

Our FRENCH-CANADIAN Ancestors

Thomas J. Laforest



Biographies of ancestors:

- JEAN BARRETTE • GUILLAUME BOILY • CLAUDE BOURGET
- JEAN BOUTET dît LEBOEUF • NICOLAS-MARTIN BROUARD
- LOUIS COULOMBE • PIERRE DANCAUSE • ROBERT DUFOUR
- RENÉ ÉMOND • MATHURIN GAUTHIER dît LANDREVILLE
- JEAN GOBEIL • LOUIS GUIMOND • GUILLAUME LABELLE
- LOUIS LAMOUREUX • JEAN PIET dît TREMPÉ • PIERRE ROBITAILLE
- RENÉ SIMONEAU dît SANSCHAGRIN • GUILLAUME THIBAUT

Gérard Lebel, C.Ss.R.



Nos Ancêtres

14

BIOGRAPHIE D'ANCÊTRES

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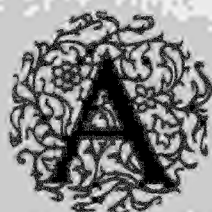
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René Simoneau dit Sanschagrin

CHAPTER 18

René Simoneau dit Sanschagrin



very popular last name, that of Simon, produces several diminutive forms; Simonet, Simonin and Simoneau. The first Simoneau to step on American soil was Jacques. In fact, on 12 February 1598, Henry IV appointed Troilus de La Roche de Mesgouez "*lieutenant general in the land of Canada.*" La Roche wanted to make a fortune, through hunting and fishing on the Acadian Coast. He chartered two ships: *la Catherine* and *la Françoise*, 180 and 90 tons respectively, and recruited forty hearty manual laborers chosen from among 260 scoundrels and beggars. Jacques Simoneau is on the list of passengers. Having left Honfleur on 14 April 1598, La Roche settled his people on the north coast of Sable Island, near a small stream forming a narrow inlet, which he named Boncoeur. After the construction, under the supervision of Commander Querbonoyer, of lodgings and a storehouse where food, clothing, tools, arms and furniture were stored, La Roche left 40 men on the island and went fishing on the banks of Newfoundland.

When the Marquis de La Roche wanted to return to the island, the winds drove his ships to the east with such violence that in 12 days he found himself in sight of the coast of France. In short, it was only five years later, in 1603, that the Parliament of Rouen ordered Thomas Chefdestel, the pilot of the *Catherine*, to bring the unfortunate men on Sable Island back home. Just eight survivors remained, including Jacques Simoneau. Henri IV wanted to see these men taken from the sea all dressed in seal skins, and Minister Sully was ordered to pay each of them 50 ecus.

A century later, another brave Frenchman brought the melodious last name of Simoneau to New France, and this time for good and permanent.

A Québécois descendant, Monsieur Pierre Simoneau, of the City of Laval, has found the baptismal record of his ancestor in the departmental archives of La Roche-sur-Yon. On Friday, 24 August 1657, Mathurin de LaPraye, uncle and godfather of the child, and Marie, wife of Vincent de LaPraye, his godmother, brought to the baptismal font of the church of Bouin, René Simoneau, son of René and of Marguerite LaPraye. The priest L.-B. Rouvillon signed the document in the registry. The child, heir to his father's first name, saw the births of 4 sisters and 3 brothers from 1658 to 1676: Jacques, Donatienne, Perrine, Gilles, Marguerite, J. or Jean and Marie. René had an uncle, Jacques Simoneau, husband of Jeanne Fret and father of 3 known children.

The church of Bouin is modern, although in the gothic style; however, the bell tower goes back to the fourteenth century.

The slight rocky rise on which the town of Bouin is built, (Bouin is a word which means stopper or plug), dominates large marshes in the confines north of *la Vendée* and the ports of Brittany.

This ancient island, today a vast locality of about 3,000 hectares in area, remains separated from the continent, at the back of the bay of Bourgneuf, by a channel, an arm of the Fal-leron. The exploitation of the salt marshes and the raising of cattle for a long time have supported the citizens of Bouin, in addition to which today we may add the cultivation of oysters. Four canals cross this land, one of which, the Grandchamp, can handle barges with a capacity of 30 to 40 tons. Le Harve des Brochets and le Harve des Champs are the two principal ports on the island.

Rene Simoneau had been born at Bouin, present department of *la Vendée*, in the arrondissement of Les Sables-d'Olonne, canton of Beauvoir-sur-Mer, in former Poitou. The town which numbers more than 2,300 inhabitants presently depends on the ecclesiastical authority of Luçon; during our ancestor's time it relied on Nantes, in Brittany.

