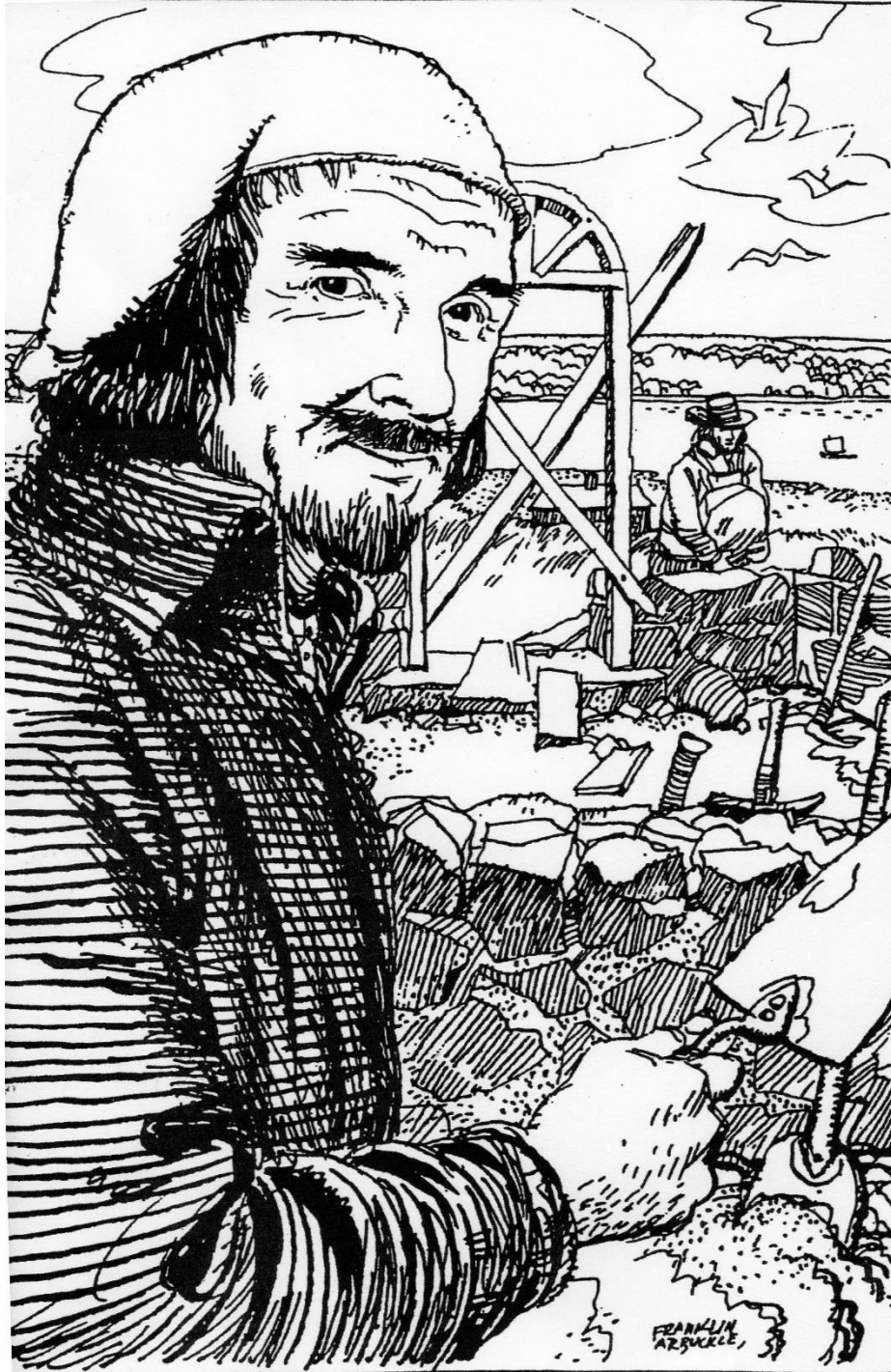
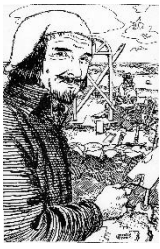


