



The Levasseur and Carmel families

Web and social media capsule



An amazing family story... and a probability

An Unlikely Encounter: Four Marriages Between the Levasseurs and the Ouellets

*A remarkable family story,
an extraordinary connection, and a question of probability.*



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The faces and people shown do not represent any real individuals.*

The descendants of Alphonse Levasseur and Odina Boucher present a particularly remarkable genealogical situation.

Four of their children married four children from the same family—William Ouellet and Joséphine Gagnon's three sons and daughter.

Thus, three Levasseur daughters married three Ouellet brothers, while their brother Joseph married the brothers' sister.

In less than six years, the Levasseur and Ouellet families were joined through four marriages.

BUT JUST HOW EXCEPTIONAL WAS THIS?

It would be tempting to calculate the probability as though each marriage resulted from a random choice among all eligible bachelors and bachelorettes in Quebec.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, social circles were far more restricted: parish, neighbourhood, extended families, acquaintances, and community life.

A major study conducted in the Netherlands (1840–1922) found that 4.14% of marriages were between "exchange cousins," a rate that remained around 5% between 1890 and 1900.

Nevertheless, four children from one family marrying four children from another remains very rare. The first marriage naturally created opportunities to meet and celebrate together, encouraging the marriages that followed.

THE FOUR MARRIAGES WERE:

- ✦ Émilia Levasseur married Joseph Ouellet on July 22, 1907;
- ✦ Marie-Eugénie Levasseur married William Ouellet on July 25, 1910;
- ✦ Éva Levasseur married Georges Ouellet on September 10, 1912;
- ✦ Joseph Levasseur married Rose-Anna Ouellet on April 1, 1913.

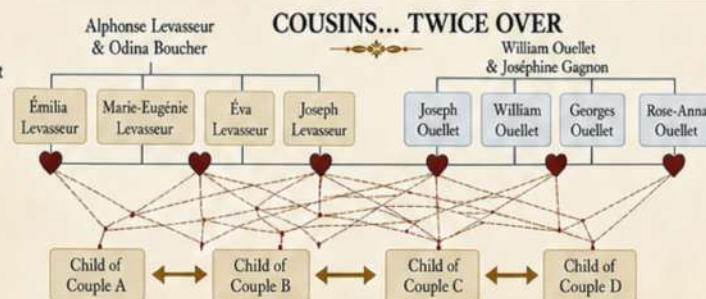
A REMARKABLE TIMELINE FROM 1907 TO 1913

- 1907** July 22, 1907
Émilia Levasseur marries Joseph Ouellet
- 1910** July 25, 1910
Marie-Eugénie Levasseur marries William Ouellet
- 1912** September 10, 1912
Éva Levasseur marries Georges Ouellet
- 1913** April 1, 1913
Joseph Levasseur marries Rose-Anna Ouellet

In less than six years, the Levasseur and Ouellet families were closely united through four marriages.



Four marriages between children from the same two families form a remarkable and exceptional pattern, even in this context.



The children born to these four couples share the same four grandparents: Alphonse Levasseur and Odina Boucher on one side, and William Ouellet and Joséphine Gagnon on the other.

They are therefore double first cousins, more closely related than ordinary first cousins.

Beyond the numbers and the question of probability,
there are four encounters, four love stories, and four new families.
A rare and precious chapter in our family history.

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Two Families with No Known Kinship



An important point must be clarified: **the two families were not related before these marriages.**

Alphonse Levasseur and Odina Boucher, the parents of the four Levasseur children involved, had **no known family relationship** with William Ouellet Sr. and Joséphine Gagnon, the parents of the four Ouellet children.

These were therefore not marriages between cousins or unions arising from shared ancestry. Rather, they involved **two distinct families in which four children from one family married four children from the other.**

The first marriage, between Émilia Levasseur and Joseph Ouellet in 1907, established the initial connection between the two families. The following three marriages then strengthened this family alliance.

The First Marriage Changes the Probabilities

We must also consider a very human phenomenon that simple mathematics cannot reproduce.

Following the marriage of Émilia Levasseur and Joseph Ouellet in 1907, the two families, which until then had no known kinship, became related **by marriage.**

The brothers and sisters had more opportunities to meet. They attended the same family gatherings, visited one another, and celebrated baptisms, weddings, and religious holidays together. The unmarried young people from both families therefore had more opportunities to become acquainted.

