

# A family name, some ancestors: The COMEAU across France

[Janet Comeau](#) / [March 28, 2016](#)

*NOTE: This is an unedited copy of an article published by Jacques A. COMEAU in 2000.*

At the beginning of these research my goal was the discovery of the origins of Pierre COMEAU, cooper at Port Royal and ancestor of all the COMEAU of North America. To learn where we come from we have to retrace our steps and with the passing of time this work transformed itself into a demographic study on the COMEAU of France. I linked all the results of this search in a piece that acquaint us on the origin of our surname, since the year 1000, and we also discover a few COMEAU families born in the middle age. We are still looking for the whereabouts of Pierre's family but now we have a few options, we can speculate and we learned a lot more on the bearers of our name in France. And we begin at the beginning.....

## **Pierre COMEAU, cooper**

Here is an excerpt from the census of Port Royal done in 1671 by M. de GRANDFONTAINE\* and deposited at "Archives du Ministere des Colonies" in Paris.

*formelle* Pierre Commeaux age de soixant-sept ans  
 La femme Rose Bayon age de quarant ans  
 Leur enfant nee, ou de mariage, Habine Commeaux  
 age de 21 ans, Les non mariés, Pierre Commeaux  
 age de 18 ans, Francoise age de 15 ans  
 Jehan age de 14 ans, Pierre age de 13 ans  
 Antoine age de 10 ans, Marie Jeanne age de  
 9 ans, Marie Anne age de 7 ans, Jehan six  
 ans. Leur bestail a Cornet 16 paires de 22.  
 Bœuf, Leur bestail Labourable six arpents

"cooper, Pierre COMMEAUX, 75 years old, his wife Rose BAYON 40 years old, their children nine, one married, Etienne 21 years old, the singles, Pierre COMMEAU 18 years old, Francoise 15 years old, Jehan 14 years old, Pierre 13 years old, Antoine 10 years old, Marie Jeanne 9 years old, Marie Anne 7 years old, Jehan 6, 16 cows, 22 sheep & 6 arpents of cultivable land."

Here it is! Pierre, his family, his holding, his neighbors and that's all. No passenger list to inform us on his arrival, no hiring contract to direct us to his place of birth. His first born, Etienne, came in near 1650, a marriage at that time, in France or Acadia is then conceivable. He is said to be 75, he would then have been born near 1597 if we can believe this census, but in this era when the majority could not read or write we can expect some divergence.

A few words about Rose BAYON, or BAYOL, or BAYOU, or BAJOLET. Yes, we have seen all these forms to identify her but a look at the original census tells us that BAYON is the right form. We could then eliminate Barbe BAYOL as a relative, Nicolas BAYOL as her father. A correspondent from Maine & Loire tells me that BAYON is a familiar name in that region. Since no "King's daughters" ever went to Acadia, most of the girls of marrying age were daughters of local habitants. It is more than conceivable then that Pierre and Rose were married in France, BAYON being an unknown family name in Port Royal.

Where does this little population of Port Royal came from? Many of these families, like the COMEAU are ignorant of their origins. Of the 78 passengers

of the St Jehan, beside Pierre MARTIN, Guillaume TRAHAN and a few children of the deceased passengers none remained in Port Royal. It is possible that some from the first group of settlers who came earlier with RAZILLY, or their children are among this population, men without a family, stranded soldiers or fishermen. After 1636 other colonist families came to live in Acadia and formed the Port Royal population of 1671



The COMEAU farming community was situated a short distance from the fort, up river, on the south bank. With 6 arpents in culture, a good average compared to the other farmer, he surely was at work for a few years. With 16 cows & 22 sheep his herd was above the norm, the surplus must have given him a fair revenue. Charles MELANCON, living across the river had 40 cows, quite a number for that period. Practically every one was raising sheep, they did not suffer much in the winter with their warm woolen clothes. In this village we count four coopers, a trade well in demand in an era when everything was kept or shipped in barrel, but with an expending farm and a large herd we believe that Pierre was a farmer first, although he seem to be proud of his cooper trade.



1678 and another census. Pierre is now a widow, has 14 cultivable arpents but his herd is smaller, 12 cows only, the sheep are absent but he owns 4 bulls, the only one reported in this census. That's quite a monopoly in a region so rich in cows plus the work that those animals can do, plowing, heavy transport and land clearing. Another item is reported in this survey, a compass. This more or less confirm that Pierre was a cooper by trade, a compass being a necessary tool in that profession.

In 1686 it's M.de MEULLES, the Intendant of New France who did the count, "transporting himself in every household". Alexandre Le BORGNE, sieur de BELLISLE is now the seigneur. His wife, Mll. Marie is the daughter of Charles LATOUR de St-Etienne. Pierre is now 88 and there is no mention of his trade. Pierre the young, Antoine and Jean the young are still living at home. 4 beasts only, are those the bulls of 1678? 12 sheeps and 4 pigs, but only 6 arpents of cultivable land, result of subdivision or raids by the English troops?

In 1693 and Pierre is gone! Jacob BOURGEOIS and Abraham DUGAS are still living but the other patriarchs took the same road as Pierre. His son Antoine is also missing from that roll call. An old family legend says that Antoine returned to France, in Bordeaux where he raised a family, a story that call for an investigation. Could Pierre, seeing his last day coming decided to return to his home land with his son?

I found an interesting marriage in Bordeaux: Marguerite COMEAU, born near 1708 in the St-Michel parish of Bordeaux, married to Francois LEFORT in 1729. This is a region where the name COMEAU is rarely seen, could this Marguerite be Antoine's daughter? The dates fits. What we thought to be a legend could be a fact. A request for the act was done, we are waiting.

To find Pierre's origins and his family in France at the beginning of the XVII century is a problem that concerns many family genealogists. To gave us a

better idea of the task and to look at different options let us look in France at everything "COMEAU".

