



Le Mercien

The Voice of the Merciers of North America

**38th GATHERING OF THE MERCIERS AT SAINT-JEAN -SUR-RICHELIEU
9th and 10th September 2023.**



Photo : gracieuseté - Luis Dion-Dussault

Louis Mercier received the Georges-Émile-Lapalme Award from the hands of Mathieu Lacombe, the new Minister of Culture and Communications.

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Those amounts are in U.S. currency for U.S. residents and in euros for European residents.

This newsletter is named after the Kingdom of Mercia which existed from the 7th to the 10th centuries. It was one of the seven original Kingdoms constituting England. The inhabitants of that territory must have been called Mercien. We are proud to perpetuate that name today.

Dépôt légal - 2022-2023
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Opinions expressed in the published articles belong exclusively to their authors. The fact that they are published in this newsletter does not mean that the Association agrees with or supports them.

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L'Association des Mercier de l'Amérique du Nord is a member of the Fédération Histoire Québec

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings to you all!

Everything to do with computers is an advancement in technology which should save time as well as function well. Since the end of January however, our editor, Ms. Lise St-André, saw the disappearance of the majority of our computer files, emails, etc. and the breakdown of two computers used mainly for Mercier files. Now in mid March, everything has come back to normal, thanks to a lot of effort and investment in time on her part. As a result, we apologize for the late publication of the last two issues of Le Mercien, Vol. 38, no. 3 and Vol. 38, no. 4.

In the current issue, we are presenting our plan for the 2023 Gathering, along with the costs and details for those well-filled days. Those of you who are new members should be told that the Gathering at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu had been scheduled each year since 2020.



Please make a note for the 9th and 10th of September 2023 dates in your agenda. In our next issue of Le Mercien, you will be asked to register for the Gathering and to make the reservation for your accommodation for the Saturday night.

We are aware of the higher costs all will face in 2023, but you do have to pay for what you get. Weather cooperating, I am sure those two days will be most pleasant, especially given the good company present.

Thank you as always for reading this and for your support.

Jacques Mercier, n°341, président

HONORÉ-MERCIER MUSEUM IN SAINTE-ANNE-DE-SABREVOIS



Source : Bonjour Québec

During our annual Gathering this September, we will visit the Honoré-Mercier Museum and also attend the unveiling of a commemorative plaque.

The museum is located in Honoré Mercier's house, where he was born. On exhibit are objects that used to belong to him and other items dating from his time. There will be a slideshow and guided tours to help us discover the life of the man and his commitment to his country.

MERCIER: A NAME THAT SAYS A LOT!

GENEALOGY OF THE MERCIERS WHO WERE MERCHANTS "TRADERS OF EVERYTHING, MAKERS OF NOTHING"

By Phillippe de Ladebat (www.histoire-genealogie.com) - March 21, 2019.

The study of surnames (Onomastics and its branch, Anthroponymy) reveals that trades are a great source of family names; names taken from "trades" show the occupation of the first person to bear a certain surname. That was the case for the Mercier surname or patronymic.

Even though nowadays the word "mercier" in English or "mercier" in French is associated with a "modest shop", specialized in notions such as sewing items in our towns or villages, it was not always so.

The world of mercers or merciers was quite varied, from the humble "small or minor mercer or mercier", a peddler of a host of everyday items in the Middle Ages, to the rich bourgeois mercer trader of luxury fashionable products and art objects, from the 17th century on. Thus, the role of an intermediary in retail commerce, is the very essence of how the trade of all those various mercers evolved through the ages: one finds their descendants in various forms of commerce today.

The origins in France: the "minor merciers" who were common traders in the Middle-Ages.

In France, family names as such go back to somewhere in the 12th century. Before that, everyone went only by their first name, given when they were baptized: such as Jean, Marie, Nicolas, Pierre, etc. In order to differentiate between all those named the same, people started adding the father's first name (Jean son of Martin), which later became Jean Martin; another way to distinguish all the Martins, for example, was to add a nickname (Martin le Grand, Martin Leblond, etc.) or adding the location of one's home (Martin Larivière, Martin Duvallon, etc.). A further way to differentiate them was to add for some, the name of their trade or occupation.

That was the case for the name "Mercier" and all its variants and extensions: Lemercier, Dumercier, Demercièrre, etc. The name Mercier is found in all the regions of France, but especially in the Northwest and even more so in the Hauts-de-France,

quite often with different variants: such as in the South, Mercadé, Mercader, Mercadie, or the Occitane ones, such as Mercié or Mercer, or some diminutives like: Marceron, Marcerou, Merceron, Mercereau, Merceret... all using the same original meaning of "merchant".

There will be, among readers of *Histoire Généalogie*, people named Mercier: in France, according to the Filae site, there are more than 50,000 of them, citing the Répertoire National d'Identification des Personnes Physiques (RNIPP).

In the beginning, Merciers, whose name came from the latin word *merx*, *mercis* and from an old French word *merz*, which meant "merchandise", sold thread and needles only incidentally. They sold a very diverse array of products, such as furs, burlap, sheets, toys, mirrors, drawings and paintings, home decorations, and also dishes and other kitchen items, hardware and all kinds of metal products commonly used.

Every craftsman had a specialty and sold exclusively the products he made, while Merciers were the only "generalists" who obtained and then sold the most diverse array of merchandise that they did not make. They then offered them to potential buyers, going door to door, or at public markets and at great fairs.



Travelling Mercier

In France, at a time when the country was essentially rural, a lot of Merciers were in the beginning travelling salesmen, sometimes called "small or minor Merciers", peddlers, "porteballe" (carrying their wares on their backs), or "mercelots" or "marcelots" travelling from farm to farm, then from village to village, offering and selling their wares. These were all kinds of utilitarian items, more rare or less rare, but remarkable in the diversity of their origin from various French regions or even from foreign countries.

The corporation of Mercier merchants was officially recognized in Paris in 1137. Their status recognized their right to "buy, sell and retail, barter and trade" all kinds of merchandise. In 1570, under Charles IX, when there were already a very large number of Merciers in Paris, and in order to avoid any competition from these generalists with the specialized craftsmen, stricter rules were established and they were forbidden from producing themselves what they were selling. According to the rules of the "Corps of Merciers" they could no longer "...make anything themselves, but only sell, buy, install, decorate and embellish all kinds of goods...".

All these regulations stating the rules applying specifically to Mercier traders, were summarized by economist Jean-François de Melon in his work *Essai politique sur le commerce* in 1734: "The people say wisely, speaking about Mercier traders, that they are traders of everything, makers of nothing", a terse and somewhat derogatory expression which would be borrowed later by Diderot in his *Encyclopédie* (1751/1772).

Membership in the "Corps des Marchands-Merciers" was strictly controlled and was soon contingent on a three-year apprenticeship, followed by three more years of training through mentoring, during which time the candidate had to remain single.

Emboldened by that official recognition, some Mercier traders settled down, setting up shop to cater to the needs of an affluent clientele and trying to distinguish themselves by acquiring rare, original or exotic objects; they then opened their shops in affluent areas in large cities, notably in Paris.



*Coat of Arms of the Corps of the Merciers: Oh you Famous Body of People, who are the Universe
(O vous, célèbre Corps, à qui l'univers) All your Edges are known and all the Gates are Open
(Tous les bords sont connus et tous les ports ouverts)*

From the 17th century on, the great Mercier traders will be the bourgeois elite of the trade: they were the example of the trade in luxury items, objects of art and decoration in Paris.

As early as 1761, the Dictionnaire universel du commerce by Savary des Brûlons shows the profound and rapid evolution of the Mercier traders towards what would be considered today as antique dealers, sellers of objects of art and interior decorators. "This Corps is considered as the most noble and excellent of all the Corps of Merchants, even more so because its members don't do any work, they don't use their hands to make what they sell, except to embellish things that have already been made by others...they sell paintings, etchings, candelabras, ornamental branched candlesticks with gilded copper and bronze, crystal chandeliers, bronze figurines, clocks, watches, cabinets, trunks, armoires, shelves and pedestal tables... and other goods and curios, as well as all kinds of items to decorate apartments".

More than just selling objects, these Mercier merchants made suggestions about decorating, improving and furnishing the homes of their wealthy clients, who considered such tasks worthy of the lowly people, but not them. They had books full of addresses with references allowing them to suggest some renowned specialized master craftsmen, and offering to find some special objects or pieces of furniture, or to have them made to measure.

Experts at the time talked about "the huge incomes" of their customers, always keen to find original items and looking for exceptional pieces, good for their egos and not looking at all for "investments" as the vulgar bourgeois would do. There was the story of an ordinary farmer boasting of having paid for a piece of furniture "made especially" for him, 10 times more than for an almost identical one that was already available. In fact, those types of customers often got rid of pieces that quickly went out of fashion, selling them at prices that were much lower than what they had paid for them. That created a "second hand" market, where Mercier merchants could get the items corresponding to the wishes of a bourgeois clientele that worried less about originality, but liked to boast of getting at a good price, a piece that used to belong to a well-known high society person.

While trade with the Court, the nobility and the great bourgeoisie brought prestige to the merchants, this activity required large financial means to pay for what they imported, their stocks and for the transactions, so they used credit a lot. In spite of that, the business was quite profitable, as can be seen in the ledgers of the merchants and in the amount of income tax and special duties they were charged. This was according to several authors, including René de Lespinasse in *Les métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris*.

One can get an idea of the personality of those Mercier merchants, their preferred field of business and their capacity to build a stock of items, allowing them to keep their demanding special customers coming back to them, with a list of around ten names among the most prestigious ones who were operating in Paris. Merchants of paintings, objects of art, rare sets of dishes, unique pieces of furniture, curios and decorating items were among those who flourished. Those traders in luxury products and decorative artworks had their shops located within a tight circle in the historical centre of the capital, at the intersection of the roads between the Saint-Denis and Saint-Jacques gates, the Saint-Honoré and Saint-Antoine gates, as well as at the Palais Royal and around that area. Homes of aristocrats were numerous there. Visiting those shops became a favourite pastime for those aristocrats! It has been said that in the 1780s, touring those shops was part of the itinerary recommended for foreign visitors to Paris.

As was the case for all corporations and communities, the Mercier merchants corporation was dissolved in 1776 by the Turgot Edict, and then during the Revolution, corporations were completely eliminated. The troubles that occurred during the revolutionary period, both monetary and economic problems, as well as the difficulties faced by the merchants' particular clienteles caused a business slowdown for the Mercier merchants until the coming of the First Empire. When business resumed and then evolved until today under various names, these merchants were always closely connected with the luxury market.

Throughout our history, commerce has known considerable upheavals, and the role of intermediary between makers/producers and buyers/consumers has remained the basis of the trade of Mercier merchants, who have always been "pure dealers".

Our humble unspecialized travelling Merciers of the Middle Ages could not have imagined that they would have one day as successors in their role, the large department stores of the 20th century; and also today, on-line sellers offering directly via the internet to sell or trade their products and offer other services, as well as the Amazon style on-line giants.

Our great Mercier merchants from the 18th century, knew how to adapt to the change and evolution occurring with their specific national and international high-income clientele. These merchants are found in the headings of interior planners, decorators and other "home designers or creators of space" who plan and supervise for their demanding and affluent clients the renovation and decoration of their apartments or houses in an original or up-to-date way. They also develop a clientele of professionals inspired by marketing: they then become "event"

organizers and designers for salons, ceremonies and shows, as well as planners and designers of grand hotels, bars, restaurants, reception rooms, and even some distinctive offices. Just as they did in the past, our contemporary Mercier merchants played on the strong need for recognition, distinctiveness, customization, and made-to-order items at the national and international level among their chosen clientele: those with large fortunes, very high incomes, celebrities...

Everything considered, we have seen that the name Mercier opened several avenues for thought and research, just as for other personal names aptly or peculiarly suited to their owners whose genealogy remains to be done, relative to the history of trades, functions or activities they represented.

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- o *Le commerce des objets d'art et les marchands merciers à Paris au XVIIIe, Pierre Verlet, Annales ESC, 13e année N1/1958*
- o *Le prince et le marchand. Le commerce de luxe chez les marchands merciers parisiens pendant le règne de Louis XIV, Stéphane Castelluccio, Éditions S.P.M., 2014*
- o *Les métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris XIV/XVIIIe - Tome 2 -, René de Lespinasse, 1846, consultable sur Gallica*
- o *La fabrique du luxe, Les marchands merciers parisiens au XVIIIe, catalogue de l'exposition, Éditions Paris-Musées, 2018*
- o *Pour les " marchands merciers contemporains ", on peut consulter sur internet le " Top 10 " des architectes d'intérieurs et " Architectural digest " qui donne des exemples d'" amazing design " au plan international (ex : Maison de Bill Gates 150 millions de dollars dont 25 millions de décoration et " styling ").*

GATHERING OF THE MERCIERS SEPTEMBER 9 & 10, 2023



Source: Croisières d'Iberville

A cruise on the Richelieu river will be part of the program for our 38th Gathering at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu in the afternoon of Saturday, September 9, 2023.

Come and join us for some pleasant times together while getting to know better this river that is so rich with history.

LOUIS MERCIER RECEIVED THE GEORGES-ÉMILE-LAPALME AWARD

With the authorization of Serge Lamontagne, LA VOIX DU SUD, January 18, 2023.



Photo : gracieuse - Luis Dion-Dussault

Louis Mercier received the Georges-Émile-Lapalme Award from the hands of Mathieu Lacombe, the new Minister of Culture and Communications.

AWARD. Born in Saint-Vallier, where he is still residing, linguist and lexicologist Louis Mercier was the recipient of the Georges-Émile-Lapalme award for his contribution to the recognition, promotion and enhancement of spoken French in Québec.

Over the last four decades, Louis Mercier has proven to be a key actor in lexicography success stories in Québec. His research dealt with the close links between language, society and culture, as well as seeing in lexicographic terms, different varieties of French, starting with the one spoken in Québec.

The researcher was particularly interested in how the names of natural species are dealt with in French dictionaries. Now retired, he continues to work on the digital development of a historical dictionary of the French names of birds of the world, and the first 500 entries have been available on line since February 2022.

Louis Mercier says that getting the Georges-Émile-Lapalme award is like “the recognition by the Québec government of the significance of my commitment to describing and promoting the value of Québec French, and the common good done through the craftsman lexicography that has been my humble avocation for the last 40 years.”

For Louis Mercier, the digital world has contributed to the renewal of the practice of lexicography and in that way, he contributed to the publication of major and innovative works, such as the Index lexicologique québécois, a digitalized body of the works created by the Trésor de la langue française au Québec, in the late 1970s, and the Usito dictionary, the first general dictionary of French developed in a digital environment. Both are accessible on-line for free.

Aside from those two outstanding contributions, Louis Mercier as lexicographer also participated in the writing of the Dictionnaire du français Plus (1988) and the Dictionnaire historique du français québécois (1998).

As a professor and researcher at the Université de Sherbrooke from 1994 to 2015, Louis Mercier was also for 13 years Director of the Centre d’analyse et de traitement informatique du français québécois, now called the Centre de recherche interuniversitaire sur le français en usage au Québec.

Wednesday November 30th is the day that Louis Mercier received his award during a ceremony held at the Palais Montcalm, in Québec City. That was the 45th such ceremony and the award was given to 16 Quebec personalities working in the fields of culture or sciences.

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GATHERING OF THE MERCIERS SEPTEMBER 9 & 10, 2023

Our 2023 annual general meeting

The Board of Directors of the Association of the Merciers of North America invites you to our AGM at Auberge Harris in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. The schedule of activities to make your visit more enjoyable will be announced in the next issue of Le Mercien.



Source : Auberge Harris

MERCIER FAMILIES IN THE OUTAOUAIS (Part 4 of 5)

*Text by Céline Mercier,
daughter of Jacques and Claudette, January 2010*

FAMILLE JACQUES MERCIER AND CLAUDETTE BEAULNE

This is the fourth of five articles about Mercier families in the Outaouais. They are taken from *L'histoire des familles de L'Ange-Gardien* (The History of Families in L'Ange-Gardien), published in 2012. The text was updated in 2022 and it is reproduced with permission from the author.

Jacques Mercier was born September 28, 1939. The son of Antonio Mercier and Marie Anne Lorette Plouffe (Anna), he married Claudette Beaulne on July 8, 1961. Early in their marriage, they rented the ground floor of a house located behind Hôtel Guénette. On September 27, 1963, they bought a farm from Edna Janet Rowan, widow of Edgar Rowan, and from Mary Maud Rowan, Edgar's sister. The farm's address is now 5154 Route 309. Soon after, they moved into the farm house, when it was still without running water! They had to get water from a pump located near a creek. The pump kept freezing up! Of course, they quickly agreed to get some plumbing work done as soon as spring arrived.



*Wedding of Jacques and Claudette
July 8, 1961
Flower girl: Line Bouladier*

While Jacques and Claudette worked on the farm buildings, they both still pursued their careers. Claudette taught at St-Laurent and St-Michel primary schools in Buckingham, and Jacques had to travel every day to Hull and Ottawa, and sometimes as far as Montreal, to practice his trade of structural steel worker. Among the numerous structures and buildings of the region he worked on, there was the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge, Place du Portage and the Canadian Museum of History (previously named the Canadian Museum of Civilizations). In Montréal, he worked on Place Desjardins.

When Jacques and Claudette first started at their farm, it was a dairy operation. In 1969, they decided to discontinue dairy farming and turned the land into a feedlot. At the time, they were among the first to practice that type of farming.

But Jacques had not yet achieved his dream: to have a purebred cattle operation. In May 1975, an opportunity came to him: a herd of purebred Charolais was put up for sale in Upper Gatineau. The asking price was very reasonable, so the decision was made quickly. Jacques bought the herd of 121 head of Charolais cattle and stopped operating the feedlot so as to devote all of his time to his herd of purebred cattle. That same summer, he became a member of the Charolais Association of Québec and Canada and he named the farm "Ferme Bomer", a homonym of the first syllable of both their last names: Beaulne/Mercier. For several years, both of them attended the Association's Conventions, even though most of these took place in Western Canada. That gave them an opportunity to meet people from all across the country who were involved in the same type of cattle raising. Even though most of their sales of bulls occurred in Québec and Ontario, on two occasions, sales were made outside of Canada. The first time was in 1993, when a bull was sold to a Mexican breeder. The following year, two breeding bulls were sold to the king of Morocco!

Apart from his time spent on farm production and his construction trade, Jacques also wished to play an active role in the life of his community. As early as 1965, he ran for a position as a city councillor in the municipality of Buckingham Canton. He remained in that position until 1975, when the municipality was merged into "Le Grand Buckingham". He did not agree with the idea of such a merger of 32 rural and urban municipalities imposed by the Quebec Government, so he did not run again in the municipal elections in that new city. In 1979, when the municipality of L'Ange-Gardien was in the process of being created, following the reorganization of Buckingham into L'Ange-Gardien, he was asked to run again for the new city council to help build this new municipality. In 1990, he completed Mayor Pierre Champagne's term. When the next election came, he was elected Mayor of the Municipality and remained in this position until the elections of 1995.

The accomplishment he was most proud of during his years on the city council of L'Ange-Gardien was undoubtedly the creation of a fire brigade, as well as the installation of dry fire hydrants, which were a first in the province of Québec.

During all those years, while the municipality was still part of the former Regional Community of the Outaouais, he defended the recognition of the specific needs of rural areas, which he felt were often neglected in favour of the urban world. In 1991, at the time of the creation of the regional municipality of the Outaouais, he fought for the acknowledgement of the specific needs of rural people. In 1991, the creation of the Les Collines-de-l'Outaouais regional county municipality in the Outaouais region, meant that the situation could be remedied by grouping under one organization the rural municipalities of the region.



Source: Céline Mercier

Jacques Mercier, city councillor of the Municipality of Buckingham Canton, "Le Grand Buckingham", Municipality of L'Ange-Gardien and finally Mayor of that Municipality.

All those years devoted to the municipal world were honoured in 1995 by the UMRCQ (the Union of Regional Municipalities of Québec counties) at its annual convention.

In 1995, when he was no longer part of the City Council of L'Ange-Gardien, the SADC (Society for Community Development Aid) of Papineau approached him to become a member of their Board. In 2010, 15 years later, he was still in that position! In 2005, the network of SADCs of Québec, in cooperation with the FQM (Quebec Federation of Municipalities) awarded him the Prix Provincial Gaétan Archambault. This award recognized volunteering in the field of economic and social development, be it at the local or regional level.



Source: Céline Mercier

*Jacques accepting the UMRCQ Méritas Award
From the hands of the President,
Ms. Jacinthe B. Simard.
September 30, 1995.*



Jacques accepting the Prix Gaétan Archambault from the hands of the President of the network of SADCs of Quebec, Mr. Gratien LeBel and from the president of the FQM, Mr. Michel Belzil (October 1, 2005).

In spite of all those responsibilities, Jacques and Claudette's priority always was their three children: Louise, Céline and Jean.

Louise died in 1987, at the age of twenty-five in a car accident, along with her husband André Séguin and their older daughter Marjolaine. I stepped in to raise their other daughter, Émilie, to whom I gave two younger sisters, Jessica and Valérie Martel, daughters of myself and Alain Martel.

Jean is married to Danielle Campbell and they have two children: Kevin and Sabrine.

Over the last five years, great-grandchildren have been added to our family...and like those that came before them, they adore visiting their grandmother Claudette and "Grandpa" Jacques

THE END!



Association des Mercier de l'Amérique du Nord

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Website : <http://www.famillesmercier.org> - Email : famillesmercier1985@gmail.com

ANNUAL FEES 2022-2023

For all members, annual fees are due on May 31st of each year.

Please make your **cheque payable** to: **Association des Mercier de l'Amérique du Nord**
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