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CHAPTER ELEVEN

LUCIEN BÉLANGER

(1868/9 - 1939)

Lucien lived during those years when Canada and the United States normalized relations and the International Joint Commission was formed (1909). Crossing the border to work was becoming commonplace and resulted in a high migration of Canadian workers to the mills in the United States. Many French Canadian settlements were started, in the US, during Lucien's lifetime. Lucien was also a witness to Canada's involvement in World War One. The advances of the industrialized world during the years 1869 to 1939 (Lucien's years) were astonishing. It was difficult for the people of the day to keep up with the times and also marked the beginning of extensive travel as a result of the rapid expansion of the railroads. The family went where the work was and this was the start of the scattering of the family unit which is so prevalent today.

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Lucien, Leda and their children

Standing (l-r) George, Alice, Alma, Gerald, Stella,
Arthur, Alexina, Roseanna and Yvonne

Seated (l-r) Emile, Lucien, Leda and Dollard



BORN 1868 OR 1869?

At the time of this writing, there is conflicting information as to the year Lucien was born. There is documentation that indicates the year 1868 and some that says 1869. Since he died at age 70 years and six months on 18 April 1939, it would indicate that his birth year was 1868. This is more likely as his brother, Joseph, is recorded as being born in 1869. His son George, however, says his father was married at the age of 18. The records of the marriages of Madawaska¹ show Leda and Lucien as being married on 26 October 1887 at Isle Verte. This same record shows Lucien's parents, Damase and Georgiana Pelletier, as having been married in 1862 and Leda's parents, Paul and Ophidie Bergeron, married in 1869. The confusion seems to come from the date of the birth and the marriage of Lucien. Although years apart, they appear to be the same day, which may be an error. Until his birth date is verified, it remains to be seen if he was born in 1868 or 1869. Lucien and Leda celebrated their 50th anniversary on October 26, 1937 in Grand Falls, New Brunswick. It is said that Lucien died at the age of 70 on April 18, 1939 and, if he was married on his birth date, he would have been born in 1869 and would have turned 71 on his anniversary in the year of his death.

ST. ALEXANDRE

Lucien was born and brought up in St. Alexandre, Quebec. He went by the initials J.L. to most who knew him. At the age of 14, he went to Green Island (L'Isle Verte), which is located South of Riviere du Loup. There, he began his apprenticeship as a blacksmith at the salary of five cents per day. He met his future wife, Leda Gagnon, while working at L'Isle Verte. When Lucien was 18 years of age, he and Leda were married.

FALL RIVER, MA.

Lucien and Leda moved to Fall River, Massachusetts, when Lucien got a job, as a blacksmith, for a family by the name of Partridge. They remained there for several years, during which time Alice and Alma were born. They had a third daughter, Roseanna, while there but she was stillborn. According to Uncle George, one of the children, Stella was also born in Fall River but the birth records of St. Pascal, Quebec show she was born there. They were forced to move back to Quebec when a doctor told Leda she could no longer remain in the cotton factory, where she worked, due to her health. She was advised to move back into the country.

It had been thought, until research proved otherwise, that Lucien and Leda were married in Fall River, but that was not the case. Research of all the Fall River marriages to Bélangers in the years 1886, 1887 and 1888 showed no union between any couple with even similar names. Armed with that information, the records of Quebec were searched. Not finding any marriage record in Lucien's birth town, the records of L'Isle Verte were searched as that is where Leda was born. There, the record of the marriage was found for 26 October 1887. Lucien and Leda must have moved to St. Pascal, from Fall River, as that is where Stella is recorded as having been born.

GRAND FALLS

During the late 1800s, many French people from Quebec were going to Grand Falls (Acadia), New Brunswick. Many were leaving Quebec and going to New Brunswick for work. The rich land in New Brunswick was very conducive to farming and large tracts of uncleared land were available

¹ Les Mariages du Madawaska des paroisses de la vallée subérieure de la rivière Saint Jean au Nouveau Brunswick, page 160

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at good prices. Farmers from Quebec had experienced the decline of crops as the wheat and barley crops no longer yielded the harvest that they used to. Lumber mills were being built along the St. John River to receive the logs floated down river after the winter yards had been unloaded on the river banks. Many families of the L'Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Rimouski and Notre Dame du Lac, Quebec were moving to the area of Grand Falls and Drummond, NB.