Etienne de Lessart and a Family of Descendants



By Solange Poulin Turcotte



Etienne de Lessart and Family Descendants

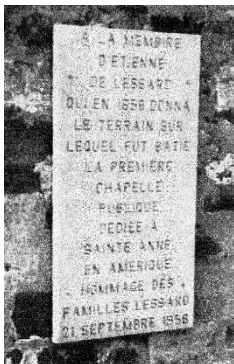
Etienne de Lessart was the ancestor of a multitude of Lessard descendants in Canada and the United States. Etienne was born in Chambois, Normandy, France in 1623. He was the son of Jacques de Lessart and Marie Herson, also known as Marie Chamboy. It was believed that Jacques was descended from nobility.

In 1645 when Etienne was 22 years of age, he decided to emigrate to New France. While crossing the Atlantic Ocean on a frail schooner and fearing for his life, he made a vow that he would build a church to Ste. Anne if he made it safely to land. He would have liked to settle on the Ile d'Orleans but the Iroquois Indians were warring against all newcomers.

Etienne received a grant along the St Lawrence River of four or five arpents. (An arpent signified a width of land from the St. Lawrence to the interior.) Etienne's neighbor and friend, Claude Poulain, (the first of our ancestors on our father's side to emigrate to New France) donated his labor and two arpents of land for the construction of living quarters for the parish priest. At that time there were only traveling priests. These new pioneers had long desired a place of worship. Etienne hired indentured servants to help him clear the land to make it manageable for building and for cultivating.

On April 8, 1652 Etienne married Marguerite Sevestre, a 15 year old girl from Quebec. Marguerite was the daughter of Charles Sevestre, Lord of Lanoraie, and of Marie Pichon. The couple had seven boys and four girls; only six boys and two girls survived to adulthood.

On March 8, 1658 Etienne donated the land for the construction of the first chapel; it was dedicated to Ste. Anne de Beaupre. That chapel was built too close to the St. Lawrence River and was damaged by a flood. In all there were three chapels built. The third was built of brick.



This bronze plaque at one side of the entrance of an early Ste. Anne de Beaupre chapel honoring Etienne de Lessart who gave the land for the first chapel. On the other side of the entrance is another plaque honoring Claude Poulain as the carpenter of the building.

Etienne was a very important member of the Beupre colony and of Quebec. He was captain of the Militia, Magistrate of Beupre, and Lord of Lanoraie, near Montreal. Many of his descendants held positions of authority in the Military.

In 1735, 35 citizens travelled through the woods to the Beauce carrying nothing much more than aprons, needles and thread. They settled along the river now known as the Chaudiere. They camped on the hillside because the river flooded its banks in the spring. Among them were Francois and Jean Lessard who became Captains of the parish. Among Francois' children was Basile-Elie, our great-great paternal grandfather. It is said that Basile was a handsome blond with beautiful blue eyes and that he was second richest man in the Beauce at that time.

Basile-Elie married Angele Labbe (Angele was half-Indian, called a Metisse). The couple had three children, George, Agnes, and Paul; the younger boy died of smallpox at the age of 20. George married Dina Tardif; they had three boys and five girls, all of whom lived into adulthood. Their names were Amedee, our grandfather, Alphonse, Joseph, Angelina, Amezielie, Alphonsine, Valerie and Virginie.

LESSARD ANCESTRY					
Jacques de Lessart *			Marie Heron		* Lived in Chambois, Normandie, France
Etienne de Lessart *	1623-1703	1652	Marguerite Sevestre	primary settler	* Migrated to Beupre in 1646
Prisque Lessard	1674-1755	1699	Marie Jacob		
Francois-Malo Lessard		1724	Angelique Racine		
Francois Lessard		1767	Marie Anne Gagne		
Francois Lessard		1802	Marie Gilbert		
Basile-Elie Lessard		1832	Angele Labbe *		* half Indian
Georges Lessard *		1859	Dina Tardif		* died at 81 years of age
Amedee Lessard * **		1887	Celina Lessard **		* died at 85+ years of age ** cousins

