

English Translation of
"Our Ancestor, Pierre Blais"
from an article appearing in Sainte Anne de Beaupré, November 1975
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In France, the family name Blais has many variations: Ble, Blay, Bled, Belet and Blet. Blais is the most popular form of the original Blaise, a physician who lived at Sebastia in Armenia, became a bishop and was martyred in the year 316. The wool-carding guild chose him as patron saint because his executioners cut him to ribbons with iron combs before beheading him. It is this **Saint Blaise** whose protection is still invoked against sore throats.

But let us discuss Our ancestor, Pierre Blaise, colonist on the Ile D'Orleans in the Saint Lawrence River.

DEPARTURE

Pierre Blais probably left France from the port of La Rochelle in the Province of Aunis in 1664; destination Canada. The Dutch ship "Noir", under the command of **Captain Pierre Filly** of Dieppe, had at least fifty men aboard. The 24-year-old Pierre is mentioned on the crew manifest as coming from Chef-Boutonne, capital of the Canton of Deux-Sevres.

Pierre was the son of **Mathurin Blais** and **Francoise Penigaud**. Mathurin had a wife previous to Pierre's mother. She was **Marie Auchier** whom he married on November 9, 1630, at Melleran, which used to be in the province of Angouleme, but today is found in the Department of Deux-Sevres. In his second marriage on April 30, 1634, Mathurin conquered the heart of Francoise Penigaud. The witnesses to the marriage were **Jean Carrier**, **Denis Richard**, **Nicolas Blanchard** and the "Procureur Fiscale" **Pierre Alix**. Moreover, and this is a rarity, we find the grandfather of Pierre at the ceremony: **Jacques**, also married to a Penigaud, one **Louise**, buried at Melleran on December 2, 1629.

Our ancestor, Pierre Blais, was raised in the Parish of Hanc nearby Melleran, also in Angouleme. The records of this town do not go back beyond 1684; therefore, it is not possible to find his baptismal certificate.

In the census of 1667 in New France, Pierre Blais is mentioned for the first time as living on the Ile D'Orleans (on the St Lawrence River, near Quebec) and having been born about 1640, occupation laborer.

Among his bachelor friends living on Island, we might note **Jacques Tardif**, **Martin Poisson**, and **Francois Marceau**.

HIS FARM

On June 22, 1667, before the Notary Paul Vachon, Pierre Blais received a concession of land within the limits of the future parish of St Jean on Ile Orlean. His neighbours were **Antoine Poisson** and **Hypolyte Thivierge**. In 1681, the census taker notes that Pierre owned four head of cattle and 15 arpents of cleared land. It was on this farm that he would live for the remainder of his life - 33 more years.

HIS FAMILY

Pierre Blais married **Anne Perrot** on October 12, 1669, at the church of Ste Famille on the Island. Anne Perrot, originally from Saint Sulpice in Paris, was the daughter of **Jean Perrot** and **Jeanne Valta**. She was a King's Daughter and brought a dowry into the family estimated at 300 livres.

From this union, ten children were born: 8 boys and 2 girls, of whom 4 died at an early age. These four boys founded the family line: **Pierre, Antoine, Jacques, and Jean**.

Anne, the mother, died in childbirth on June 29, 1688 and was buried the next day in the cemetery at Saint Jean, at about 45 years of age.

Pierre remained a widower with two young infants, especially the poignant little **Marguerite**, born on June 29th, on her mother's deathbed. It was she who would marry **Etienne Lamy** in 1714.

Pierre sought to reorganize his life, so on April 18, 1689, before **Notary Paul Vachon**, he nominated a guardian for his children, and had an inventory made of his possessions. On the following 5th of June, he married **Elizabeth Royer** at St Jean; she was the daughter of **Jean** and **Marie Targer**. From this union, five children were shown the light of day: a daughter, **Anne**, and four boys: **Francois, Alexis, Louis-Charles, and Gabriel**. The last Gabriel, was born in March 1699, and adopted by **Pierre Cloquet** and his wife, **Marie Chaperon**. Gabriel married at Boucherville on May 31, 1718.

Pierre Blais died suddenly on February 16, 1700, at the age of 60. His widow, Elizabeth Royer, married eight months later, on the 16th of November, to **Robert Pepin** at St-Jean. She followed her husband to Montreal where she lived out the rest of her days. This couple put seven children into the world, then Elizabeth died and was buried on June 22, 1715 at Montreal.

MUCH PROSPERITY

Pierre left behind fifteen children of whom eleven were alive at the time of his death. **Alexis**, born April 8, 1693, went exploring down the Mississippi but alas he was killed, along with his companion, **Laurent Bransard**, by the Chicahas and buried on March 3, 1722 at Kaskasia, where **Pere Marquette** had founded a mission and where the french built a fort in 1736.

The first descendant of Pierre Blais to enter the clergy was **Francois-Xavier-Ludger**; born November 16, 1832 at St-Pierre-de-Montmagny, son of **Louis Blais**, Colonel, and **Marie Genest**. After his ordination at Quebec on May 10, 1857, he became Vicar of La Riviere au Renard, professor at Notre Dame du Maon Carmel and Cure at Riviere du Loup, where his dynamism and devotion accomplished important works, which still exist. We also take note of **Monseigneur Andre-Albert Blais**, born at Saint Vallier on August 26, 1842. He was consecrated a Bishop on May 18, 1890, and directed the Diocese of Rimouski for 28 years.

Many Canadian descendants of our ancestor, Pierre Blais, became Blaise, which family had two branches: Des Bergeres de Rigauville and Sanscartier.