One must keep in mind that travel, in those days, was not by roadway. Since the only dependable travel, year round, was via the St John River, Grand Falls became a center of activity. This development was due to the fact that travelers needed to "portage" (carry their craft and belongings around the falls) the falls. This made Grand Falls the natural place to stop and rest before continuing along one's voyage. This also made Grand Falls a place of great military importance and, for all these reasons, commerce grew. Many of the people who stopped there, stayed there because they found the soil so fertile and rich for farming. This natural increase in population and need for support services must have lured Lucien to the area.

In 1842 a large territory East of Grand Falls was blocked off and named Drummond after Sir Gordon Drummond, a colonel attached to the 104th regiment at Grand Falls. At this time, Grand Falls and the surrounding area was settled and inhabited mainly by English speaking families from England. When the Drummond territory was blocked off and divided into rows and lots, the nature of the inhabitants started to change. All of a sudden, there was land divided into 100 acre tracts, all squared off and divided, for the asking. All one needed do was to clear the land of trees and farm it. This brought about a tremendous influx of Quebec residents. In these times, many traveled from Quebec to New Brunswick and it was accepted that they were put up and fed by farmers along the route. There seemed to be no question but that a farmer who had a family of travelers moving south stop in on their journey would put them up for the night and feed them.

In 1890, one hundred families came from Quebec to settle in the Grand Falls area and convinced Monseigneur Rogers of Chatham to establish a Catholic parish in Drummond. An area mostly made up of English settlers started to change into Quebecois until, by the year 1946, all the inhabitants were French speaking Quebecois. Many went from Quebec to the Grand Falls area, farmed for a few years, went to the United States to work in the mills in Fall River, Massachusetts and Nashua, New Hampshire, only to return to the area with a new stake to start profitable farming for their offspring.

What made the English decide to leave the area for other ventures? The reason for this exodus has been said to be that the English families were small in numbers and could not clear land as well and as fast as the extremely large French families. Others say that the English were not well suited to farming and clearing of land, got discouraged, and left to pursue commerce in other areas. The real reason might possibly have been that the Drummond territory was intended to be divided and given to the french soldiers of the 104th regiment stationed at Grand Falls after the regiment was disorganized. The English settlers certainly must have felt strange being invaded, so to speak, by french soldiers with military demeanor and ideas which would have, inevitably, meant that the English would be living under the french soldier's governance. It had not been that long since the turmoil between French and English, the expulsion of the Acadians and the final fragile peace.

Lucien made his first trip to Grand Falls in the fall of 1893². He checked out the area and then returned to Quebec to rejoin his family. He must have been impressed as, the next spring, he and his entire family made the move to New Brunswick. Lucien set out, by train, and arrived in Grand Falls with a wife, 3 young children (Alma, Alice and Stella) and another on the way (Emile, born 1894) and only ten cents in his pocket. He had met a man there who took them in, gave them dinner

² According to George Bélanger's account

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and let them stay overnight. Lucien bought a small house and started his blacksmith business. He opened his first smith shop between Front Street and Broadway. After buying the Badgely home, on Main Street in 1896, he moved his shop there. The house and lot were purchased for a total of \$180.00.

Many profited from Lucien's training in the blacksmith profession. Three of his sons in law, Fitzieme Coté, Louis Beaulieu and Philip Gagnon, all became blacksmiths. In Lucien's day, the blacksmith was what the automobile mechanic is to us in the 1990's. They made sure the horse was in shape to carry out its function and able to finish the job or journey.

Lucien was our grandfather. Recollections of Lucien and Leda are recounted by Phyllis since both had passed away before the author was born in 1943. Lucien died in 1939 when Phyllis had just turned five and Leda in 1943 when Phyllis was nine. As Gerald (our father) was the youngest of Lucien's 12 children, the age difference between Gerald's children and his parents was significant.

Ice racing was one of the big sports in Grand Falls during the early 1900s. Whenever racers from Maine and New Brunswick communities came together for competition, they would stop by the Bélanger blacksmith shop to get their horses checked out. Depending on the type of racer, the shape and size of the shoe varied. Trotters had toe weights on their front shoes to allow the horse to go faster. On each step, they would cover an extra inch with the added weight on the front of the shoe. Pacers, however, needed side weights on their back feet. This made the shoe a little heavier and prevented the back feet from striking the front feet while they were running. Lucien and his sons would shape, adjust and sharpen the shoes on about 20 horses on any one day of those races. It was said, of the Bélanger shoes, that these were well made, fancy shoes, not coarse and they would never come apart.