Basile-Elie worked hard on his land, land that had a lot of hillocks and sandy areas. Wind blew sand in his eyes. He rubbed his eyes a lot, and eventually became blind. Basile made a pilgrimage to Ste. Anne de Beupre and promised to return to thank her if he received his eyesight back. He was able to see but forgot to return to thank her and arrived home once again blind. He stayed blind for the next 17 years. He lived with his son George; one of his

grandsons helped him with his daily tasks. It is said that Basile was a handsome blond with beautiful blue eyes. He died at age 79. When Basile's wife Angele died, she was buried in the basement of the parish church having paid \$100 for the honor, a privilege usually given only to the priests.

In 1735, 35 citizens traveled through the woods to the Beauce taking very little with them. They settled along the river which is now known as the Chaudiere. They camped on the hillside because the river flooded in the spring. That place is now called Saint Joseph de Beauce. Among them were Francois and Jean Lessard who became Captains in the parish. They were nephews of Basile Elie Lessard.

The American invasion in 1775 was an embarrassment to the town of St. Joseph and to many of the families who lived there because of the official report that was filed in 1776. It was Francois Malo Lessard and his son Francois who, as leaders of the militia did not defend the frontier against an invading army. It was noted that the entire town helped the enemy by selling them goods and helping them with canoes to help them reach Point Levi. Francois Malo and His son were removed from the militia and also the entire town was held to blame.

Whoever provided lodging for Captain Henry Dearborn for four weeks so he could recover from pneumonia he had come down with when he crossed the Height of Land, that family saved his life. Whoever in Saint Joseph sold food and helped the American Army when they arrived after crossing over, who were starving and barefoot also saved those men's lives. I think the help provided was an honorable thing to do.

The French Canadians in Canada were in a difficult position after the British won the war and took over in 1759. They deported the entire population of Acadia and created the present-day Nova Scotia. They stole their land and burned their ancestral homes along the St. Lawrence including the house of Etienne de Lessart at Ste. Anne de Beaupre. The British were lucky that the French resentment only resulted in a passive form of resistance because Canada might have become a very different place in history if the French had risen up at that time.

An ancestor of George Lessard's wife Dina Tardif, was Olivier Tardif who was born in Bretagne but lived in St. Onge, Normandy. There he met

Samuel de Champlain who took him to New France in 1604. At that time Olivier was only 15 years of age. Champlain hired Olivier, as his right-hand man, to learn the Indian dialects so as to enable Champlain to negotiate with the Indians in the fur trade. At the age of 31 Olivier married Mlle Couillard, daughter of Louis Hebert who was renowned as the first farmer of Quebec. Olivier had but a few children. He died in 1635 at the age of 68.

Samuel de Champlain lived from 1567 to 1635. He was the first governor of French Canada. He was an adventurer, exploring the St Lawrence River area during 1603 and discovering Lake Champlain in 1609. He founded Quebec in 1608.

Basile and Angele's daughter Agnes married Octave Jobin of Scott Junction. They are said to have had several children. Octave worked as a secretary in the Government in Ottawa and was home only at the end of the sessions of Parliament. Their son Maurice was the only one who lived to old age. The names of the other children are unknown. Maurice had several children who were left well-off having inherited from his mother who had inherited from her father and also from her mother's family.

Louis Lessard married Euphrosine Letourneau on October 19th 1824. They had a son named Benjamin Lessard who married Lucie Lessard on November 23rd 1869. Benjamin was left widowed to raise their two children, a son Josep and a daughter Celina. Josep was a very blond man, nicknamed Blond Lessard. He married three times and had twelve beautiful children. When he died at the age of 86, he left his children with good Christian values and in comfortable circumstances.

More important to our family is that Benjamin and Lucie Lessard's daughter Celina Lessard married Amedee Lessard, a cousin. Amedee's parents were George Lessard and Dina Tardif.

