

THE ACADIAN BENOIT'S OF RHODE ISLAND

by: **Richard L. Fortin**

In Marie-Louise BONIER's book "Debut de la colonie Franco-Americaine de Woonsocket, Rhode Island" (french and english version) there is a genealogy of a BENOIT family that descends from one of the smaller families to settle and come out of Acadia.

1. MARTIN BENOIT-dit-LaBRIERE left France from the port of LaRoche in the spring of 1671 on board "L'Oranger" at the age of 28, also on board was MARIE CHAUSSE-GROS who was 15 at the time and it is believed that she came from Rochefort a city not too far from their port of embarkation. Martin and Marie are believed to have been married either at LaRoche just before boarding the ship or shortly after their arrival in Port Royal Acadia. The couple along with their family of five girls and five boys spent their first 30 years in the vicinity of Port Royal inland on the north bank of the Riviere des Dauphins (today known as the Annapolis river).

2. CLAUDE, the seventh child and fifth son of Martin and Marie, was born in Port Royal in 1686 and spent his first 15 years there. In 1702, still un-married, he re-located along with his parents to Pisiguit on the Minas Basin and live there until 1711. On 19 January of that year, he married JEANNE

HEBERT, the daughter of Etienne HEBERT and Jeanne COMEAU, the wedding ceremony took place in the Church of Grand Pre and the couple settled between la Riviere-des-Habitants (today Wolfville) and la Riviere-aux-Canards (today Canard) where they raised a family of 12 children six boys and six girls. Claude is believed to have died before 1744 fortunately avoiding the fate reserved for his children the majority of whom were deported to Massachusetts. He is believed to be buried in the parish cemetery of St Joseph de Riviere-aux Canards (now Chipman's Corner). He is the ancestor of all the Acadian Benoit's that settled in New Brunswick and Quebec. Among the seven of his children sent to Massachusetts was his son Joseph.

3. JOSEPH, the eleventh child of Claude and Jeanne, was born 1732 at Riviere-aux-Canards and on 5 September 1755 he was taken as a prisoner by the English to the church at Grand Pre where Colonel Winslow read the order for deportation, he was 23 at the time and was probably one of the 141 who were forced at bayonet point onto vessels and deported and in his case it was to Boston, Massachusetts. The trials and tribulations of the Acadians deported to that state have been documented a number of times so they will not be repeated

here. On 18 January 1761, Joseph was married in a civil marriage to JEANNE-ANNE THIBODEAU-dite BLANCHE who was the daughter of Rene THIBODEAU and Anne BOUDROT, the wedding ceremony took place in the presence of one LOUIS ROBICHAUD, it is also possible that he had a first wife before the deportation. In 1763 his request to be transported to France was denied.

In 1766 he along with 159 other heads of families petitioned the Governor of Massachusetts to be allowed to emigrate and when it was finally approved they left on foot and in wagons (charettes) through the woods most likely following the Connecticut River and made their way north towards Vermont where they hired out to work in the forests on their way to the joining of the Connecticut and the White River, they eventually made their way to lake Champlain, the Richelieu river finally arriving in Montreal where they were joined by other members of their family who had come from Connecticut. Joseph and his wife Jeanne established themselves in Yamachiche and their civil marriage was validated at Trois Rivieres on 20 September 1766, the couple had 8 children. Jeanne his wife died in 1803 and he followed her in 1812 and both are buried in the parish of St-Michel de Yamaska. His name figures prominently even today in the commemorative chapel at Grand Pre National Park.

4. FIRMIN, the second child and first son of Joseph and Jeanne-Anne was born in 1764 in Massachusetts mar-

ried MARIE-MADELEINE ROY-dit-DESJARDINS the daughter of Jean-Baptiste ROY and Josephe PARADIS on 29 June 1787 in Yamachiche and he died in 1818. The couple had a family of 9 children 2 girls and 7 boys.

5. JOSEPH, the second child and first son of Firmin and Marie-Madeleine, was born 31 December 1792 at St-Michel-de-Yamaska and on 28 September 1812 he married MARGUERITE DEMARAIS (not CRYSTALIN as shown in Bonier's book) she was the daughter of Christophe DEMARAIS and Catherine CARTIER. Joseph and his wife Marguerite had 13 children 9 of which are included in Bonier's Book, French, pages 118-119 and English, pages 147-148 and can be followed from there.

AUTHOR'S NOTES: The source of this Benoit information are from "Histoire, Notes et Genealogy sur la famille Acadienne Benoit, authored by Louis O. Benoit of Tracadie-Sheila, New Brunswick, and from the personal research done by the author of this article who is also a descendant of Firmin Benoit and Marie-Madeleine Roy-dit-Desjardins, the book cited can be purchased from the author for \$23.00 (US) by writing to 3371 rue Helen, Tracadie-Sheila, NB. E1X 1A6, or by fax at 1-506-393-1210 or via E-Mail at benoitlo@nbnet.nb.ca. He is also interested in any up dates from family members that are included in this genealogy.

In the society of organizations, it is safe to assume that anyone with any knowledge will have to acquire new knowledge every four or five years or become obsolete.

— Peter Drucker