THE OLD SOLDIER

Rene Simoneau's first career was that of a soldier. A patient researcher perhaps some day might find a clue in the *Archives militaires francaises*, of the deeds of this ancestor. At that time, like today, countries recruited their brave defenders from the strongest of the young people, but, unlike today, failed to keep detailed records of service.

The first mention of Simoneau in Canada, at the time of his marriage in 1699, lists him as a soldier and sets his age at 41. The conclusion is obvious: René was an old soldier, war-hardened, sensible, and generous, but with little education, since he did not know how to write. This very briefly summarizes perhaps twenty years of active duty in the service of his country.

When did René arrive in New France? We only know one sure fact: at his marriage, he said he was in the *Compagnie de Saint-Martin*.

Alexandre Joseph Lestringant de Saint-Martin, also known as Viabon, was commander of the battalion at Québec at the time of Frontenac's campaign against the Iroquois in 1696, and he was captain of the troops detached from *la Marine* on 12 May 1697. Saint-Martin arrived in Canada in July 1684, and lived and worked there as a soldier until 1722.

This information provides us with no serious details on the number of years René Simoneau spent in the *troupe de la Marine*. Did he fight against the Indian enemies? René, according to his nickname *dit Sanschagrin*, was not one to show his feelings. On the first of April 1701, the registry of the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec tells us that René Simoneau was hospitalized for 16 days. Was this to heal an old wound? In any case, he left the army at that time and became a resident of the country.

MOREAU-SIMONEAU

On 29 November 1695, a young man from the Ile d'Orleans, Joseph Dalleray, son of Marin and of Marie-Anne Lafontaine, was married to Jeanne Moreau,

The couple had only time enough to have one daughter, Marie-Angélique, baptized on 13 January 1697 at Saint-Laurent. By the time of her birth, the child had lost her father. The widow Dalleray probably returned to live at the home of her parents, Jean Moreau dit LaGrange, and Anne Couture, who had been settled at Saint-Laurent for a number of years.

Jeanne Moreau, the widow Dalleray, had been baptized at Sainte-Famille on 19 January 1676. She had Louis Oiumet and Jeanne Nourice for her godparents.

How did René Simoneau meet the young widow Dalleray? In those days soldiers did not live in barracks like today. In times of peace, especially during the winter, they found lodgings in the homes of the inhabitants, trying to be of service to them. Perhaps he worked at the home of the Moreaus, already getting on in age in 1699. The marriage contract of René and Jeanne, which could tell us, has not been found. On Monday, 23 November 1699, Father Pierre Dumont dit La Musique, a famous unknown, blessed their union in the presence of relatives and witnesses, including Mathurin Thibodau dit Lalime, a Vendéen from Les Sables-d'Olonne, husband in a second marriage to Marie Petit, and an inhabitant of Saint-Laurent.

René and Jeanne probably spent the winter of 1699-1700 at the Moreau home on the island, with little Marie-Angélique Dalleray. Their first child was baptized at Saint-Laurent on 16 October 1700. Jeanne Moreau was then 24 years old, and René 43.

MONTMAGNY

Probably in 1701, René Simoneau left with his family to settle at Montmagny, where his second child and all the surviving ones were baptized, beginning on 8 April 1702.

We have already seen colonists,--like Jean-Jacques Talbot--wait 16 years before receiving a land grant contract for their land. It was so for René Simoneau: on 23 August 1716, Jean-Baptiste Couillard de Lespinay, seigneur for a part of la Rivière du Sud, in his name and in his brother Louis's name, co-seigneur, ceded him six arpents of frontal land on the Saint

Lawrence River, "*between the said river and the said Rivière du Sud.*" Notary Abel Michon wrote the following stipulations: René Simoneau must "*continue to Keep a home*" on his concession; the seigneur reserved for himself the necessary wood to maintain the manor house, the church and the community mill, as well as oakwood suitable for the construction of ships, etc. The seigniorial rents were fixed at 6 livres in silver and 6 live capons, and the cens at 6 sols, all payable on All Saints Day.

Charles Huault, Sieur de Montmagny and Governor of New France, was the first owner of this seigneurie, developed from a concession on 5 May 1646. At first it was shared by Théandre Chartier, Sieur de Lotbinière, and Jean Moyen, Sieur des Granges. On 11 May 1655, Louis Couillard de Lespinay took possession of a part of the seigneurie; he acquired the rest of it in 1668. The first chapel was blessed by Msgr de Saint-Vallier, on 21 April 1686. The parish of Saint-Thomas in Montmagny was set up on 29 October 1714. The church opened for worship on 23 July 1719 and counted 41 pews.

