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EARLY FAMILIES OF THE UPPER GREAT LAKES

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.Francois Belanger.

contributed by: [John Martin](#)

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One of the original pioneers of Beaupré, Quebec and also the first seigneur of Bonsecours, L'Islet, Québec. Francois was born in 1612 in Saint-Pierre, village and church of Seez in the south of Normandy. He was brought over by Robert Giffard in 1636 (according to a note of the Jesuits) and married in 1637. Records of Notre-Dame-de-Québec, marriages show François and Marie Guyon (July 12, 1637) had two children married there, Marie Madeleine & Nicolas (who married Marie de Rainville).. He married thirteen year old Marie Guyon, daughter of Jean and Mathurine Robin. This union was blessed by Father Charles Lallemant, of Notre-Dame-des-Anges. The marriage contract was signed in 1640. This document described him as a mason by trade. It was drawn up by Jean Guyon, notary royal of Canada. This couple had 12 children, of which 10 had children of their own.

The 1667 census shows him as having 50 arpents (acres) under cultivation and 13 beasts in his stable. He was listed as the captain of police for Beaupré, as well.

He witnessed at the signing of the marriage contract of Robert Drouin and the ten year old Anne Cloutier. His signature shows that he had an education superior to that of the average settler.

Jetté has this information: "peut-être de Saint-Thomas de Touques, ar. Pont-L'Évêque, év. de Lisieux, Normandie (Calvados); décédé entre le 25-10-1685 et le 25-04-1687,

L'Islet, QC; peut être parent de Nicolas; 54 ans au rec. 66, 55 ans au rec. 67, à Beaupré; 60 ans au rec. 81, à L'Islet, QC; cité capitaine de milice de Beaupré de 1663-1677; concession de la seigneurie de Bonsecours (à L' Islet, QC) le 01-07-1677, hérité par son fils Charles; (remarque: un François Bélanger, fils de François et de Françoise Horlays, a été baptisé le 07-10-1612 à Saint-Pierre de Sees, Normandie, Orne. [AGA, MSGCF (104): 85-103 et (105): 13 1-143])"

#2

A baptismal record was found in the parish register of St. Pierre de Seez, Orne and reads as follows: " On October 07, 1612 was baptized François Bélanger, son of François Bélanger and Françoise Horlays. He was named by the Honorable François Dumesnil, lord notary, Lord of St. Teny. Present were the Honorable Nicolas Bougis, Lord of Fosses and controller and Lady Loyse Gurou, wife of the noble Guillaume Lepaulnier, notary, Lord of the Chapel." There is nothing to verify that this is the Baptismal record of François Bélanger that came to Canada.

Sources:

Other : TANGUAY: Dictionnaire Gen. des Fam. du Quebec: v. 1, p. 38

Other : BBS: 14 Mar 94 16:58:00 Henry Lanouette

Capt of Militia, Beaupré 1663-77. Concession of the seigneurie de Bonsecours L'Islet. Transferred to son Charles

#3

Mayor of Longue Point in 1653

Confirmed living in Château-Richer 2 Feb 1660

François originally received six arpents (acres) of land in Château-Richer. In 1660 appointed marguillier at Château-Richer and curator of the public affairs of Olivier le Tardif at his death. In 1662 and 1669 Captain of the Militia of Château-Richer. On July 1, 1677 governor of Frontenac conceded land to him covering one mile and half facing the St. Lawrence by two miles of depth on the southern bank, later known as the province of Bonsecours. His death was in 1687, during the ratification of donation made to his son, he did not appear on any of the documents. (per "Le Centre de genealogie francophone d'America," translated from French to English)

"François Bélanger was a mason, an active and resourceful, informed, and honest businessman. He was sought after as an expert appraiser. He was also authoritative, violent, and tenacious in his demands. He was better educated than his fellow citizens, and he sought to impose his will on them in a thousand and one ways. From the time of his arrival in Canada, François Bélanger worked for seignior Robert Giffard. On August 9, 1653 the Journal of Jesuits reports François Bélanger was chosen for the important office of mayor of the citizens in the Québec region near Longue Pointe. The area would become the parish of St-Anne-de-Beaupré...In 1669 he was named Captain of the militia of the Beaupré coast. As Captain of the Militia his duties were 'the heads of

municipal organization in each village. He had to carry out the governor's ordinances, and supervise the construction and maintenance of roads.' François Bélanger carried a reputation as an honest man but a hard man to do business with. He had law suites against his brother-in-law Simon Guyon that Bélanger lost and had to pay damages. Earlier he lost another lawsuit to his former partner Massé Gravel over property boundaries. He fought with his son-in-law, Bertrand Chesnay de la Garenne over accounts. He interfered in the affairs of his daughter Mathurine Bélanger...concerning a house that bordered the property of Étienne Blanchon and his wife Anne Convent in the Lower Town of Québec...On October 25, 1685 François Bélanger willed all his property to his son Jacques." (per Joe Kare)

#4

From Dennisson's French Families p.80

François Bélanger was recruited in Mortagne, France by Robert Giffard, Seigneur of Beauport to cultivate for his fief on the north side of the St. Lawrence River, east of Québec. He departed Dieppe on Captain de Nesle's vessel in 1634 arriving in North America 4 Jun 1634. There are different dates given, but the timeframe seems to be between 1634-1635.

About 1654 he obtained land at L'Ange Gardien which has since passed on from father to son and still remains in the Bélanger family.

#5

From: Our French Canadian Ancestors, Vol. 6, Chapter 2, by Thomas J Laforest

"Archange Godbout has compiled notes on several hundred Canadian pioneers, principally those who landed on our shores during the XVII century. Here is what he had to say about François Bélanger, the earliest colonist bearing this name and having offspring in Canada: "He was active and resourceful and the notaries of the time in their contracts, sometimes show us the businessman; informed, upright and honest, sometimes as a man much sought after as an expert appraiser...In order to be fair, it is necessary to add that François Bélanger was authoritative, violent, and tenacious in his demands. He wanted above all, that his ideas be those of others... which made him a few enemies... because he was not infallible, even when he appealed to the Bishop and to the Governor of New-France." The Bélanger family, however, has had the privilege of having its own historian in the person of a descendant of the ancestor, Leonidas Bélanger who, about 1967, took over from Msgr Victor Tremblay as President of what would be the most important Historical Society in Canada, that of Saguenay.

FROM PERCHE AND FROM NORMANDY

Leonidas Bélanger cites historians Thwaites and Suite, as well as genealogist Tanguay, to prove that François was originally from Touques in Normandy. However, this opinion is not universally shared. Abbot Gaulin and Pierre Montagne say that he was from Perche or Orne. The confirmation list of 2 February 1660 at Château-Richer indicates "diocese of Lisieux." However, ancestor Bélanger could have been born in

Perche and then lived in Normandy because these two provinces are neighbors. The Bulletin of Historical Research for 1938 reproduced the following act, taken from the registry of Saint-Pierre-de-Seez (Orne): "On the seventh day of October (1612) was baptized François Bellanger, son of François Bellanger and Françoise Horlays and was named after the honorable François Dumesnil, Squire of St-Teny, and by the honorable Nicolas Bougis, Sieur de Fosses, and demoiselle Loyse Gurou, wife of Squire Guillaume Lepaulnier, Sieur de la Chapelle."

FIRST DOUBLE MARRIAGE IN CANADA

On 27 July 1636, François Bélanger was mentioned for the first time in New France: He was a witness at the signing of the marriage contract of Robert Drouin and the ten year old Anne Cloutier. His bold signature denoted a degree of education superior to that of the average settler. On 12 July of the following year, François himself took a wife. Father Charles Lallemant, acting as the curate of Notre-Dame-des-Anges, blessed his union with the thirteen-year-old Marie Guyon, daughter of Jean and Mathurine Robin. The marriage act, drawn up in 1640, tells us that François was a mason by trade. That same morning, at the same place, Anne Cloutier and Robert Drouin were united in a church wedding delayed because of her age. This was the first double marriage ceremony celebrated in Canada.

MAYOR AND CHURCH WARDEN

From the time of his arrival in the country, François Bélanger must have worked for seigneur Robert Giffard. In the first notarized act concerning him, drawn up on 8 September 1647 by Claude Lecoustre, our ancestor was required to pay Pierre Legardeur de Repentigny the sum of one hundred livres for the purchase of some wheat. To guarantee the loan, he put up all of his property as security. On 9 August 1653, the Journal of the Jesuits reported that François was chosen for the important office of mayor of the citizens of the Quebec region who lived at the Longue Pointe, which would become the future parish of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. Also elected to the town council at the same time were: Thomas Hayot, Charles Legardeur de Tilly, Christophe Crevier dit Lameslee, Guillaume Peltier, Pierre Picard and François Bissot.

At this time François Bélanger and Massé Gravel worked a concession together on the Beaupré coast. On 24 March 1655, Gravel agreed to sell his half to his partner for the sum of one hundred livres per arpents, payable in three installments on Saint-Jean's Day. Once again, François secured this debt by pledging all of his property as well as the present and future inheritance of his children. Has anyone ever seen a mortgage better endorsed? On 23 March 1660, Gravel declared that his former partner had paid up and owed him nothing more. In this same year both of them became churchwardens in the parish of Château-Richer, as indicated in a document mentioning the gift of a small building made to the fabrique by Julien Fortin dit Bellefontaine.

In 1662, François Bélanger was named trustee of the affairs and guardian of the children of the late Olivier Le Tardif, co-seigneur and justice of the peace at Beaupré. That same year, François sold two oxen to Romain de Trepagny, for the sum of 300

livres, payable in silver, in beaver pelts, or in valid currency. In 1663, the year of the founding of the Sovereign Council, this Québécois pioneer became, according to Msgr David Gosselin, "one of the principal inhabitants of the region and he had the confidence of the authorities and the colonists. " That same year also marked the departure from the paternal hearth of two of the children, Marguerite and Charles, in order to marry. It also tolled the knell for Jean Guyon, Marie's father. His death led to a family quarrel, which lasted five years, over the settling of his estate. The Sovereign Council finally had to step in to decide this affair and to resolve the details.

A MILITIA CAPTAIN ON THE BEAUPRE COAST

In 1667 the general census of the inhabitants of New France notes that François Bélanger had fifty arpents under cultivation and thirteen animals, which made him one of the richest property owners of that time. In 1669, the year the militia was established in the colony, François was named captain of the Beupré coast. According to J. Edmond Roy, the captains "were, so to speak, the heads of the municipal organization in each village. They had to carry out the governors' ordinances, as well as supervise the construction and maintenance of the roads."

AN HONEST MAN BUT HARD IN BUSINESS

François Bélanger earned a reputation as an honest but hard man with whom to do business. He had an argument with his brother-in-law Simon Guyon and had to resort to the Sovereign Council for recourse. This litigation lasted until 21 April 1670, at which time François was forced to loosen his purse strings. A little earlier he had lost another lawsuit to his former partner Massé Gravel. The councilors, undoubtedly exasperated by his penchant for suits, begged him to make his apologies to the Intendant.

"As we have seen," writes Leonides Bélanger, "our man did not have any luck with his suit and it was certainly not willingly that he must have made his apology. This also proves to us that he was stubbornly set in his own ideas a little too much. Better educated perhaps than the majority of his fellow citizens, he sought to impose his will on them in a thousand and one ways."

Nor did François get along with his son-in-law, Bertrand Chesnay de la Garenne, on the subject of their accounts. Not content to act for himself, he interfered in the affairs of his daughter Mathurine, widow of Jean Maheu, concerning a house situated in the Lower Town of Québec, and bordering the one belonging to defendants Étienne Blanchon and Anne Convent, his wife. In 1674, Bélanger again had trouble with his neighbor Massé Gravel concerning a boundary between their properties established by the surveyor Jean Guyon dit Dubuisson. Quite simply put, Masse wanted François to stop bothering him about the exact placement of the line. Again, the matter ended up on the agenda of the Sovereign Council, which gave him another opportunity to lose a lawsuit, his last.

SEIGNEUR OF BONSECOURS

When incessantly involved in protests and demands, one usually ends up by longing for a more tranquil life. On 1 July 1677, François Bélanger obtained a vast concession

from Governor Frontenac; a league in frontage by two leagues in depth on the south bank of the river. After forty years of struggle and constant work, our ancestor had suddenly become the Seigneur of Bonsecours (L'Islet).

The Sovereign Council placed this concession on record on 24 October 1680. In 1709 the engineer Gedeon de Catalogne spoke of it as follows: "The land there is rather level, sprinkled with plowed up stones, and marginally produces all sorts of grains, vegetables and pasturage. The fruit trees produce abundantly, and the natural woods are a mixture of all species."

The census of 1681 places the Bélanger family in the seigneurie of Bellechasse, of which the fief of Bonsecours was a part. Four servants worked for the new seigneur: Jean de la Voye, Barthelemy Gobeil, Pierre Lafaye and Pierre Mataule. The move had been made but recently because François had only cleared five arpents.

On 25 October 1685, he bequeathed all of his remaining property to his son Jacques, in return for good and loyal service. This donation included his lands at Bonsecours, a house, a barn, a mill, a mare, three oxen, three cows, wagons, etc. Marie Guyon ratified this act on 25 April 1687, in a document, which indicated that she had become a widow. François had probably died the preceding winter while Marie would live for about another ten years. The registry of Cap-Saint-Ignace mentions her burial act, on 1 October 1696. She was then 78 years old.

TEN OF TWELVE CHILDREN HAVE OFFSPRING

Today the Bélangers are spread throughout North America. This proliferation began with our ancestor himself. Ten of his twelve children had offspring:

1. Charles (1640-1692) was married in 1663 to Barbe Cloutier, the daughter of Zacharie Cloutier, Jr., and Madeleine Émard. They had 4 boys and 5 girls. Charles inherited a half of the Bonsecours fief.
2. Marie-Madeleine (1643-1670) married Seigneur Bertrand Chesnay de la Garenne in 1656. They had 2 boys.
3. Marguerite (1645-1703), married Antoine Berson dit Chatillon in 1663. They had 2 girls. Marguerite remarried in 1666 to Louis Levasseur and they had 5 boys and 6 girls.
4. Jean-François (1648-1699) was married in 1671 to Marie Cloutier and settled at L'Islet. They had 3 boys and 2 girls. It was Jean-François who succeeded his father as a captain of militia.
5. Françoise-Charlotte (1650-1707?) was married in 1665 to Jean Langlois dit Boisverdun. They had 11 children, 6 of whom were boys. She remarried in 1691 to Thomas Rousseau and they had one son.

6. Mathurine (1652-1698) had three husbands: Jean Maheu in 1673, Antoine Deserre in 1674 and François Gregoire in 1688. She had a total of 10 children by her second and third husbands.
7. Louis (1655-1724), married in 1682 to Marguerite Lefrançois, was the first Seigneur of L'Islet. They had 13 children, of whom 5 were boys.
8. Louise (1657-1726) was married in 1679 to Jean Cloutier. They had 12 children.
9. Geneviève (1659-?) was married in 1682 to Guillaume Ferté. This family settled in L'Islet and had 3 children.
10. Guillaume was born and died in 1661.
11. Jacques (1662-1699), was married in 1691 to Élisabeth Thibault, also a pioneer at L'Islet. They had 4 children, 3 of whom were boys.
12. Anne (1664-1665) lived only a little more than a year.

NAME VARIATIONS

Bélanger was known as Bellenger in colonial days. Later variations were Baker, Ballonger, Belenger, Bonsecours, Boulanger, Catherine, Deliennes, Labonte, Lavolonte, LePrince and Marchand."

François married Marie Madeleine Guyon, daughter of Jean Guyon and Mathurine Madeleine Robin, on 12 Jul 1637 in Québec City, Québec, Québec, Canada.^{1 2 3} (Marie Madeleine Guyon was born on 18 Mar 1624 in St-Jean de Mortagne, ev. Sees, Perche, France,^{1 3} died on 29 Aug 1696 in Cap-St-Ignace, Montmagny, Québec, Canada³ and was buried on 1 Sep 1696 in Cap-St-Ignace, Montmagny, Québec, Canada^{1 3}.)

SOURCES:

1. Jetté, René, Dictionnaire Généalogique des Familles du Québec (Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1983).
2. Tanguay, Cyprien, Dictionnaire Généalogique des Familles Canadiennes (Quinton-Rock Pub, reprint 1982, 2 JUL 2000), Rectifications et Additions #13.
3. PRDH (University of Montréal - Online).

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