## The Origins

While on a trip in France I was walking in Beaune, Saone & Loire, not far from the cradle of the COMEAU of that region. While talking to a postman, asking for direction, I asked him, after spelling my name, if by any chance some COMEAU lived in the area. Yes, said he, there is one across the street but he is not related to you, he spell his name with two "M".

I often ask myself how Pierre wrote his name. If he was in the same position as his sons and the majority of the population, he did not write it, it was done by others, priest, notariy and clerk who wrote it their way, often different from one to the other.

Let us start in early the middle age where we have seen COMIEL in Normandy, a latinized COMEAU that changed to COMMEAUX, then came Herbert in 1348 with QUOMIAL, COMAUL and finally COMEAU in Pouilly-en-Auxois. The ones in Saone & Loire opted for COSMEAU with a silent "S". It was the criterion until the 18th century when it changed to COMEAU and COMMEAUX, those two last forms seen in to-day's France as in Canada and the US but we still see a few COSMEAU in France who refuse to part with their "S".

The family names did not always exist. This trend started at the beginning of medieval time by the royalty, followed by the nobles, the bourgeois and then the mass of the population. Near the XIII century with a growing population the repetition of first name became increasingly confusing. Too many Pierre, Paul or Jean in the same village are hard to identify. A Pierre works the oven at the bakery, lets call him Pierre le FOURNIER, Jean at a tall six feet, Jean le GRAND, and Paul from the village of Lusignan, Paul de LUSIGNAN. With the passing of

time everyone was dotted with a family name, a nickname that conveyed their origin, their status, their appearance. The rendering of those names was often different from one region to another. As for the signification of names, I do not believe that those clerk lost much time on the subject, the etymologists were born later. For our concern I came across many forms for our name and the first complete signature seen in my family was from my grand father who did not leave anything to chance when he signed "COMMEAULT".

## NORMANDY

In the " Recueil des Actes des Comtes de Pontieu(1026-1279) we can read in Latin the confirmation by Robert de BELLEME, Duke of Normandy, of an accord between Robert SANSON et ARNOU, abbot of Troarn, regarding a renunciation by SANSON to the profit of the abbey of Troarn of the domains d'Ours de Gaboury that enfold the hamlets of St-Hyppolite and Commeaux.

The original document was lost but a copy from the 14th century exist in the "Chartrier Rouge de Troarn: "et opera totius terre Ursi de Gaburi, cum duabus partibus decime ipsius terre, scilicet de Santo Ypolito et de Comels". And here is the first visual contact with our family name, on the 5th of November 1101. In 1246 another chart read to the parishioners of Commeaux informs us on this disputed territory, asserting the ownership of this domain by the Abbey of Troarn. Robert de MONGOMERY, a noble of ancient Normandy and acknowledged founder of this religious community bought this land from Ursin de MOULINS and donated it to the Abbey of Troarn near the year 1000.

In an article on the names of Normandy communities we see:

#747,Commeaux, local pronounciation Komya.(Argentan)Comels, 1101.

Chartrier Rouge de Troarn. Undetermined origin. The 'Dictionnaire du Pays d'Argentan" goes further & gave us Comelli in Latin, Commeaux in

French(1240) and Chretien de JOUE-du-PLAIN propose "cum aquis" = with

water(1256) and the old form Comias.

We have found the probable site of the origin of our family name, COMMEAUX, a small hamlet in the center of Normandy, in the Argentan region where nobody bearing that name is seen in the archives, and we will have to wait a couple of hundred years before we see it again. The geographic position of COMMEAUX often places it in the path of history. In 1589 it saw the battle of the GAUTHIER, an uprising brought about by religious and territorial differences, preceded by a bad crop and an epidemic. This conflict ended near COMMEAUX, what was left of the GAUTHIER were trapped and had to surrender to the king's army. The day before 300 were killed in an engagement a few kilometers away. It is said that now and then, when the fields are plowed some ashes and old bones come to the surface. The history books tell us: Here, on the 22nd of April 1589, abandoned by all, 3000 men died for someone else's cause.

Nobody by that name in the Normandy archives, even so the Mayor of COMMEAUX told me that a De COMEAU couple are buried in the local cemetery. When they rebuilt the church in 1697 they transferred their remains to a new cemetery. They were then buried before that date. A small tombstone of a meter square existed but it was damaged by bombs in the last war and broken in many pieces. What was left was carried away in a clean-up near 1950. Too bad, we could have learned something on that couple who are now sleeping beneath the cemetery cross. Where were they from? No record to instruct us, they will remain another family mystery. A look at the marriage record of the Orne department (incomplete) shows no COMEAU but the Argentan records tell us that a M.COMEAU, a land owner was living there in 1788., a M.CHRETIEN was looking after his farm. The research is ongoing...

Situated in this part of France the village was strongly occupied by the German in the last war. The railroad line from Caen to Le Mans crosses the village and

further more, the occupying army build an airport nearby, what a target! And once again this hamlet saw the end of another war. A good part of the German army in disarray passed through the main street and the population paid the price, a constant bombardment from the air by the Allied planes that destroyed most of the village.

The COMEAU are not in evidence in medieval Normandy and it remains so today. However in the Rouen Archives we found a record of 1595 that require our attention. An Esthienne COMMAULT, ship owner & fisherman is the subject of this document. It's about the price of a ship load of cods in provenance of the coast of Newfoundland. A COMEAU not far from the shore of Acadia at the time of our Pierre's birth, was he from Normandy? We see this spelling mostly in Brittany, a province well known for it's fishermen. We'll come back to this man later.

We now leave Normandy for Burgundy where two groups of COMEAU are awaiting us.

