



# Levasseur and Carmel families

## Web Capsule and Social Media



### Pioneer Families of Manchester, NH.

David and Azilda Levasseur and their 12 children left behind many descendants



The great-grandfather of the author of this article, David Levasseur, and six of his children. Down, Adélard, David, and David Albert. Top row, Rose, Dora (grandmother of Joyce), Angeline and Clarinda. Photo taken in Manchester, N.H. around 1941.



This article was first published in the Fall 2025 issue of « Sent By The King », a biannual journal of La Société des Filles du roi et soldats du Carignan, Corp. ([fillesduroi.org](http://fillesduroi.org)).



Azilda Levasseur (1861-1910) died on May 23, 1910, 44 years before her husband, David.

Thanks to Mrs. Joyce J. Adams, third-generation descendant of the couple David and Azilda, to allow us to reproduce this article

## La Famille Levasseur A Tale of Two Immigrations

By Joyce Adams  
ALA member # 750



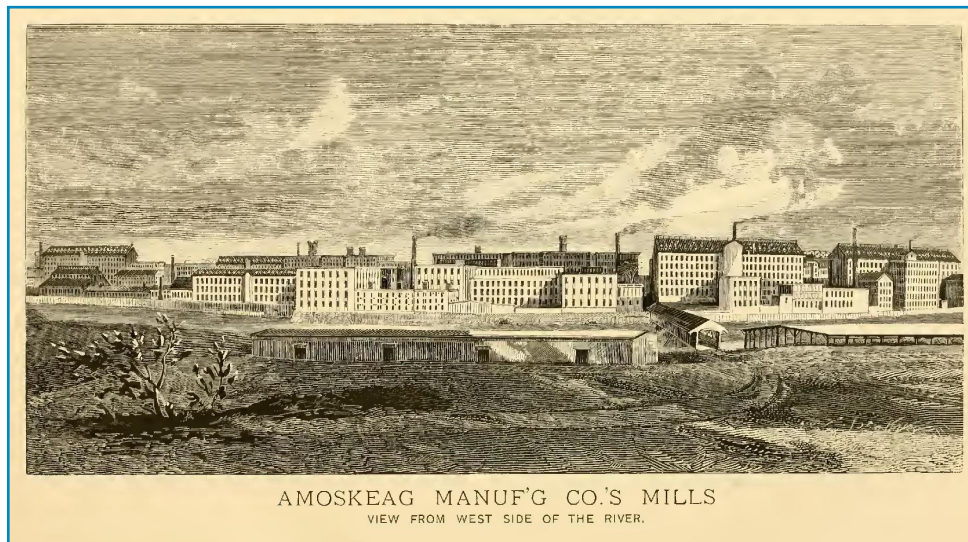
### The French-Canadian Migration to New England

I became interested in my Franco-Canadian heritage and started my ancestry research when I retired in 2014 from my professional nursing career. I knew that my grandmother, **Dora Levasseur-Boisclair**, was a daughter of immigrants **David and Azilda Levasseur**, who left Quebec in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for New England. Dora was a first-generation United States citizen born in Manchester, New Hampshire in 1896. Her younger sister Angeline was also born in Manchester in 1899.

Today more than ten million Americans, including one in every five New Englanders and Vermonters, are of French-Canadian descent. Many of these French-Canadian immigrants ended up in industrial centers such as Fall River, Massachusetts; Lewiston, Maine; Manchester, New Hampshire; and Woonsocket, Rhode Island. The primary sources of employment for these new immigrants were in the construction, textile and shoemaking industries (Choquette, 2018).

**Azilda and David Levasseur** and their seven children immigrated from Quebec to Manchester, New Hampshire in 1895. Between 1850 and 1900 more than 300,000 French-Canadians abandoned the poor economic conditions that existed there. Many of the immigrants (French-Canadian males 16 years old or older) were farmers (approximately 50%); laborers and other job categories accounted for 40%; and 10% had no occupation (Vermette, 2018). At the height of Quebec immigration to New Hampshire, 40% of the population of Manchester were French-Canadians while nearby Nashua had 38% (Brault, 1986).