In other words, the first marriage **probably increased the opportunities for encounters that led to the second marriage.**

Two marriages then created even more opportunities for the families to meet. By the time of the third marriage, the Levasseur and Ouellet families were already closely connected through marriage. It would therefore be incorrect to multiply four independent probabilities as though these events were four random draws. The events were not independent: each new union brought the two families closer together.

Double First Cousins

These four unions produced a particularly interesting genealogical relationship.

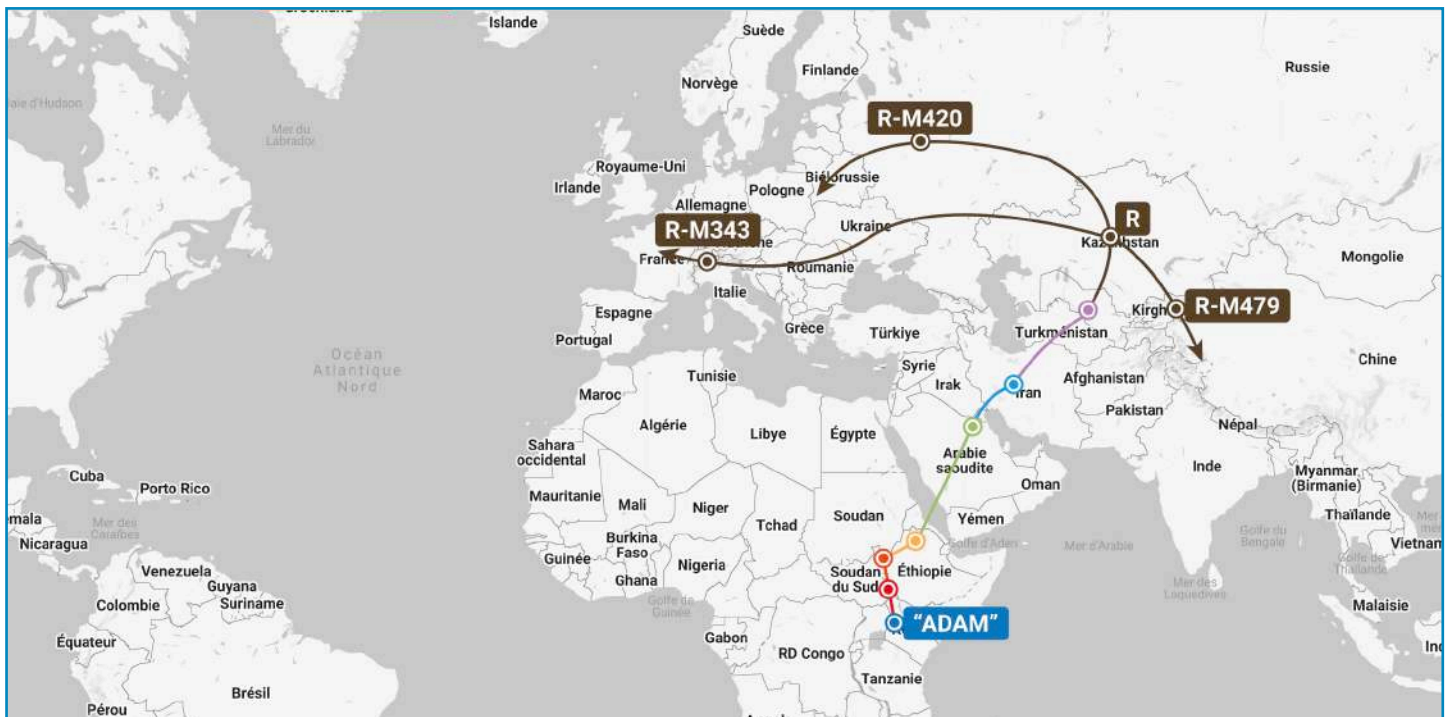
The four Levasseur-Ouellet couples were not cousins to one another. It was their children who became double first cousins to one another.

Consider, for example, a child of Émilie Levasseur and Joseph Ouellet and a child of Marie-Eugénie Levasseur and William Ouellet.

On the Levasseur side, their mothers, Émilie and Marie-Eugénie, were sisters. The two children therefore shared the same maternal grandparents: **Alphonse Levasseur and Odina Boucher**. On the Ouellet side, their fathers, Joseph and William, were brothers. The two children also shared the same paternal grandparents: **William Ouellet Sr. and Joséphine Gagnon**. The two children therefore shared **all four of their grandparents**.