Jean-Baptiste Couillard, Sieur de Lespinay, signer of the grant to René Simoneau, had been, since 27 April 1716, lieutenant of the Provost of Québec. Jean-Baptiste and Louis Couillard appeared as the seigneurs of the Simoneau family. The parish census of 1732 mentions René Moineau as an habitant of the seigneurie and owner of 7 arpents of workable land.

INHERITANCE

Jean Moreau dit Lagrange, father of Madame René Simoneau, died on 13 March 1704, at Saint-Laurent. According to the custom, although it may seem unfair today, the paternal property was divided between the heirs. Half of the land went to the mother, Anne Couture; the other half, to the six Moreau children; an arpent of frontal land to cut into six equal parcels.

On 30 June 1705, sons-in-law René Simoneau and René Mineau hastened to sell their adjoining parts (one-third of an arpent) to Pierre Dufresne, a neighbor of the Moreaux, for 220 livres, not counting a gift of 10 livres in pins. Simoneau immediately received 34 livres; as for Mineau, married to Marie-

Anne Moreau, a 23 year old minor, according to the law of the time, he must wait until his wife reached her majority before receiving payment.

On 14 October 1706, Jeanne Moreau ratified this transaction, and on 13 October 1708, the Moreau-Mineau couple gave a receipt to Dufresne for the 110 livres which were owed them.

Anne Couture died on 13 May 1715, at Saint-Laurent. The question of dividing the other half of the concession among the inheriting children again was raised. René Simoneau and Jeanne Moreau sold their part of the land to René Mineau, on 9 November 1716.

Did this infringe upon the rights acquired by son Pierre Moreau on 10 July 1706? Evidently it did, because on 5 December 1712, René Simoneau had obtained documents of restitution from Pierre. The quarrel took on alarming proportions. René did not hesitate to take his case to the Superior Council. He had cause to regret it: the high court of the land dismissed his case and on 24 January 1718 even ordered him to pay the costs, both for the original tort as well as for the appeal.

NINE NEW LIVES

A child, according to Peguy, is a small drop of life. This drop can become a small stream, a brook or a river. The Moreau-Simoneau couple caused the source of existence to gush nine times: René (2), Marie-Jeanne, Jean-Baptiste, Pierre, Michel, Joseph, Charles, Marie-Marguerite and Gabriel; seven sons and two daughters bore the living testimony. The majority of them took the surname of Sanschagrín, which appears, however, to have been abandoned by the third generation.

1. The oldest, and the only child born on the Ile d'Orleans, *René Simoneau dit Sanschagrín*, inherited his father's first name at his baptism on 16 October 1700. On 4 February 1727, at Saint-Nicolas, he joined his heart to that of Marie-Françoise Lambert, daughter of Jean-Aubin Lambert dit Champagne, and of Marie-Anne Houde.

In the census of 1762, René Sanschagrin owned land with 3 arpents of frontage, including 20 arpents under cultivation, 1 cow, 1 horse and 2 pigs. He was buried at Saint-Nicolas on 18 January 1785.

2. As for *Marie-Jeanne Simoneau*, baptized at Montmagny on 8 April 1702, she married Charles Chalut dit Lagrange, on 15 November 1728, at Saint-Thomas. They had seven children. Her burial record was signed at Notre-Dame de Québec on 16 July 1742.

3. *Jean-Baptiste Simoneau*, godson of Jean Letourneau at Montmagny on 18 May 1704, never left his native parish. On 24 November 1727, he was married at Berthier to Marie-Anne Vermet, daughter of Robert and of Marie-Anne Bernard, and saw his children grow up at Montmagny.

4. His brother *Pierre*, born on 22 May 1707, sponsored at his baptism by his godfather Pierre Blanchet, was married three times: first on 25 October 1735, at Berthier, to Angélique Bilodeau, from whom he had two daughters; the second time at Saint-Vallier on 2 February 1750 to Marie-Suzanne Hayot, who gave him three daughters, one stillborn; the third time, about 1757, to Marie-Josephite Martin, who enriched his descendants with five sons. The registries of Islet have preserved Pierre's death certificate dated 12 August 1775.

5. Angélique Renaud, dit Lafond, married *Michel Simoneau* at Saint-Nicolas on 7 January 1737. Their cradle was filled eleven times with rays of life. Michel died at Nicolet and was buried on 5 December 1790, at the age of 81.

6. *Joseph Simoneau*, born on 19 February and baptized on 20 February 1711 at Saint-Thomas, was the only one of the family not to marry. He died at Montmagny on 19 October 1772 and was buried the next day.

