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Newsletter of l'Association des familles Robitaille inc.

LES

ROBITAILLERIES
Express

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This digital shipment is the first newsletter sent to our electronic members in 2020. The first three shipments will form the June 2020 issue of the *Robitaileries* (#90).

You will find here a first article of a series about a large family in Abitibi and a portrait of the pioneer of the first gasoline car in Québec City in 1907.



Robitaille Family

This picture was taken in Abitibi around 1930 and the people on this photo are, from left to right:

Ernest Robitaille, Mélie, Rose, grandma Alma Robitaille, baby Michelle Robitaille, grandpa Robitaille, Solande Robitaille (in the car), Eugène Robitaille, young Micheline Robitaille, Ector Robitaille, Gérald Robitaille and ? Robitaille.

(Photo : Amos Historical Society – Fond Bernard Cossette)

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IN THIS ISSUE...

Who are these people?

Part one – clues and quest

By Jean Robitaille, Québec

In my online travels, I stumbled on an old photo on the Amos Historical Society's website. The caption simply said *Robitaille Family*. It was enough to pique my curiosity.

I contacted the Amos Historical Society (AHS) to ask for more information on this photo and they confirmed that the picture was taken in Abitibi around 1930. The persons appearing on the photo were identified in 2014 by a descendant of the family during a photo identification operation led by the AHS. So, from left to right, they would be:

Ernest Robitaille, Mélie? (aunt), Rose? (aunt), Alma Robitaille (grandmother), Michelle Robitaille (baby), ? Robitaille (grandfather), Solande Robitaille (in the car), Eugène Robitaille, Micheline Robitaille (child), Ector Robitaille, Gérald Robitaille et ? Robitaille (boy).

So we have a photo of twelve Robitailles, taken in Abitibi around 1930, but how can one find out who they are precisely?

The clues

Let's start by analysing this image a bit further.

First, since we have been told that it is a Robitaille family, we will adopt the premise that these persons are all related. They are not gathered here as members of an association or simply as neighbours.



Robitaille Family
(Photo : Amos Historical Society – Fond Bernard Cossette)

At first glance we note that there are people of all ages. Small children, young adults and older individuals. It is likely that we have here three generations. Besides, the description made available to us states **grandfather** Robitaille, **grandmother** Alma, **aunt** Rose and **aunt** Mélie. Needless to say that Michèle and Micheline would be the little girls around whom the others are designated. Aunt Mélie would then be Michelle's aunt, Alma, her grandmother...

Also apparent, are two more children on the photo: a young *Solande* in the car and a young boy, no given name, petting a dog on the right. There is a good chance that these two children are siblings of Michelle and Micheline. Before continuing, let's raise a big doubt on the given name *Solande*: could it rather be Solange, Rolande or Yolande?

We can see that they are in their Sunday bests: Rose has her nice necklace, the gentlemen all wear ties. Everyone is warmly dressed and wears a hat or cap (except *Solande* who is sheltered in the car). The shadows on the ground tell us that the sun is low. We can easily imagine that the picture was taken on an autumn Sunday, toward the end of the day.

Let's continue with the analysis. In the center, a grandfather whose given name we don't know yet, sits on the stepboard of an old automobile. Right beside him stands grandmother Alma Robitaille holding a small Michelle in her arms.

On the grandfather's other side, a man named Eugène holds little Micheline's hand. He could very well be Michelle and Micheline's father, son of grandmother Alma and grandfather Robitaille.

Behind Grandmother Alma, two ladies : first Aunt Rose who seems rather young and Aunt Mélie who seems older, enough so as to wonder if Aunt Mélie wouldn't be Eugène's aunt rather than the children's.

Remaining three mature men on the photo: Ernest, Ector and Gérald. We were not told their family ties. Ernest and Gérald seem to be of the same generation as the grandfather but Ector, sitting on the car's hood would be of father Eugène's generation.

Note that the legend we were given for the picture identifies no mother for the children, which is very surprising.

Now we have a few clues to begin our search for the identity of these Robitaille. We simply have to find a family with a grandmother named Alma, an aunt named Rose, children named Michelle, Micheline and *Solande*.

The quest

We have a photo of Robitailles taken in Abitibi around 1930. Were they born in Abitibi? For the young ones, it's possible but we must remember that these lands became available only at the beginning of the twentieth and that the first waves of settlers arrived during the 1930's. The older protagonists in the picture were probably born and married outside the region.

I primarily used the Directory of baptisms and marriages created by the Association des familles Robitaille to try and find the identity of the Robitailles on the photo. This database now consists of about 6675 baptisms and 9920 marriages of Robitailles. The list of marriages is fairly complete up to the 1960's but, to this day, the inventory of baptisms is still very limited after 1900. To find our Robitaille family of Abitibi in 1930, we will thus concentrate on the marriages.

Accordingly, I reviewed one by one each of the marriages of Robitailles in Abitibi, starting with the oldest and pieced together each family, as best I could, at the search of a family with names corresponding with the individuals on our photo.

After many days of research, I finally found the marriage of **Solange** Robitaille to Henri Pageau on April 20th, 1938, in Belcourt (Abitibi). Solange is the daughter of **Eugène** Robitaille and **Alma** Gagnon. Solange, Eugène, Alma: three given names from our picture. Finally, a serious trail to explore further.

Eugène Robitaille married Alma Gagnon in Montréal September 16, 1895.

The Directory of baptisms tells me that Eugène and Alma had a boy baptised **Hector** in Montréal on July 17, 1897. Another given name from the photo!

Using the 1921 Canadian census, I was able to find the couple Eugène Robitaille and Alma Gagnon in Courville-Carpentier-Senneterre. The family already lives in Abitibi in 1921. With them, three children: **Eugène**, Aline and **Solange** and a lodger, **Ernest** Robitaille, brother of the head of family. Three given names from the photo.

Searching for traces of these children, I stumble upon the marriage of the son **Eugène** with **Rose** Lavoie, in Belcourt (Abitibi) October 17th, 1923. Among the witnesses signing the register, **Eugène** the father, **Eugène** the son, **Rose** Lavoie but also **Hector** Robitaille and **Émilie** Robitaille. Well, well, could it be Aunt Mélie?

The clues pile up, relations intertwine. Hector is Émilie's husband. Émilie was born Émilie Lavoie. She is Rose Lavoie's sister.

Having the maiden name of Rose and Émilie, it is possible to look for children of theirs who got married. In the Directory of marriages, with Eugène Robitaille as father of the bride and Rose Lavoie as mother, there are three marriages: **Micheline** married in Senneterre in 1959, **Michelle** married in 1957 in Belcourt and Alette married in 1958 in Senneterre. We found the two little girls from the photo!

Scanning the registers of Ste-Cécile de Belcourt's parish for the years subsequent to the marriage of **Eugène** and **Rose** in 1923, we find a few children to this couple: Lucille born 1924, **Gérald** born 1926, the twins **Michelle** and **Micheline** born 1931 and Alette born 1938. As Michelle and Micheline are toddlers on the photo, it is understandable that Alette was not yet born.

At the twins' baptism, we learn that Michelle's godfather is **Ernest** Robitaille and Micheline's is **Hector** Robitaille while his wife **Émilie** Lavoie is her godmother. All of them in our picture!

Voilà! The table is set.

The documentation is sufficient to sort out all of this.

That's what we'll see in the next shipment of the *Robitalleries Express!*

/jr



Automobile Pioneer

A newsclip from Québec City's newspaper Le Soleil, 6 August 1946

Have you ever owned a 1907 two cylinder Ford? A 1903 one cylinder Packard? Then you are one of the first pioneers of the gasoline automobile. It's the case for Mr Cyprien Robitaille, 165 Christophe-Colomb street, Québec, whom, with the late Doctor Casgrain, dentist, owned in our city at the turn of this century, the first car of this type. In the last few days, M. Robitaille had his two brothers, Adélar and Joseph, whom he hadn't seen for nearly 35 years, visiting to celebrate with him the golden jubilee of automobile.

Since 1907, when he owned in Québec a two-cylinder Ford, bought second hand at the Toronto exposition, Mr Cyprien Robitaille has had autos of all the imaginable brands. Currently, he drives a 1938 Chrysler. But Fords and Packards with one, two or three cylinders, are all familiar to him.

Yesterday, M. Robitaille, employee to the Provincial Department of Roads on Belvédère street, accompanied by his two brothers, was the guest of Mr Émile Renaud, secretary of Québec's Automobile Club.

Mr Joseph Robitaille drove the long distance from St-Boniface, Manitoba, where he owns a garage, to Québec, where his brother Cyprien lives. Mr Adélar Robitaille has traveled even longer, from Long Beach, California. Both arrived two weeks ago.

Mr Adélar Robitaille built his own gasoline car in 1896, while Henry Ford made his first appearance in Detroit with a four-wheel vehicle, also powered by gasoline. During 1907 and 1908, MM. Adélar and Cyprien Robitaille, then both living in Québec, bought two two-cylinder Fords at the Toronto Exposition, which they then re-



conditioned " the best they could to turn them into automobiles ".

Ever since that time, the Robitaille brothers have always been interested in the evolution of the automobile. They have bought, dismantled and rebuilt, studied all auto pieces, owned every brand, so that we can rightly call them « first pioneers of the automobile in Québec. »

We know that the first gasoline powered car appeared in America in 1896. Henry Ford built the first one in Detroit and proudly drove around that city. A year later, Doctor Casgrain, from Québec, amazed his fellow citizens with a new modern apparatus, a tricycle of sorts powered by gasoline. At that time, Québec had automobile veterans, all members of the budding Auto-Club, MM. Carrel and Pion, Georges-Élie Amyot, the Honorable D -O. L'Espérance, Wellie Brunet, A.-E. Pfeiffer, J.-M. Landry, Jos. De-

vareennes, Dr Robert Larue, H. Lavigneur, Mr Georges Parent, J -T. Donohue, Guy Simpson, M.-H. Leonard, J.-H. Fortier, Jos. Boswell, Adj. Amyot, P.J. Paradis. Cyrille Kirouac and many others.

If Eugène Brieux, famous French writer of that time, was still living and saw the three Robitaille brothers in each of their cars, as well as the enormous development of the auto industry across the world, he might have refrained from writing: " I have doubts about our future when I see one of those men with cap and glasses, enormous, wrapped up in woolens or ugly pelts, like a native from Groënland. Why is this extraordinary triumph of ugliness? Insulting mockery of a carriage, disfigurement of man and street. The absurd development of motoring calls for sanctioning by public authorities. "

The historical notes on automobile development in the Québec region were kindly provided by Mr Émile Renaud, secretary of the Automobile Club in his article "« Automobile's Golden Jubilee; 1896-1946. »



THE FIRST GASOLINE CAR IN QUEBEC : The two-cylinder « Ford » seen on the top photo, was the first gasoline automobile appearing in Québec's streets. It was owned by Mr CYPRIEN ROBITAILLE, sitting behind the wheel, in the company of his two brothers. On the bottom photo, the ROBITAILLE brothers in front of the Automobile Club, where they were guests yesterday. From left to right: Mr JOSEPH ROBITAILLE, from Saint-Boniface, Manitoba; Mr ADELARD ROBITAILLE, from Palm Beach, California; Mr CYPRIEN ROBITAILLE, 165, Christophe-Colomb Street, Québec, and Mr J.-EMILE RENAUD, secretary of the Automobile Club.

DO YOU HAVE A COMMENT OR ANYTHING RELATED TO YOUR FAMILY THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

WRITE US AT INFO@ROBITAILLE.ORG

Vintage issues 41 to 45 of the Robitalleries on our website

...now on the web

Par René Robitaille, Saint-Lambert-de-Lauzon

Editor's note: Each issue usually includes a word from the president giving news on the Association's projects and activities. Number 41 is the last number which was limited to a maximum of 10 pages to save postage. Starting with issue 42, a new Association policy made it possible to publish newsletters of 20 to 30 pages. It was also at this time that we began to publish more articles in English for English-speaking members.

No. 41 presents news on members, deaths and events in which we participated, such as the Fêtes de la Nouvelle-France and the genealogical workshops. There is also a report on the annual meeting and visit to the Village québécois d'Antan in Drummondville as well as President Claire's annual report.

A message from Manitoba informs us of the great Robitaille meeting to celebrate the centennial of the arrival in Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes of the couple Joseph Robitaille and Parmélia Cailler, considered to be the ancestors of all Robitailles in the region.

No. 42 includes an important file on the knight Olivier Robitaille (1811-1896), doctor, mayor of Québec City and great philanthropist. He was the great-grandfather of René from Québec, the first president of our Association.

The bulletin also contains the history and genealogy of Emmett Robitaille of from Texas and his brothers Daniel and Frank of from California. In addition, that issue describes a corn roast for all Robitaille from Dupuy in Abitibi, descendants of Ovide Robitaille and Adélia Morasse, and two golden wedding anniversaries among these descendants. Finally, we learn the story of Jacques Robitaille who runs an exceptional and historic inn in Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier.

No. 43 has an archive photo on its cover page from 1928, showing the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec. In the group photographed, there were two Robitaille who played music and who were members of the Board of Directors, Paul flautist and Gustave cellist.

There are several biographical stories told:

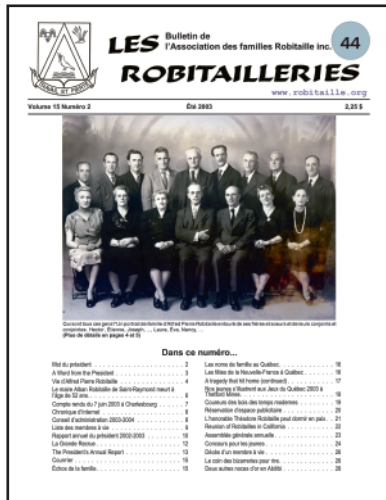
- ▶ The 24,000 km solo bicycle expedition across the three Americas from south to north by the grandson of Cécile Robitaille Le Thierry d'Hennequin from France
- ▶ The story of a rescue of the crew of a sinking boat during a storm off Vancouver by Major Jacques Robitaille
- ▶ The story of Sr Lucille Robitaille who taught music in India for many years
- ▶ The life of Père Blanc d'Afrique missionary, Jean-Paul Robitaille (19 24-2002), in Burkina Faso.



Finally there are a few news items such as news from members from New Jersey and Saskatchewan, photos of the wedding in France of Olivier Cailler and Christine

Robitaillé, the latter known for taking part in two of our gatherings, and the meeting of Samuel de Champlain and the Indians at Tadoussac in 1603 with the understanding that the French were welcome in exchange for future aid against the Iroquois.

No. 44 presents the first part of the life of Alfred Pierre Robitaille (1873-1964), the ancestor of a pioneer family from Charlesbourg. The son of Cyprien Robitaille, a businessman from Quebec, Alfred Pierre raised ten children and lost an eleventh infant. He worked in accounting, founded several



companies and was deeply involved in his community.

An article recalls the fact that Mayor Alban Robitaille of Saint-Raymond had guided an Association group on Mount Laura and that he died

shortly after at the age of 52. Other news reports are:

- ▶ The continuation of the rescue story by Major Jacques Robitaille
- ▶ The Robitaille meeting in California
- ▶ A demonstration of the modern coureurs de bois
- ▶ Two other golden wedding anniversaries celebrated in Abitibi

Finally, an article mentions the installation of a commemorative plaque in tribute to Lieutenant-Governor Théodore Robitaille (1834-1897) in the Belmont cemetery. Having no descendants and his funeral monument having been vandalized and destroyed, the Association undertook to correct the situation.

No. 45 honors two other related families, that of William Robitaille and Gemma Daigle and

that of Paul Robitaille and Yvette Bureau. William and Paul were two brothers raised on a farm in the Eastern Townships. William is the father of Florent, then president of the Association.



The other subjects dealt with concern:

- ▶ The second part of Alfred Pierre Robitaille's life
- ▶ The unexpected meetings of our representative Paul Robitaille from the United States of owners of Robitaille Candy Store in California and Father Raymond Robitaille in New Iberia in Louisiana
- ▶ The story of Andréanne Robitaille, nurse in the Far North
- ▶ A 2003 statistic which shows that the Association had a total of 203 members including twelve in the United States and nine in France
- ▶ The story of a happy 75-year-old guy, Conrad Morasse aka Mister Potato

P.S.: For more details, go to our website robitaille.org and click on the tabs

- ▶ The Association
- ▶ Communications
- ▶ The Robitalleries
- ▶ Full text of old issues

Enjoy your reading!

A Hesdin Notebook (Part 7)

Spanish Rule (1553-1639)

*By René Robitaille, Saint-Lambert-de-Lauzon
(translated by David Robitaille, North Vancouver)*

Ed. note: The first five parts of this notebook dealt with the history of the Hesdin region from prehistory until the destruction of the city in 1553 by Charles V. The sixth part covered the reconstruction of the fortified city between 1554 and 1560, located a few kilometres west of the old site. This seventh part deals with Spanish rule during the period from 1553 to 1639.

■ **Source: Histoire d'Hesdin by Bruno Béthouard et al.**

Importance of a fortified city for Charles V

As king of Spain, Charles V already ruled over the 17 provinces of the Netherlands (the Low Countries). By gaining Artois and Flanders as war trophies, he enlarged Spanish domination of the region. Hesdin was located near the border with France. The French were still present in this fortified area, but weakened because of their outdated defenses. For Charles V this was like a thorn in his side, and he decided to settle once and for all the danger of an invasion at his southwestern border. In 1553, he managed to take the city after a short siege and decided to raze it and rebuild a modern fortified city on a defensible site located a little to the west, and it became a kind of buffer zone.

The life of the population under the reign of the Spaniards (1553-1639)

In 1555 Charles V resigned as emperor and king of Spain and officially ceded his titles to his son, Philip II, in 1556. The latter had previously received from his father the task of representing the king in Spain, since he knew the country so well. With the arrival of a new king of France, Henry II, skirmishes began again at the border and there were many crossings by soldiers and mischief from armed gangs that surely affected the population. In 1595, the French army, under the direction of Henry IV, took Auchy and burned the old city Hesdin, but they were unable to

conquer the new Hesdin stronghold.

On the other hand, Philip II had to face a serious internal problem. The 17 provinces of the Netherlands were of highly significant value to Spain since they brought in royalties of 2 million ounces of gold annually from foreign holdings, out of a total of 5 million. The 7 northern and protestant provinces suffered severe reprisals from the very catholic king because of their religion. Feeling betrayed by this strict Philip II, who had been raised in Spain when they were accustomed to being ruled by a more tolerant ruler raised in Burgundy, they revolted; thereby creating a split. The ten predominantly catholic provinces in the south, including Artois, did not have to suffer religious violence.

The Spanish, who could now count on a stronghold to control the southern region, knew that the cooperation of the population had to be relied upon to ensure peace. In developing a city within the fortifications, they implemented the clauses of a charter that defined urban attributes and administrative functions. The organization was headed by a governor who took care of the military and defensive side, along with a mayor and 7 aldermen responsible for the local tax and judicial systems. This was the model which had been used in Old Hesdin. The surrounding municipalities, under the supervision of the governor, had the same structure.

This stable organization enabled the establishment of civil and religious institutions and buildings. In 1563, the first stone was laid for the Hesdin Town Hall, which was completed only around 1599, while the belfry was completed in 1581. A new church in Saint Omer was consecrated in 1573. It later served as the foundation for a Franciscan convent (the Recollets), dedicated to public assistance and teaching, as well as several colleges run mainly by the Jesuits.

Justice was sometimes applied harshly. In 1573, Jehanne Lepetit, known as Nisette, was accused of witchcraft. A dozen witnesses spoke of the woman's malfeasance including the use of spells: that is, calling upon an "evil spirit" to kill cattle, as well as women and children. The so-called witch was condemned to be exhibited in a public place, beaten, and burned.

According to census results, the population of Hesdin within the fortifications was 1000 inhabitants in 1569 and 2000 in 1592. Between 1620 and 1639 there were a number of epidemics of plague and smallpox. Having no statistics for this period, it is believed that the demographics did not change and that the population would have remained at 2000 inhabitants until the siege of 1639.

