

## The Laney Family<sup>1</sup>

Soon after coming from France, Bernard Laisnes was hired as a farm-hand by Antoine Dionne who had obtained a land grant on the Isle of Orleans in 1667. Bernard was sober, serious, and quite a worker, so it was no surprise in the vicinity that Antoine Dionne gladly gave his consent when Bernard sought the hand of daughter Anne even though she was but 15 years of age. Anne was the second child and eldest daughter of Antoine Dionne. She was baptized in Quebec on August 3, 1665. She had eleven brothers and sisters. Since Antoine had quite a large family and being a man of means, he thought it proper and fitting that his daughter and son-in-law should have their own home separate from the homestead. This is why a second home was built not far away from the residence of Antoine. When the census of 1681 was taken, Bernard was living with his wife in his new home on his father-in-law's farm. Already, his wife, Anne had given birth to a child on April 11 of the same year. The poor thing was still-born. At the time of the census Antoine Dionne had five children, one gun, three cows and 25 acres of cultivated land.

Bernard Laisnes and Anne Dionne had fourteen children. The third child, Pierre Laisnes, our ancestor, was baptized in 1692. On January 30, 1720, he married Marguerite Plante at St.-Jean-de-l'Isle-d'Orleans. They had twelve children. On August 5, 1721, Pierre took his first born to the church of St.-Jean for baptism. He requested to have the child called Pierre Laisne dit Laliberte.<sup>2</sup> On October 6, 1763, Pierre Laisnes and Marguerite Plante shed many a tear. Marguerite was making soap. On the floor, she had a large tub containing boiling water and lye. Their only son, so far, little Pierre, fell in the tub and was so badly scalded that he died almost instantly. The poor child was buried the same day. Undaunted, Pierre Laisnes and Marguerite Plante named their second child, also a boy, Pierre. Their next to last child was our ancestor, Jean-Marie Laisne. The church records of St.-Jean don't contain his baptism record. Still, the same books reveal to us that on June 4, 1764, at St. Jean, he married Basillisse Audet. We know the Basillisse was born in 1745.

Here we are to witness a migration of the Laisnes children. You understand that with such large families, they could not continue living in the same surroundings. Quite a few moved to new farms recently opened to colonization.

In 1796, Jean Laisne, son of Jean-Marie Laisne and Basillisse Audet, married Louise Guffard. Said marriage took place at St.-Charles, near the City of Quebec. Jean Laisne gave Louise Guffard several children. Among them we find Michel. Louise died at an early age. I cannot find the marriage certificate of Michel Laisne and Theotiste Bilodeau. I presume that Michel Laisne, a real farmer, was not satisfied with the land around St.-Charles. Moreover, Quebec City was building itself rapidly. So, eager for good land, Michel gradually migrated to the Beauce section of the River Chaudiere Valley. He may have married at St.-Charles or at some intervening point between St.-Charles or St.-Francois, Beauce, where he eventually established himself. It may be also that he was married by some missionary who

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<sup>1</sup> From a letter titled *Genealogy of the Laney Family* by Reverend J. Walter Gelinas; written to Miss Louise Laney about 1943-1944.

<sup>2</sup> This is the first time I have heard of a dit name as being given at birth; we can't be sure if the author has documentation of this or he has interpreted it thus. My understanding has been that dit names were given upon entering militia service, not at birth. These adopted nicknames have caused so much confusion in the genealogies of French Canadian families.

carried the record on some loose leaf that was later lost. This happened but too often to the great despair of genealogists. Again, fire might have destroyed some records. Still, the record may be found at some later date as has often been the case. Michel Laine and Theotiste Bilodeau had at least nine children, Theophile Laine (our ancestor) among them. We saw that Louise Guffard died at an early age. We know that her husband, Jean, came to live with his son, Michel at St.-Francois, Beauce. There, he married a second time to Christine Dulac in 1827. He had further children.



Children of Theophile Laney, circa 1925.<sup>3</sup> L-R back row: (unknown), Emma Margaret Laney Provencher (3<sup>rd</sup> marriage), Mary Laney Baker (3<sup>rd</sup> marriage), Mary Adeline Laney Turcotte ("Lena," 3<sup>rd</sup> marriage), "Tiboy" (3<sup>rd</sup> marriage, possibly named August or George, occupation plumber); front row: Letitia Laney Blanchette (3<sup>rd</sup> marriage), Napoleon Pearley ("Pearley," 1<sup>st</sup> marriage), Mary Langlora (1<sup>st</sup> marriage), and Joseph Laney (2<sup>nd</sup> marriage).

Theophile Laney (also known as Laisne and Laliberte) was born in 1844 and migrated to Skowhegan, Maine, from St. Isadore, Canada, about the year 1888. It is then that the spelling of the name was changed to Laney.<sup>4</sup> Theophile married three times. His first wife was Olive Bernier. They had four children, only two of which, Mary, 1<sup>st</sup> child, and Perley, survived. After Olive died Theophile married his housekeeper, Mary Jolin. By her, Theophile had five children, only one of which, Joseph John, survived. When Mary died, Theophile married Mary's younger sister, Philomene Jolin, who was

<sup>3</sup> Photo Courtesy of Sandi and Mike Baker; names courtesy of Solange Poulin Turcotte.

<sup>4</sup> This and most of the following information is from a revised account written by Ray or Neil Turcotte.

also his housekeeper at the time. She was born in 1865 and although she died at the early age of 37 in 1902, she bore him nine children. Theophile continued to live until September, 1928, at the ripe old age of 84. He is buried in the Catholic cemetery at Skowhegan. The nine children of Theophile and Philomene were Letitia, August, Mary, George (Arthur?), Mary Adeline (Lena), Frank (died in infancy), Louis, Lillie (died in infancy), and Emma Margaret.

### **Alfred and Lena's Family**

Mary Adeline, known as Lena, was born November 15, 1889 in Skowhegan as the first American-born child of Theophile Laney. She was twelve years old when her mother died at the age of 37 and had to stay home from school to care for her two younger siblings, Emma and Louis (known as TiBoy). Lena worked a few years in the Spinning mill before she got married.<sup>5</sup> She married Alfred Turcotte of Skowhegan on November 6, 1911, in that town.



The Turcotte Family: L-R front: Mary Adeline (Lena) Laney, Walter Arthur, and Alfred Turcotte; L-R rear: Ledger Roy (Roy), Leon Louis, and Ralph Neil (Neil).<sup>6</sup>

They moved into the house of Chestnut St. which was given to them by Lena's father. She died September 30, 1968 at the age of 78 in Skowhegan. Alfred's parents were Joseph and Ozilla Jince Turcotte. Alfred, known as Fred, was born in Meriden, Connecticut on March 12, 1890. His father had moved there from St. Isadore, P.Q. Quebec, same as Theophile Laney. They knew each other and were friends. Lena Laney and Alfred Turcotte had six children. Philomene was born July 30, 1912, and died of

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<sup>5</sup> From a separate biography of Neil Turcotte, written by his wife, Solange Poulin Turcotte, titled *Neil*.

<sup>6</sup> Photo courtesy of Therese Provencher Poulin.

Rheumatic Fever November 9, 1924, at the age of 12. Ledger, known as Roy, his middle name, was born December 6, 1913. Dorothy was born February 23, 1919 and died of complications of Whooping Cough February 17, 1921 at nearly two years of age. Ralph, known as Neil, his middle name, was born September 14, 1921. Leon Louis was born December 27, 1923, and Walter Arthur was born April 16, 1926. All births were in Skowhegan. Fred and Lena had a very hard life, suffered a lot of pain, sickness and deprivation. Lena used to talk of her daughters occasionally and said that she still had not gotten over their loss even many years after they died.

They also had to suffer through four years of war, worrying over the safety of their four sons. All four boys were in the service at the same time. Roy was a Sergeant in the infantry for 39 months, from Oct. 1942 to Dec. 1945. He was stationed in Okinawa for a few months. When he was inducted into the service he was a twenty-nine year old married man with an infant daughter, Pauline. He was also deaf in both ears which was of no consequence to the army. Many able-bodied men were able to get deferments but he couldn't. Leon was in Army Quarter Master as Postal Clerk from Aug. 1942 to Feb 1946. Neil was Staff Sergeant in the Army Air Force for 39 months from Sept. 1942 to Dec. 1945. Walter was in Field Artillery from 1944 to 1947. He was in Germany and was in the "Battle of the Bulge". He was a Courier. While stationed in Germany he met and married Barbara Zeller. Fortunately they all returned home sagely and uninjured except that Walter developed Glaucoma during his time in the service and eventually became legally blind; he had only 5% vision before he died.<sup>7</sup>

Roy married Louise Z. Gilbert of Skowhegan on May 5, 1941, and their only child Pauline Mae, was born on July 29, 1941. Pauline married John Applin of Wiscasset, Maine, on June 13, 1964, and had no natural children. They adopted two girls, Angela (Angie) and Terry Ann in 1981.

Leon married Georgianna Sirois of Skowhegan on July 23, 1949. They had two sons, Lloyd Alan born May 24, 1950 and Dana Louis born June 12, 1954, and a daughter Wanda Jean born November 6, 1964.

Walter married Barbara Zeller of Goppingen, Germany, on July 30, 1947. They had two daughters, Nancy Marie born September 29, 1947 and Margaret Ann, known as Peggy, born November 15, 1948. They were divorced in 1956. Barbara died in December, 1974 and Walter married Margarita Rojas, originally from Mexico City on October 8, 1977, two years after moving to California.

Alfred died in Skowhegan on April 23, 1956 at the age of 66. Lena was healthy until a few months before her death. She was having mini-strokes and passed away on September 30, 1968, at the age of 78.

### **Arthur and Emma's Family**

Emma Margaret Laney was born on February 1, 1892. Emma married Arthur James Provencher on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, year unknown.<sup>8</sup> Arthur was born in New Hampshire on January 3, circa 1894.<sup>9</sup> My mother said he came from New Hampshire and his parents were Morse (Morris) Provencher and Mary Theresa Broe, an Irish woman from New York. They had two children, Mary Theresa, born on March 26, 1924, and Richard, born in 1928. Arthur owned a Dry Cleaning business in downtown Skowhegan, so

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<sup>7</sup> Solange Poulin Turcotte, *Neil*.

<sup>8</sup> My maternal grandparents. Most of these facts are from my mother's notes.

<sup>9</sup> Ancestry.

they did not suffer too much during the depression. Their home was on Free Street in Skowhegan. Arthur was an avid member of the Knights of Columbus. Emma died on August 1, 1973 in Hartland, Maine.

### **Neil and Solange's Family<sup>10</sup>**

Neil was born in the house on Chestnut St. and was about nine years old when the family bought and moved into the house on Poplar St. which is where Leon and Georgiana still live. He started school at the Notre Dame de Lourdes Convent but for some reason, Lena took him out of school and a year later enrolled him in the Lincoln school on Leavitt St. he started school late because of that move. He also attended Park School, Junior High on the Island and graduated from Skowhegan High/Bloomfield Academy in June 1939.

When he was fourteen he had a paper route which he passed on to his brother Leon when he was seventeen. He worked one summer with his brother Roy in a dry cleaning establishment. The fumes from the chemicals made him sick almost every day. Another summer he worked for the Independent Reporter, a small local weekly newspaper in Skowhegan. He started working at Med Wed after he graduated from high school.

He liked to hunt and fish in all kinds of weather. He had friend, Babe St. Peter who had a hound dog and they used to go rabbit hunting together. They went brook fishing a lot too, in spite of the black flies and mosquitoes. Ice fishing was another sport that he enjoyed. He shot and tagged many deer during the years but gave most of the meat away. While in their teens Babe and Neil were in a bicycle/train accident. Babe sustained a leg fracture but Neil was lucky and was only bruised.

He was an avid basketball fan and was manager of a local team before he entered the service. When he watched a fast-paced game where the players were evenly matched and the scores would see-saw, he got so excited he had to leave the room until his adrenaline came down. He liked all sports but none excited him as much as basketball. He wound up with three daughters who were not interested in sports.

Neil married Solange Poulin of Skowhegan on June 25, 1949. They had three daughters; Mary Martha, born October 4, 1950, Marcia Ann, born October 23, 1951, and Ellen Margaret, born March 21, 1955.

### **Gaston and Theresa's Family**

Gaston Poulin and Mary Theresa Provencher were married on 5/29/48 in Skowhegan. Gaston had been an aerial gunner during World War Two. After the war he belonged to many clubs and organizations, Kiwanis, Lyons, VFW, American Legion, to name a few. Gus worked as an upholsterer with his brother Joe. Their shop was located at 5 St. John St. just behind my grandmother's, Alida Poulin, house. Theresa was employed by ATT as a telephone operator at the office on North Street. Their residence was at 2 Valliere Court. One of my classmates, Pamela Pelletier, lives there now. Gus and Theresa had two children, David Michiel (Dad miss-spelled Michael on my birth certificate) 12/31/50, and Diane Theresa 1/25/56.

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<sup>10</sup> Solange Poulin Turcotte, *Neil*.

Ancestors of my mother (the Laney side):

Antoine Dionne married Catherine Ivory in 1660 in Quebec City or Chateau-Richer, P.Q.

Bernard Laisnes married Anne Dionne in 1680 at Quebec City or at St.-Jean, Isle d'Orlean, P.Q.

Pierre Laisnes married Marguerite Plante in 1720 at St.-Jean, Isle d'Orleans, P.Q.

Jean-Marie Laisnes married Basilisse Audet in 1764 at St.-Jean Parish, P.Q.

Jean Laisne married Louise Guffard in 1796 at St.-Charles, P.Q.

Michel Laisne married Theotiste Bilodeau (records are still undiscovered)

Theophile Laney married Philomene Jolin, Beauce County, P.Q.

Emma Laney married Arthur Provencher, Skowhegan, Maine