## **The Noble COMEAU of Pouilly-en-Auxois**

Pouilly-en-Auxois in Cote d'Or, a small town from prehistoric time who saw the Gauls followed by the Romans and later the invasion of the Bourgondes is in the center of Burgundy, a French province since the 15th century only. It was earlier part of ancient Burgundy, a larger and autonomous country.

In the old church now gone, on a tombstone, we could read; "CY GGIST HERBERT QUOMIAUL QUI TREPASSA LANM.CCC.XL et VIII".

Here lies Herbert COMAUL who died in the year 1348. Here is the first COMEAU seen bearing the name and another space of time before we see it again in Guy de COMEAU in 1495. Guy is said to be keeper of the castle and "receveur" of Pouilly-en-Auxois, presided over the foundation of the Chapelle

Ste-Anne in the parish church of St-Pierre. Some historians named his sons Jean & Claude as the founders but one thing is certain, his two sons made the last mortgage payments of 30 pounds in 1515. This family is well followed by family genealogists. Owner of many domains, by alliance or otherwise, a good number were members of Parliament in Dijon, military officers, another was godson of the Prince of Conde, many chose the religious orders and left their marks, one was a King's musketeer. A Jean of this family was knighted in 1603 for his military accomplishment.

"Armorial & Noblesse" tells us that six other members of Herbert's family were buried near by. Guy de COMEAU, castle keeper in Pouilly and patriarch of this family is said to be a descendant of Herbert. the only one identify as such\*. But where are the descendants of the other members of Herbert's family?

\* From "Amorial et Noblesse de France"

Where did Herbert came from? The family names are only beginning to be in use, a migrant from COMMEAUX in Normandy who adopted the name of his birth place? He died in Pouilly during the 100 Years War, a war that dispersed many families across France. Did his offspring's suffered the same fate? There is a tendency to bestow some noble or military status to this man. Could he be of another region, one of these soldier of fortune put in charge of the defense of the town against marauding armies who were constantly criss-crossing the country in that period?

The De COMEAU of Pouilly-en-Auxois left us many family records and genealogies, but in spite of that their history is very complex with omissions, anomalies and disparities. A branch opted for the Nièvre department, another for Lorraine. Many of them were "seigneurs" and land owners, counselors in Parliament at Dijon, military officers, some held high government post and a few made their mark in the church.. A complete search of their marriages and birth could put some order in this disorder.

Going through records at the Archives a name attract my attention, a lieutenant COMEAU in the Sarre regiment. What is he doing here? A distant cousin of the family? With the help of "Service Historique de l'Armé" in Paris and the Nièvre Archives I managed to follow this officer, from his birth to his death. He was born in Nevers in 1731, was a descendant of Benigne De COMEAU, seigneur of Chassenay, seigneur de Pont-de-Vaux by alliance and a native of Pouilly-en-Auxois. Another branch moved to Bavaria after the troubles. This family is the favorite of the COMEAU researcher, we count three Pierre of this house in line for the honor of being our forefather, but sadly none of them can be selected..

In "Amorial et Noblesse de France" we see a link between Herbert and Guy De COMEAU said to be "establish from authentic proof" and we see Francois, a son of Herbert for the first time. His existence is well proven by his descendants. However this work does not show Jeanne and Magance, two daughters seen in other genealogies and well documented. Could this Francois been baptized Jean-Francois? Could it be possible that among the Jean & Claude of the first generation one of them was a Jean-Claude? That would explain many of the irregularities in this family. Here is a short list of the early member of this family.

The complete list contains more than 200 members.

- (a)Hubert COMEAU, died in 1348. From "Courte-Epée "(Description de la Bourgogne), we could see his tomb and six other member of his family in the church of Pouilly. He was qualified " Noble Seigneur". he had for sons:
  - N... de COMEAU, married to N...de MACHECO, they had Guyot that follow:
    - Guyot de COMEAU,.founder of the Pouilly Hospital, from a chart related by "Courte Epée". He left as son & successor:

- Guy de COMEAU, who founded a chapel in the parish church of Pouilly in 1495. Castel keeper of Pouilly in 1520 (COURTEPEE et BOURRE) He is named in the foundation titles and the patent letter given by Charles VIII (Noble Guy de COMEAU). A verdict rendered on the 4th of January 1760 by the Sovereign Court of Lorraine & Barrois based on an authentic genealogy & the titles submitted established that he followed the lineage as the number of his children. Claude & Jean, his sons, made the last payment on the cost of the chapel, 30 pounds, in 1515.
  - François, 1st of the name.
  - Claude, n. 1507, that we find head of the branch of the Seigneurs of Creancey
  - Marguerite de COMEAU who married Pierre de LAINCOURT, squire.
  - Jean
  - Jeanne, n. 1522
  - Magnance

A great number of family genealogies gave us a Pierre of this family as our ancestor. Pierre de COMEAU, seigneur de Choselle, son of Jean and Marguerite OCQUIDEM, viscount mayor of Dijon, lieutenant general au baillage de Dijon (police commissioner or D.A.) would have left everything to joint the Acadian adventure. Before going to print they should have read a document kept at the Archives in Dijon, Pierre de Choselle's death certificate.

“Le 2d jour du mois de mars 1672 a onze heures du soir est décédé en son logis Mr Pierre COMEAU, conseiller du Roy, Lieutenant général criminel au baillage de ceste ville (=Dijon), seign(eu)r de Choselle, âgé de 71 ans(...), et le 3e du mesme mois de mars a six heures du soir a esté inhumé en (l')église de St-Etienne au choeur d'icelle, au tombeau de M(essieu)rs ses

## prédécesseurs(...)

Yes, he died in 1672 in Dijon. On that day our ancestor Pierre was probably getting ready for the spring plowing in Port Royal!

An interested party looking at this document told me: No, No, not Pierre de Choselle but his younger brother also called Pierre. It's logic, if it's not the first one it has to be the second. I was told that it is normal to give two children the same first name, our Pierre did it twice. In the last few years, with many letters and request I obtained all the available genealogical charts of this family and I can say that the birth of the second Pierre was completely ignored. In the genealogy of this branch we see that Pierre, seigneur de Choselle is the first to bear this name and the second one is a nephew born many years later. That take care of Pierre II but what about the nephew? Don't even think about it! He was twice married, raised a family and was in good health in Creancey in 1688. He was the son of Antoine, Pierre's brother, and was born in 1634. One of his son, Pierre, was a garde marine and died young.

According to Du CHESNAY, Jean & Ocquidem had Pierre, Antoine & Benigne, all three well documented, followed by two other sons and two daughters. From Fatras De JUIGNE, the family genalogist, we have, after the three brothers Claude born the 16 June 1614 in Dijon, Jean born in 1617, same place & Nicolas, born 17 Oct.1621 also in Dijon, no daughters. Another source gave us another son, Gustave who died without heirs, and a daughter in religion, first name omitted. I found two Ursulines but they belong to another couple. No other Pierre!

And why not a third one? This one comes with full baggage, a lovely saga that I would like to believe or at least keep as a theory.

Born in 1597, son of Jean de COMEAU and Claude de COLOMBEY, Pierre left home and joined the garde-marine of the King at La Rochelle, a post that he

left in 1621, still single. That's where he learned the cooper trade before his migration. All research done by the author lets him affirm without a doubt that Pierre COMEAU, cooper by profession, seen in the archives of the "Amirauté de La Rochelle" for the year 1636, on the 1st of April, on the passenger list of the St-Jehan carrying a certain number of colonist and hired worker from Champagne, Anjou and Dijon is our ancestor. His father died in 1631 and in Pierre's absence his uncle Antoine took care of the domain. In 1649 the uncle also depart and, after a legal waiting period, all properties reversed to the Crown.

How I would love to write "THE END" right here! But I am being a little confused, I have some credibility problems.

1. Du CHESNAY, author of "Dictionnaire de la Noblesse" and Fatras de JUIGNE, the family genealogist do not show any children for Jean & Claude de COLOMBEY, however we find two sons included in the civil acts of Pouilly, Jean, born in 1617 and Jacques in 1624 followed by Claudine in 1629. So much for "only son". If a Pierre was born in 1597, 20 years between children is not very likely.
2. Pierre served as garde-marine in La Rochelle between 1616 & 1624. The "Service Historique de l'Armée à La Rochelle" told me that no such record exist prior to 1672. Is there a secret cache of record for the a few? We know that La Rochelle was the theatre of a violent war of religion in the middle 17th century when three quarter of the population was annihilated, what does that say about the Archives. I believe that story based on Antoine's son, the garde marine, but that Pierre was born in 1690.
3. They declared that Pierre was a passenger on the St-Jehan on the 1st of April 1636. I have a copy of the passenger list, the only such list available for Acadia to my knowledge, I read it many times and Pierre is nowhere on that list..

Another confusing statement found in Du CHESNAY that seems to bring different interpretation in regard to the children of Jean and Bertrande BROCARD. He named Jean, Claude et Antoine and wrote "and an unknown son". Here is the lost ancestor, the unknown son of Jean, said many. You have to read this quotation slowly, it's Jean, Claude, Antoine and an unknown son. The answer was on a family tombstone in the old chapel of Pouilly.

" Here lies noble Jean de COMEAU, seigneur squire de La Sarree, gendarme of the company of Mgr. the grand squire of France et Count of Charny who died in 1618 and Bertrande BROCARD his wife who left behind four sons their true and legitimate heirs, noble Jean de COMEAU, the eldest, Claude de COMEAU, second, Anthoine de COMEAU, the third, Jacques de COMEAU the fourth.

Here it is, Jacques de COMEAU, the unknown son.

In an historic work in this department, "La Chancellerie pres le Parlement de Bourgogne" there is a few paragraph on this family. It end by saying, without clarification, that this family still exist in America. What is the foundation for this remark? We often see comments done without explanation in serious work who once written take on a biblical importance. In this piece we only have a partial list of the family, a direct line from Guy to Claude, husband to Jeanne PESHARD. In a genealogical file I found this migrant.

"Louis de COMEAU, husband of Louise VILLEDIEU, de Torcy, living in America since 1850".

This Louis is a descendant of (a) Jean & Marguerite OCQUIDEM, (b) Benigne, seigneur de Pont de Vaux & Odette RAPINE, (c) Jean-Claude, seigneur de Pont de Vaux & Madeleine COCHET, (c) Antoine-Bernard, seigneur de CHAFFENAY & Louise de CHARRY-BEUVRON. They lived in Nièvre, (d) Antoine-Bernard de CHARRY & Francoise Jeanne Baptiste ESPIARD, (f) Louis-Alexandre &

Cesarine QUARRE. A family with a brilliant military career we find them in Bavaria and Lorraine after the troubles. This Louis would be the migrant who came to America in 1850. North or South America? no records of this family or any descendants has surfaced yet.

Is it possible that Pierre was born in this family? The possibility remains, a cousin, a forgotten or illegitimate son, or a COMEAU of the bourgeois families of Cote d'Or, These bourgeois, farmers, ploughmen could be related to the famous family but all supporting evidences are lost in history. They are found mostly in or around Creancey and Arney-le-Duc, many have first names often seen in the next department of Saone & Loire. There is a few link here & there, one of them was a gardener at the Chateau of Creancey, others were god-fathered by members of the noble family. I spent a lot of time researching this Noble family with good reason, a great number have adopted their family crest, their chateau, their complex genealogy. Now follow me into the adjoining department.

### The COSMEAU of Charmoy

Still in Burgundy, in Saone & Loire, between Arroux & Bourbince, two little rivers that created an undulated plain in the shadow of Mont Uchon live the COSMEAU, with the old silent "s" pronounced Cômeau. This group, different from the Pouilly group, are mostly small farmers & ploughmen. Their origins could be similar or from a completely different source. People of the land living in the middle age, in community, that I tend to believe were born and died in the same locality. One of the oldest COSMEAU found in the region was called Lazare and a few years back I found the obituary of a Lazare that died probably working the same piece of land as his namesake. They were present in the area as early as 1475. With the passing of time we see a few member of this community in other departments, Cote d'Or, Nièvre, Cher and even Jura. They could very well be descendants of Herbert.

With the cooperation of the "Cercle Genealogique de Saone & Loire" a genealogical chart of this group was done that clearly demonstrate their attachment to their community. This branch is, I believe, at the origin of the majority of COMEAU & COMMEAU in France to-day. This list of over 600 individuals encompass all the COSMEAU from Charmoy, Vernisy, Saisy, Epinac and other locals. The first part cover the radius of Charmoy while the second part deals with the Saisy group. No direct link has been found between the two groups, but the similarity of their names and trade tells us that they are related, further research will prove that assumption.

Here is a short list of the oldest COSMEAU taken from "cherches de feux", regional census.

These next 3 seems to be at the source of the COSMEAU

Cathelin COSMEAU, Vernisy, 1475.

Pierre COSMEAU, Vernisy, 1475.

Jehan COSMEAU, Vernisy, 1475.

Jehan de COMEAULT, Collevrine, 1551.

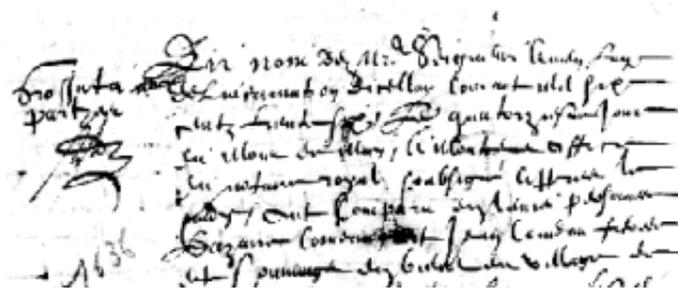
Jehan COMAULT the young, Collevrine, 1551.

Anthoine COMAULT, Collevrine, 1551.

PERNOT COMAULT, Collevrine, 1551.

Widow of François COMEAULT, Collevrine, 1551. Could she be Francois De Comeau's widow? the son of Guy?

Lazare & Jean COSMEAU, two brothers, split their community and later sell their part of the land to Jacques SACLIER in 1636.



Lazare and Jean COSMEAU, two brothers from CHARMOY divide their land in

1636. To those two brothers we should add in the same generation / Claude & Anne CATOTIN / Jeanne COSMEAU, wife of S.PERNOT/ Emilan & Mad.GASTEAU/ Nicolas & Jeanne MONTMERAN/ the brothers Léonard and a few other ones who most likely are all brothers or cousins and all live in the vicinity of Charmoy. Here are the first line of this document.

This contract gave us an insight on their life at the beginning of the XVII century. Lazare & Jean are at the "notaire royal", Me VERNEAU of Moncenis to sign an agreement on the division of a piece of land inherited from their father. Situated at Vernisy, a few miles from Charmoy where they live, we learn that one of the neighbor is a Pierre COMEAU, another Pierre! Those document are often very descriptive on family ties, but not in this one. On the 7th line we see "Lazaire and Jean COMEAU, sons of" and on the next line "the said COMEAU". They will sell their share to Jacques SACLIER in the same year.

We also learned that a small lake, Etang COSMEAU, existed in 1617, but the best find is of a living Pierre in the area, witness at a wedding. This is only the second Pierre of the right age found outside of Pouilly but our ancestor was 60 at the time, and with four children, a migration of this Pierre in Acadia is not likely since Port Royal was in English hands at the time. We have to eliminate him and keep on looking....

Is this the family that gave us Pierre? This region is certainly prolific as far as the COMEAU are concerned. We have enough material here to make a few observation. Here is what BEAUCARNOT, a French genealogist has to say:

"COM(M)EAU (EAUX-AUX). Ancient form, COSMEAU. Short for Cosme(Come) transformed into a family name. Family of Charmoy where we find: in 1475, Cathelin, Pierre, Jehan COSMEAU; Vernisy in 1551, Jehan de COMEAULT in Collevrine, and Jehan de COMEAULT the young, Antoine, Pernot and the widow Francois COMEAULT".(11)

Here as in most of France the parish acts older than 1600 are scarce, the notary records barely touch the farming community. I believe this family unique, working the same fields since mediaeval time, but we can see some De COMEAU now & then near 1550 and later, visitors from Cote d'Or looking for new domains? In 1673 in Moncenis, in COSMEAU territory, Jean-Claude de COMEAU, squire & seigneur de Pont-de-Vaux, son of Benigne, squire & seigneur de Chaffenay & Jeanne Odette RAPINE de STE-MARIE, marries Madeleine COUCHET, daughter of Melchior, lawyer in the Parlement, seigneur of Grandvaux & Courain, and Jeanne CALART. It's evident that he did not come down from Cote d'Or to help with the plowing!

The archives records of Saone & Loire on the COSMEAU begins in 1680, too late to help us on our quest. In the COMEAU marriages of Saone & Loire the oldest is 1641 when Claudine COSMEAU, of Saisy marries Fiacre MARE. It is futile to look for a registered birth earlier than this date, or a marriage of Pierre in France, if it is where it occurred. The possibilities that Pierre was from this family of COSMEAU are precarious, but still a likelihood, we should continue the search.

Always in Saone & Loire we find a very interesting village, St-Eusebe-sur-Bois. Here is what the parish priest says about the population: " Outside of farming the habitants of this village are mostly occupied in the production of barrels, probably in account of the proximity of material, the woods are nearby, and the tidy profit that result from the sale of those item".

Plenty of coopers, a good site to scrutinize.

1-Sieur Le CREUX, one of the main recruiter for the Acadian experience was responsible for the hiring of the Dijon workers transported on the St-Jehan in 1636. Le CREUX's wife was Anne MOTTIN, from Burgundy. He was seigneur of BREUIL, near by, in 1636 and lived in St-Eusebe.

2- We know that some COSMEAU were living in or around St-Eusebe. In the

marriage list we see a few COSMEAU from this village. It's in the Charmoy region.

3- Barrel-makers. At least one Cosmeau is identified as a cooper. Emiland COSMEAU married in Ste-Helene in the 18th century. He was probably from St-Eusebe.

We have a recruiter(a fact), some COSMEAU(a fact), some coopers(a fact) and all in the same village, it demands some attention. If a Pierre was recruited he could have been part of RAZILLY expedition in 1632, or later, after 1636. We have no specific time for his arrival. Did Le CREUX's recruiting happened only in 1636, before or later?

The president of the SGSL and an archivist from the Archives in Macon spent a week-end searching old records from St-Eusebe where Le CREUX was living, but to no avail. The majority of the archives concerning our French ancestors, parish records, notary contracts and other were dissected by Canadian historians and researchers. Very little surprises left to find in Poitou, Perche, La Rochelle and other known region. But other region, less likely to be sources of settlers were probably passed over. Of little interest to French contemporaries, some old boxes from the 17th century with Pierre's name in it are probably decaying somewhere in some forgotten corner of archive repository.

While in the neighborhood.....

We see a few COMEAU in the vicinity, in Yonne, Cher, Allier & others.

YONNE (89)

Only one marriage here, I'm sure there is more to come.

Edmée COMMEAU (?)m. to Barbe FOUGERAT(Gaspard & (?)Chevannes, 14/02/1684.

## NIEVRE (58)

Still in Burgundy we see here a few families that seems to be from Saone & Loire. The lack of parental names hampers any chance of reunification. Too bad that we do not see any COMEAU from POUILLY, some were there, near Nevers, and well documented. The marriages tables of this department are far from complete, a look at a later time might be more productive.

## ALLIER (03)

We are getting closer to the center of France and two departments, Allier and Cher have their share of COMEAU. we are still close to Burgundy but inching our way toward Anjou. A lot of work to be done here before we find any link. Allier is poor in information but with the help of a correspondent we managed to round up a small family.

## The ANGEVINS

In Ile-de-France lived a COMEAU family bearing a coat of arm "d'azur a une ancre d'or, accole d'un dauphin d'argent, la tete en bas et a dextre". In a publication it is said that this family was "Angevins" and related to Michel COMEAU of Angers, a professor of law in 1576. An anchor surrounded by a fish, was this family engaged in fishing? An original design for a family living inland. With the help of the archive department of Maine & Loire I learned that this professor, Michel COMEAU, was Doctor and Regent of Anger university in 1568. He is among other COMEAU, all living in the 16th century. His father, also called Michel, was born before 1518.

Before leaving Ile de France, let's take a look at this marriage:

(a) François COMMEAU (?)x à Anne LEVASSEUR(?)v.1670?

(b) Anne-Françoise COMMEAU ,de Poissy(Notre Dame)(f François & Anne LEVASSEUR)x à Charles-Nicolas FOULLE, seigneur de PRUNEAUX(f

Estienne de PRUNEAUX & Magdeleine de l'ESPINAY)Poissy(Notre Dame)10/05/1689.

The COMEAU of Pouilly had a few associations with the ESPINAY family. Further research should gave us some lead.

A Jean LEVASSEUR and his bride, Marguerite RICHARD migrated to Quebec near 1652. A daughter, Anne was born in Quebec after their arrival. Jean did a few trip back to France and of Anne it is said that her destiny is unknown. Could she be the same Anne who wedded Francois COMEAU near 1670? Jean LEVASSEUR and his brother Pierre were sons of Noel, master carpenter in Paris and Genevieve GANGE. Marguerite RICHARD of St-Nicolas des Champs parish in Paris was the daughter of Nicolas, master in glass work and merchant. Jean was also master carpenter and later sculptor and bailiff for the Sovereign Council. We are still looking for a link between these families. Our first impression on this branch, no familiar first names as seen in Cote d'Or. If any link exist with Burgundy it is previous to the 17th century. Of the oldest marriages and until ca.1650 the COMMEAU are found between Angers and St-Mathurin to later form an oval between Angers and Saumur, on both shore of the Loire. we are getting closer to Ludun, a hiring center for Acadia by M. d'AULNAY.

An interested party of this region supplied me with new information on these COMMEAU. We have the bourgeois living in Angers, farmers on both side of the river and also domain owners. Distant cousins to the Pouilly branch? The dates and persons enumerated in these notes demand to be studied.

A COMMEAU domain existed near Beaufort near the 1500. Is that were the land owners started their expansion? Here is an enigma, two Gilles COMEAU of different region are named owner of the same domain, error?

(2) Gilles COMMEAU, n. 1626, St-Mathurin sur Loire(Nicolas & Mathurine BREON). \*Gilles is the owner of Maison Barilleau & farm in 1656.

Source:C.Port,tome I,p.235,n.ed. Another Gilles COMEAU of the family of Pouilly -en-Auxois,(21) is said to be seigneur of this domain(see:,Les COMEAU de Pouilly)

(5) Gilles, écuyer, sgr de Barilleau, m. to Claire de COULÉART(?) 27/07/1661. (La seigneurie de Barilleau would be in Maine et Loire. A Gilles COMEAU of this region is said to be the owner of same. Could it be the same Gilles? Not likely, they have different spouse..