7. *Charles Simoneau*, seventh of the family, baptized on 19 January 1714, found his kindred spirit at the home of Pierre-Robert Vermet. He married daughter Marguerite on 18 January 1740 at Berthier. The parish of Montmagny was witness to the baptisms of their nine children.

8. The second Sanschagrín daughter, *Marie-Marguerite*, born on 26 April 1716, became the god-daughter of notary Abel Michon on the following day, and was married at Québec on 8 August 1741, to Charles Marois, widower of Catherine Coussy. They settled at Cap-Saint-Ignace and had nine children.

On 19 October 1778, Marie-Marguerite, now a widow, found a second husband in the person of Joseph Dubé, widower of Marguerite Cloutier and son of Laurent and of Geneviève Boucher.

9. Finally, *Gabriel*, the youngest Simoneau, the godson of Charles Bélanger on 7 June 1718, took as his companion for life Marie-Josephte Blanchet, at Montmagny on 23 November 1744. She gave him three daughters and one son, before being buried on the first of May 1754, at Saint-Nicolas.

The following year, on 24 November, Marguerite Boucher took over this broken home, and doubled the number of children by adding four girls. In 1762, Gabriel, listed in the census at Saint-Nicolas, was said to own a farm with 3 arpents of frontage, 15 arpents under cultivation, 1 cow, 1 horse and 2 pigs. He was buried in the cemetery of his adopted parish on 17 July 1780.

By the third generation, the Simoneaus had grown and multiplied 69 times. The largest branch of the family goes back to Michel.

DETACHMENT

To be attached to material things in order to draw subsistence from them often monopolizes an important part of a person's life. To remove oneself from it in order to gain more spiritual values is the act of persons who generally have reached the mature age of fifty. And so on 29 May 1726, René Simoneau and his wife sold to their son Jean-Baptiste a part of their land, two arpents in frontage situated near Joseph Lefebvre dit Boulanger, newly married to Geneviève Laurendeau. The Simoneau parents only asked 100 livres tournois for this property. Antoine Dandurand dit Marchaterre, and Guillaume Thibault signed as witnesses in the presence of notary Michon.

On 28 December 1738, the Simoneaus relinquished the four remaining arpents of frontal land and divided them equally among their children, including half-sister Marie-Angélique Dalleray. In return for this "donation", the children were committed to jointly and annually provide their elderly parents during their lifetime with

36 minots of wheat "made by them into flour", 1 fat pig, 10 pounds of butter, 15 cords of heating wood, 1 cow and 1 sheep "which will not die", 1 suit made of drugget and, every other year, 1 other suit of suitable cloth from France, 1 hat, another 1 of white linen, 1 of muslin.

They did not forget the bar of soap nor the half-thousand pins. And finally, they promised a burial according to the condition of the parents and offered masses for the repose of their soul. The mention of the neighbors Jean Vallée and Claude Côté perhaps would help a descendant to indicate the spot where the ancestral farm was located.

Jeanne Moreau died first, in the spring of 1740. She was buried in the parish cemetery of Saint-Thomas on Tuesday, 26 April. She was 64 years old, a respectable old age for that time. As for ancestor Simoneau, whether he was retired at the home of one of his sons living at Saint-Nicolas, or whether he was there on a visit, he died there suddenly, unable to receive the sacraments, and was buried on Tuesday, 7 July 1744. The registry gave him 80 years of age. The first Simoneau generation was no more; already the succeeding ones had vigorously taken over.

MIGRATIONS

The Simoneaus have become numerous in the area of Saint-Nicolas. They have spread into the Beauce, then into the Cantons of the east, up the Saint-Lawrence Valley towards the region of Trois-Rivières, and even slipped into New England. In the nineteenth century, two Charles Simoneaus were married at Percé. They have descendants in this region.

In the fifth generation, Leon Simoneau, blacksmith, was married to Cellesie Demers on 12 February 1822, and moved to Detroit with his three children: Marie, Rosalie and Leon; the latter was born at Saint-Nicolas on 5 February 1834. Son Leon joined his fate to that of Zoe Tourangeau on 29 January 1855, in the parish of Sainte-Anne at Detroit. We know of their six children, including one son. Leon became a pharmacist at Saginaw, Michigan, and mayor of the place in 1888; he died there accidentally on 21 January 1894. He had changed his first name to Leander.