There were two types of horse shoes for regular work too. There was the snow shoe and the summer shoe. The summer shoe was the regular form, which was fine for a horse as long as there wasn't snow on the ground. When this shoe was worn by a horse in the snow, the snow would pack into the shoe, form an ice ball and every so often this packed snow would be tossed back only to hit the driver. Lucien devised a special shoe for winter conditions. The inside was concave and did not allow any snow to build up.

Lucien also made and set shoes for oxen and mules. Mules were especially difficult since their hooves were thick, hard and narrow. Mules who broke a limb were automatically destroyed because they have no marrow in their bones. There was no hope of healing if a mule broke a limb so it was especially important for them to have good shoes.

Lucien was always ready to learn why certain ailments would afflict animals. When a lame horse died, he would cut off the ailing foot and study it, trying to determine why the horse went on the limp in the first place. He would then reshoe the foot the right way and keep that bit of information for future reference. Lucien was not stuck with shoeing animals, however. He provided barbers with their implements, as he made straight razors. He learned this process while working for Mr. Partridge in Fall River, Massachusetts. He even shipped some of his implements to Boston until he was stopped because he did not have a license to do this.

MEMÈRE AND PEPÈRE BÉLANGER

Memère and Pepère Bélanger died when the grandchildren were rather young. Pepère Bélanger was a big man, with a big mustache and a deep booming voice. His blacksmith shop was near the house and he spent most of his time there. Sometimes, when he would go off on a "toot", he'd sleep

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there too because Memère wouldn't let him in the house after he had been out drinking. Memère was a small woman and, as I recall, she always had help in the house because her sons seemed to marry the live in maids. My recollection is that she had to be catered to quite a lot, especially by her youngest (our father), her Minune, since he was her baby. Memère and Pepère Bélanger lived in the homestead with Uncle Dollard, his wife Aunt Phena (Alphena) and their family. It seemed understood that they would care for her and then inherit the homestead. She traveled quite a bit, visiting relatives in Riviere du Loup as well as her own children. She wasn't a close, loving Grandma who baked cookies and such. She appeared to be quite distant and, oddly enough, appears that way in most photos. Perhaps she felt she had raised her children and could not be bothered to take an interest in her children's' children.

GRANDPA AND GRANDMA ACCORDING TO BARBARA BÉLANGER DUMOND

I remember Grandpa as a thin man working in the blacksmith shop and, although he was the shortest in his family, he always seemed tall to me. Early in the evening, he would walk down to our house with a little pail to get some milk. He'd sit in a rocking chair and smoke his pipe. His English wasn't the best but that never stopped him from getting his message across. He sang in church for many years.

Grandma was a little lady, loved to pay Bingo, was a terrific cook and a great pie maker. On New Year's Day, we would go to Grandpa and Grandma's house for dinner. Grandma and her great french meat pies made it like Christmas. When Grandpa and Grandma celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, they renewed their vows in church followed by a huge reception in the Knights of Columbus Hall. There was no dancing allowed but one older couple dared to dance a French Jig and that was the talk of the town for quite some time.

Grandpa's blacksmith shop had a woodworking shop in the back, which he rented out. I have a small end table that was made in that shop before it was torn down. The original blacksmith shop was built right next to the old homestead until a new shop was built and the original taken down. The old homestead was later to become Uncle Dollard's home. Grandma and Grandpa had a camp at Salmon River and all of us kids enjoyed going there.



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Pedigree Chart

Chart no. _____

No. 1 on this chart is the same as no. _____ on chart no. _____

2 Damase Belanger

B: 27 May 1830
P: St Andre, Kamouraska, Que
M: 22 Jul 1862
P: St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
D: 5 May 1927
P: St Alexandre, Kamouraska, Que

1 Lucien Belanger

B: 26 Oct 1868
P: St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
M: 26 Oct 1887
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
D: 18 Apr 1939
P: Grand Falls, Victoria, NB

Parmella "Leda" Gagnon

Spouse

3 Georgiana Modeste Pelletier

B: 10 Jan 1842
P: St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
D: 31 Oct 1882
P: St Alexandre, Kamouraska, Que

4 Joseph Marie Belanger

B: 4 Apr 1797
P: St Roch des Aulnaies, L'Islet, Que
M: 12 Jun 1820
P: St Roch des Aulnaies, L'Islet, Que
D: 22 Nov 1884
P: St Alexandre, Kamouraska, Que

5 Baselize Dufour

B:
P:
D:
P:

6 Pierre Pelletier

B:
P:
M: 28 Nov 1837
P: St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
D:
P:

7 Marie Bard

B:
P:
D:
P:

8 Pierre Belanger

B: 2 Mar 1759 cont. ____
P: Montmagny, Que
M: 18 Jun 1781
P: St Roch des Aulnaies, L'Islet, Que
D: 17 Mar 1834
P: St Roch des Aulnaies, L'Islet, Que

9 Marthe Talbot-Gervais

B: 10 Sep 1764 cont. ____
P: St Roch des Aulnaies, L'Islet, Que
D:
P:

10 Pierre Dufour

B: 9 Jan 1769 cont. ____
P: Ile Aux Coudres, Charlevoix, Que
M: 29 Apr 1792
P: Ile Aux Coudres, Charlevoix, Que
D:
P:

11 M Josette Audet dit Lapointe

B: 17 Aug 1773 cont. ____
P:
D:
P:

12 Germain Pelletier

B: cont. ____
P:
M: 8 Feb 1796
P: St Roch des Aulnaies, L'Islet, Que
D:
P:

13 M Theotiste Lizotte

B: cont. ____
P:
D:
P:

14 Fabien Bard dit Jambard

B: cont. ____
P:
M: 11 Jan 1813
P: Riviere Ouelle, Kamouraska, Que
D:
P:

15 Marie Lavoie

B: cont. ____
P:
D:
P:

Prepared 25 Oct 1997 by:

Jim Belanger
32 Plain Road
Hollis, NH 03049

603 465-2301

Family Group Record

Husband Lucien Belanger		
Chr	1868	
Birth	26 Oct 1868	St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
Burial	1939	Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
Death	18 Apr 1939	Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
Marriage	26 Oct 1887	Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
Father	Damase Belanger (b 27 May 1830)	
Mother	Georgiana Modeste Pelletier (b 10 Jan 1842)	
Wife Parmella "Leda" Gagnon		
Chr	1870	
Birth	2 Dec 1870	Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
Burial	1943	Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
Death	27 Jan 1943	St Basile, Madawaska, NB
Father	Paul Gagnon	
Mother	M Ophidie Bergeron	
Children		
1	F Alice Belanger	
	Birth	1888 Fall River, Bristol, MA
	Death	21 Sep 1980 Edmundston, Madawaska Co, NB
	Burial	Drummond, Victoria Co, NB
	Spouse	Phydeme Cote (m 8 Oct 1907)
	Spouse	Eliz Ouellet (m 10 Feb 1919)
	Spouse	Anselme Dionne
2	F Alma Belanger	
	Birth	abt 1889 Fall River, Bristol, MA
	Death	30 Dec 1951 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Spouse	Louis Beaulieu (m 27 Apr 1908)
3	F Emma Estelle (Stella) Belanger	
	Birth	20 Sep 1892 St Pascal, Kamouraska, Que
	Baptism	22 Sep 1892 Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
	Death	29 Oct 1974 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Burial	Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Spouse	Joseph Berube (m 19 Sep 1911)
	Spouse	Joseph Mcclure (m 13 Sep 1923)
4	M Joseph Emile Lucien Belanger	
	Birth	14 Dec 1894 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Death	15 Oct 1958 Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
	Burial	18 Oct 1958 Van Buren, Aroostook, Maine
	Spouse	M Emilie Cecile Sirois (m 23 Nov 1920)
5	F Rosanna Belanger	
	Birth	abt 1895
6	F Alexina Belanger	
	Birth	31 Dec 1897 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Death	6 Oct 1978 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Burial	Drummond, Victoria Co, NB
	Spouse	Jean Baptiste Lavoie (m 19 Jul 1921)
7	F Rosanna Belanger	
	Birth	abt 1899
	Death	7 May 1959 Hartford, Connecticut
	Burial	Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Spouse	Eddie Graves
8	M Arthur Belanger Sr.	
	Birth	abt 1901
	Death	1 May 1976 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Burial	Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Spouse	Laura Cote (m 31 Jul 1923)
9	F Yvonne Belanger	
	Birth	23 Jan 1902 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Death	1989 Lewiston, Maine
	Burial	1989 Lewiston, Maine
	Spouse	Louis Philip Gagnon (m 15 Sep 1919)

