



Aimé Levasseur (1850-1906) - Historical Review

by: Jean-Marie Levasseur

Aimé Levasseur was born on December 27th 1850 in the parish of Bécancour, which later became, in 1868, Sainte-Angèle-de-Laval.

A descendant of Pierre (1st generation) and Denis-Joseph (3rd generation), he was the son of Joseph Levasseur (6th generation) and Marie-Anne Rheault.

He had an eventful youth : he joined the military to fight Canada's invaders (the Fenians), and later against the invaders of the Papal States. He spent the rest of his life more peacefully, living as a farmer in Saint-Maurice, among family and friends.

Photo: Colonel [Athanase de Charette](#), commander of the pontifical Zouaves

THE SOLDIER



At the age of 19, Aimé joined the militia to fight the Fenian incursion in Canada. The Fenians were part of a society established in the United-States in 1858. They sought to obtain Ireland's independence. Canada still being an English colony, was a target of choice. From 1865 to 1870, the Fenians raided the southern part of Canada. Aimé Levasseur joined the militia to counter these raids. He was part of the Bécancour's Infantry Company, which was linked to the 3rd provisional battalion of St-Hyacinthe. He was stationed in St-Jean and in Montreal from April 13th to the June 1st 1870. For his military services to Canada, Aimé received the « *Médaille du service général au Canada : Fenian Raid 1870* ». This medal, which carried the portrait of queen Victoria, was the first war medal issue by Canada in 1899.

The same year, Aimé enlisted in the « Papal Zouaves » (a special militia to defend the Pope). He was part of the 7th and last detachment to leave Montreal on September 1st 1870, in bound for

Brest, in France, and scheduled to arrive on September 12th. This detachment was detained in Brest because of the ongoing war between France and Prussia.

The « papal army » was made up of just over 13 000 men. 6 500 were from Italy and 6 500 were catholic volunteers from different countries : 3 500 came from Holland, France, Belgium and Canada. Of the 509 Canadian Zouaves, 114 were detained in Brest. The « piemontaise » army, attacking the « pontifical » army had 100 000 men. With such a superior force, the « Pontifical » army was forced to retreat back to Rome where, protected by the walls, she resisted for a few days. After this symbolic resistance, pope Pie IX ordered the surrender. It was September 20th 1870. At that time, Aimé Levasseur was waiting at Lesneven, near Brest, with 113 other Zouaves from his detachment. Among them was also Ov. P. Levasseur of St-Aimé, near Sorel. Aimé and Ov. P. Levasseur were the only two « Levasseurs » among the « Zouaves pontifaux », and they were in the same detachment.

On September 23rd, they left Lesneven to board a ship in Brest, in bound for New-York. Therefore, they came back to Canada without ever being in a battle, without seeing the pope or Rome. Aimé received the « Bene Merenti » medal from pope Léon XIII in 1891 : it was given to 300 canadian Zouaves, during a solemn ceremony organized by prime minister Honoré Mercier on his Tourouvre estate.

THE FARMER

In the years that followed,, Aimé first worked in Ste-Angèle-de-Laval as a farmer with his father, Joseph, and his two brothers, Joseph-Alfred and Napoléon. Later on, he wanted to own a farm. Since free land on the borders of the Saint-Lawrence river was getting scarce, he turned to Saint-Maurice, in the Champlain region, 20 kilometers north-east of Trois-Rivières. The colonization of the northern portion of

the Cap-de-la-Madeleine seigneurie had started in 1831. This territory became the parish of Saint-Maurice in 1837. When Aimé decided to go there in the middle of the 70's, Saint-Maurice was then one of the most populated parishes of the Trois-Rivières diocese, with 3 000 inhabitants. It covered an area from the Saint-Maurice river (hence it's name) to many kilometers east of the Champlain river. In 1903, the western part of Saint-Maurice was removed and became the parish of Saint-Louis-de-France, a city that numbers close to 8 000 inhabitants nowadays and which has recently been merged with the new city of Trois-Rivières.

Aimé had many family members in Saint-Maurice, several of which were cousins. In 1870, his father, Joseph, bought a piece of land with a house and buildings. Aimé's oldest brother, Joseph-Alfred, married at Saint-Maurice in 1873, inherited that land. It's quite possible that Aimé went to help his brother when he met Clarisse, his brother's wife sister.

In 1875, Aimé, at the age of 25 and experienced with farm work, decided that he was ready to get married and start a family. He married Clarisse Levasseur, daughter of Louis-Étienne Levasseur and Apolline Gauthier. He was going on 25 and she was going on 19. Louis-Étienne, who had only daughters and was 70 years old, gave the new spouse, in exchange of a live annuity, his house and his land in row St-Jean. The house, which stands to this day (civic number 2201), is located on the way out of Saint-Maurice, when heading toward St-Louis-de-France.



Clarisse Levasseur

From 1875 to 1906, for the 31 years that followed his eventful youth, Aimé Levasseur enjoyed the peaceful life of a Saint-Maurice farmer. His wife Clarisse, who was a proud woman with good aesthetic sense, decorated the house with quality furniture that made it a nice place to live. They had six children : Alexandrine, married to Louis Bailly, Damien, married to Bernadette St-Hilaire, Jean-Baptiste and Félix, unmarried, Thomas, married to Alma Côté, and Pierre, married to Léda Rivard. During this period, Aimé was also involved with his community of Saint-Maurice : he was chosen as municipal advisor from 1887 to 1889 and was president of the school board from 1900 to 1902.

Aimé died suddenly on April 12th 1906, at the age of 55. Since most of his children were still studying, none of them were prepared to take over and become farmers, his wife Clarisse decided to sell the land, the house, the buildings and move to Trois-Rivières. It would be easier there for her to have her children pursue their studies. It might seem strange, for the times, that none of the five brothers took over the farm, but we have to point out that four of them had not reached the age of 20 when the father died and both Aimé and Clarisse recognized the importance of education.

Therefore, there was a shift from school to college and from farm life to city life. The Levasseurs from the three first generations had been carpenters in the cities of Québec and Trois-Rivières, those from the 4th to 7th generations had been farmers in Bécancour and Saint-Maurice, and those from the following generations went back into the city to practice various trades and professions.

In retrospect, more than a century later, we can better assess why Aimé in his youth chose such an eventful life. Was it of great importance to take arms to defend Canada against the Fenians? Was the Canadian Federation the best form of government? Did the Church need the « pontifical » States? Was it necessary to defend it with arms? One thing for sure is that many catholic Canadians of that era felt strongly about Canada as the homeland and the importance of your religion. Aimé was of that era and was ready to defend his beliefs at the cost of his life.

In his youth, Aimé had admired Georges-Étienne Cartier, who had passed the law on voluntary militia, in 1868. He had welcomed Macdonald and Cartier' project for unifying Canada from coast to coast, while respecting religious freedom and autonomy to the provinces. Toward the end of his life, he turned to Wilfrid Laurier, whom he saw as a man of vision, capable of launching Canada into the XXth century.

Aimé had appreciated the discipline and solidarity of the military life. In his political life, he manifested the same spirit of service and tried to promote solidarity in the municipality of Saint-Maurice. His premature death most likely prevented him from fulfilling all of his dreams, but his memory continues to inspire his descendants.

Aimé Levasseur

- Born 29 December 1850 - Bécancour, Nicolet, QC
- Baptized 29 December 1850 - Bécancour, Nicolet, QC
- Died 12 April 1906 - St-Maurice, Champlain, QC , age at death: 55 years old
- Buried 16 April 1906 - St-Maurice, Champlain, QC

Parents

- Joseph Levasseur 1809-1884
- Marie-Anne Rheault -1858

Spouses and children

- Married 12 October 1875, St-Maurice, Champlain, QC, to Clarisse Levasseur 1855-1935 with
 - Alexandrine Levasseur 1882-1966
 - Damien Levasseur 1885-1965
 - Jean-Baptiste Levasseur 1888-1943
 - Félix Levasseur 1891-1947
 - Thomas Levasseur 1893-1951
 - Pierre Levasseur 1894-1941



The Association, Levasseur d'Amérique Inc. is a non-profit organization, founded in 1988, in accordance to a federal charter. Its goals are:

- To join together and unite a large number of Levasseur and other descendants who have adopted the patronymic Borgia, Carmel, Carmell, Vasseur, Vassor, Vasser.
- To promote, develop and diffuse historical genealogical knowledge about the Levasseur families with Internet, an electronic Newsletter published three times per year also the publication of genealogical dictionaries.
- To maintain and update, on an ongoing basis, the genealogical data base available to members at all times on the Internet.
- To make available to members a family photo album and the Newsletters that the Association has published since 1988.
- To honor the memory of our forefathers and their descendants by way of monuments, plaques or symbolic gestures that commemorate historic events that are chronicle the Levasseur family.
- To gather all documents related to the Levasseur family for the purpose of constructing archives that will constitute the heritage of our Association and that will provide a source of information for historians and genealogists.

We would appreciate if you could send us family related documents that would add to our data base of archives and also enable us to continue the publication of the Levasseur Newsletter three times per year. The participation of the Levasseurs and members of their families is essential to allow us to pursue our mission. Send us your photos and texts for the next publication of the Newsletter. You can download them very easily with this new tool and by providing a brief description of the photo or text that is being sent. Following receipt of your documents, a copy of all information to be published in the Newsletter will be sent to you for approval prior to final publication.

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Web site : www.levasseur.org - webmaster@levasseur.org

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Other Levasseur Association Web sites:

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