Descendants of the first Gilles are later named as owner of this domain. Another COMEAU mystery to solve!

The list of those COMMEAU consist of many families hard to assemble in account of the lack of records. The oldest are from the end of the XVI century, mostly from Michel's family.

In the parish registers we have found a few Pierre of the right age. (a) Pierre, born in 1607 in St-Mathurin and his brother born in 1610, sons of Louis COMMEAU & Renee MARTINEAU, not followed. (b) Pierre born in 1616 in St-Mathurin, son of Mathurin COMMEAU & Francoise LAVOLLE, not followed, (c). We could add a few other born in the right time space, married with no children or widowed after 1650 .

This region is reputed for it's vineyards, and who says wine says barrels, so a great demand for coopers also existed here. An owner of a large domain lived in Loudun, Charles de MENOUE de CHARNISAY, sieur d'Aulnay. He was very active in the development of Port Royal and Acadia. In 1641 he was named governor & Lt.general of all the coast of Acadia, from the gulf of St-Lawrence to the Virginias. He recruited most of the new settlers from among his neighbors and employees, in and around Loudun, about 20 miles from the shores of the Loire where the long journey to Acadia probably began. This d'AULNAY was

married to Jeanne MOTTIN, sister of Anne who married Le CREUX, interesting.

Anjou supplied us with many Acadian & Canadian ancestors, we should not forget this region in our search. Maine & Loire was a department of this province.

Our research brought to light a local COMMEAU who migrated to the Vosgue region.

(a) Jean COMMEAU (?)m.to Marie VIOLEAU(?)of Maine & Loire(see list (49)

(b) Jean COMMEAU ,of Longué,dioc.d'Angers(Jean & Marie VIOLEAU)m.to Barbe VILLAUME, de Gugnécourt(f.Dominique & f. Sébastienne MARSAL) Rambervillers,13/06/1716

## BRITTANY

Brittany is another province that excite my curiosity. In the 16th century we see COMMAULT in small number in Tremuson & Helion. The spelling goes from COMMAULT, COMMAUD, COMMAUT to COMMAUX to come back to COMMAULT still in use to-day. Circa 1600 the family seems to have adopted St-Glen as the center of their activities. They lived and still live in Cote d'Armor(22) in the eastern part of Brittany but are seldom seen in the western part. A look in the archives of this department brought very little on this family, with the exception of two priest living in the 18th century. The research in this region are ongoing.

A family genealogy of COMEAU living in Alsace gave us a Fabien COMEAU as progenitor. He is said to be from Lannion in Brittany. We have gathered about 300 acts for this department but most without parents. An interested party could widen our list and in the process enlarge the families. The majority of these acts were obtained from Minitel, a few tables, St-Glen and Meslin, were purchased from the C.G.C.A, sadly a duplication without parents also. Our only hope to advance this list are a few COMMAULT genealogy if they exist.

Excerpt from "Bio-Bibliographie Bretonne" by René KERVILIER:

COMMAULT: Name of a rector at Coëtmieux "mort en fraude de ses créanciers" in the XVIII century, he left the presbytery in ruin. (Arch. d'I. et V. C.1203)

COMMEAUX. Name of a pastor of St-Glen in the XVIII century. (Hist. du Dioc. de Saint-Brieuc pendant la Révolution)

A COMMAULT in Hillion, 1560.

Jacquette COMMAULT, (?) m. to Vincent LeFAUCHEHOUX (?)  
Meslin, 05/07/1581.

While searching the Normandy archives we found an Esthienne COMMAULT on a contract in Le Havre, in 1595. This Esthienne was engaged in fishery and was a boat owner. The contract is about the price of a boat load of cod, taken on the coast of Newfoundland. Very interesting, A COMEAU living at the time of Pierre's birth with interest in America. Is he Normand? If not from where? We saw COMMAULT in constant use in Brittany, could he be Breton? A man who sailed near the coast of Acadia at that time is to be followed.

Near 1650 Pierre named his first son Etienne, did he name him after his grand father, Esthienne? The first born names are often a replica of close relatives. By the way, there is nobody called Etienne in the Pouilly family but the name is widely used in Saone & Loire and Maine & Loire. A point to remember.

Brittany gave us very little with the exception of Esthienne but we cannot ignore this population of fishermen who spent a good part of their life sailing our coast, even before the colonization of Acadia.

Other places

A branch of COMEAU were discovered living in Moselle and other department near by.

Now and then we see our family name written COMOT, an obvious error. But in Marne and also in Ardennes we found a family that has been using this spelling constantly as early as 1600, probably before. Are they COMEAU or simply COMOT, another family name all together? Since the tables of Chamery only begin in 1669, the date of the earliest marriage found, there is little chance of going further back in their history. We found that their proper names was certainly different from what we are use to, in the oldest record we see a Lié COMOT marrying Pasquette SERPETTE, they named their son Rosle.

### False Lead

Of little interest to our clan, I enter these few leads in the hope that future researcher will not loose precious time going through archive records.

We sometimes see allusion to the fact that Pierre was one of the Huguenot or Protestant forced to abdicate his religion, we are referred to the list of abjurers of Quebec. In these family search we have to look under every stone and leave nothing hanging in the wind. I saw that film twice, we see Pierre COMEAU who abjure in 1672, well spelled and at least twice on the act but in the margin we see BONNEAU, an error surely. On my second visit I looked a little closer and I see that the "C" of COMEAU is in realty a large minuscule "b", bonneau! Who is this BONNEAU? He was from the western part of France, migrated to New France, started a family in Ste Anne du bout de l'Île, now Ste Anne de Bellevue. He was latter killed by the Iroquois and we can see his name on a commemorative plaque near the door of the church in Ste Anne.