Family Group Record

Husband Lucien Belanger	
Wife Parmella "Leda" Gagnon	
Children	
10 M	George Joseph Lucien Belanger
	Birth 10 Apr 1904 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Death 15 Apr 1991 Perth Andover, NB
	Burial 19 Apr 1991 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Spouse M Anne Mockler (m 1 Sep 1924)
11 M	Dollard Belanger
	Birth 23 Jul 1906 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Death 12 Nov 1976 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Burial Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Spouse Alphena Page (m 4 Sep 1928)
12 M	Gerald Louis Belanger
	Birth 28 Jan 1910 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Chr 30 Jan 1910 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Naturalized 5 Feb 1941 Caribou, Aroostook, Maine
	Death 12 Jul 1976 Caribou, Aroostook, Maine
	Burial Caribou, Aroostook, Maine
	Spouse Irene Eva Marie Michaud (m 22 Aug 1932)
Prepared 25 Oct 1997 by: Jim Belanger 32 Plain Road Hollis, NH 03049 603 465-2301	
Comments:	



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Pedigree Chart

Chart no. _____

No. 1 on this chart is the same as no. _____ on chart no. _____

2 Paul Gagnon

B:
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
M: 2 Feb 1869
P: Que (St Georges de Cacouna)
D:
P: Fall River, Bristol, MA

1 Parmella "Leda" Gagnon

B: 2 Dec 1870
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
M: 26 Oct 1887
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
D: 27 Jan 1943
P: St Basile, Madawaska, NB

Lucien Belanger

Spouse

3 M Ophidie Bergeron

B:
P:
D:
P: Fall River, Bristol, MA

4 Onesime Gagnon

B:
P:
M: 20 Jan 1846
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
D:
P:

5 Julie Gauthier

B:
P:
D:
P:

6 Paul Bergeron

B:
P:
M: 8 Jan 1833
P: Que (St Georges de Cacouna)
D:
P:

7 Apolline Hudon dit Beaulieu

B:
P:
D:
P:

8 Jean Charles Gagnon

B: _____ cont. ____
P:
M: 26 Nov 1806
P: St Jean Port Joli, L'Islet, Que
D:
P:

9 M Ann Morin

B: _____ cont. ____
P:
D:
P:

10 Joseph Gauthier

B: _____ cont. ____
P:
M: 11 Jan 1819
P: St Louis, Kamouraska, Kamouraska, Que
D:
P:

11 Julie Dupuis

B: _____ cont. ____
P:
D:
P:

12 Michel Bergeron

B: abt 1768 _____ cont. ____
P:
M: 25 Jun 1798
P: Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
D:
P:

13 Anastasie Cote

B: _____ cont. ____
P:
D:
P:

14 Jn Bte Hudon dit Beaulieu

B: _____ cont. ____
P:
M: 11 Jan 1808
P: St Anne de la Pocatiere, Kamouraska, Que
D:
P:

15 Louise Sirois dit Duplessis

B: _____ cont. ____
P:
D:
P:

Prepared 25 Oct 1997 by:

Jim Belanger
32 Plain Road
Hollis, NH 03049

603 465-2301

Family Group Record

Husband Paul Gagnon		
Birth		Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
Death		Fall River, Bristol, MA
Marriage	2 Feb 1869	Cacouna, Riviere du Loup, Que (St Georges de Cacouna)
Father	Onesime Gagnon	
Mother	Julie Gauthier	
Other spouse	Eugenie Cote (m 17 May 1892)	
Wife M Ophidie Bergeron		
Death		Fall River, Bristol, MA
Father	Paul Bergeron	
Mother	Apolline Hudon dit Beaulieu	
Children		
1	F	Parmella "Leda" Gagnon
	Chr	1870
	Birth	2 Dec 1870 Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
	Burial	1943 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Death	27 Jan 1943 St Basile, Madawaska, NB
	Spouse	Lucien Belanger (m 26 Oct 1887)
2	M	Joseph Gagnon
	Birth	1874 Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
	Death	1943 Riviere du Loup, Riviere du Loup, Que
	Spouse	Eva Laura April (m 4 Oct 1910)
3	M	Georges Jean Gagnon
	Birth	Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
	Death	Matane, Matane Co, Que
	Spouse	M Louise Cote (m 4 Sep 1900)
4	M	Alphe Gagnon
	Birth	Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
	Death	Fall River, Bristol, MA
	Spouse	
5	M	Paul Gagnon (Uncle Pit)
	Birth	1905 Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
	Death	1934 Grand Falls, Victoria, NB
	Burial	1934 Ile Verte, Riviere du Loup, Que
	Spouse	M Stella
Prepared 25 Oct 1997 by: Jim Belanger 32 Plain Road Hollis, NH 03049 603 465-2301		Comments: