
THE ANCESTRAL COUPLE

CHARLES MERCIER DIT LAJOIE ET MARIE-ANNE LAHAISE

The soldier Charles Mercier Lajoie arrived in New France in 1757 with the Regiment of Berry to participate in the war of the Conquest. Grenadier in the French army, he is part of an elite troop that takes part in several battles including those of Fort Carillon and Sainte-Foy.



*Photo credit: R.J. Marrion,
Canadian War Museum*

The French army, withdrawn to Montreal, must capitulate on September 8, 1760 in front of the overwhelming superiority of the English army. Thus ends the military career of the ancestor Charles Mercier dit Lajoie. Later, the conquerors give the choice to the soldiers of the French army to repatriate them in their country of origin or to settle in the valley of the St. Lawrence. They are granted religious freedom and immunity from property.

Charles, like the other soldiers of his regiment, lived between two battles at the home of the Canadian inhabitant. It is located in the Terrebonne region, near Montreal. As early as May 1760, even before the capitulation of Montreal, his decision to remain in the colony was taken. In front of the precariousness of the French army, one can even think that he deserted his regiment. He passes a notary in Trois-Rivières to sell his properties and properties he owns in France. The buyer is Jean Bertrand, a neighbor and companion in arms, who will return to the motherland after the conflict. The only son and orphan, Charles found a new family among the Canadians and the many French soldiers who, like him, chose a new homeland.

Charles may have remained in the family of the widow Lahaise. He may have noticed the young Marie-Anne Lahaise, which will make her stay in Canada despite the English occupation and the ruin of the colony. On June 22, 1761, at the age of 26, he married Marie-Anne, 14 years old. He is the only son of Vincent Mercier, weaver, and Catherine Gossard d'Aouze, a couple living in the Vosges department, in Lorraine (eastern France). He was born on February 16, 1735 in Removille, the mother's mother's parish located 2.8 km from the village of Aouze.

The new wife is the daughter of the late Jean-Baptiste Lahaise and Marie-Anne Archambault. At the time of the wedding, Charles' mother-in-law was married for a second time with grenadier Joseph Tollier from the La Sarre regiment. He was probably a friend since he serves as a witness to the groom.

The couple settles on land located on the peninsula of the seigniory of Lachenaie in the current municipality of Legardeur. From their union are born 15 children, three of whom die at a young age: Apolline, Charles, François, Joseph, Jean-Baptiste, Jean-Louis, Louis, Joseph, Pierre, Marien, Magdeleine, Catherine, Françoise and Vincent. Cinq filles et cinq garçons.

Five girls and five boys contract marriage. The latter work as farmers, carpenters, millers and travelers. The majority of the couple's children live in the Repentigny or Saint-Roch-de-l'Achigan area.

Although a simple farmer, Charles concluded many contracts with his neighbors and his sons. He owns properties that he will sell or sell to his sons Jean-Louis and François. According to a transaction he made with François on February 6, 1789, it can be assumed that he was exploiting the lands that today correspond to lots 189, 196 and 197 of Saint-Paul-l'Ermite.

During the Rebellions of 1837-38, his sons Jean-Louis, François and Louis belonged to committees 38 and 75 of the Patriots of Saint-Roch-de-Lachenaie. In the nineteenth century, three descendants of the couple stand out: Oscar-Félix, doctor, surgeon, professor and administrator, inspired a major movement to modernize hospital practice in Quebec. François-Xavier was an explorer in the Yukon and Alaska, and Louis co-founded the Dorchester Regiment, which became the Régiment de la Chaudière. These two men have a common physical characteristic: their large size of more than one meter 90 (6 feet and 3 inches). It is assumed that their ancestor Charles was also an imposing man since the grenadiers were placed in the front line to impress the enemy.

Deceased at the age of 82, Charles Mercier dit Lajoie was buried in Repentigny on September 19, 1817, as was his wife Marie-Anne, who died at the age of 78 on January 28, 1825.

Their descendants represent about 5% of the Mercier of America. They are found mainly in the regions of Lanaudière, Bellechasse, Montreal, Quebec City and the United States.

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