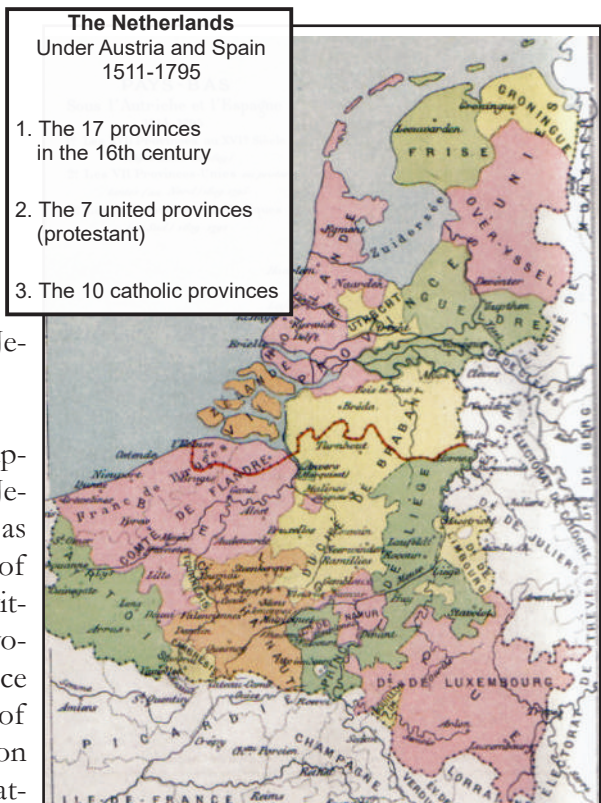
Our ancestors during the reign of the Spaniards

We know that the Spanish reign over the Netherlands took place from 1553 to 1639. The four brothers, Jean, Nicolas, Pierre, and Philippe Robitaille, who emigrated to America, were born in 1642, 1650, 1651, and 1662, respectively. They did not live under Spanish rule. They stated that they were born in Auchy, St. George, and Bealen-court. They lived in villages on the outskirts of Hesdin under the new French rule.

On the other hand, it is known that the parents of the four brothers, Jean Robitaille and Martine Cormont, were married in Auchy near Hesdin in 1640, the day after the handover of power from the Spanish to the French. Jean and Martine therefore lived their youth between 1615 or 1620 and 1639 during the last days of Spanish rule, and raised their children in the

early years of French reign. They must have been strong because they survived epidemics of plague and smallpox and witnessed the siege and capture of Hesdin in 1639.

As for the grandparents and great-grandparents of the four brothers, there are no records of their dates of birth, marriage, and burial, nor of their places of residence. All that can be assu-



Illustrative map of the Spanish Netherlands and the split

During the reign of Philip II, a conflict with Spain arose. Indeed, as much as Charles V was a child of the country, Philip II was just as much a foreign sovereign, educated in In addition, there was a financial conflict against the (centralizing) government and a religious divide (the king, a catholic, strongly fighting against "protestant heresy"). (Wikipedia)

med is that they lived all their lives under Spanish rule and probably in villages surrounding Hesdin.

In short, the living conditions of the Artesian population under the Spanish were no worse than under the tutelage of the French. Local administrative and judicial officials managed the

activities in the same way in both cases. What might have been trying for people was when they had to suffer the consequences of wars and skirmishes; however, the 86-year period of Spanish rule can be considered to have been relatively stable for the region Hesdin.

To be continued

Obituary

Madeleine McGuigan (nee- Robitaille) was born in St. Boniface Manitoba on October 9, 1925 and passed away in Qualicum Beach, BC on January 2, 2020. She was a happy resident of Qualicum Manor and succumbed to an infection. She was a long-time member of our Association.

Madeleine was predeceased by her husband Jack McGuigan in 1992 and her parents Joseph Robitaille and Victoria Ouellette. Madeleine is survived by her daughter Bridget McGuigan and her son in law Frank Pouliot.

Madeleine was a Commercial artist, better known as a Graphic artist, now a days. She was a multi medium artist who also taught painting and had the privilege of earning her living at art too. In her retirement she mastered china painting and enjoyed that with a great passion. Also, in retirement she enjoyed the art of cruising with her daughter. Madeleine had a full beautiful life and was living independently until December 2018. She will really be missed by her family and close friends.

Our sincere condolences to the bereaved family.



Some documents have been translated automatically and may contain grammatical errors or inaccuracies. Our goal is to make this content useful to you.

L'ASSOCIATION DES FAMILLES ROBITAILLE INC.
C.P. 47007, Succ. Sheppard
Québec, QC G1S 4X1

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Association Membership Renewal

Except for life members, all subscriptions expired on December 31, 2019.

If you have not yet paid your annual subscription, the Association would appreciate receiving membership forms soon to avoid recall fees and to make sure that you keep on receiving our newsletter every other month.

Why not take the opportunity to enroll a relative? He or she will receive issue # 89 (December 2019) for free. This may be the boost he or she needs to spark interest in his history or her genealogy.

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