HARMONIES

The bells of the church of Notre-Dame de Québec had been smelted in New France. The third, weighing 1,500 pounds, had been split or broken since 1715. On 4 September 1757, Etienne Simoneau appeared and claimed to be an expert in bell repair. The authorities offered him 40 francs a quintal (a quintal equals 48.9 kilograms) for his work. Etienne Simoneau returned in bronze the bells previous voice. Success! One hundred francs were given to him as a bonus. Thanks to the talents of a descendant of the humble ancestor Rene Simoneau, a bell in the old tower of the cathedral of Québec had again found its original timbre and its life as a messenger.

Two centuries later, the best known of René Simoneau's descendants, the tenor Léopold Simoneau, son of Joseph and of Olivine Boucher, and husband of the soprano Pierrette Alarie, daughter of Sylva and of Amanda Plante (Amanda Alarie is the "mama Plouffe" of the famous television series), became internationally known as a specialist in the vocal works of Mozart, of whom he, along with his wife, is one of the greatest interpreters.

FAMILY NAME VARIATIONS

Simoneau has become Berry, Boure, Bienvenue, Elisabeth, Fontaine, Isabel, Lafontaine, Lisabel, Robert, Simoneau, Simmons, Simon, Simonaux, Simoneaux, Simonet, Simonneau and Sawyer.

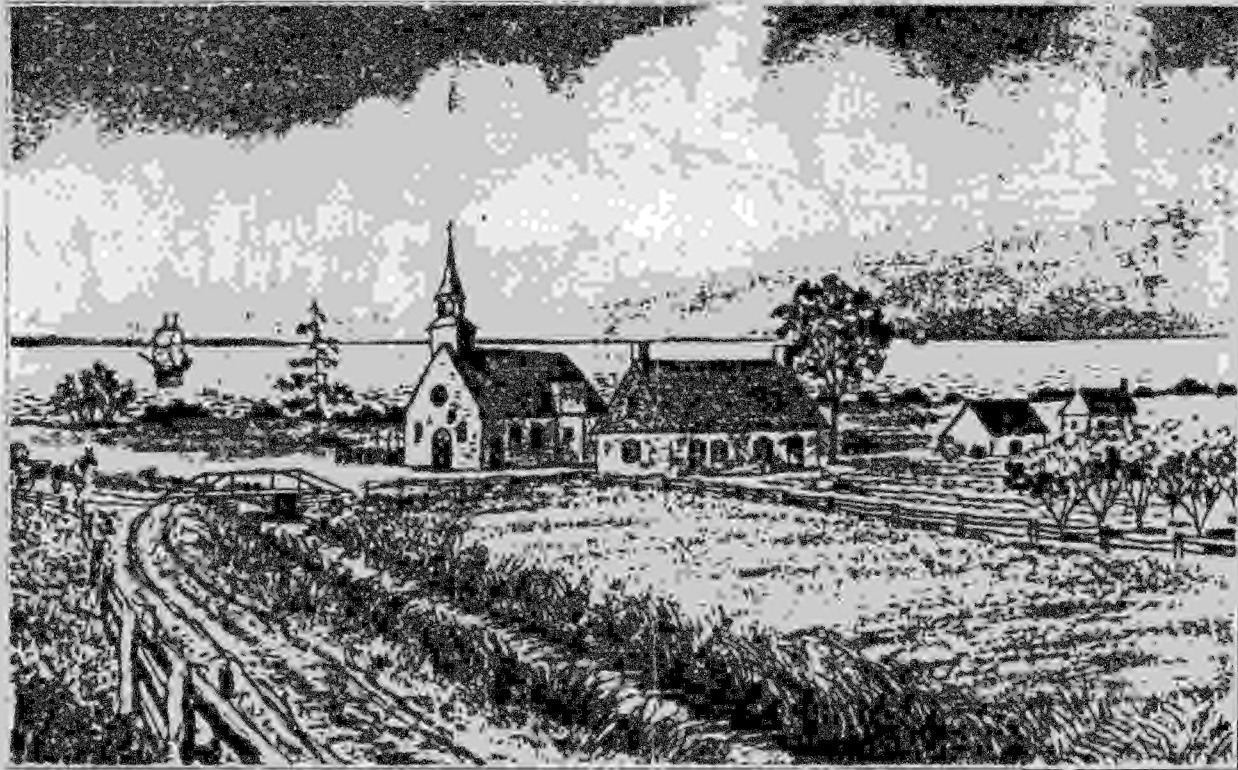
Sanschagrin has become Alinaud, Alineau, Chevalier, Courtin, Duval, Leonard, Lionard, Montagne, Penn, Rabau, Rahy, Rivet, Robis, Sancegraw, Sanchegraw, Santhegran, Sauchegraw, Saushegra, Sawyer, Segoiot and Vivet.

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