guerre" or "dit name"

given to a soldier headed to war. He claims that Pierre, for whatever reason, decided to keep his Genereux "dit" surname for the rest of his life. When the companies of marines were to be reduced in size around 1698-1699 by order of the King of France, soldiers willing to marry and settle in New France were granted a year's salary. Pierre Genereux and more than 100 other soldiers took advantage of this offer. On September 28, 1699, Pierre, who was most likely in this early 30s, married twenty-one year old Francoise Dessureaux in Champlain, QC. The translated marriage record states:

*This day twenty eighth of the month of September the year one thousand six hundred ninety nine after the publication of three banns of marriage on 3 consecutive Sundays between Pierre Genereux soldier of Monsieur Chevalier Degrais of the bishopric of Limoge and Francoise Dessureaux daughter of Francois Dessureaux and of Marie Bouard her father and mother inhabitants of Batiscan the girl residing in this parish. I undersigned priest pastor of this parish of N.D. de Champlain have married them according to the custom of our Holy Mother Church in the presence of Jean Boimenes step-father of the girl, of Francois Fafart and of Francois Baillac and Anthoine Poupart friends of the said couple all of whom declared not to know how to sign as required following the ordonance at Champlain this day and year above. Signed: L. Geoffroy, priest*

Pierre and Francoise had a dozen children including six sons. Pierre's son, Pierre Francois Genereux, married Marie Latour in 1723. Their son, Francois Pierre, married Ursule Amable Desrosiers in 1754. They had Joseph Ambroise Genereux who married Catherine Piette dite Trempe in 1789. He was the father of Joseph Ambroise Genereux who married Madeleine Duteau dite Grandpre in 1810. Their son, Paul Genereux, who was baptized Vincent de Paul in 1816, married Adelaide Baril in 1838 in St. Barthelemy, QC. Paul died in St. Cuthbert in 1866 but Adelaide and her children, including my great-grandfather, Louis, emigrated from Canada to New England. Adelaide died in East Douglas, MA in October, 1899.

Odile Gagnon's ancestry can be traced back to her fourth great-grandfather, Robert Gagnon, who was also Louis Genereux's fifth great-grandfather in his mother's line. Robert was born in Ventrouze, France in 1628, the son of Jean Gagnon and Marie Geffray. He came to Canada in 1655 and obtained a land grant on the Ile d'Orleans the next year. The following year, at age 29, Robert married fourteen year old Marie Parenteau who was contracted to come to Canada as a "Fille a Marier" to be his wife. These "Marriageable Girls" were recruited between 1634 and 1663 to emigrate from France to be married. Unlike the "Filles du Roi", who arrived in Canada between 1663 and 1673, these girls were neither sponsored by nor given a dowry from the French King. They were usually recruited and chaperoned by religious groups. Odile's fifth great-grandmother traced through her mother, Elisabeth (Isabelle) Lavallee, was Catherine Baillon, a "Fille du Roi". Catherine's published ancestry goes back twenty-nine generations through royal lines to Charlemagne who was crowned Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day, 800 A.D.

There are no family stories to tell us how Louis and Odile met. But they were still teenagers when they were married in St. Charles Borromeo church in Woonsocket on March 29, 1869. Louis was 19 years of age and Odile was 18. Louis' twenty-nine year old sister, Marie Adelaide Genereux, married twenty-seven year old Joseph Grandchamp dit Cornellier on the same day in the same parish. St. Charles, the oldest Catholic church in Northern RI, had been built only two years earlier.

On June 29, 1870 in the United States Census, Louis and Odile, whose first names were recorded as Lewis and Louisa, were living in Central Falls, RI with Louis' widowed mother, Adelaide Baril Genereux. Listed as Adeline Genereaux, Adelaide was head of the household of several family members including Louis' sister, Adelaide, her husband, Joseph, and their five month old daughter, Mary. Louis' mother was keeping house, his sister, Adelaide, was a dressmaker, Louis' sixteen year old brother, Napoleon, was a clerk in a grocery store and the remaining members of the household, including Adelaide's husband, Joseph, whose surname was misspelled Constine, were working in a woolen mill.



In 1872, Louis bought property on Sayles St. in Woonsocket from his father-in-law, Clement Gagnon, for the sum of \$1000 to be paid in 40 installments of \$25. The deed was signed by both Louis and Odile with an X indicating that neither of them could read or write. This was supported by United States censuses of 1870, 1880 and 1890 and the Rhode Island state census of 1885 where husband and wife were both recorded as not knowing how to read or write. Louis and Odile lived most of their married life together on Sayles St. The Woonsocket City Directories between 1880 and 1890 have Louis running a saloon and "casket warerooms" at the corner of Sayles and River streets. In the U.S. Census of 1880 and the Rhode Island state census of 1885, Louis' occupation was listed as "undertaker." In the Woonsocket City Directories of 1894 through 1897, Louis was listed as a weaver. In the U. S. Census of 1900, his occupation was "Repairer - carpenter." In the Woonsocket City Directories of 1901 through the year of his death, only his home address was listed with no occupation. Louis and Odile were not recorded in the U.S. Census of 1910.

Louis and Odile had 12 children between 1870 and 1892. Eight sons survived to adulthood. Their first child, Clement, was born in July, 1870, shortly after the 1870 census recorded his parents in Central Falls. There is no record of the exact date and place of his birth but it can be assumed that he was born in Central Falls. Clement died unmarried at age 33 on October 13, 1903 in Woonsocket.

Louis and Odile's remaining eleven children were born in Woonsocket. A son was stillborn on March 24, 1872. Marie Jeanne Georgianna Genereux followed two years later on June 23, 1874. She died at the age of two years on June 17, 1876 in Woonsocket.

Napoleon Genereux was born on December 28, 1875. He married Gerena Gagnon on April 25, 1898 in Precious Blood parish in Woonsocket. They had four children: Florence (1899-1970), Irene (1904 died at 1 day), Louis P. (1909-1975), and Willard E. (1910-1980). Napoleon died on October 6, 1951. I went with my parents to his wake in his home on Alice Avenue in Woonsocket. I had

never met him before his death and remember noticing, as he lay in his open casket, how much he resembled my grandfather who was his younger brother. I was just ten years old at the time and because this was the first wake I had ever been to and the first dead person I had ever seen, I recall having an interesting discussion with my father later about death and the function and importance of wakes.

Cyprien Genereux was born on August 27, 1877. He married Marie Louise Laliberte in East Douglas, MA on May 12, 1908. They had one child, Doris, who was born in 1909. Cyprien died in Worcester, MA on October 13, 1911. Doris never married and lived to the age of 97. As my mother's first cousin, Doris visited us occasionally in Woonsocket. A couple of years before her death on July 22, 2006, she sent me a quilt that her grandmother, Odile, had made more than 90 years earlier. Since my wife is a quilter who appreciates antique quilts, this has become a family memento and heirloom that she displays in our home.

Louis Alfred Genereux was born on June 4, 1879. He died at the age of one year on June 12, 1880 three days after he appeared in the 1880 U.S. census. His brother, Frederic Genereux, was born on January 31, 1881. He died on May 3, 1946, having never married. Louis Genereux Jr. was born on September 12, 1882. On February 27, 1905, he married Emma Lauzon in Holy Family church in Woonsocket. They had two daughters, Irene (1906-1990) and Viola (1909-1987). Louis died on June 15, 1942 in Woonsocket at age 59.

Arthur Leopold Genereux was born February 5, 1885. He married Eva Bousquet on October 11, 1909 in Our Lady of Victories Church (N.D. des Victoires) in Woonsocket. They had three sons and a daughter, Wilfred Arthur (died in infancy in 1910), Oscar (lived less than a day in 1913), Onile Louis (1918-1979) and Sylvia (1925). Arthur died on March 17, 1962 at age 76.

My grandfather, Gaspard Genereux, was born on September 28, 1889. He married Annette Lefrere on January 10, 1914 in Holy Family church in San Francisco, CA. They met after he returned

from the Philippine Islands and was stationed at the Presidio awaiting discharge from the U.S. Army. Annette was the traveling companion of an English woman who had come to San Francisco to be married. Gaspard and Annette had six children, who, except for my mother, were all born in Woonsocket. My mother, Raymonde O., was born in San Francisco in 1914. She died in Woonsocket in 1990. My aunts and uncles were: Robert Arthur (1916-1999), Paul C. (1918-2008), Louis C. (1921-2010), Therese B. (1923-1988) and Irene C. (1926-1985).

Marie Cecilia Eva Genereux was born on June 8, 1891. She must have died before 1900 because she did not appear in the U.S. census recorded on June 4, 1900 in Woonsocket.

Edmond Olivier Genereux was born on October 12, 1892. On February 7, 1916, he married Bernadette Salvasin Holy Family church in Woonsocket. They had no children. Edmond died on October 4, 1918 in Woonsocket after only two years of marriage. His widow remained in the Genereux household on Sayles St. until after the death of Odile.

Louis Genereux died on November 18, 1911 at age 61 following a stroke. His obituary appearing in the Woonsocket Call the following day read:

**LOUIS GENEREUX.**

*Louis Genereux, for over half a century a resident of this city, died early Saturday morning at his home, 131 Sayles street. Mr. Genereux was in his 63d year. He suffered a paralytic shock some time ago, from which he failed to recover. Mr. Genereux formerly conducted an undertaking business in this city, years ago, and retired some time ago.*

*Mr. Genereux was born in Canada and came to this city when a boy. He always resided here since. He was well and favorably known, especially by the older residents.*

*He is survived by a widow and six sons, Napoleon, Frederic, Louis, Jr., Arthur, Gaspard and Edmond Genereux. He also leaves two brothers, Fred Genereux of Manville and Arsene Genereux of Pawtucket .*

*The deceased was a member of Council St. Jean Baptiste, No. 2, L'U. St. J. B. D'A. The funeral was held Monday morning at 8:30 o'clock from his late home, with a high mass of requiem at 9 o'clock at the Holy Family church.*

After her husband's death, Odile continued to live in her residence on Sayles street. My mother told me that she remembered that her Memere Odile, whose first name she had been given as a middle name, was blind in one eye. An undated newspaper clipping reported the following on Odile's surgery to remove a cataract from her left eye:

### *SIGHT IS RESTORED*

*Cataract Removed From Left Eye of Mrs. Odile Genereux by Dr. T. F. Kennedy.*

*Mrs. Odile Genereux of 257 Sayles street, deprived of the sight of the left eye for the past two years, is now able to see and work, as a result of a difficult operation performed yesterday by Dr. T. Frank Kennedy, eye, ear, nose and throat specialist. Mrs. Genereux had the misfortune six years ago to lose the sight of the right eye after a cataract developed. She was operated upon at that time at the Boston Eye and Ear Infirmary, but despite the skill of the surgeons and the careful attention of the hospital authorities the sight of the eye was lost.*

*Two years ago a cataract developed on the left eye, and Mrs. Genereux became blind and rendered unable to perform her regular duties about the house. Yesterday Dr. Kennedy performed the operation, removing the cataract, and Mrs. Genereux is today a happy woman.*

Doris Genereux, daughter of Cyprien Genereux and Marie Louise Laliberte, wrote the following about her grandmother, Odile, in a July, 2000 letter to me:

*"... I recall her as a gentle person, sitting in her rocker at the window saying her beads & crocheting with one eye closed. Her hair was pure white with a pug, very plain.*

*Uncle Fred lived with her and I remember playing "buttons" (n.b. a game like Parcheesi) on the reverse side of the table oil cloth. Overhead was a single gas light.*

*I remember her very high feather bed. I would sink in the middle of it between her and my mother. She would use a broom handle to level it off.*

*Her favorite candies were Canada mints, small squirrel peanut bars & "Boston Baked Beans", a covered nut. She would bake a plain butter cake - no icing and a double crust custard cream pie with a thin icing, she named a "Neapolitan". (n.b. This same pie continues in our family today renamed "Napoleon" pie). It is strange how little things come back to memory.*

*I think she favored me because I was the orphan. Nice memories!"*

In the U.S. Census of 1920, Odile Gagnon Genereux was living in her home on Sayles St. with her unmarried son, 39 year old Frederic, and her 23 year old widowed daughter-in-law, Bernadette. Odile died on March 20, 1924 in her home. She is buried with her husband and several sons in the Genereux family burial lot 26 in Precious Blood Cemetery. Her obituary appeared in the Woonsocket Call on March 21:

#### MRS. ODILE GENEREUX

*Mrs. Odile (Gagnon) Genereux, 73 years old, widow of Louis Genereux, died in her home, 257 Sayles Street, last night at 11:45 o'clock after an illness of three weeks. She was born in Sorel, Can., and had lived here a number of years. She was a member of the Ladies of Ste. Ann and the Union of Prayer of Holy Family parish.*

*Five sons, Napoleon, Frederic, Louis, Arthur and Gaspard Genereux, a brother. Edouard Gagnon, and a sister, Mrs. Francois Coulombe, all of this city, survive her.*

*The funeral will be held from the home Monday morning with a high mass of requiem in the Church.*

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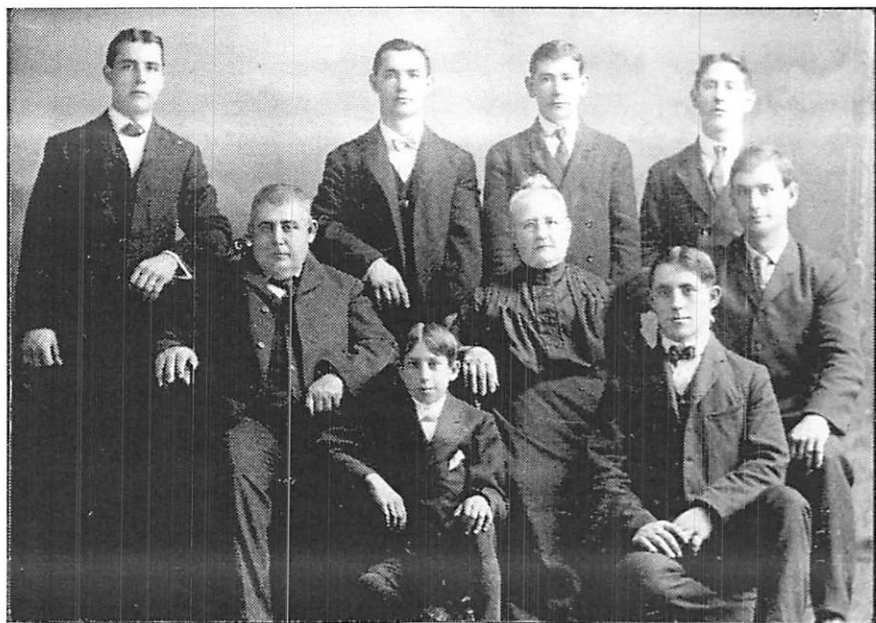
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## About the Author

George Buteau is a long-time AFGS member, an assistant editor of JMS and a frequent contributor.



Top Row (L to R): Louis Jr., Napoleon, Frederick, Arthur  
 Seated (L to R): Louis Sr., Odile (Gagnon), Cyprien  
 Front Row (L to R): Edmund, Gaspard

**Figure 5.** Photo circa 1904-1906





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Burials of the Joseph Lauzon & Sons Funeral Home (1911-1988),  
Woonsocket, Rhode Island

11 Fiche           \$11.00

Burials of Menard Funeral Home (1970-1990), Woonsocket,  
Rhode Island

5 Fiche            \$ 5.00

## *FUNERAL HOME REPERTOIRES*

Burials of Menoche Funeral Home (1955-1984), Woonsocket,  
Rhode Island

5 Fiche                      \$5.00

Burials of the Potvin Funeral Home (1893-1960), West Warwick,  
Rhode Island.

19 Fiche                      \$ 19.00

Burials of Potvin Funeral Home (1960-1995), West Warwick, RI -  
7 Fiche                      \$7.00

Burials of the Alfred Roy & Sons Funeral Home (1904-1994),  
Worcester, Massachusetts

23 Fiche                      \$23.00

## DEATH REPERTOIRES (FROM CHURCH RECORDS)

Burials of the First Universalist Church (1834-1998), Woonsocket,  
Rhode Island.

5 fiche                      \$5.00

Burials of Holy Family Catholic Church (1902-1987),  
Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

13 fiche                      \$13.00

Burials of Our Lady of Good Help Catholic Church (1905-1995),  
Mapleville, Rhode Island.

3 fiche                      \$3.00

Burials of St Joseph Catholic Church (1905-1986), Attleboro,  
Massachusetts.

5 fiche                      \$5.00

Burials of St Joseph Catholic Church (1872-1990), N.  
Grosvenordale, CT.

10 fiche                      \$10.00

## DEATH REPERTOIRES (FROM CHURCH RECORDS)

Burials of St Matthew's Catholic Church (1906-1988), Central Falls, Rhode Island.

8 fiche                \$8.00

## BAPTISM/MARRIAGE/DEATH REPERTOIRES

Baptisms, & Marriages of Our Lady of Good Help Catholic Church (1905-1995), Mapleville, Rhode Island

6 Fiche                \$ 6.00

Baptisms, & Marriages of St Michael Catholic Church (1922-1995), Swansea (Ocean Grove), Massachusetts

8 Fiche                \$ 8.00

Baptisms, Marriages & Burials of Sacred Heart Catholic Church (1879-1990), West Thompson, Connecticut

5 Fiche                \$ 5.00

## MISCELLANEOUS BOOKS

Burials of Oak Hill Cemetery, Woonsocket, RI.

7 fiche                \$7.00

French and Belgian Immigrants to Northern Rhode Island.

3 fiche                \$3.00

Letourneau Dictionary-The Descendants of David Letourneau (1616 to Present).

12 fiche                \$12.00

Letourneau Dictionary-The Descendants of Guillaume Letourneau & Letourneaus of NH.

4 fiche                \$4.00

Postage and handling on all fiche is \$2.00 for the first set, and \$.75 for each additional set.

# Research Policy

Spring 2011

The American-French Genealogical Society accepts requests for ancestral searches. This offer is open to the general public, members or not. The only requirement is that the ancestor you are seeking be French-Canadian, for that is the focus of our organization, and the area where we can be of the most help.

To utilize the AFGS Research Service, simply print the research request sheet by clicking on the research request form at the bottom of the page at our website, [www.afgs.org](http://www.afgs.org), fill in the necessary information, and send via regular mail to the address listed on the form. No requests will be accepted via email at this time.

To utilize the AFGS Research Service, please fill out the research form with the following information and send it in regular mail:

## **What You Need To Send To Us**

1) Your request with a choice of one of the following;

### **Type of Research**

Single Marriage - One marriage to search.

Marriages of parents will also be counted as additional single marriages and billed as such.

Direct Lineage - A straight line of either a husband or wife back to the immigrant ancestor. This will include each couple, their date and place of marriage, and their parents' names and location of immigrants in France. Price for direct lineages will be determined by the number of generations found times the rates for research as applicable.

Five Generation Ancestral Chart - Standard five generation ancestral chart of 31 ancestors with 8 marriages found. The last column of names will give parents' names only: no marriages as they will start a new five generation chart.

Your name, street, city, state, zip code, and member number if you are an AFGS member

Any pertinent information you may have should also be sent.

### **What We Will Do In Return**

After receiving your request, we will start as soon as possible on your research. Currently, our staff is very busy with a record number of searches to perform, so please be patient. We will then notify you by mail of our findings and bill you in advance for the research performed using the applicable rates listed below.

### **Your Approval**

After receiving our report and billing statement, return the top portion with a check payable to AFGS. Upon receipt, we will forward your requested research.

All requests not found by the Research Committee will be placed in the question and answer section of our semi-annual journal, *Je Me Souviens*.

#### **Rates**

\$5.00 per marriage (AFGS Members)

\$10.00 per marriage (Non-members)

\$35.00 per 5-generation chart - Direct Lineage (AFGS Members)

\$50.00 per 5-generation chart - Direct Lineage (Non-members)

Please be patient, the Research Committee is a volunteer group, as is the entire AFGS. There is a backlog of requests, and the group is working very hard to keep up with the demand!

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Nous parlons Français



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Wilfred Paille married Georgeline Bombardier on 02 Dec 1904 in Fall River, MA. Wilfred came from Winsor Falls, PQ. Georgeline came from Valcourt, PQ. They lived most of their married life in Norton, MA.