This relationship is known as **double first cousins**. In an ordinary first-cousin relationship, two people share one pair of grandparents. The descendants of these Levasseur-Ouellet couples, however, shared both pairs of grandparents.

This relationship may also be important when interpreting autosomal DNA test results: double first cousins may share more DNA than ordinary first cousins because they are related through both sides of their families simultaneously.



This map illustrates the paternal lineage migration of a human branch Laurent Levasseur, from its origins in East Africa to Western Europe. The Y-chromosome markers indicate the main steps: "Adam", R, R-M479, R-M420 and R-M343. The routes suggest migration through the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Central Asia and finally Europe.

Saint-Éloi in the Time of the Levasseur and Ouellet Families

A Rural Community in Transition, 1880–1920

When the Levasseur and Ouellet families settled in the Saint-Éloi area in the late nineteenth century, the parish was still relatively young. Saint-Éloi was established in 1848 from territories detached from the seigneuries of L'Isle-Verte and Trois-Pistoles. Over the following decades, the land was gradually cleared and settled by families whose daily lives depended primarily on agriculture.

The landscape encountered by the Levasseur and Ouellet families was distinctly rural. Houses and farm buildings were scattered along the concession roads. Farms generally practised diversified agriculture, combining livestock raising and crop cultivation with production intended first to meet the family's needs and, increasingly, to supply local markets. Large wooden barn-stables were among the characteristic features of the landscape. Several roof styles were used in the region, including gable roofs, ridgeback roofs, and roofs with half-hips or flared eaves.

During the same period, the family of **William Ouellet and Joséphine Gagnon** was also living in this part of the Basques region. Their children Joseph, William, Georges, and Rose-Anna would soon play a particularly important role in the history of the Levasseur family.

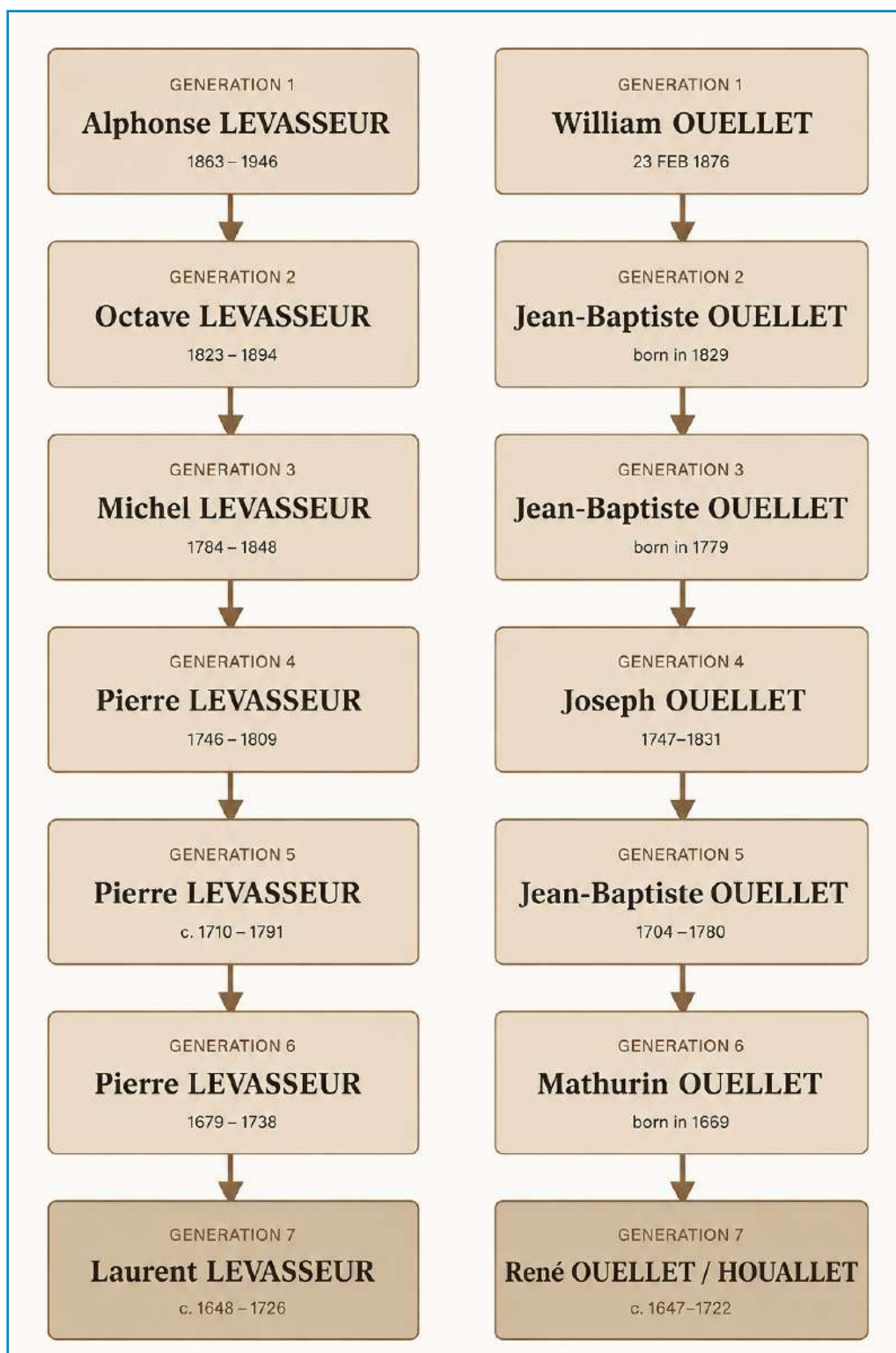
Between **1907 and 1913**, a remarkable family development occurred: four children of Alphonse Levasseur and Odina Boucher married four children of William Ouellet and Joséphine Gagnon. **Émilia Levasseur married Joseph Ouellet in 1907; Marie-Eugénie Levasseur married William Ouellet in 1910; Éva Levasseur married Georges Ouellet in 1912; and Joseph Levasseur married Rose-Anna Ouellet in 1913.**