This business with the Huguenot provoked my curiosity, I made a request to the "Societe Historique du Protestantisme Francais". I was rewarded with a few manuscript pages from J.RIVIERE, author of "Dictionnaire des Familles Protestantes du Poitou". an account of the problems brought about by the religious discriminations of the time, very interesting. We see some COMBAULT, CONNEAU & COMMEAU. One in particular, Hierome, is called

CONNEAU on one page and COMMEAU on the next. I now know that the spelling should have been CORNEAU, a family with roots in Niort. Another interesting case, an Abel was condemned to the galley in 1687 at 41 year old. He died "constant in his faith".

A CORNEAU from that region migrated to New France, established himself near Quebec where his descendants still live. and keep on appearing on COMEAU lists! On many occasions I undertook research on a few COMEAU in Quebec before the deportation of 1755 only to land on some CORNEAU's door steps. I imagine that they probably have the same problem with our name. After all, the only difference is the distance between the "r" and the "n", sample: "rn" and "m"!

Beside the CORNEAU and the BONNEAU we have the COMONT, COME, COMMEY and many other versions to keep us busy..

While surfing the Internet I noticed that the Massachusetts Archives had a probate record of 1672 on a Peeter COMEAU(Commew), well I've got to see that. They were most obliging and I received a copy in a short while. In 1672 there was only 3 Pierre COMEAU alive, which one? This probate record was about an inventory of a Peeter COME...the last part blurred. It list a few personal belonging, like an inventory after a death, seems he was living in a kind of boarding house. With a name like Peeter he probably was Dutch.

Well, at least we know.

I also made a request in France on that marriage of Marguerite COMEAU in Bordeaux in 1729 that we saw earlier in this story. The wait could be long on that one but I'm always hoping for a break!

At the turn of the century Placide GAUDET, an well known Acadian genealogist received some genealogical notes from a Charles Stewart COMEAU from Louisiana concerning a Noble COMEAU family living in Cote d'Or in the

province of Burgundy. The well known and well used family of Pouilly-en-Auxois! After scrutinizing these notes and finding no valuable information Mr.Gaudet filed those paper away, evidently not far enough. And here Pierre de COMEAU, seigneur of Choselle makes his entrance!

About Pierre?

After all these explorations across France we learned a lot more on our family name and our French cousins but we are still in the dark on Pierre's origins. Here is a few elements to keep in mind:

1. The fact that Pierre owned a compass more or less confirm that he was truly a cooper.
2. Those two region of France, Saone & Loire and Maine & Loire are on the middle age highway, the Loire river, easy passage for migrant workers of the era.
3. Esthienne COMMAULT, fisherman and ship owner, probably from Brittany. His dealing surely encompassed the hiring of coopers. A son or nephew hired to pack fishes on the coast of Acadia?
4. In 1690 on an Oath of Allegiance signed in Port Royal most of the habitants used a cross as mark. Pierre COMMEAU, one of old Pierre's son wrote "co". It looks like the mark of an artisan. Could this be Pierre trade mark? Or could it be Pierre himself? He was gone in 1693, but was possibly alive in 1690..

On this document we see four COMEAU, two Pierre, Jean and Etienne. Pierre with the "co" is the first on the right column followed by Emmanuel HEBERT, then comes Jean, my ancestor. The younger Jean is absent, he was living in Riviere aux Canards. Next is Etienne. The other Pierre is seen in the central column, a simple cross. Antoine, decease or gone does not figure on this document. In 1690 there was only 2 adults Pierre COMEAU in Port Royal

beside old Pierre, Pierre dit l'Esturgeon and Pierre dit Loup-Marin, both son of Pierre. Most could not sign, they use a cross for the most and in some case an initial.. They are mostly from the first generation of Acadian.

When did Pierre arrived in Acadia? Here we have many options. He was certainly born early enough to be with the group brought over by RAZILLY in 1632. Sieur D'AULNAY was also of this expedition. On a map of Port Royal for 1707 we see that Etienne lives fairly close to the fort. As the older son we can presume that he inherited his father land, then Pierre, to receive this preferred piece of land must have been in Port Royal fairly early. It's possible that he was there as early as 1632 but not later than 1650, his farm was certainly the product of a few years of work. About his marriage? Did Rose arrived with her parents, since deceased, with relatives or as a domestic? A return to France by Pierre, a marriage and a trip back to Port Royal?

Near 1632 Nicolas DENYS is at La Heve where he supervise a dozen of workers. "some ploughmen, the others wood cutters for barrel making, carpenters, and other for hunting". After this date we see two Acadia", one in Port Royal was the sedentary Acadia where families enlarge their holding and later open new frontiers at the end of the bay. The other, the Acadia of the frontier, La Heve, Cap Sable and the gulf coast where hired workers, fishermen and adventurers come and go. Rameau de ST-PERE, one of the first historian to study the Acadian history in the XIX century tells us: "The first Frenchmen to land in Acadia were a singular mix of sailors and fishermen, fur traders, soldiers, artisans and even farmers brought in at intervals by a few entrepreneurs who initiated this colony". And Pierre was among them....

Many questions, few answers. I only hope that this work will awaken some curious mind. All trough these research I was help by many Genealogical Association, Departmental Archives and many correspondents who supplied me with their knowledge, Thank You! To bring us more answer a long stay in

France would be required to search parishes and archives records across the country, without knowing where to start. This work is still in progress and probably will never be finished. I am always at my post to correct errors, add new data, answer requests. When I get up there with Pierre some unknown COMEAU will take over, try to fill the empty spaces, find some answers.

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And those I may have forgotten...my excuses.

This work is always in progress and we welcome any additions or correction

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