THE BELANGER ROOTS IN NORTH AMERICA

Joan Johnson Belanger 2114 Northwood Blve. Royal Oak, Michigan 313/398-7969

## THE BELANGER LINE

1.	Francois Belanger - Marie Guyon	1640
2.	Charles Belanger - Barbe Cloutier	1663
3.	Charles Belanger - Genevieve Gagnon	1692
4.	Prisque Belanger - Genevieve Gosselin	1724
5.	Jacques Belanger - Marie Rousseau	1768
6.	Francois Belanger - M. Catherine Bolduc	1819
7.	François Stanislas Alfred Belanger - Marie Louise Doyon	1845
8.	Francois Joseph Denis Belanger - Madeleine Askin Peltier	1873
9.	Charles Alfred Belanger - Juliet Catherine Hammond	1922
10.	Francois Joseph Belanger, II - Patricia Schafer	1951
11.	Richard John Belanger	

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Francois Belanger was the first Frenchman by the name of Belanger to settle in North America. He settled on the northern bank of the St.

Lawrence River in 1634. In order to understand his life, it is necessary to learn the history of the establishment of the French Colony in Canada.

In 1534 Jacques Cartier, sponsored by King Francis I of France, made his first voyage across the ocean to a land called Canada by the Indians. At that time there was a struggle in Europe between Catholics and Protestants and Cartier, being Catholic, took only Catholics with him on his three voyages to the new world. He built a cross thirty feet high and nailed it to a shield bearing the Fleur-de-lis. On the shore of Quebec, he planted this cross in the name of King Francis I to establish the country for France. During the remaining years of the sixteenth century, Canada was used by both England and France for fur trading and fishing. Both countries claimed Canada but neither country settled her. Due to the severe winters in the north, the English were more interested in establishing colonies in New England and felt that Canada was not worth fighting over.

Quebec City was founded by Samuel de Champlain upon a rock, above the moving tides of the St. Lawrence River where it narrows. The St. Charles River formed the eastern side of the city. The Indians gave the name "Kebec" to the narrows of a river. Champlain made thirteen voyages to New France from 1603 to 1633 and died at Quebec City in 1635. His ambitions were: to

establish a colony for fur trading with France; explore the wild country west of Quebec; and convert the Indians to Christianity. 3

The land was inhabited by various tribes of Indians classified by their language roots and their cultural and social way of living. Three groups of tribes were found by the French explorers; Algonquinas, Hurons, and Iroquois. The Algonquians were a populous group including the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Montagnais tribes. The Hurons were the main target of the Jusuit missions. The Iroquois group included the five nations; Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senicas. Each Iroquois tribe was divided into eight clans; wolf, bear, beaver, tortois, deer, snipe, heron, and hawk. Champlain made friends with the Montagnais tribe who were bitter enemies of the Iroquois, but far weaker. The Montagnais believed that with Champlain's support, they could win a revengeful war over the Iroquois. Because of this friendship with the Algonquian tribes, the Iroquois attacked the early French explorers and colonists.

The Indians taught the French how to live off of the land. Elk were killed with arrows or javelins and dried or smoked for preservation, although freshly killed elk was better tasting. Beavers were trapped in the summer and netted through the ice in winter. It's soft fur made hats. Porcupines were trapped, then scraped and boiled. The meat was edible although very tough. Bears were trapped in the Spring and rabbits and squirrels caught in nets or killed with arrows. Geese, ducks, partridge, woodcock, and snipe were killed with bows, arrows, and darts. Fishing for salmon, pike carp, sturgeon,

whitefish, goldfish, barbels, eels, lampreys, smelt, and turtles was done with nets or harpoons. They were dried and smoked. Seals were surprised with clubs when they came out of the water. Raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, nuts, wild apples, grapes, and roots were gathered and eaten. Syrup was tapped from the maple trees.

