



**American Canadian
Genealogical Society**

Strategies and Hints for Researching Your French- Canadian Ancestors

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Why do a family tree?



"I'm trying to prove we're not related to the kids."

Topics

- Learning where to look for records by understanding migration patterns
- Name changes in Canada, Name changes and variations in the US
- Records used in French-Canadian research
- Primary sources vs. secondary sources
- Our society
- Online resources with examples of those specific to FC research

First some basics

- Work from yourself, to your parents, grandparents
- Document, verify, double check
- When researching your ancestor in there earlier years in the US try to research them in context with their immediate family. With scarcity of records, it's easy to end up with the wrong family!
- Early US records can be scarce or non-existent, lack vital information about your ancestor.
- Avoid assumptions!

Does the information you found make sense?

- Was the child really born 5 years after the father died?
- Did the mother really give birth when she was 80?
- Did your great Grandfather really get married when he was 6?

Migration Patterns Between Canada and the United States

How extensive was the emigration?

- Between 1840 and 1930 roughly 900,000 French Canadians left Canada to emigrate to the United States. By French Canadians, it is understood that they came from Québec Province.
- According to the 1980 American Census, 13.6 million people claimed to have French Ancestors.

Where did they go?

- In the early years, emigrants tended to head for the northern parts of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.
- Because of increased industrialization and the growth of railroads , emigration shifted to Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

Distribution of French-Canadians in the NE States

	ME FC pop % Dist.	NH FC pop % Dist.	VT FC pop % Dist.	MA FC pop % Dist.	RI FC pop % Dist.	CT FC pop % Dist.
1860	7,490 20	1,780 4.7	16,580 44.3	7,780 20.8	1,810 5.0	1,980 5.3
1880	29,000 13.9	26,200 12.6	33,500 16.1	81,000 38.9	19,800 9.5	18,500 8.9
1900	58,583 11.3	74,598 14.4	41,286 8.0	250,024 48.1	56,382 10.9	37,914 7.3
1930	99,765 13.4	101,324 13.6	46,956 6.4	336,871 45.3	91,173 12.3	67,130 9.0

Emigration Patterns

- Emigration of a family usually started with a couple of its members who would 'check out' the situation in a given town
- Family members, cousins, uncles and aunts would usually follow.
- On return to Canada, their perceived wealth would attract others to New England.

The end of French-Canadian Emigration

- The Great Depression virtually put a stop to French-Canadian emigration.
- The textile industry moved to Southern states.
- As jobs were lost, many French-Canadians gathered up their savings and returned to Canada.

Name Changes

- Our ancestors often anglicized their names to 'fit in', simplify the pronunciation
- Vermont seems to have the most creative anglicized names, followed by Maine
- Many of our ancestors were illiterate and could not spell their name
- Names were recorded as heard, often by an English speaking person

Examples:

- Letourneau – Latoneau, Latno
- Pelletier – Pelkey, Peltier
- Paradis – Parady, Parody
- Briand – Brillant, Brien, Brigham, Bright

Generalizations

- Census records will have the anglicized name
- Church records will have original name
 - Except an Irish priest recording a french name!
- Name changes included both given and surnames
- Often used only part of the name
- Think out of the box; we all know Bashaw is Bachand except when its Bergeron!

Phonetic changes: homonyms

- French er/é sound like a long a
 - Lussier= Lucia, Coté=Cota
- ier can sound like y
 - Cloutier= Clukey or Clutee,
- ois, oit, oix all sound like wah/way
 - Benoit= Benway except when its Bennett!
- ert sounds like air but could be spelled are
 - Hebert= Abair, Abare (no 'H' sound in french)
- Sometimes the name was kept & pronounced in English: Benoit (oyt), Pelletier (teer), Always search for Ch names under Sh

Given name dilemma

- Synonyms: Pierre/Peter, Narcisse/Nelson,
 - Nazaire/Nathan, Jacques/John
- Homonyms: Damase/Thomas, Flavie/Phoebe
 - Appoline/Pauline/Polly, Eusebe/Zeb
- Foreshortened: Hyppolite/Paul
- Beware of Joseph: what happened to Cyprien, Celestin and Symphorien?
- Or Marie same with Phélonise, Zénaïde?