My great-grandfather was a **journalier** (day-laborer) and worked for the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, the largest cotton textile plant in the world during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At its peak, the company ran three mills in Manchester and employed 17,000 employees. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century approximately 35% of the work force of Amoskeag's was French-Canadian (Kujawski, 2019).



Maurice D. Clarke, [from old catalog]. Wikimedia Com

Manchester was known for textile and shoe manufacturing. A long and bitter strike at Amoskeag in 1922 was the end of a way of life for many of the Franco-Americans. The cause of the strike was an increase in work hours and a 20% cut in pay. The Amoskeag mills closed in 1935, leaving many without work, some families returning to Québec. My great-aunt Clarinda, like her father, worked at the Amoskeag mill as a spinner. Her brothers David Albert, Wilfrid, and Adélaré worked in a shoe factory along with their sister Marie. The westside of Manchester, where the Levasseurs lived with their children, was called their « *Petit Canada* » district. All their adult children remained on the west side of Manchester. Clarinda married and returned to Bécancour, Quebec in the early 1920's, where she had her family.

*In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, conspiracy theorists thought that the Québécois Roman Catholic hierarchy had sent our ancestors to annex New England to form a new independent country, a resurgent Nouvelle France (New France), a French-speaking Catholic state.*

Many French-Canadian communities in New England had their "Petit Canada". These communities began to disappear before the mills fell silent. Now Franco-Americans were looking for better paying jobs, better living conditions and education for their children (Vermette, 2018). The Franco-Canadians, when they arrived, were relegated to overcrowded tenements on the westside of New Hampshire, causing poor health conditions leading to diseases like tuberculosis which was a leading cause of death in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first medications to treat tuberculosis were discovered in the 1940's and 1950's (Daniel, 2006). Sadly, for my great-grandparents, they lost their 8-year-old daughter Marie

Angeline from pneumonia in 1898 and son Wilfrid from pulmonary tuberculosis in 1902 at age 17. My great-grandmother Azilda also succumbed to pulmonary tuberculosis in 1910 at the age of 48. Azilda's and David's daughter Marie died of the same disease in 1912 at the age of 28. David died in 1954 at age 98 in Manchester, New Hampshire.





A family photo of Azilda and David taken about 1908, in Manchester, NH

As immigrants to the United States, Azilda and David experienced challenges much like their ancestors did in coming to New France. Integration into a new community and country was difficult. Our French-Canadian ancestors experienced prejudice and discrimination. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, conspiracy theorists thought that the Québécois Roman Catholic hierarchy had sent our ancestors to annex New England to form a new independent country, a resurgent Nouvelle France (New France), a French-speaking Catholic state. There were a small number of elite extremists who promoted this vision (Vermette, 2018). However, working class immigrants, like my great-grandparents, came to the United States for a better life

for themselves and their children. Their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, whether in Canada or the United States, continue to be a part of the fabric of their communities and are proud of their Franco-Canadian heritage.

This heritage began in France with the emigration of my sixth great-grandfather **Pierre Levasseur dit l'Espérance** and my sixth great-grandmother **Jeanne Chaverlange**.

## The Levasseur Family Immigration and Lineage

My great-grandparents David Levasseur and Azilda Levasseur had the same surname and were born in Saint Maurice, about forty miles from Trois-Rivières in the province of Quebec in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. David was born in 1862 to **David Levasseur** and **Marie-Delina Beaumier**. Azilda was born in 1862 to **Jean Baptiste Levasseur** and **Marguerite Leduc**. They were fourth cousins.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, people with the surname "Levasseur" left France to come to New France. Pierre Levasseur, his brother Jean and sister Jeanne, immigrated to Quebec from Paris, France. They were the children of **Noël Levasseur**, a master carpenter, and **Geneviève Gaugé**.

**Pierre Levasseur dit L'Espérance**, my sixth great-grandfather, was, like his father, a master carpenter. He was born in 1627 in Paris. Pierre is noted in the records of the city of Quebec as early as August of 1654. He was one of the founders of the Confrérie de Sainte-Anne at Notre-Dame de Québec (L'Association des Levasseur d'Amérique inc.). Pierre married **Jeanne Chaverlange** in October of 1665 in the city of Quebec. Jeanne was the daughter of **Antoine Chaverlange** and **Marthe Guérin** and had been born in 1637 in Bourges, France. She immigrated to Quebec city in 1655 and is considered a Filles à Marier (Gagné, 2002). Pierre and Jeanne had seven children.