Fighting between the French Protestant Huguenots and Catholics ended in 1628 when Cardinal Richelieu came into supreme power, including power over King Louis XIII. Richelieu prohibited Protestants from entering Canada due to all of the religious conflicts in Europe and decided that the missionary efforts of christianizing the Indians should be in the hands of the Jesuits because they were a wealthy organization and would be able to work at their own expense. Although the first Catholic Fathers in Quebec were of the Recollet Order, the Jesuit Fathers became the backbone of New France during the colonial period from 1632 to 1657. The Jesuits encouraged population because they felt that they would be more efficacious if they were supported by a strong colony. Quebec City was the headquarters of their missions and Champlain built them the Chapel of Notre Dame de la Recouvrance on the cliff, which was destroyed by fire in 1639. After 1657 the Jesuits met growing competition from other missionary groups. 7

Champlain had hoped that the fur trading colony would interest the merchants in financing the peopling of Canada but, although the merchants traded in furs totaling about 200,000 levres per year, they did not send colonists. In 1626, only 18 to 20 acres of cultivated land existed. By 1628, only 76 persons

had settled in Canada and they all lived in the trading post of Quebec. 8

Richelieu began organizing a company of one hundred associates including nobles, merchants, and officers. They had the power to colonize the king's land and rule New France in North America. Champlain was an active member of the company. The company was given fifteen years to establish four thousand colonists, both men and women, support them for three years, and place them on the land. 9

The establishment of a stable organization for the colony of New France was necessary so that the unsettled land would not fall prey to a few powerful landlords and that the land granted would be settled. A Seigneurial System was developed under the jurisdiction of the State where Seigneurs 10 would have a personal interest in colonization and colonists would be protected. Seigneurs would be granted tracts of land to bring in settlers, both having a precise knowledge of reciprocal rights and duties, laid down in advance, over which the State reserved the right of surveillance. Every demand made by the Seigneur was regulated by the State and every condition that the Censitaires 11 must accept was written in his contract when it was first drawn. 12 State supervision was constant by the Intendant 13 who intervened to ensure that both parties got their respective rights.

In subdividing, the land was cut in two by the St. Lawrence River flowing from southwest to northeast. The river provided the front for most of the early seigneuries, as life centered on the great waterway. Inorder that most Seigneuries have access to the river, they had to be narrow but could extend

far into the interior. To establish a geometric pattern, the boundaries were pointed in the same direction as the river with parallel lines drawn perpendicular to the frontage giving the Seigneuries the shape of rectangles. There were exceptions due to islands in the river, hills in the interior, and demands of farmers in the back country. The geometric pattern also divided the land within the Seigneuries. Strips of land, parallel to the boundaries gave more people access to the river and were narrow but deep.

Not all of the Seigneuries were granted the same amount of land. Account was taken of the Seigneur's merit or capacity for exploiting his opportunities.

Most were small although a few large Seigneuries were granted in the early part of the seventeenth century. They were Beaupre, the Island of Montreal, Batiscan, Cap-de-la-Madeleine, and Lauzon. After 1695 the King granted much smaller areas with the exception of Beauharnois in 1729, Saint Armard and Saint Hyacinthe in 1748, and Rioux in 1751. About one quarter of the 7,985,470 acres granted during the French regime was given to the church. 14

Early Seigneuries were established around the center of population; near Quebec, Trois Rivers, and Montreal, on the north bank of the river with open areas between them. Only 53 Seigneuries were granted between 1623 and 1663. After 1663 expansion increased and both banks were settled, including the Richelieu Valley which was the invasion route of the Iroquois Indians. About 140 Seigneuries were added between 1663 and 1732. During the next seven years, 28 more were granted and Beauce and the Lake Champlain regions were settled. Expansion was regarded as urgent to forestall English colon-

ization. The last 20 years of the French regime saw little expansion. 15

The Seigneur could reserve only a part of the Seigneury for his own domain. The church and presbytery was granted land in mortmain 16 often from his domain inorder to have the church near his manorhouse. Usually a common land was granted to the settlers of the first range or even the whole Seigneury, as pasture. In return they paid dues, cleared, and fenced the land. Ceded lands were long and narrow to give the greatest number of people access to the water. The average lot measured three arpents in front by thirty in depth. 17 The strips of land between ranges were called "abouts" and ceded to the Censitaires as additional acreage. Once the first range had been settled, the Seigneur placed people on the second range. Unceded lands could not be touched. Woods growing on them could not be cut, maple trees tapped, or wooded lots sold. The Seigneur had been given title to cede lands, not speculate with them. 18

Villages within the Seigneurial System had not been allowed. The State ruled that buildings could not be erected on lots smaller than one and a half arpents by thirty. Villages were needed to provide homes for craftsmen whose services were essential to a community and a plan for a village on the outskirts of Quebec was developed by Talon, the Intendant, in 1667. Most villages began after 1745. The Seigneurial System was not developed as an economic organization but as a means of settlement. 19

A Seigneur became a promoter of colonization and had to accept a series of duties which had been ordained for him. He must pay fealty and homage

at the governor's chateau where, in the presence of the Intendant, he took off his hat, laid down his weapons, knelt, and declared himself to be a servant of the king. By performing this feudal rite, he proclaimed himself a faithful subject and to undertake, in a solemn manor, his obligations. 20

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When called upon by the Intendant, the Seigneur was subject to an inquiry and to present a census of his fief. It contained a declaration of title, an enumeration of each of the lots which he ceded, a description of those lands, giving the names of the Censitaires, the amount of cultivated lands and a statement of the rents collected. He must reserve, for the king, all oak growing on the Seigneury to be used for ship building. After its discovery, he would notify the State. He agreed to reserve all mines and minerals in the subsoil for the king. <sup>21</sup>

The Seigneury would pass in direct succession after death or could be sold, the buyer subject to the "droit de quint", a tax of one fifth of the value, aimed against speculation and ensuring that sales of Seigneuries would be difficult. 22

The Seigneur was obligated to the Censitaires. He must maintain a manorhouse as a residence within the Seigneury and a place for the Censitairies to pay their rents. <sup>23</sup> He did not have to reside there year round, but provide a responsible tenant. He must cede the lands and could not refuse an applicant without sufficient cause. He would grant a temporary title permitting the applicant to prove his ability to cultivate his land, then a final contract. An applicant that had been refused land could appeal to the Intendant, who could

override the decision. If a Seigneur neglected his land, it could be returned to the royal domain. 24

Other duties of the Seigneur included building and operating a flour mill. He was responsible for justice, established a court, and payed the salaries of the court officials. <sup>25</sup> Lawyers were prohibited in New France, therefore, each man defended himself until the law as changed in 1760. A prison cell was maintained by the Seigneur for punishment as the death penalty was prohibited. <sup>26</sup>

The Seigneur was under a constant threat of losing his fief for failure to meet his obligations. To compensate, he was honored by the Censitaires. The social life of a Seigneury was centered in the church. He was given a free pew, twice as large as the ordinary bench, located in the most prominent place, the first row to the right. He took precedence over the people in the church ceremonies and, with his family, was named in the prayers. He had the right of burial inside the church, beneath the Seigneurial pew. 27

The Censitaires honored him by planting a maypole in front of the Seigneurial manorhouse on the first of May for a celebration. It was a fir tree decorated, except at the top. They paid cens as a symbol of dependence although the rate was small. A transfer tax was paid if the Censitaires sold their land. Tolls were received from the flour mill. Each Censitaire who brought grain to the mill paid one out of every fourteen minots. This charge paid the cost of operation and the miller's salary. 28

The Seigneur could impose "corvees" governed by the contract. Usually

only three or four days were required for seeding, haying, harvesting, and if a fourth day was required, it was used for autumn ploughing. Three or four days was not much to give at that time and when a corvee was needed for work on the highway, the Seigneur was also required to do his share of work. Every farmer was responsible for a road in front of his house. 29

At times the Seigneur had the right to cut wood for buildings or fuel on the uncleared land belonging to the Censitaires, but eventually the State prohibited this. He reserved the fishing rights and the Censitaires had to purchase this right by surrendering about four barrels of eels, a tenth of the porpoises, or every tenth to twentieth fish. A charge could be levied for common pasture land. If a Censitaire failed to cultivate his land the Seigneur could return it to the domain but it must have the approval of the Intendant. 30

The rights of a Censitaire were the counterpart of the Seigneur; the presence of a responsible person in the manorhouse, concession of lands, a mill, a court of justice, and a church, provided in his contract. If the Seigneur neglected his duties, the Censitaire appealed to the Intendant. In return, the Censitaire must live up to his duties. He must live on his land, pay his dues at the manorhouse, usually on St. Martin's day, the eleventh of November, produce his title on demand, cultivate his land, give right-of-ways to his neighbors, permit the building of communal roads, and pay lods et ventes if he purchased another's concession. If he failed, penalties were also imposed by the Intendant. The invention of the Intendant was important as it protected both the Seigneur and Censitaires against each other. 31

There was little contact with the outside world in the St. Lawrence
Valley during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was an isolated
country with extremes in climate and poor internal communications. The
Censitaires and Seigneurs could only survive through mutual assistance. This
system of colonization was successful in civilizating the banks of the St.
Lawrence. It did not attract a large number of immigrants due to a lack of
industry with demand for labor.

Quebec City fell to British control in 1759 during the French and Indian War and by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, New France was ceded to Great Britain. When the English took over control of the country, they were obligated to respect the geographic entity formed by the Seigneuries. The settled Seigneuries and those in the process of settlement could not be integrated into the common soccage of the English system of land tenure. <sup>33</sup> It preserved the French Canadian way of life for, except in the large cities, it prevented the English from mixing with the French as the Seigneuries were closed to them. The English gravitated toward the Eastern townships where they could create their own world and where French were reluctant to settle because they could not find advantages that they enjoyed in the Seigneuries. It is the Seigneurial system that preserved the identity of the people.

The Seigneurial system began to disappear during the English regime.

State supervision was essential to the system because without it, the Seigneurs carried out only those obligations that suited them and increased the charges upon the Censitaires. English authorities were not interested and failed to

intervene. Rapid industrialization of the society was not designed for the system and abolition became imperative because the system could not exist with economic progress. 34

A law was passed on 18 December 1854 by the Provence of Canada which ended the Seigneurial system. Censitaires were freed from their obligations and Seigneurs were promised an indemnity for their losses. The Seigneur was allowed to retain his domain as well as all lands which had not been ceded. The Censitaires had to pay a sum equivalent to the market value of his land as the land had been ceded to him, not granted. Those that could not afford the amount could continue to pay an annual rent to the Seigneur. 35

During the spring of 1634 Robert Giffard, a navy doctor, was named Seigneur of Beauport by the company of one hundred. He had to find the colonists to cultivate the large amount of land given to him by the company, on the north bank of the St. Lawrence River. <sup>36</sup>

He first recruited Zacharie Cloutier, a carpenter, and Jean Guyon, a bricklayer from Mortagne, the chief town of the old province of Perche in France. Guyon pledged to bring his wife, Mathurine (Robin) and their children to settle in his Seigneury. The men promised to build Gifford a residence thirty feet long and sixteen feet wide. They signed a contract on the 14 March 1634 at the home of the notary. The thrill of adventure was communicated around Mortagne and a total of 35 accepted the challenge, including Francois Belanger, a bachelor of twenty two years. They left Mortagne at the beginning of April. Departing from Dieppe, France with forty three members on four

ships, it took two months to reach America where they were met by Huron and Algonquin Indians. They traveled to Beauport where Robert Giffard chose the site for the manorhouse of his Seigneury. With primitive instruments, the settlers constructed their homes of wood from the forest, and plowed the land to plant wheat. <sup>38</sup>

The French houses were constructed in a similar manor. The side lot lines were perpendicular to the river with the front and rear lines parallel. The houses were built with the roof lines, fence, and road parallel to the river, with the road between the house and river. The house was built with a post in the hole for the foundation, with logs cut in thirds for the front and back, and halves on the sides. The roof, being thatched, was steep so that the water and melted snow could run off, and had dormer windows. The houses had a hall running from the front to the back. Most of the cooking was done outdoors and summer kitchens were built. They built fences around their homes to keep the animals away except for the chickens which they fenced in. The gardens, planted in mounds rather than rows, were also fenced. The soil around Quebec City was very productive, the richest in the Province. 39

Marie Guyon was only ten years old when she came to Quebec with her parents. Three years later she married Francois Belanger, 12 July 1637, at the Chapel of Notre Dame de la Recouvrance, built by Champlain. <sup>40</sup> It was the first wedding contract in Quebec. After their marriage, Francois and Marie shared the home of her parents and brothers where Francois helped his father-in-law cultivate the land and care for the animals. In return, Jean

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Guyon promised to deed a portion of land to Francois as a wedding gift. 41

No documents have been found to establish the exact date that Francois obtained land and moved from Beauport to l'Ange-Gardien. The census of 2 June 1650 revealed that Francois owned six arpents plus eight perches by one and a half leagues deep in Beaupre where Olivier Le Tardif was Seigneur. Four years later, 18 February 1654, Jean Guyon, the senior of Buisson, granted to his daughter Marie, a plot of land twenty perches on the river and one and a half leagues deep at l'Ange-Gardien including buildings and animals. He retained a portion five arpents wide. 42

The first descendant of Francois and Marie Belanger was born 19

August 1640, and because of the danger of death, he was baptised at the home of his grandfather, Jean Guyon. It was necessary to produce more from the land as the family was growing in size. Francois made the furniture for the house from the trees he cut on his land. A new bed was made for each birth. Francois became prosperous according to the census of 1667. It revealed that he had developed fifty acres of land and possessed thirteen head of livestock. These numbers are uncommon for that time. 44

In 1665 Jean Talon became the Intendant of Quebec. His main concern was in developing the agricultural life of the colony, improving the road system, and upholding the laws. <sup>45</sup> As a result of the Iroquois offensive, burning buildings and killing animals, all male inhabitants between the ages of sixteen and sixty became liable for military service. Talon established a military system of captains from each parish to control the soldiers.

Militiamen were supplied with arms at cost and ammunition for military purposes free of charge. Muskets might also be used for hunting purposes and were eagerly sought. They had no uniforms, and they were not paid for their services. 47

The unit of organization was the company with the commanding officer called the "Captain of Militia" or "Capitaine de la Cote". The officer was not the Seigneur but usually the most intelligent, prosperous, and reliable man in the community. He was commissioned by the governor although his selection was largely determined by the habitants of the Seigneury. 48

The task of the captain was to maintain a roll of all those liable for services, to instruct the militiamen of the parish in musketry, and to hold military exercises. The main object of the militia training was to teach the men how to shoot. Involved drill and tactical movements were out of the question. Long marches were unnecessary for men who spent several months each year on snowshoes, but the knowledge of musketry was useful both in peace and war. The captain received no pay. 49

The French militia system was one of the remarkable features of the regime. The whole country was organized in a way which made it possible for a man to continue his work on the farm and still carry out military obligations.

The style of fighting was copied from the Indians which was well adapted to the needs of the country. By making full use of his knowledge of the country, his superior mobility, and his ability to live off of the country,

the militiaman was able to strike sudden blows at his enemy and to withdraw to the safety of the wilderness before counter attacks could be mounted against him.  $^{50}$ 

Francois was appointed Captain to control the Seigneury of Beaupre. In his absence from the farm, his son, Charles, with the help of his two sons, Francois and Charles, cultivated the land and cared for the animals. On 24 October 1674, more land was added to the farm. One perche and five feet was given in gratitude to Francois in appreciation for his work with the military. 51

Talon gave all of the officers a Seigneury inorder to colonize the south side of the river. Francois, his wife and two younger sons left the farm at l'Ange-Gardien in the care of their son, Charles, on 1 July 1677 and accepted the fief of Bonsecours. He was granted a domain of three miles on the south side of the river, by six miles deep, and was promised part of the parish of l'Islet in the future. The combination of this land became the Seigneury of Belanger. The census of 1681 revealed that Francois, Seigneur of Bonsecours had four servants which indicates that he was quite well off. <sup>52</sup>

Francois and Marie spent their remaining years on the south shore of the river. Francois died in the winter of 1690/1691 and Marie died 1 September 1696. They did not leave a will and there was an argument over the title to all of their property on both sides of the river. On 1 December 1691, the oldest son, Charles, reclaimed the farm at 1'Ange-Gardien of five arpents of land. The farm has since passed continuously from father to son and is presently owned by Marcel Belanger. In 1721, the Seigneurie of Bonsecours

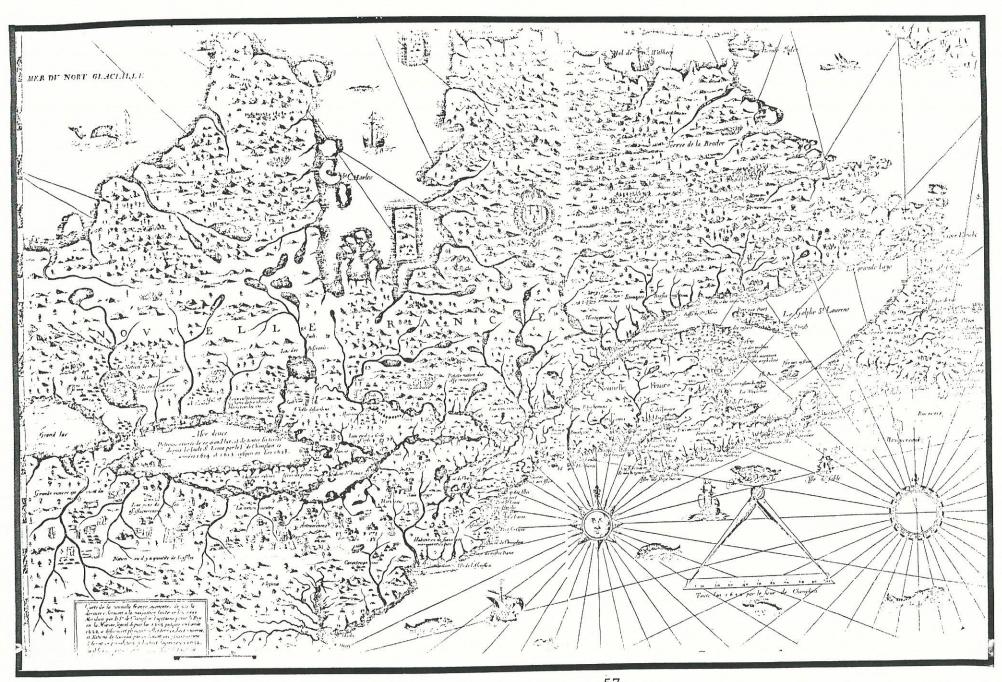
was shared between the sons of Francois; Jean-Francois, Louis, and Jacques. 53

Seven generations of Belangers remained in Quebec. Fourth generation Prisque, born at Chateau-Richer in 1700 was the first colonist to settle St. Vallier in 1722. Two hundred years later in 1922, his descendants erected a monument to his memory on land that he had cleared. 54

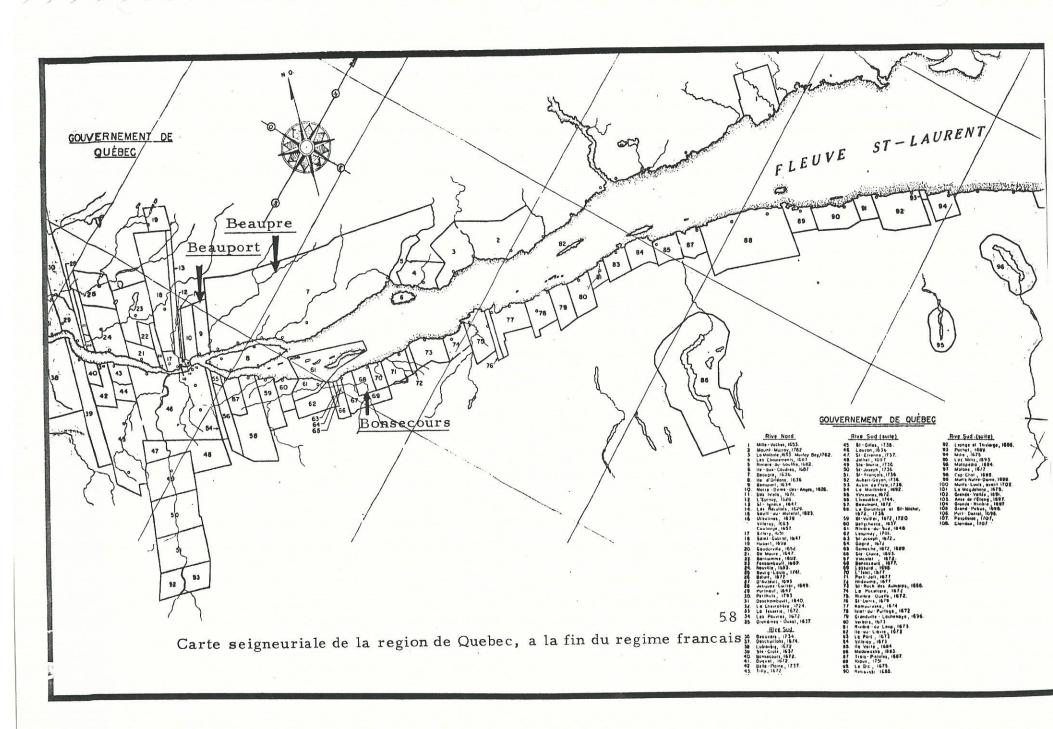
Francois Joseph Denis Belanger was born in St. Joseph, Beauce in 1848, the eighth generation. 55 After attending St. Marie College in Beauce and the Military Institute in Quebec, he traveled to Detroit, Michigan in 1868 where he became a prominent man in the insurance business and Consul of France. 56

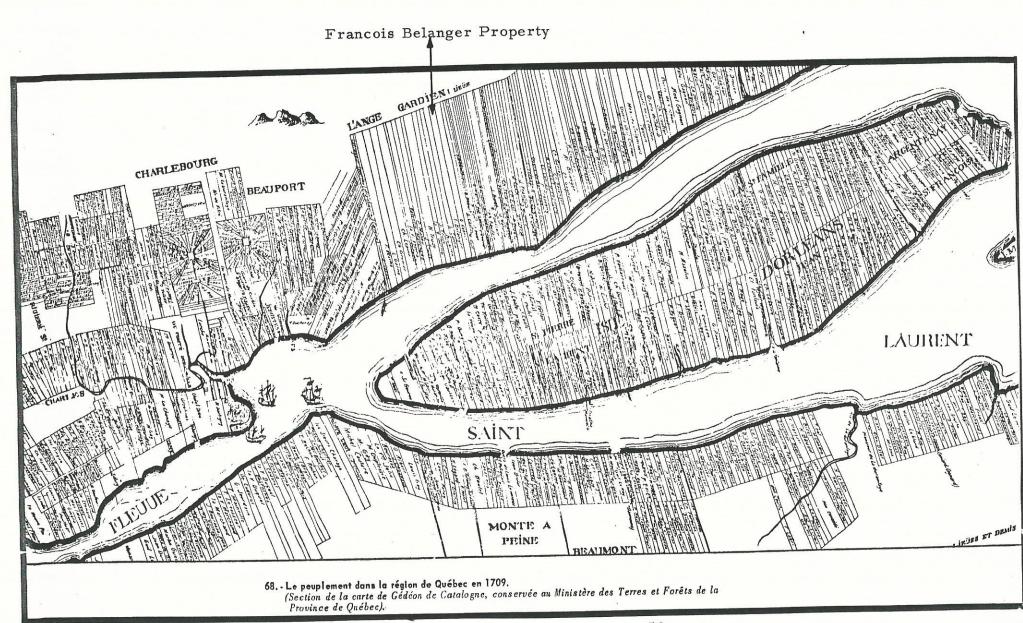
On 19 July 1980, the Rassemblement des Belanger was held at Beauport and l'Ange-Gardien. About 5,000 attended including ten direct descendants of Francois and Marie (Guyon) Belanger, from the Michigan area.

The direct Belanger descending line follows.

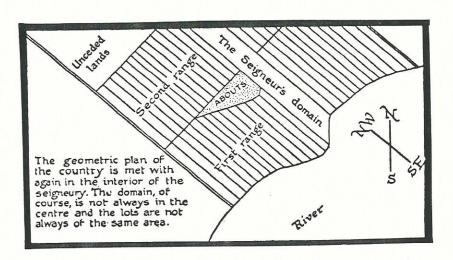


La Nouvelle France, 1632





Land division of the seigneuries



Division of a seigneury 60



Home of Francois Belanger, l'Ange-Gardien, Quebec 61



Francois and Marie (Guyon) Belanger



Marie (de Rainville) and Nicolas Belanger

Portrayed by direct descendants at the Rassemblement des Belanger 1980 François was a more prominent and prosperous person and wore fancier clothes