This period also coincided with the gradual transformation of agriculture in Saint-Éloi. Dairy production became increasingly important, leading farmers to organize collectively. Around 1920, farmers from Saint-Éloi and L'Isle-Verte established a butter factory in Saint-Éloi's Second Range. It made it possible to process part of the local milk production and remained in operation for more than half a century. When it closed in 1972, it was the last small butter factory still operating in the Basques region.

The Saint-Éloi known by the Levasseur and Ouellet families between 1880 and 1920 therefore stood at the crossroads of two eras. The village remained deeply agricultural and family-oriented, but production methods were beginning to evolve, and farmers were organizing more extensively to process and market their products.

Two lineages, two founding families

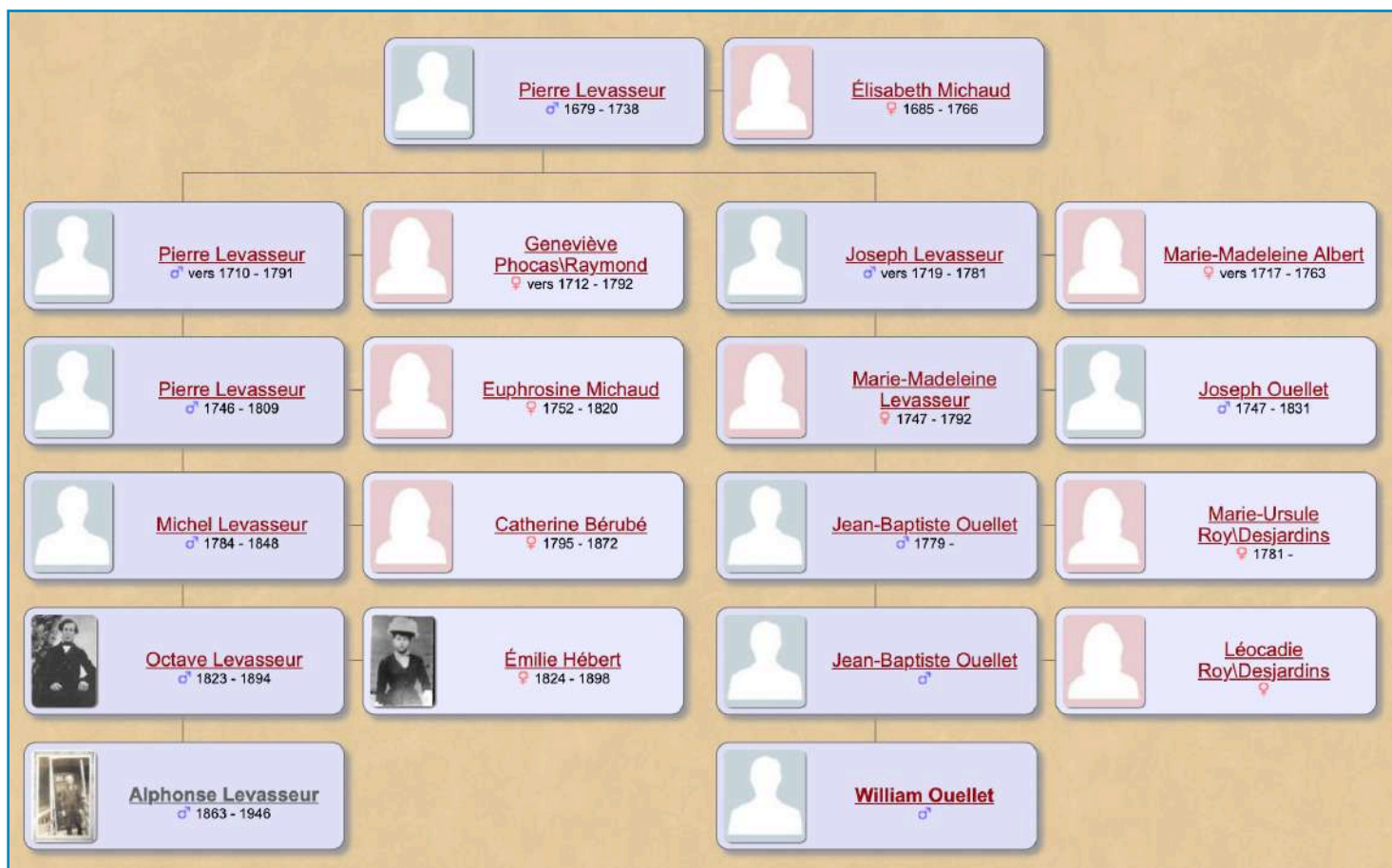
This diagram shows, over **seven generations**, the direct paternal lines of **Alphonse Levasseur** and **William Ouellet**. The Levasseur line goes back to **Laurent Levasseur** (c. 1648–1726), while the Ouellet line leads to **René Ouellet/Houallet** (c. 1647–1722). It thus allows us to visualize, generation after generation, the roots of these two families who would come together in Saint-Éloi at the beginning of the 20th century.



The Kinship Between Alphonse Levasseur and William Ouellet

Alphonse Levasseur and William Ouellet were fourth cousins. They were both descended from **Pierre Levasseur (1679–1738)** and **Élisabeth Michaud (1685–1766)**, their common third-great-grandparents. Alphonse's lineage continued through their son Pierre Levasseur, while William's lineage descended through their son Joseph Levasseur and later joined the Ouellet family through the marriage of Marie-Madeleine Levasseur to Joseph Ouellet.

Sources: Levasseur d'Amérique inc. database. Calculations made by T.N.G.



The Household of Octave Levasseur in Saint-Éloi in 1891

The 1891 Canadian census provides a particularly valuable snapshot of Octave Levasseur's family in Saint-Éloi, in the district of Témiscouata. The family is listed as census family number 31. Octave, aged 66, is identified as the head of the household. Beside him is his wife, Émilie, who is also 66 years old.

The household, however, extends beyond this couple. Their son, **Alphonse Levasseur, aged 28**, is recorded with his young family. Alphonse is married and works as a **farmer**. The document also indicates that he can read and write, is French Canadian and Roman Catholic, was born around 1863 in Quebec, and was living in Saint-Éloi in 1891.

His wife, aged 23, appears with him and is identified as "**Odile**" in Ancestry's transcription. Caution is necessary here: this entry most likely refers to **Odina Boucher**, Alphonse's wife. The census then lists their three young children: **Joseph, aged 6; Cyrice, aged 3; and Émilie, aged 1**.

The composition of this household sheds light on rural life at the time. At 66, Octave remains the head of the household, while his son Alphonse, already married and the father of three children, is also a farmer. **Three generations therefore live within the same household**: Octave and Émilie; their son Alphonse and his wife; and their grandchildren Joseph, Cyrice, and Émilie.

Another detail makes the household even more interesting: **Michel Levasseur, aged 74, is also recorded with the family and identified as a Octave's brother**. Octave's household thus includes not only his son's young family but also a member of his own generation.

This arrangement helps us better understand the family and agricultural organization of the Levasseurs in Saint-Éloi at the end of the nineteenth century. **Eight people** are associated with the household: Octave, Émilie, Alphonse, his wife, their three children, and Michel. The document alone does not, however, establish that they all lived under exactly the same roof or that Alphonse worked the same land as his father. The family number primarily indicates that they were grouped as a single household for census purposes.

For our land-record research, this information is nevertheless crucial. Alphonse does not appear as the head of an independent farm: he is explicitly recorded as Octave's son, while Octave remains the head of the family.

The Household of Octave Levasseur in Saint-Éloi in 1921

From Saint-Éloi to Trois-Pistoles: Thirty Years of Change

A comparison of the **1891 and 1921** censuses reveals an important chapter in the family's history. In 1891, Alphonse is a young, 28-year-old farmer living in his father Octave's household in **Saint-Éloi** with Odina and their first three children. By 1921, Octave has long since passed into the preceding generation, and Alphonse, now aged 58, has become the head of a large household established in **Trois-Pistoles**.

The censuses therefore capture the family at two very different points in its history. In **1891, Alphonse is still part of his father's household in Saint-Éloi**; by **1921, he is himself the head of the next Levasseur generation in Trois-Pistoles**. Between these two administrative snapshots, separated by thirty years, we can trace the departure from Saint-Éloi, the establishment in Trois-Pistoles, the departure of children who had reached adulthood, and the continuation of family life with the younger children.

This comparison becomes even more valuable when considered alongside **Alphonse's land records**. Together, these sources may allow us to determine precisely when he **left Saint-Éloi, where he settled in Trois-Pistoles, and why his residence was recorded as rented in 1921**.



The Household of William Ouellet in Saint-Éloi in 1891

The 1891 Canadian census presents a particularly interesting portrait of the family of **William Ouellet**, who lived in Saint-Éloi, in the district of Témiscouata. Aged **40**, William was likely born around 1851 in Quebec. He is married, Roman Catholic, French Canadian, and works as a **farmer**. He is listed as the head of **family number 19**.

His wife, **Joséphine Ouellet**, is 32 years old. The couple lives with six children: **Joséphine, aged 14; Georges, 12; Louise, 10; Joseph, 8; William, 6; and Eugène, 2**. The household also includes **Adèle Ouellet**, aged **50**, who is identified as William's sister. The household therefore consists of **nine people**: the two parents, their six children, and Adèle.

This composition illustrates a farming household in Saint-Éloi at the end of the nineteenth century. William is in the prime of his working life as a farmer, while his children range in age from 2 to 14. The oldest had reached an age when young people could generally participate in certain domestic or agricultural tasks. The census provides no information about their actual involvement, however, so this possibility reflects the rural context of the period rather than an established fact about this family.

Adèle's presence also shows that the household extended beyond the immediate family of parents and children. As in the household of Octave Levasseur, recorded elsewhere in the same census, an adult brother or sister could live with the family. The Ouellet household does not include three generations, but rather two generations together with two adult siblings.

This page is particularly important to the later history of the **Ouellet and Levasseur families of Saint-Éloi**. The children listed include **Georges, Joseph, and William Ouellet**, who were still children or adolescents before marriages in the next generation brought the two families closer together. The document therefore provides a snapshot of the Ouellet family before these connections were formed.

Finally, the census offers a useful clue for land-record research: William is clearly identified as the **head of his household and a farmer in Saint-Éloi in 1891**. Unlike Alphonse Levasseur, who was still living in the household of his father, Octave, William was already the head of his own household.

"Math can tell us that the configuration is rare. Genealogy, on the other hand, tells us how it actually came to be. "

Research and compilation: Jean-Pierre Levasseur.

Primary sources: ancestry.ca and levasseur.org/tng

Text review and translation support: Lynda Levasseur and Pierre LeVasseur.

Note: Artificial intelligence tools were used to assist with the writing of this text and the creation of historical illustrations, under the supervision and validation of the authors.