It is said that our first maternal ancestor to arrive in New France was Jean Nicolet. Jean came to Canada in 1618 accompanied by Francois Grave, Lord du Pont, and by Father Paul Huet. He was an explorer with Samuel de Champlain, spending his life at various times with the Algonquins of the "Ile-aux-Alumettes" on the Ottawa River and with the Nipissing tribe, the mildest and best of the Indian tribes. The impact of the Indian tribes on the white

settlers of New France was gradual, mainly developed through the dependency of the settlers on the Indians as suppliers of furs.

During more than 20 years Jean Nicolet led a rough life among the Indians with very few comforts, hundreds of miles from his parents and friends, beyond any civilized environment. It was while living with the Algonquin tribe that Jean Nicolet married an Indian maiden. That was the custom of the country and times. Intermarriage between the Indians and whites contributed to changes in the culture and marriages helped keep the peace. Jean and his wife had one daughter, Euphrosie-Madeleine, born 1626. Euphrosie-Madeleine first married Jean Leblanc and then Elie Dusceau, leaving a large family.

It seems that the principal role played by Jean Nicolet in New France was as the Governors' ambassador "extraordinaire" among the many Indian tribes, with the mission to pacify them, to prepare the way for the arrival of the missionaries and to direct their fur trading business toward New France. This was his reason for learning numerous Indian dialects, especially those of the Algonquins, the Nipissing being one of their important tribes.

Among the most outstanding accomplishments of our ancestor was his discovery of Lake Michigan and his early exploration of present day Wisconsin. These two events occurred during a long adventurous journey in 1634 in the Great Lakes region.

In 1637, Jean Nicolet received a land grant from M de Monymagny on the hillside of Ste. Genevieve, today part of Quebec City. From then on he was known as Nobleman Jean Nicolet, Lord of Belleborne. A few months later he married Marguerite Couillard, daughter of Guillaume Couillard and Guillemette Hebert and Granddaughter of Louis Hebert, the first Canadian colonizer. Louis Hebert was renowned as the First Farmer of Quebec. Their daughter Marguerite married Jean Baptiste Le Gardeur de Repentigny; they had many descendants.

October 19, 1642, Jean Nicolet drowned in the St Lawrence River near Sillery during a northeastern storm. He was on his way to Three Rivers to appease a party of Algonquins who wanted to put an enemy to death. A city, county, diocese, lake and a river bear the name of our ancestor Jean Nicolet, extending his memory.

The Nipissing Indians were a tribe of the Algonquins. They were a comparatively unwarlike people, firm friends of the French, readily accepting the Christian teachings of the missionaries. Although having a fixed home, they were semi-nomadic, going south in the autumn to the vicinity of the Hurons to fish and prepare food for the winter, which they shared among the tribe. They traded with the Cree tribe in the North and did some cultivating of the soil. On the whole the Algonquins were a gentle, peaceful and trusting tribe. Indians had no surname, so some took the name of white settlers. Some took the name of Lessard, which extends our family name.



Amedee Lessard was our maternal grandfather.

Celina Lessard was our maternal grandmother.

Our grandparents, Celina and Amedee Lessard had fifteen children. Our mother, Alida Elise, was the eighth child of the family.

(Following is a listing of the fifteen siblings in the Lessard family)

SIBLINGS		COMMENT	SPOUSE
Arthur	m	Died 6/13/1977 at 88	Dina Tardiff
Marianne Albertine	f	Died at birth	
Angeline	f	Died 6/23/1984 at 93	Arthur Giguere
Valere	m	Died at 63	Armoza Poulin
Philibert	m	Died at age 4	
Albertine	f	Died at 91	Joseph Veilleux
Achilles	m	Died at 79	Maria Carrier
Alida	f	b. 4/08/1900; Died 4/30/1971	Joseph Wm Poulin
Marie Ange	f	Died at 85	(Infirmarian)
Marie Anne	f	Died at 59	Theotime Poulin
Joseph Marie	m	Died at birth	
Adelbert	m	Died at 49	Eveline Breault
Bernadette	f	Died at 27	(Religious)
Cecile	f	Died 6/23/2003 at 91	(Caregiver)
Antoine	m		Irene Doyon

Alida married Joseph William Poulin as she approached the age of 21.