Their son, also named **Pierre Levasseur dit L'Espérance**, was born in 1661 in Quebec City. **Anne Mesnage** (Ménage) was Pierre's second wife. They were married in 1696 in Quebec city at the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Marie Anne was born in 1676 in Quebec City to **Pierre Mesnage** and **Anne Le Blanc** (Leblanc). Anne Le Blanc had been born in 1659 to **Nicholas Le Blanc** and **Anne Gauthier** in St. Martin, Ile de Ré, France, and immigrated to Quebec in 1672 as a « Fille du roi », after her mother's death (Gagné, 2001) She married Pierre Mesnage in 1673.

Pierre Mesnage had been born in Poitiers, France around 1645, and was the son of a merchant **François Mesnage** and Françoise Lunette. Pierre had arrived in Quebec City in 1669 and was a master carpenter. He built several important houses in Quebec City, for Phillipe Gaultier de Comporté and the Jesuits and Ursulines. He was also involved in the construction of the cathedral (Notre-Dame de Québec Basilica Cathedral), the Hôtel-Dieu and the Château Saint-Louis. In addition, he was involved in the construction of the home of François Jacquet (Gagné, 2001). The Jacquet home is one of the oldest houses in Quebec City and, since 1966, has housed the restaurant « Aux Anciens Canadiens ». Pierre and Marie Anne had sixteen children. One of their children was Denis-Joseph Levasseur.

Through **Denis-Joseph Levasseur** and **Marie-Charlotte Couturier dit La Bonté** (Labonté), my great-grandparents David and Azilda share common ancestors.

Denis-Joseph was a carpenter like his father and settled in the Trois-Rivières area. wife Marie-Charlotte married in 1738 in St-François-du-Lac and had nine children.

Marie-Charlotte Couturier dit La Bonté's grandparents were **Gilles Couturier dit La Bonté** and **Anne-Elisabeth de Tarragon**. Gilles was a soldier in the Carignan-Salières Regiment, and by profession was a cobbler. He immigrated to Nouvelle France from Rennes, Brittany, France in August of 1665 with the Saurel Company. His parents are unknown (Gagné, 2001).

Anne-Elisabeth, a « Fille du roi », is thought to have immigrated to Canada in 1671 from Beauce in the Loire Valley in France. Gilles and Anne-Elisabeth married in 1676 and had three sons: Pierre, Jean-Baptiste and Gilles. Captain Saurel from the Carignan Regiment served as a godfather to all three boys. (Gagné, 2001).

Their son, Pierre, was the father of Marie-Charlotte Couturier dite La Bonté. One of Denis-Joseph and Marie-Charlotte's sons, **Joseph Onesine Levasseur**, and his wife **Marie Madeleine Desharnais** dite La Neuville married in 1765 in Bécancour, Canada, and had seven children. Two of their sons were Étienne and Modeste. **Étienne Levasseur** was the father to Jean-Baptiste Levasseur, Azilda's father. Modeste Levasseur was the grandfather of my great-grandfather David's father, who was also named David. Denis-Joseph and his wife Marie-Charlotte also had a daughter, Marie-Charlotte Levasseur. She was the grandmother to Azilda's mother, Marguerite Leduc. Marguerite's mother was Charlotte Bouvet, and her father was **Armand Grégoire Leduc**.

So many names, so much history! I feel such a sense of accomplishment that I followed all the leads to figure out this complicated family history.

Immigration from France to Nouvelle-France was on a relatively small scale. By 1673, the colony had only 6,700 inhabitants compared with 120,000 colonists in New England. (Lacoursière, Philpot). The result was that the French-Canadian population grew from just a small number of immigrants. Many French-Canadians and North Americans today have the surnames of the pioneer families. My following ancestors were pioneers in Nouvelle-France: Levasseur, Couturier dit La Bonté and Desharnais dit Laneuville ([www.prdh-igd.com](http://www.prdh-igd.com)). I suppose it is not surprising, given the number of French immigrating to Canada in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, that many of our families have common relatives, especially with the advent of the « Filles à Marier » and « Filles du roi » programs.

One of the surprises that I found while doing my family research is the *Association des Levasseur d'Amérique Inc.* The association is a non-profit organization founded in 1988. Several of their goals are to unite the Levasseur descendants, promote genealogical knowledge about the Levasseur family and organize meetings and gatherings of the Levasseur families. Another surprise for me was learning about the « Filles du roi » and the « Filles à Marier » and their importance in the settlement of Nouvelle-France. I am very proud of my pioneering family roots.

## SOURCES

Brault, Gerald J. (1986), *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England*, University Press of New England.

Choquette, Leslie. "French-Canadian Immigration to Vermont and New England (1840-1930)", *Vermont History*, Vol.86, No.1(Winter-Spring, 2018), Vermont Historical Society, pages 1-8. Daniel, Thomas M. "The History of Tuberculosis", *Respiratory Medicine*, Vol.100, Issue 11, November 2006, Elsevier Publishing Company, pages 1862-1870.

Gagné, Peter J. 2001 *King's Daughters* Kujawski, Kim (2019), *The French-Canadian Genealogist*, <https://www.tfcg.ca/history-frenchcanadians-manchester-nh>, "The French-Canadians in Manchester, New Hampshire", accessed February 18, 2025.

L'Association des Levasseur d'Amérique Inc.: <https://levasseur.org>, accessed December 13, 2024.

Lacoursière, Jacques and Philpot, Robin. *A People's History of Quebec*. Septentrion, 2002.

Programme de recherche en démographie historique (PRDH): <https://www.prdh-igd.com>, accessed April 16, 2025.

Québec Genealogical Dictionary of Canadian Families (Tanguay Collection), 1608-1890, Volume 1, Section 2: Hem-Zap, page 428, Mesnage, Pierre.

Vermette, David (2018), *A Distinct Alien Race, The Untold Story of Franco-Americans, Industrialization, Immigration, Religious Strife*, Baraka Books of Montreal, Chapter 9, "Who were the Immigrants?", pages 172-185, Chapter 12, "Fears of Franco-American Conspiracy", pages 212-243.



Photo of Elm Street in  
Manchester, New Hampshire,  
circa 1910 from the Library of  
Congress.

## Short biography of the couple David and Azilda Levasseur

David Levasseur was born on May 4, 1856, in Bécancour, Nicolet, QC. He was the fifth child of David Levasseur (born March 7, 1821) and Rose Délima Beaumier (born circa 1828). He had seven brothers: David Levasseur (October 19, 1849), Olivier Levasseur (March 31, 1853), Anne Levasseur (January 12, 1855), Joseph Léon Levasseur (December 9, 1859), Joseph Guillaume Levasseur (December 18, 1862), Honoré Levasseur (April 4, 1865), and Joseph L. Levasseur (April 1, 1868) and three sisters: Salomé Levasseur (May 4, 1851), Elmire Levasseur (March 3, 1858), and Olivine Levasseur (June 13, 1870).

He was 45 years old when his father, David Levasseur, passed away on July 20, 1901.

On July 16, 1878, he married Azilda Levasseur (born March 16, 1861) in Ste-Angèle-de-Laval, Nicolet, QC. He was 22 years old at the time of his marriage to Azilda Levasseur, who was 17 years old. They had twelve children: Olivine Levasseur (April 26, 1879), Clarinda Levasseur (April 27, 1880), David Albert Levasseur (August 31, 1881), Marie Levasseur (April 27, 1883), Wilfrid Levasseur (September 14, 1884), Ludina Levasseur (April 10, 1886), Adélard Levasseur (January 26, 1888), Marie-Angé Levasseur (November 12, 1889), Cordélia Levasseur (March 11, 1891), Rose Levasseur (April 14, 1893), Dora Céline Levasseur (November 27, 1896), and Angéline Bernadette Levasseur (September 18, 1899).

He passed away on March 26, 1954, in Manchester, NH, at the age of 97. He was buried at St. Augustin Cemetery in Manchester, NH, on March 29, 1954. His wife, Azilda Levasseur, had died 44 years earlier, on May 23, 1910.

Click on the image to access the  
genealogical fan chart of David Levasseur

