

# LE TISSU BLANCHET

Bulletin of the Association of the Blanchet(te) families of America Vol. 21, No 1, Jan. 2016



Photo of a silkscreen depicting the home of the ancestral land. This house is now owned by Mario Blanchet who has lived there his childhood and also dwells nearby. It has been witness of two major events in the history of the Blanchet (te) families.

In 1946, it was there for the three hundred anniversary of Pierre Blanchet's birth. Some personalities made speeches in front of it.

Twenty years ago, during our Retrouvailles, many events buzzed all around: erection of a cross on the site the first church; installation of a big tent north of the maple bush, nearby. Under this tent, at the end of the Eucharistic celebration, Serge Blanchet sang "*The credo of the peasant*, which recalled our ancestor.

Our association was launched during the 1996 Retrouvailles. It therefore records its twentieth anniversary this year.

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*LE TISSU BLANCHET is the communication link among the members of the Association of the Blanchet and Blanchette Families of America. It is published three times a year. Its title recalls a drawing of our ancestor, Pierre Blanchet, a weaver before his arrival in New France. It also symbolizes the blood links woven by our ancestors and the genealogical links between the Blanchet and Blanchette families. A partial or total reproduction of articles is allowed with permission and must show the source, the author's name and the address of the Association.*

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[www.familles-blanchet.ca](http://www.familles-blanchet.ca)

NEXT ISSUE  
MAY 2016 (?)

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APRIL 15, 2016

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BLANCHET**  
Volume 21, no 1, 2016

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Conception : Bertrand Blanchet  
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Printing and distribution : FAFQ

.....  
Printing : 175 copies in French  
25 copies in English

ISSN : 1206-7172

Legal deposit : Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada  
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec



Our association is a member of the  
*Fédération des Associations de  
familles du Québec (FAFQ).*

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## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



For our association, 2015 was an important year. We celebrated the presence in America of the lineage of the Blanchet (te). A stone for our ancestor Pierre (stone) was erected near the church of Saint-Pierre-de-la-Rivière-du-Sud in the Montmagny area. Those of you who did not have the opportunity to visit it are invited to do so. This will enable you to bathe in the history of the area where our ancestor lived much of his life.

The beginning year will also be, for our association, an opportunity to offer a sincere testimony to the many people that allowed us to keep in touch, share and continue to write the history of the family of the Blanchet (te) in America.

Our association was born in 1996. Twenty years later we can only rejoice for the progress which has been made. Many of our members gave generously time and energy to keep our association dynamic and vigorous. They have contributed to the radiation of the presence of the Blanchet (te) in America.

The *Tissu Blanchet*, distributed three times a year in English and French, thanks to the invaluable involvement of Archbishop Bertrand Blanchet, has been, is and will be a valuable link between all members.

The website ([www.familles-blanchet.ca](http://www.familles-blanchet.ca)) which will soon be available in English, allows all those seeking information on the Blanchet families to find various texts and links that can help them

meet their needs. Documentation is also available and is announced on the website.

Our biggest challenge, after these first twenty years, will be to find ways to reach younger generations. Sources of inspiration, motivation or misunderstanding for our society: these new generations never let us indifferent. Values, culture, tastes, habits : differences between generations raise debates.

The new generations do not seem to find their place within groups like ours and to be really interested. Although the association has to follow established trends and stay true to its members, we must find ways to rally Blanchet (te) of different generations so as to expand the membership and give a radiating place to the great family of Blanchet (te) and his descendants. I believe that if we put our efforts together, this challenge is achievable.

To you, dear members, I wish a 2016 year of Pleasure, Happiness shared under the sign of an adequate health in order to meet your ambitions. The members of your administration board will ensure that your organization remains radiant and meet your aspirations.

As it is, we are preparing for our next annual meeting in August 2016. We are looking for a 20th Anniversary special program that, we hope, will interest you and incite you to participate in large numbers. A committee has already started to carry out the programming and preparation.

Many thanks to you, board members, for your support, your invaluable involvement and generous availability.

Friendly yours,

Rodrigue Blanchette, president



## For the 20th anniversary of our Association

by **Paul-Yvon Blanchet**

*"Amis, partons sans bruit, la pêche sera bonne...»  
Friends, let us leave quietly, fishing will be good ...*

For those who participated, in August 2015, at St-Pierre-de-la-Rivière-du-Sud, in the General Assembly and celebration of the 350th anniversary of the arrival of our ancestor Pierre Blanchet in New France, this folk song, sung by three generations of Blanchet at the end of the eucharistic celebration, evokes a beautiful memory.

In 2016, we will celebrate the 20th birthday of the Association of the Blanchet and Blanchette Families of America. I had the idea of writing the following article to present the current administrators, their present involvement in the Administrative Board and their vision of the future of our Association.