For a year or so the Poulin family on their

Crowded conditions and lack of work in La Beuce led to moving

couple lived with the large farm in Beuceville.

from La Beauce to Skowhegan, Maine, in search of work and their future life. As they journeyed into Maine, they carried their infant son, Gaston. In Skowhegan the family grew to nine children, five boys and four girls.

Our father eventually found work in a local spinning mill through the influence of his cousin Arthur Poulin; he always worked night shift. The years were not without hardship. Papa's salary was meager. Mama supplemented his income by taking in laundry, sewing and mending. Our mother had been fortunate to be able to attend vocational school so she became a proficient seamstress.

During the early years, our home off North Avenue in Skowhegan had no central heating. Mama bathed us standing at the kitchen sink protected by a screen. She cooked on a wood stove. She baked sixteen loaves of bread each week, especially for her growing boys. Groceries were supplemented by government-given food. In the spring and summer Papa helped by cultivating a garden. We lived with hand-me-down clothing. In spite of all those conditions we never realized that we were poor. We had the opportunity for good education and we entered into business and into the professions.



Bottom row: Roger, Mama, George, Papa, Victor
Top row: Bernadette, Yvette, Gaston, Guy, Martha, Solange

The oldest among the siblings were Gaston and Guy, known mostly as Gus and Joe. After their high school years in Berthierville, Canada,

Gaston and Guy served in the American air force during WWII. They were involved in bombing before and during the great invasion of France.

After the war Gus and Guy apprenticed in upholstery, then they set up their own business behind our little home in a large wooden structure that they built themselves.

(Following is a listing of the members of our Poulin/Lessard family)

FAMILY NAMES		DATE BORN	DATE DECEASED	SPOUSE
Joseph William	f	October 29, 1889	March 31, 1952	Alida Elise Lessard
Alida Elise	m	April 28, 1900	April 30, 1972	Joseph William Poulin
Gaston Gerard	s	January 28, 1922	July 24, 1973	Mary Theresa Provencher
Joseph Guy	s	October 15, 1923	May 11, 1986	Cecile Louise Guenette
Marie Yvette	d	October 25, 1924	December 28, 1999	Walter Vivarelli
Marie Solange	d	September 15, 1926		Ralph Neil Turcotte
Marie-Marthe	d	March 20, 1929		Joseph A. David Kammer
Joseph Victor	s	March 18, 1931	February 19, 2016	Roberta Kell
Joseph Roger	s	November 27, 1932	November 12, 1978	Charlene Elizabeth Dostie
George	s	February 22, 1935	March 09, 2016	Janice Mae Ward
Marie Bernadette	d	November 19, 1937		Herbert Gabriel Karter

Yvette and Solange studied nursing at St. Mary's Hospital in Montreal; as RNs both served in the Skowhegan hospital. Marie-Marthe spent her high school years with many Canadian girls at Sacred Heart Academy in Jackman near the U.S.-Canadian border; she graduated from LaMennais College in Alfred, Maine, with a BA degree; she got her Master's degree from Boston College. Martha spent her years as a high school teacher.

Victor, Roger, and George studied with the Franciscans in Biddeford, Maine. Vic and Roger served in the Air Force during the Korean War, then Vic became a high school teacher and Roger became a butcher. George also became a teacher, after serving in the Air Force during the Cold War. He was posted in Turkey, deciphering Russian communication.

Bernadette, the youngest in the family, became a lab technician and rose to be head of the laboratory department at the Thayer Hospital in Waterville, Maine. Bernadette was instrumental in merging the laboratory facilities of that hospital with that of the Augusta hospital.

Over the years we have remained very close to our parents' families in Canada, especially to our mother's Lessard parents and family. Early on, at least once a year, one or the other of us children would accompany our parents to visit in St. Joseph de Beauce.

On our visits we heard stories. We learned that our Lessard grandparents, Amadée and Céline, were cousins, both Lessards; our grandfather was seventh in a line down from Etienne de Lessart.

We understand that the family first lived on a moderate sized farm north of St. Joseph where most, if not all, of the children were born and raised. In summer and fall Pèpère drove his horse and wagon to nearby villages to sell his produce. We heard the story that he often stopped at a convent to contribute food there, in hopes of seeing and talking with this daughter, Bernadette, who had become a member of that religious congregation.

Eventually the family gave up their farm and moved their home to a small plot of land on the north edge of the village of St. Joseph de Beauce. That is the home where we grew to know Mama's family, the home we often visited even in later years. We remember Pèpère rocking in his chair, smoking his pipe, and smiling gratefully as Mémère played cards enthusiastically, even with her arthritic hands.

Ma tante Cécile, the youngest daughter, had aspired to follow her sister Marie Ange as a nurse, but she graciously and generously devoted herself to caring for her parents in their declining years. Her mother Celina had a stroke at the age of 50 and later had two more strokes, but she was fortunate to recover without any severe debilitating defects. She never lost her eye sight or her mental acuity but she did have severe arthritis. She needed help with the activities of her daily living. She loved to play cards and to laugh with the other players.

After her parents died Ma Tante Cécile cared for her older brothers Arthur and Valère and for her older sister Angéline Giguère.

Once when I was young I accompanied my mother Alida to visit family in Canada. Mama's brother Adelbert had his wedding reception at the family home. There was a fiddle player and a harmonica player and everyone was dancing. After the newly married couple went upstairs to bed, some of the men went upstairs to harass them. Because of all the company, there was a shortage of beds, so I had to sleep between Mama and Tante Cecile. We were in a double bed and the mattress swayed in the middle. I don't think we got much sleep that night but Tante Cecile was up a 5 a.m. and not tiptoeing around either, so it wasn't long before everyone was up. Cecile was always happy and we couldn't help smiling when she was around. She told her stories in such a way that always made us laugh.

There was a pump organ in the living room on which Tante Cecile liked to pound and sing loudly while pumping away. She was a good cook but she served much richer fare than we were used to. Sometimes she fried eggs loaded with fat and maple syrup.

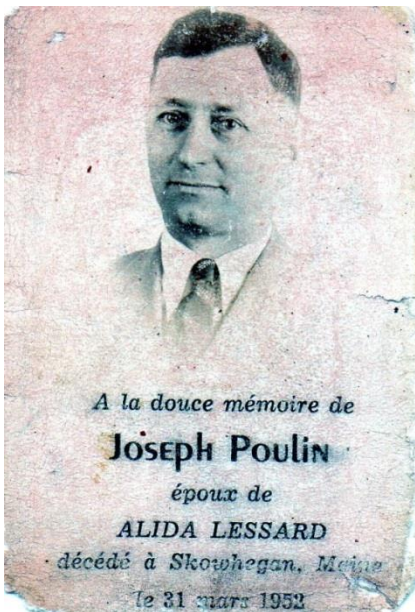
In later years our visits with ma tante were often interrupted by phone calls; she could converse with people on the phone and with us at the same time, and once we heard her whisper on the side to her brother Arthur, "Met tes dents!"



Ma Tante Cecile with
Martha and Solange
in 1997

Ma tante Cécile was a very kind, pleasant, and jovial person. It seems that everyone in St. Joseph was her cousin, especially anyone named Lessard. Often when we visited her, we would go with her to Restaurant Capri; she would stop at every table to converse.

Of the nine children in our family, as of 2017, six are deceased; still living are Solange, Marie-Martha, and Bernadette. And there are 28 grandchildren; most of them are now married with children of their own.



Papa died March 31st 1953



Mama died April 30, 1972
Photo was taken June 20th 1970

In telling the story of our family we have avoided the temptation to write more about our father's ancestry; we have also avoided going into extended details about our own growing up.

The story of our Poulin ancestry is very well delineated by our nephew, David Poulin, in *La Famille Poulain*, available on line at <http://entrada1598.com/family/family.html>.

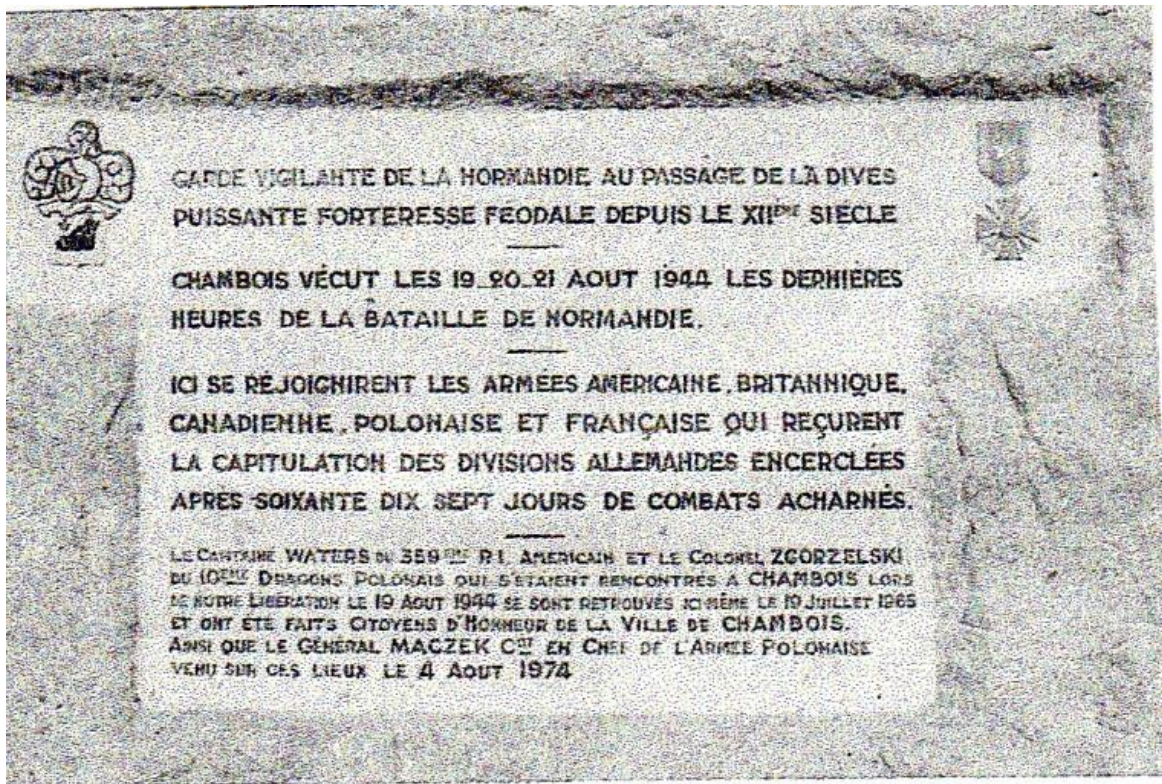
Within that work at Chapter 5 is more of the story of our immediate family, shared by Solange Poulin Turcotte. At that same site our nephew David has also placed, under the title *Gus and Guy*, the story of the WW-II experiences and adventures of his father Gaston and his uncle Joseph Guy.

All of this material is worth devoting time to the reading of it.



Referring to World War II leads to noting that the village from which Etienne Lessart emigrated to Canada was Chambois, France, which is about 30 miles southeast of the D-Day landing of Allied troops. Fighting around and in Chambois was significant to the Allied victory. In that area many German units were killed or captured in their retreat.

Below are shown photos of a stone monument in the Chambois town square honoring the fighting and victory, mainly by the American and Polish troops.



**Stèle commémorative de la jonction des Armées alliées
et de la fin de la Bataille de Normandie.**

*(A marble ? commemorative of the joining of the Allied armies
and of the end of the Battle of Normandy)*

There us a translation of the words in the monument below.

English translation of the words of the monument from the French:

The second paragraph of the monument reads:

“Through August 19, 20, and 21, 1944, endured the last hours of the battle in the last hours of the Battle of Normandie.”

The third paragraph: “In this place the American, British, Canadian, Polish and French armies accepted the capitulation of the German divisions which had been encircled after 70 days of fierce battle.”

The center of Chambois with the monument on the left:

