

5.

Les Bélangers de Quebec Family Roots Replanted From France to the USA

*This work traces the ancestry of the Bélanger family
from France, to Quebec, through New Brunswick,
then to Maine & New Hampshire*

Contributors

Irene Michaud Bélanger
John Bélanger, Caribou, Maine
Michael Bélanger, Zion, Illinois
Phyllis Bélanger, Caribou, Maine
Elaine Libovicz, Elmhurst, Illinois
Stephen Bélanger, Caribou, Maine
William Bélanger, Caribou, Maine
Richard Bélanger, Bristol, Connecticut
Lawrence Bélanger, Plainville, Connecticut
Sandra St Pierre-Bélanger, Hollis, New Hampshire
Lorraine (Lavoie) Jensen, Drummond, N.B. Canada
Barbara Bélanger-Dumond, E. Hampton, Connecticut
Dolores Bélanger, Grand Falls, New Brunswick, Canada
Mrs. Cecile Michaud-Violette, St. Leonard, New Brunswick, Canada
Neville & Marina Bélanger- McCormick, Grand Falls, New Brunswick Canada

Author - Jim Bélanger
Proof-reading - Elaine Libovicz

Publisher - Jim Bélanger

THE GERALD BELANGER FAMILY AND ITS ROOTS

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late father and mother, Gerald Louis Bélanger and Irene Michaud Bélanger, who inspired it but never lived to see the start of it. Research into the early pioneering start of the family, historical accounts of the times and stories of the 20th century, produced the product you see here. This compilation of information came from many genealogical sources, visits to parishes and cemeteries in Quebec and stories told to me by others. I have written this work and noted from whom the information was received as part of the text. Without information from my brothers and sister and those cousins who supplied it, I could not have come close to completing this work. There came a time when I had to stop asking for more information and publish what I had. The project took a great deal of time, as it was, and I could no longer wait for those who had not sent in anything. Therefore, we went to press with what we had. My sister Phyllis has been invaluable in this project.

The birth of this project was inspired by my late mother, Irene Michaud Bélanger, and she was only a Bélanger by marriage. Irene provided a stack of information that lacked continuity and form. She probably had more information than she realized and it was not until after her death that Phyllis and I realized what mother really had. Upon entering her notes and all the information she provided, on small pieces of paper, into a computer, we recognized that she had more information on our particular branch of the Bélanger family than even the album provided at the Rassemblement des Bélanger, which is described later. Mother not only provided information on the Bélanger heritage but also supplied endless notes on both the Michaud and Cormier families. To start writing about one's family is a task which no person, who has not started it, can imagine. Seeing that work to a conclusion, however, is a task greater than one can envision at the outset. Inspiration, motivation, persistence, patience and sympathetic companions are necessary ingredients in this endeavor.

I remember the trip to Quebec in 1980 when several of us met in Beauport and L'Ange Gardien for the **Rassemblement des Bélanger** on 19 July 1980, an organized Bélanger family assembly (as opposed to a reunion) attended by some 4,000 interested Bélangers. They came from all parts of the two countries and from all walks of life. Some were from Canada, others from the United States, some spoke French, some English and others, as we were, fluent in both. The organizers estimated that there were approximately 10,000 living descendants, still carrying the Bélanger name, who might have made the trip. The Rassemblement was interesting and served to light a fire in some of us to go deeper into the work done by the organizers of this gathering. The arrival of Francois and Nicolas into New France was reenacted by having people in period dress come into a football stadium, packed with Bélangers, in a horse drawn carriage that would have been in style at the start of the 17th century.

At the Rassemblement, a souvenir album was given out which contained considerable information on the early roots of the Belanger family. I ran across most of this information again, later, in my own research in the sources I used. The album made finding the information much easier, however. The album was the result of several years of work by such people as Leonidas Bélanger, president of the "Societe de Genealogie" and the "Societe Historique" of the Saguenay - Lac-St-Jean region; Louis Philippe Bélanger, engineer and professor at the Laval University; Monsignor Leon Bélanger, P.D. who wrote the story of L'Islet and Roland J. Auger of the Genealogical Section of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Quebec.

The information presented in this writing was obtained from many and various sources. These sources included, but were not limited to, personal knowledge of family members, information obtained by writing letters to living relatives and research done at the American Canadian Genealogical Society

7
Library in Manchester, New Hampshire from the works of such recognized authorities as Tanguay, Jette, Carbonneau, Talbot and others.

A DIFFERENT WORK

Family genealogies usually give dates and places of birth along with marriages but do not convey, to present and future generations, an insight into the lives of the ancestors that could give them a better understanding of their own personalities as well as those of their siblings and parents. The stories and anecdotes contained herein, are a result of this realization as this enormous task unfolded.

Phyllis said; "This story is written for nieces, nephews, grand nieces and grand nephews so that some of their own personality characteristics, attitudes or family expressions might be traced to their origins. In this way, their ancestors and, in fact, their lives might be more real to them and not just names and dates."

My goal was to write the story of my line of the Belanger family but also to collect as much information on the lives of those ancestors and how they fit into the natural course of events of the day at the time they lived. That is why, at times, this may seem like a mini-history of Canada. Without a feeling for what the world was like during the time our ancestors worked and raised a family, one loses touch with what those times were like and how they affected future generations. It helps explain the migration, the decisions and the attitudes of our ancestors.

THE FAMILY MOVEMENT FROM FRANCE TO MAINE

As you will see from the many chapters that follow, our Bélanger family originated from France and progressed across Quebec to New Brunswick and then made its entry into the United States in Maine. Nicolas, our first documented ancestor, came to New France during the early 17th century and settled in Beauport. His son Nicolas moved slightly west to the Charlesbourg area. Ignace, the son of this second Nicolas, made the move across the St Lawrence River to St Vallier and thus he started the eastward progress which led the family to New Brunswick and then into Maine. Ignace had a son named Pierre who established himself at St Roch in the Aulnaies Seigneurie where he raised a large family. Joseph Marie, the son of Ignace, found St Roch to his liking and stayed there. Joseph Marie's son, Damase, continued east and provided for his family at St Alexandre where his son Lucien was born.

Lucien, my immediate grandfather, met Parmella "Leda" Gagnon in Fall River, Massachusetts but married her in her home town of St Pascal which was west of St Alexandre in Kamouraska county. After finding life in Fall River not to be in the best interests of Parmella's health, they moved back to Quebec but did not stay long. It is not certain if they lived in St Pascal or St Alexandre during that brief time before they moved on to New Brunswick. New adventures brought them to Grand Falls, New Brunswick where my father Gerald was born.

The lure of the United States and the availability of work brought Gerald to Van Buren, Maine following in the footsteps of his brother Emile. Gerald raised his family in Van Buren and Caribou, Maine but the traveling generation was in full swing by the time his children were adults and half of them established themselves in other regions of the United States following the availability of work.

That is how the Bélanger family migrated from France to the United States via New France and New Brunswick. The family name has not changed from those early days except that the second "L"

in the spelling of Béllanger was dropped after the first generation in New France. To this day, many spell the name with an accent over the first letter 'e' and others do not. This may be due to the availability of that format on typewriters and word processors. It is interesting that there are many Baker families who have their origins from the Bélanger name but few Boulanger families do. Baker is the English version of Boulanger and yet, few Baker families resulted from Boulanger origins.

ORGANIZATION

I have attempted to organize this material in an orderly fashion. I covered each of our Bélanger ancestors as deeply as I could with the information I have been able to gather. Because their wives were our grandmothers, their families deserve some coverage as well. I have tried to show you where the wife came from, who her parents were and a little about her brothers and sisters.

Because there is some question as to the direct line to Francois Bellanger for our family, I have covered Francois separately and then went on to Nicolas and the families that followed him. Starting with Nicolas, the son of Nicolas and Marie de Rainville, the chapters are organized in a similar manner. I cover our direct male ancestor and his children. Then I cover his wife, our direct female ancestor, her parents and then her brothers and sisters.

You may find some spelling differences for the same names during this work. I tried, whenever possible, to spell the names the way they were spelled in the records I was able to find. If there are any variations in the last names of spouses, it is because they were actually spelled differently in different places. This also accounts for many of the 'dit' names. The French word 'dit' can be translated into English as 'aka' and is an identifier to describe a person's origins which often became a commonly accepted surname for that person.

I sent out numerous requests, verbally and in writing, to my cousins for information on their fathers, their mothers and their own family. I wanted to include as much as I could get from everyone to make this work appealing to more than just my immediate family. I included what I was able to get. Should you be reading this and wonder why your family wasn't better covered, write your story and send it to me for a possible later addendum.

I delayed the publication of this work because I was never satisfied as to the amount of information I had been able to obtain for the generations from Ignace Belanger (1723-1797) to Damase Belanger (1830-1927). I also hoped to obtain more information on the children of Lucien Belanger and Leda Gagnon. There came a time, however, when there needed to be an end to the searching and hoping. After the written work was done, the placing of photos into the script became a task in and of itself. I simply had too many photos to insert and had to limit these too. I have included many more photos and family pedigree charts in the original manuscript and these are available for perusal but were not included in the published work. May 1997 marked the closing of new material and the final preparation to take the work to a printer.

SOME BELANGERS WHO BECAME FAMOUS BY THEIR TRAGIC END

A certain Bellanger was killed by the Iroquois at Montreal in 1643. This fact was mentioned with no more details in "Histoires des Canadiens Francais" Tome III, Page 44 by Benjamin Sulte.

Abbey Charles Edouard Bellanger, pastor of Plessisville, froze to death in the forest of Somerset on 23 November 1845. He was going from Plessisville to Princeville carrying an important message, regarding a school affair. A companion met the same fate as the Abbey Bellanger, although a third was saved. A monument to the memory of this valiant priest was erected in front of the church, St Felix de Plessisville. Another monument was erected at the place where Cure Bélanger and his companion Ambroise Pepin died. It can be found on the road that goes from Princeville on the Trans Canada Highway. The notary Cormier, the other companion of Abbey Bellanger, survived. He told the facts to the Abbey Charles Trudelle who has written this adventure in a historical manuscript of the Parish of St Felix of Plessisville. Charles Edouard Bellanger was a descendant of Nicolas Bellanger and Marie de Rainville.

A half breed, Alexis Bélanger, born in 1816 was employed by the Hudson Bay company since the age of 13, when, in the Spring of 1848 he was killed by a gunshot from an indian when he was going up the Fraser River.

An employee of the Hudson Bay Company, Jean Baptiste Bélanger was killed and eaten by the Iroquois Michel Teroahaute, in a moment of extreme depression.

Acknowledgements

SPECIAL THANKS

Whenever a work of this kind is started, there is always some "mega" contribution by others besides the writers. This is no exception. There are many who provided information and stories to include in this writing. Some of them that deserve special recognition are:

Irene Michaud Bélanger
Phyllis Bélanger, 19 McArthur Ave, Caribou, Maine
Dolores Bélanger, Grand Falls, NB, Canada E0J 1M0
Elaine Libovicz, 635 Hillside Ave, Elmhurst, Illinois 60126
Lorraine (Lavoie) Jensen, Drummond, NB Canada E0J 1M0
Richard, Lawrence, Michael, William, John & Stephen Belanger
Barbara Bélanger-Dumond, 124 Main St, E. Hampton, CT 06424
Cecile Michaud-Violette, POB 188, Main St. St Leonard, NB Canada E0L-1M0
Neville & Marina Bélanger- McCormick, RR1 Grand Falls, NB Canada E0J 1M0