The article has three (3) sections. One will trace the journey of those who were part of the starting crew in 1996: Ginette, Fernand and archbishop Bertrand. The second part tells the story of three other members (sailors): Denise, Rodrigue and Paul-Yvon who joined the crew of the boat. Finally, some questions about the future and the celebration of our 20th anniversary.

### **1- In the starting crew : The captain and his crew**

Much of the credit of this adventure on the land of America is bishop Blanchet's responsibility. At New Years Day, in the 90, he spoke of this anniversary to his family, who lives in St-Thomas-de-Montmagny. This is confirmed by his brother Fernand.



*Ginette, Fernand and bishop Bertrand*

But Fernand's involvement began during the preparations for the 1996 Retrouvailles (Homecoming). This was also the case for our current treasurer, Ginette Gagné Blanchet. Ginette was contacted by Benoît, who was the president of the organizing committee. During the event, at St-Pierre and at Montmagny, Ginette worked for the reception and the information: *"She just saw the feast while being busy and reacting to everything that was unexpected."* Ginette is on the Board since 1997.

In 1996, Fernand and his wife gave a technical support with other relatives of the area. He remembers the hay car that served as an altar to celebrate the Mass. Women from St-Pierre had prepared a sheaf of barley and flowers picked up from their gardens which were offered during the celebration.

The Retrouvailles of July 1996 inspired the pioneers in founding the Association of the Blanchet and Blanchette Families of America. In *Le Tissu Blanchet* published after the feast, bishop Bertrand wrote: *"Is it not true that after our Retrouvailles, the large Blanchet (te) family is no longer quite the same? A pride has been expressed, a meaning revealed, links have been forged. We are ready to ensure the vitality of an association."* Its legal incorporation will be on February 14, 1997.

A highlight was experienced by some 50 members in September 1999, during a two-week trip to France, Picardie, especially in Rosières, the town where our ancestor Pierre Blanchet was born.

Ginette, Fernand and bishop Bertrand who were there from the beginning keep good memories of our annual meetings, in Arthabaska, Trois-Rivières, St-Eustache, Lotbinière, Wendake, Richelieu, Quebec Ursulines, etc.

Fernand and bishop Bertrand (± 10 and 13 years old) recall having participated, in 1946, in the great gathering that was held at Saint-Pierre: Msgr Boulet of the College of Ste-Anne made a speech, a dinner took place near the ancestral home (140 meals), maple sugar was tasted in the small sugar bush behind the house, a pause for "milking" the cows and finally some dancing in the evening. On Sunday, their father went, without the children, to the Mass celebrated at the Basilica of Quebec and to the following banquet.

For Ginette, Fernand and bishop Bertrand, their interest in the history of their ancestors comes from their parents. In the region of Montmagny and St-Pierre especially, people still remember the English occupation of the 18th century and the efforts for economic, cultural and spiritual survival deployed. Therefore, the Museum of Living Memory of St-Jean-Port-Joli, the cemeteries, the 300 years old buildings all tell the courage, the shaping of identity, the meaning that has been transmitted as a precious legacy. It is therefore essential that we meet each year to see other members of the Association. Our life is made of links and shared experiences.

As retired farmer, Fernand was very proud of his contribution, in 2015, for the stone we have installed next to the church of St-Pierre, which has been frequented by many Blanchet. This stone comes from the land he sold to his nephew Pierre. When drainage works were done, the stone had to be pulled out from the ground and buried elsewhere.

But it was beautiful and Fernand decided to keep it. He was there at the right time since the Association was looking for a strong way to acknowledge the 350th anniversary of the arrival of Pierre Blanchet in New France. The stone was saved, cleaned, engraved and placed next to the church.

## **2- Those who joined the crew along the way : the sailors :**



*Rodrigue, Denise et Paul-Yvon*

Rodrigue Blanchette is the current president of the Association. At the General Assembly of 2010, Benoît Blanchet, who was one of his co-workers, and bishop Bertrand joined to ask Rodrigue to be a member of our Administrative Board. He became president in 2011.

Denise Blanchette-Poudrier became secretary of our Association in 2012. Rodrigue is the one who proposed her. She also chairs the *L'Association des descendants de Louis Blanchet et Delvina Blais* since many years in the Victoriaville-Arthabaska region.

Paul-Yvon is the latest. He was recruited by Rodrigue in the parking lot of the Ursulines at the 2014 General Assembly in Quebec.

Obviously, none of these "young people" has participated in the great Blanchet gathering of 1946 in St-Pierre and in Quebec City. and in the publication of the souvenir book of the 300th Anniversary. Denise tells an anecdote about her father. He participated in the 1946 gathering, and going back home, he changed his name from Blanchette to Blanchet; which also did her siblings.

Denise has not changed her last name. By this little fact, we understand her sense of determination. The souvenir book of the 300th has always been very precious for the family of Paul-Yvon. It was given to him after the death of his father Rolland, in 2010.

Denise and Rodrigue participated in the Retrouvailles of 1996, at St-Pierre-de-la-Rivière-du-Sud. The parents and the brother of Paul-Yvon also attended and have returned with such pride that Paul-Yvon has decided to become a member, which he did at the General Assembly in 2002, at the Ile aux Grues.

The membership of an association is voluntary. It is interesting to ask everyone the motivation for his or her participation.

Rodrigue considers that it is essential to "*convey the desire to be associated with one's family and a wider family. We must convey the desire to leave traces, so that future generations have the opportunity to tap into the heritage of this valuable baggage*".

Seeing all the implications of Denise, we understand her interest to participate, not only in our Association and that of her region (Descendants of Louis and Delvina) but also in the establishment of a descent in Western Canada. Thus, in 2007, she went to Saskatchewan, to mark the 100th anniversary of the arrival of Laurent Blanchet. She was accompanied with Albertine Blanchette, Marcel Blanchet and André Poudrier.

For the latest addition to the Administrative Board, Paul-Yvon, it is important to know one's ancestors, their ingenuity to survive, their family and spiritual concerns, their gift to the society and to the Church of well educated, helpful and responsible citizens. The name of a family is a precious value.

### **3. Celebrating 20 years :**

Our Treasurer Ginette has to ensure that the finances swing every year. With 125 members, we realize only what our finances allow us.

Some statistics can help us understand the challenge ahead of us. In 1996, 4820 letters of invitation have been sent and nearly 3,000 people attended the festivities. In 2006, we made 1500 mailings and we grouped some 200 participants. For our three first sailors of 1996, the experience of large gatherings ending up in much smaller group during our summer meetings can pose questions or demoralize.

However, we all know that the world is changing at high speed and we all age the same speed. Bishop Bertrand thinks that once people have identified the places like the farm of the ancestor Pierre, the cross on the site of the first church ... they are partly satisfied.

Moreover, with internet, the youngest find the information they desire. Older people experience pleasure to meet, but their lack of mobility makes traveling more difficult. How to attract younger? How can we interest them to take responsibility and make them last? Maybe we should question the absent? How to get into the homes of families? Christmas, maple sugar shack, Feasts of the Nouvelle-France? ...

In the social and technological context we live, we question the future of the Association. Currently less than 60 people are present at our General Assembly meetings, to which we incorporate cultural and tourist activities. Denise wants that our Association continues and in the Victoriaville region, descendants of Louis and Delvina attract different age groups. According to Rodrigue, thereby mobilizing the younger is our challenge.

For many, interest in genealogy begins in midlife and the time to deal with it is when we retire.

How to reach those who are always dealing with their electronic tablet? Efforts are being made with the website and with the announcement of our activities in the bulletin of the *Federation des Associations de Familles*. Since we are all born before the advent of information technology and social media, we need to integrate this technology. How can we use it (teleconferencing, Skype, ...) to expand our membership concentrated in the east of the province? The experience of the actual members of the Board shows that the contact with each other allows the recruitment of directors.

Let us end this article on a positive note justifying our desire to celebrate our 20th anniversary in 2016. Each person mentioned in this article wants to bequeath *"the pride of wearing that name, curiosity about genealogy, solidarity and loyalty to the Association which brings us altogether."* (Rodrigue).

Let's leave the last word to bishop Bertrand: *"In a society and a culture of the ephemeral, it is important to focus more on values that last, to remain true to our roots, to be proud of our predecessors and to honor them for what we received from them: the most precious gift of life. One way to render them this tribute is to keep alive the memory of them. Is not this duty to remember that we filled by erecting a cross on the land of our ancestor and by setting a stone near the church frequented by many of his descendants?"*

## **A cousin from France named bishop**

Pope Francis named a Blanchet cousin Bishop of Belfort-Montbéliard, a northwestern diocese of France. Not so far finally from the Picardie region where our ancestor was born.



*Bishop Dominique Blanchet*

His career is quite remarkable. Born in 1966, he was ordained a priest in 1999. Previous studies had led him to become an engineer from *Ecole Centrale of Paris*, a Master in mathematics and owner of a degree in engineering materials. To this, he has added a Master of Divinity.

He is a member of an association called Priests of Prado. This association supports them in their vocation and mission.

His pastoral experience is diverse: delegate of the bishop to youth ministry, chaplain of Faith and Light (consisting of persons with disabilities), vicar general of the diocese.

He was ordained a bishop July 12, 2015.

I did not want to contact him too quickly, knowing that the arrival into a new diocese mobilizes all the energies of a new bishop. But I intend to check his origins, inform him of our association and of the beautiful story of the Blanchet (te) of America. (B.BI.)