....from a research perspective

- Always try to find a comparison
Manchester NH vital, 1893
 - Frank Dufraim m Valerie Shubert
St. Augustin church, Manchester
 - Francois Dufresne m Valerise Chabot
- Census records, city directories
- Verify, verify

Most Common Records Used in French-Canadian Research

- Church Records
- Notarial Records
- Census Records
- Vital Records

Primary vs. Secondary Sources

- **Primary Source** - Original, first-hand account of an event or time period
 - Usually written or made during or close to the event or time period
 - Marriage, Baptisms, Burials (not obits), Draft registrations
- **Secondary Source** - Analyzes and interprets primary sources
 - Second-hand account of an historical event
 - Compilations, transcriptions, etc.

Research Strategy

- When researching your ancestor in the United States use
 - Church records when available
 - Vital Records
 - Other – Census Records, Draft Registrations, Naturalization applications, newspapers, etc.
- Goal is to 'cross the border' back to Canada

- Once back in Canada, church records are the main and best source of information.

Church Records

- The majority of French-Canadians were Catholic
- Excellent records were kept by the churches of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials
- Used as civil records in Canada
- Main tool used in Canadian research
- Many societies have transcribed and indexed these records (great aid in seeking out primary records)

Baptism Record

1
Jos. Girard P^{re}

B. 23 Le dia. sept. M^{re} mil huit cent
Joseph quatre-vingt-neuf nous soussignés, curé de cette
Hlud paroisse, avons baptisé Joseph Hlud, né la veille
Savard fils légitime de Siméon Savard, cultivateur, et
de Amélie Tremblay, de cette paroisse. Le parrain
a été Joseph Dallaire, de cette paroisse, cousin
de l'enfant, la marraine Marie Tremblay, amie
de cette paroisse tante de l'enfant, lesquels ont
signé avec nous ainsi que le père.

Lecture faite
Marie Tremblay
Joseph Dallaire
Siméon Savard

Joseph Girard P^{re}

24 Le vingt M^{re} mil huit cent

Marriage Record

M 38
Le vingt quatre Nov-
embre mil huit cent quarante
un la dispenſe triſile de trois
Eliſe Framblay au quatrième degré de conſanguini-
tè; accordée par M. le Curé de
Chamvix vicair général de Sa-
seigneur Joſeph Eugène de Arceſſe
en date du vingt des préſents mois
et après la publication de trois bans
demariagez faite au ſecours de nos
mesſes parſonnes entre Yvanis
Savard entretenu fils majeur de
de ſaint Joſeph Savard de Cole deſigné
Dionora Perignon de cette paroiſſe
d'une part et Eliſabeth Framblay,
ſille mineure de Joſeph Framblay
cultivateur de Cole deſigné Eliſabeth
Juchon auſſi de cette paroiſſe
d'autre part, ne ſ'étant découvert
aucun empêchement, nous ſous-
ſigné deſſous ſeul de cette paroiſſe, du con-
ſentement du père de la dite Eliſe-
beth Framblay, nous avons les man-
dés ſonſentement & demariage et

Drouin Institute

- Photographed and put on microfilm the vast majority of Quebec province church records from the founding of the various parishes up to the 1940s. Over 20 million baptisms, marriages, burials
- Indexed the marriages
- These are primary records, recorded at the time the event occurred!
- As can be expected, the majority of these records are written in French.
- These are readily available at our library, [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), [Genealogiequebec.com](https://www.genealogiequebec.com).
- A subset is also available on [familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org)

Notarial Records

- Virtually every transaction that occurred in Quebec was documented through a notary.
- This includes
 - Marriage contracts
 - Land transactions
 - Probate records
 - Inventory at death
 - Guardianship

Marriage contracts

- Notarial marriage contracts can serve as a replacement when the marriage record no longer exists
- List parties getting married, what they bring to the marriage, disposition of property should one die before the other. Often acts as a will
- Some have an amazing amount of detail!

Census Records

- Since many of our French-Canadian ancestors lived in both countries, census records help us track their travels.
- Comparing Canadian and US census records for families helps us to verify that we are looking at the same family on both sides of the border. Look for the same kids, same approximate age.
- Especially useful when there were unique names, less useful when everybody had common names like Mary, Joseph, John!
- Not a primary record because we don't know who gave the information so names/ages can be off

Dit Names

Dit Names – important when researching Canadian records

Definition: An ‘alias’ tacked onto a surname

- dit means “to say” thus ‘also called’ Example:
Miville dit le Suisse

Where? France, New France

- Names were regional, adding a “dit” differentiated families



Nom & surnom de l'homme

lefebvre ET

Prénom de l'homme

ET

Nom & surnom de la femme

ET

Prénom de la femme

ET

Ressemblance

Période : de

à

Rôles

Tous les rôles

Paroisse

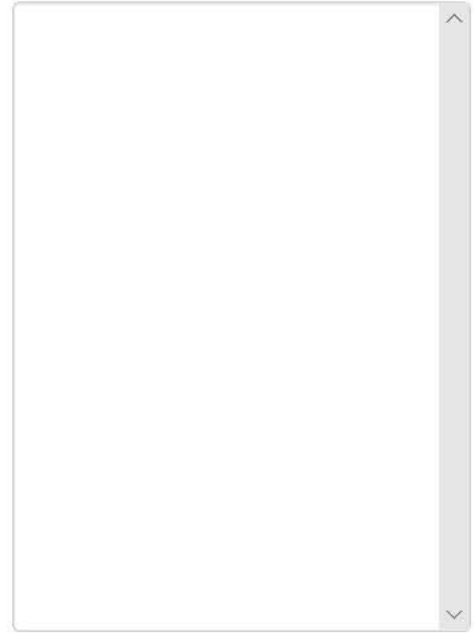
Toutes les paroisses

Rechercher

Effacer tout

Surnoms avec LEFEBVRE

- boulangier (2962)
- descoteaux (1099)
- laciseray (817)
- villemure (768)
- lacroix (438)
- despins (257)
- angers (144)
- duchouquet (143)
- beaulac (131)
- bellefeuille (103)
- labbe (101)
- lernerise (77)
- denoncourt (58)
- duplessis (58)
- belisle (56)
- faber (52)
- belanger (45)
- decoste (37)
- briquet (30)
- villeronde (21)
- senneville (20)
- batanville (19)
- michauville (17)
- villeneuve (17)



“Dit” were often given to differentiate people
with same last names

Could be based on:

- Physical features (Le Blond, Le Roux)
- Moral features (Bon Enfant, Le Sage, Malenfant)
- Trades (Boulanger, Boucher)
- Places of Origin, including province, town, city or village (le Picard, le Normand)
- Residences

American-Canadian Genealogical Society

- Records
- Transcriptions of most of the Quebec Parish Records (Repertoires)
- Research Services
- Many online databases available at the library
 - GenealogieQuebec
 - PRDH
 - Ancestry.com, American Ancestors, Family Search (affiliate library)
- Volunteers to assist you

Online Resources - Subscription

- Ancestry.com – huge collection of US and Canadian records (beware of family trees!)
- GenealogyBank.com, Newspapers.com – Extensive newspaper collection
- FindMyPast.com
- MyHeritage.com
- Fold3.com – Military records
- BMS2000.org – Extensive collection of transcribed records from various Quebec genealogy societies
- GenealogieQuebec.com – Searchable database with links to original images
- Genealogie.umontreal.com (PRDH) – Early FC family groupings
- AmericanAncestors.org (NEHGS)

Online Resources - Free

- FamilySearch.Org – Maintained by LDS church. Billions of records
- Google – often overlooked, can point you to that obscure record!
- Googlebooks – tons of genealogy books!
- Archive.org – genealogy books, vital records, histories
- Provincial archives of each province
- Rootsweb.com
- Genweb by state

- FindAGrave.com, Billiongraves.com – will have pictures of gravestones, obituaries, etc. Good hints that need to be verified
- Fultonhistory.com – this guy has singlehandedly digitized more newspaper pages than the Library of Congress. Majority are New York publications. Great NY resource.

**I sent that 'Ancestry' site
some information on my
Family Tree.**

**They sent me back a pack
of Seeds,
and suggested that I
just start Over.**