

FRENCH-CANADIAN DEMERS HISTORY

There is a lineage that goes back to France and it covers about 450 years. It all begins in a tiny, fishing village called Mers, which is on the N.W. coast of France, in the Rouen, Normandy area. The family was then known as the Jean Dumet (Dumay) group and the name of Demers did not come until three of the children of Jean I immigrated to Canada.

These three brothers were Etienne, Andre' and Jean II. At first the records showed Etienne as being their uncle but it was later discovered that he was the older son by Jean I's first marriage. The term Uncle was used as a term of respect for all male relatives that were older-as Etienne was.

Our direct family line stems from Andre' who settled in Montreal very early on in the development of that country. He had a farm that was next to Urban Jette's and these two families inter-married nine of their children to each other. This Jette' line is the basis of the Premier Genealogist of Canada - Rene' Jette'.

In Canada, perhaps the first question asked of any settler was where did you come from in France? The Dumet(Dumay) brothers said "Mers". Thus they became know as de(meaning of) Mers. This name stuck, though there are still many spellings and variations in all the records - confusing anyone who is searching. In fact, my very first encounter with this problem was when I first began, and the St. Peter's Church Census showed our ancestor, David, as a Dumas. Confusing,, Certainly, but you quickly learn to discount these imperfections as you go along.

From Andre' we progress through Robert, Henri', Joseph, Pierre, David(first in U.S.), William Sr., William Jr. and then in my particular family - to Leo and myself. Through all of these lines and marriages there is only one non-French line. This is the German soldier, Philippe Heil, who chose to stay in Canada and marry a French girl, rather than go back to Germany when his tour was over. However, the Catholic church did not look kindly on these marriages, so when the marriage was entered in the records, the Priest changed the sur-name to Philippe (after the Parish) instead of Heil. Thus the Heil was lost-but only in the records.

When our first ancestor entered the U.S. it was David and his brother Simon. They first settled in St. Albans, Vt. where Simon married and had two children. David decided to cross Lake Champlain and settle in Plattsburg. Simon took his wife and children and went back to Montreal. Later on he again entered the U.S. but this time in Wisconsin and used a different spelling of the Demers name - DeMarce.

David married Josephte Trudeau and settled down, His oldest son William took up residence in nearby Morrisonville and the house they owned is still there and it was the only clue I started out with. My Mother had kept a clipping from the paper stating that this piece of property in Morrisonville was sold and they were seeking to clear the title. My Father and all of his siblings, still living, were contacted and signed off the deed. When I began, some 30yrs. later to find

our family, I started with that clipping and it eventually led me to all the rest.

The DeLisle line came to me from a priest in Canada who started the original genealogy data, by marriages, and it was on card files at first, and now on microfische-where I did, indeed find our David, who was my key to Canada.

The DeLisles were all from the West side of the river, near Quebec City and these were much later settlements than the Montreal ones. They had some property and were very shrewd to parlay it into a comfortable existence. When they came into the U.S. they already had several children and the rest of the nine were born in Ausable Forks, N.Y.

Our Grandfather, William, Jr. was one of the first to be educated and he was apprenticed out at the age of 12. Fortunately, for him, his master revered education and allowed Will to be tutored along with his sons. This put Will one step up and gave him a desire for more. He later went on to get his Mechanical Engineering degree. A great accomplishment in those days of little money.

Will was trained as a wheelwright, blacksmith and carpenter. He gradually moved west in N.Y.S. seeking work and ended up in Bloomingdale, N.Y. for awhile and then into Saranac Lake. He met Mary DeLisle and was smitten but Mary was living under her older sister Leah's roof and Leah did not approve of Will for her husband. It took some time but Mary persisted and they were married, with the proviso (by Leah) that he must build Mary an adequate house. Will proceeded to do so at 63 Riverside Drive and that house is still there. Leah and the rest of the DeLisles lived across the corner in what is now known as the Baily house.

Leah was always a problem in Will and Mary's marriage. They had 8 children, losing beautiful Alice at the age of 14 to spinal meningitis. She was my Father's favorite and that is why I am named Alice, after her. My Father married and bought the house next door at 59 RSD and that is now my brother's home.

It would be prudent of me to add at this time that the Demerses and DeLisles were all very stubborn and life was not always cheery or calm. However, we, as children, were fortunate to know our Gr.Grandmother Marguerite LaPointe DeLisle and most of my Grandmother Mary's brothers and sisters. It was a large clan and spread out in all directions. They are now in Washington State, Oregon, California, Idaho, Colorado, Alabama, Georgia, New York, Vermont and many, more I can hardly remember. Add your own families to that list and we probably hit about every state. Ha!

The Egyptians believed that as long as your name is written or spoken, you are eternal. Genealogy seeks to keep all of these thousands of names and people alive through many generations. Your name will be part and parcel of this huge gene pool and the generations to come as well. None will be forgotten because we know them now as PEOPLE, not just names on a page. There were no Kings or aristocrats in our lines, they were hard working artisans and craftsmen and proud of it. So are we. They gave up everything to come to these shores and make