

A drifting cowboy

An old cowboy's thoughts about horses, canoes, fishing, art, movies, family, and

Saturday, May 21, 2016

My Leber Family -- La Prairie, Quebec, Canada



Yours truly dressed as a Coureurs de Bois at the Wind River Rendezvous 1987. Even tho I have studied family history since 1972, it wasn't until 2010, that I made a breakthrough and discovered my French-Canadian heritage. See <http://a-drifting-cowboy.blogspot.com/2011/10/cowboy-legacy-french-connection.html>

François LeBer -- my 8th great grandfather

François LeBer was born 1626 in France. François LeBer was the child of Robert LeBer and Collette Cavelier

François was an immigrant to Canada, arriving by 1662.

François married (1) **Marguerite Leseur** before 1655 in France. Marguerite Leseur was born about 1628 in France and died 1662 in Canada.

François and Marguerite had (at least) 1 child:

i **Anne Leber** was born abt. 1656 in France. Anne Leber was the child of François LeBer and Marguerite Leseur. Anne was an immigrant, arriving by 1672. She married (1) Antoine Barrois 12 January 1672 in Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal) . Antoine Barrois was born abt. 1647 in France. He died bef. 1689 in Albany, New York, USA. She married (2) Jean Baptiste Lotman dit Albrin 1689 in New York, USA . Jean Baptiste Lotman dit Albrin was born 1662 in New York, USA . He died 30 March 1717 in Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal).

François married (2) **Jeanne Testard** 2 December 1662 in Montréal, Québec, Canada

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About Me



Drifting Cowboy

My goal in writing this blog is to leave to my grandsons the answers to the questions I wish I had asked my granddad... I am a cowboy activist, a Western movie historian, genealogist, and a folk artist. My cowboy and voyageur legacy can be back-trailed for more than twelve generations in North America.

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(Notre-Dame-de-Montreal) . Jeanne Testard was born abt. 1641 in Rouen, France. Jeanne Testard was the child of Jean Testard and Anne Godefroy. Jeanne was a Fille à Marier, arriving in New France by 1662. Jeanne Testard was born abt. 1641 in Rouen, France . She died 18 January 1723 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis) .

The couple had (at least) 6 children.

i **Joachim-Jacques LeBer** (b.10 June 1664, Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal) d. bef. 19 November 1696, La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). He married Jeanne Cusson 28 January 1692 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis) . Jeanne Cusson was born 1663 in Trois-Rivières, Québec, Canada (Trois Rivières) (Three Rivers) . She died 19 March 1738 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis) . She was the daughter of Jean Cusson and Marie Foubert. Joachim-Jacques LeBer died bef. 19 November 1696 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis).

+ii **Marie LeBer** (b.6 December 1666, Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal) d. 23 December 1756, La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). She married (1) Charles Robert dit Deslauriers 9 January 1681 in Contrecoeur, Québec, Canada (Ste-Trinité-de-Contrecoeur) . The couple had (at least) 1 child. Charles Robert dit Deslauriers was born 1645 in France. He died bef. July 1684 in Québec (Quebec) Province, Canada (New France) . She married (2) François Bourassa 4 July 1684 in Contrecoeur, Québec, Canada (Ste-Trinité-de-Contrecoeur). The couple had (at least) 6 children. François Bourassa was born abt. 1659 in Poitiers, France. He died 9 May 1708 in Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal) . She married (3) Pierre Herve 22 April 1714 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis) . Pierre Herve was born abt. 1673 in France. He died 5 April 1736 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). Marie LeBer died 23 December 1756 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis).

iii **Jeanne LeBer** (b.1670, Québec (Quebec) Province, Canada (New France) d. 10 December 1687, Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal). She married Jean Tessier dit Lavigne 21 November 1686 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). Jean Tessier dit Lavigne was born 14 June 1663 in Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal). He died 6 December 1734 in Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal). He was the son of Urbain Tessier dit Lavigne and Marie Archambault. Jeanne LeBer died 10 December 1687 in Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal).

iv **Jacques LeBer** (b.20 July 1672, La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis) d. 21 July 1672, La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). Jacques LeBer died 21 July 1672 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis).

v **François LeBer** (b.11 October 1673, La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis) d. 24 April 1753, La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). He married Marie-Anne Magnan dite Lespérance 29 October 1698 in Montréal, Québec, Canada (Notre-Dame-de-Montreal). The couple had (at least) 5 children. Marie-Anne Magnan dite Lespérance was born 30 November 1677 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). She died 11 November 1760 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). She was the daughter of Jean Magnan dit Lespérance and Marie Moitié. François LeBer died 24 April 1753 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis).

vi **Claude LeBer** (b.14 September 1675, La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis) d. 10 October 1675, La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis). Claude LeBer died 10 October 1675 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis).

My Leber
Family --
La Prairie,
Quebec,
Canada

Back Trails
and Tales
of a
Western
Family

Movie
History in
Chatsworth,
California

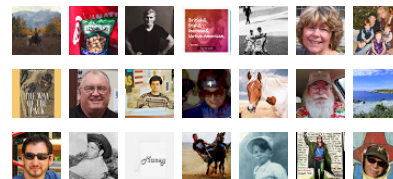
Fur Trade
Goods --
Beads and
Silver

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François LeBer died 19 May 1694 in La Prairie, Québec, Canada (St-Philippe-de-la-Prairie) (St-Jean-François-Régis).



Coureurs-des-bois

François LeBer and his three sons were "coureurs-des-bois"

The most active and most picturesque figure in the fur-trading system of New France was the "coureur-de-bois". Without him the trade could neither have been begun nor continued successfully. Usually a man of good birth, with some military training, and a good education, he was a rover of the forest by choice and not as an outcast from civilization.

Young men came from France to serve as officers with the colonial garrison, to hold minor civil posts, to become seigneurial landholders, or merely to seek adventure. Very few came out with the fixed intention of engaging in the forest trade; but hundreds fell victims to its magnetism after they had arrived in New France.

The young officer who grew tired of garrison duty, the young seigneur who found yeomanry tedious, the young habitant who disliked the daily toil of the farm--young men of all social ranks, in fact, succumbed to this lure of the wilderness.

"I cannot tell you," wrote one governor, "how attractive this life is to all our youth. It consists in doing nothing, caring nothing, following every inclination, and getting out of the way of all restraint." In any case the ranks of the "coureur-de-bois" and "voyageurs" included those who had the best and most virile blood in the colony.



The story of Joachim Leber (1664-1695) -- My 8th Grand Uncle

The following is an excerpt from *Narratives and identities in the Saint Lawrence Valley : 1667-1720*, by Linda Breuer Gray, Ph. D., McGill University (published

between 1999 and 2001 in English and available for download from the Library and Archives Canada at http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape9/PQDD_0023/NQ50177.pdf

If identity is expressed largely through language, then language becomes particularly important for individuals carving an identity in cross-cultural settings. To be sure, these individuals spoke different languages: Dutch, Iroquois, French, Abenaki. But within these corporate languages were subsets of language, which were sometimes called jargon or lingua franca, which allowed communication across standard language and cultural barriers. To explore the relationship between language, narrative and identity we can turn to the choices of Anne Leber's brother, Joachim Leber, who moved as a child with his parents from Montréal to La Prairie.

Young men, particularly when they are in the middle of an illegal activity, are difficult to track. It is certain that some young men left these communities and never returned. Such, apparently, was the case with a man named Jacques Guitaut. Guitaut received a concession at La Prairie. He had apparently, a daughter but no living wife. He left the daughter with nuns, probably the Congrégation Notre Dame. He may have planned to pay for his land with furs.

In any case, he departed in 1674 but had not returned by 1678. At this date he was presumed dead.

The voyages and (perhaps undocumented) returns of Guitaut signal the pattern which was to engage several men, and occasionally, families, at La Prairie for the next 175 years. This pattern is absence, due to engagement -- either legal or illegal -- in trade with Indians, Dutch and English. One can gather from the record that those left on the banks of the St. Lawrence awaited the return of these traders, often for years. For most of those who did not return, it is difficult if not impossible to trace their route. They could have, in fact, traveled up the Ottawa, or to Lake Superior, or only as far as a few miles upstream. There were probably some who arrived in other communities in the colony (either Indian or French) and never returned to La Prairie. Some may have arrived in Indian, English or Dutch communities to the south and stayed there, marrying, changing their names and religion. Others may have taken a boat to another part of the colony, to another colony or back to Europe. These who did not return, however, would not have significantly affected the flow of information to La Prairie. Quite simply, the narrative of their lives would not have been well-known. Their absence would be noted, of course, and perhaps was a cause of mystery or fear to the remaining residents of La Prairie who contemplated similar voyages. But they did not return to tell their tale, and as such were not an active part of the evolving community of La Prairie.

There were some who did return, and who, by doing so, drew the attention of officials in Montréal. In 1681 Frontenac wrote to the King describing "certain individuals, who resort among the Indians . . . [convey] Beaver to Fort Orange by a place called Chambly." Frontenac notes that the 'Loups (Mahicans) and Iroquois of the five nations . . . have pursued trade to Fort Orange for a long time by means of those of their tribe who have settled at Sault St. Louis, "near Montreal," which is, as it were, their entrepot for this traffic. He informed the king that he sent guards to Chambly to keep the French from imitating the Indian trade to Fort Orange.

Other young men from La Prairie returned each year, or even more often. These include members of some of the oldest families in La Prairie, such as the Leber, Roy, and Deniau families. Often, in these families, one or more members worked in alternation or together as a team in the fur trade. One example of this frequent trading activity by a young unmarried man is Joachim Leber. Joachim is of particular interest because he, probably against his will, left for historians a narrative record.

Joachim Leber was born early in 1664. He was baptized on June 10,

1664 at Notre-Dame-de-Montréal as Joachim-Jacques Leber. He was the eldest son of François Leber and Jeanne Testard. By 1672, as a young boy of about eight, he had moved with his parents and older step-sister, Anne, to La Prairie. Joachim worshipped with the Indians of the mission at La Prairie until 1676 when the native mission moved the first time, to the place called Kahnawake, at the mouth of the Portage River. He may have had an opportunity to learn native languages at the mission during the 1670s. Too young to be a soldier for Prouville de Tracy during the raid of Iroquois villages in 1666, he would have been privy to the tales told by the soldiers who returned from this mission and settled at La Prairie. He also would have heard the stories told by returning coureurs de bois in his youth. It is difficult to ascertain exactly what Joachim knew about the route, the Iroquois, the Dutch or the fur trade, but it is clear that unless he was deaf (and later events demonstrate that he was not) he had many opportunities to learn about things which would fascinate a growing boy.

It is possible that Joachim went along on trips to the Iroquois or Ottawa when he was as young as fifteen or sixteen years old, either as an assistant to the Jesuits or as a helper for older coureurs de bois. His brother François may have been a fur trader. The first recorded contract for Joachim's services, however, was in May, 1685, when Joachim was 21 years old. He was paid the same wage as a 30-year-old engage, which indicates that the contractor, Claude Grizonneau (Greysolon), knew that Joachim was experienced. Joachim was engaged, with others, to go to the Ottawas. Three years later, in 1688, he and François Bourassa were hired by René Legardeur de Beauvais. Two years later, in 1690, he was hired with Pierre Bourdeau, André Babu, François Bourassar again by Legardeur, this time to go to "Michilimackinac."

Joachim was about twenty-seven years old when he contracted to go to Michilimackinac -- a longer trip which often took more than one year depending on weather conditions and good, or bad, relationships with the Indians. It seems that he came home from this trip. Following Leber in the parish records, we find that in January 1692 at La Prairie he married a widow, Jeanne Cusson. Jeanne had two children by a previous marriage with Jean Bateau/Brelau. The records show that Joachim attended a baptism in February, 1696. Joachim died, perhaps in 1696, perhaps as part of an Indian raid. Jeanne testified that Joachim had been "burle par les Iroquois." Jeanne had a child during the summer of 1696, perhaps by the man who was to become her third husband in the fall of 1696, and with whom she would have several more children.

The exact details of Joachim's life are difficult to discern. Though the record of Joachim's life in New France is scanty, a few patterns emerge. Joachim had all the training necessary to be a valued employee in the fur trade, by virtue of growing up in La Prairie. He probably understood at least a few words of Iroquois or Algonquian, and it is very possible that he was bilingual. His uncle was the wealthy Montréal merchant Jacques Leber, brother of Joachim's father François. This family connection opened opportunities for employment for Joachim -- indeed several members of this extraordinary family are found among the engages, as well as in leadership positions in their parish.

It is very likely that he was away from La Prairie during the August, 1690 attack, led by Johannes Schuyler, on La Prairie which left 25 dead. He was also not at La Prairie during the August 1691 attack by Peter Schuyler and some Mohawks which left fourteen dead. If he was in Iroquois, as plans for these attacks were developed, he may have heard about them. The time which elapsed between his recorded engagements is about two to three years leaving time, depending on how far he went each time, for a short illegal trip in between engagements.

Like many of his contemporaries, Joachim married when he was a relatively old fellow, at about the age of twenty-nine. Also, like many of his contemporaries, he married a woman who had been married before, and who had children. He seems to have acquired little -- there is no mention of

belongings. He and Jeanne baptized no children, indicating, among other possibilities, that he was absent from La Prairie for much of the time between their marriage in January, 1692 and his demise in 1695 or 1696.

Joachim's life, even though short, was affected in important ways by proximity to Iroquoia. First, he had the opportunity to learn the language and perhaps the habits of the Indians he lived with as a young boy. The stories he heard as a boy would have told him more. Second, he traveled several times on fur trading business, or, as shall be seen, as a captive, far into native territory. Third, he married the widow of a man who was killed by the Iroquois. Fourth, he was closely related to several others active in the fur trade, including his brother, François, who was, in 1693, a prisoner of the Iroquois and most particularly his uncle, Jacques Leber, who had favored status among the Onondaga. Fifth, he was, at least according to his wife, captured and killed by the Iroquois.

There is, however, another source on Joachim. It is a source which tells us much about the other side of his life, away from the notaries, the priests, and even away from his fellow engagés. Joachim was alone, and perhaps rather desperate, when he was interrogated by Governor Benjamin Fletcher of New York, at Albany, on October 4, 1692. Fletcher had been Governor of New York for only two months when he conducted "The Examination" of Joachim Leber, a French Man of Canada, and Native of Mont Royal, taken before his Excellency... at Albany the 4th of October, 1692.

The scene in Albany was one of high alert. It was near the end of the raucous trading season. The fur trade at Albany had been in serious decline since 1690 and the Albany merchants complained that they must have access to more furs from the Great Lakes region. There had been open warfare in the St. Lawrence region between Sault Indians and League Iroquois since about 1691. These skirmishes and battles included Europeans on both sides. It is possible Joachim was taken captive in one of these small raids or in a larger battle. It is also possible he was on a simple trading trip to Albany when he was taken. There may have been a secretary or scribe assisting the governor, and whoever brought Joachim in for interrogation (a jailer or an Indian or a soldier?) may have been standing to one side. Nearby was a workhouse where impoverished Iroquois lived and made wampum. Licensed and illegal taverns and bars conducted a brisk business within earshot. But Joachim, probably a captive, was in Albany to be interrogated.

Fletcher's report follows:

That he lived at Prairie de la Magdelain. That it is 60 leagues from Mont Royal to Quebec. That Mr. de Cellier (de Calliere) is Governor of Mont Royal. That there are 2,200 men carrying Arms in his Government, soldiers and Inhabitants. That the Town of Mont Royal is enclosed with stockades. That there are 53 pieces of Canon, Brass and Iron, eight Companies of Soldiers, unequal in number, 50 men being the most.

That the Fort of Magdelaine contains 23 families, 400 men in Arms, 2 pieces of Canon, and 5 Patteraroes. There are 200 men in the Indian Fort called Canawagne. That there are ten Men of War (ships) arrived at Quebec, from France, laden with Ammunition, and that he saw the said Ships. That he hath been taken 43 days, and says, that the day before his being taken he being at Mr.

Cellier's house, he saw a Canon arrive there from Mr. LeCount, sent to Mr. Cellier to demand the Collem of deeds, which are usually presented at the concluding a Peace, the which occasioned him to say there was Ambassadors coming to treat a Peace.

Upon the Objection made, That there could not be So many

People as he says, that the two Frenchmen were sent to York sometime since, being now at Canada, did inform Mr. LeCount, that the English had assembled all their Nations, with a design upon Canada, which obliged Mr. Le Count to raise all the men he could possible, which was that number he said. and says, he knows nothing more.

This document provides some information about Joachim Leber continued activity, information which is missing from the French record. He seems very knowledgeable, and perhaps he understands English, for there is no indication of an interpreter nor any fumbling of answers or misunderstanding of questions. The specifics are remarkably accurate. For instance, Joachim was a native of Montréal, but was living in La Prairie. Joachim has adopted the language of warfare (weapons, defensive and offensive capability) in this situation; it is a language his interrogators expected and understood. Joachim may have had other options, such as remaining silent, asking for the assistance of his relatives, in particular his half-sister Anne Barrois Lotman, or inventing another tale for why he had been captured. With the frequency of travel and intelligence-gathering in the Champlain-Richelieu corridor however, false information was easily detected. Most of the extant testimonies indicate that prisoners provided accurate if sometimes sketchy information.

What details can be learned from his testimony? Since Joachim's family was well-connected it is entirely possible that he visited with and dined at the home of the Governor of Montréal; his uncle Jacques Leber had a home adjacent to Callières' home in Montréal.

Had Joachim seen ships in Québec? Ten men of war? Possibly. Did he go often to Québec? The distance is about 175 miles; Joachim's estimate of the distance is accurate. No road yet linked the two cities, but the habitants and traders traveled by boat. As a young engage and sometime coureur de bois however, Joachim's patterns probably included visits to La Prairie, business arrangements and obtaining supplies in Montréal, and upriver trips to the Great Lakes or to Albany. Quebec would be an unprofitable and lengthy detour, and there is no evidence that he ever was there. A more typical route for this information would have been word of mouth, which was the fastest. Communication was frequent between Québec and Montréal, and between Montréal and La Prairie. His wife was from Cap de la Madeleine, near Trois-Rivières, half-way between Montréal and Québec. It is possible that communication with his wife's family would have informed him with certainty of "ten Men of War."

Joachim's estimates of the defense capabilities of New France, while not believed by Fletcher, were fairly accurate. In 1689 the French forces in New France were consolidated into twenty-nine companies of fifty men each. In 1699 the number of men per Company was reduced from fifty to thirty, probably due to the difficulty commanders experienced in keeping their companies at full strength; in this the financial strain these forts placed on the colony's finances was a significant factor? The men defending La Prairie were probably soldiers billeted there. These soldiers were distributed throughout the St. Lawrence valley. There were 1,418 regular soldiers in New France in 1688. Soldiers were also billeted at Sault St.-Louis. The record indicates that Frontenac sent 600 militia, Indians, and regular soldiers to Mohawk territory in 1693, just one year after Joachim testified in front of Governor Fletcher.

Joachim's narrative moves from the defense of his home town to the wartime capability of Sault St.-Louis. Like roost of his superiors, he thought of the mission as a recruiting ground for the defense of New France.

Joachim also has news of a peace. Though not specific, he implies that it is a peace which will strengthen the defense of New France. Warfare between League Iroquois (mostly non-Christians) and Sault residents (some of whom

were ardent Christians, others of whom at least tolerated the presence of the Jesuit priests among them) had been constant since December 1691. By 1692 La Prairie was a garrison town, with soldiers billeted there from other parts of the colony. The attacks and counterattacks were reaching intolerable levels. Individuals sometimes refused to fight if they did not know the exact targets.

It was not uncommon for individual soldiers, particularly native soldiers, to ask the names of individuals in the opposing party before commencing to fight. A peace with the Iroquois was in fact imminent, following Canada's devastating raids on the Iroquois in 1690 and 1691. An Oneida, Tarrha, approached Frontenac in June, 1693 to propose peace. Frontenac's frenetic pattern of trade, warfare and tough diplomacy was bearing fruit, and perhaps in his recent travels Joachim Leber had heard rumblings of this.

In general then, Joachim's story is both accurate and precise. He appears to have been traveling without a permit, or to have been, as he would have it, captured near a settlement. It seems likely that he was engaged in some private illegal trading in upper Iroquoia when he was captured. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that the governor did not ask Joachim the purpose of his travel, or why he was traveling without a permit. He may have been a captive of a native group. It is also possible that he had been or would be tortured and tested for adoption by the native group that captured him. He may have returned to La Prairie and later died at the hands of the Iroquois, although the exact timing of his travels is impossible, at this distance, to trace.

Joachim Leber is an example of a young man raised at La Prairie whose life, at least as much of it as we can reconstruct, was centered around the fur trade. There is no evidence of significant agricultural activity on his part. He did not help support his mother, though other neighbors and a younger brother did. He did not receive a concession, and can be documented in Iroquoia or New York in 1685-1690 and 1692. As a part of the fur trade he traveled to Montréal, to the Ottawas, to Michilimakinac, and, perhaps under force, but likely more than once willingly as well, to Albany. Yet, if we believe the testimony of his wife, who had two husbands meet similar ends, this proximity to the natives did not save him from a violent death at the hands of "les Iroquois."

He had no children, and perhaps knew of his wife's liaison with the man who was to become her third husband. Joachim's burial was not recorded in New France. It is entirely possible that he remained in Iroquoia, traveled further into the pays d'en haut, or changed his identity and traveled to another colony. It is not possible to know for certain how or when he ended his days.

For scholars of Canadian history, Joachim's life is more familiar than Anne's. Joachim is a resident of New France whose journeys are related to the fur trade. His testimony is a rare narrative source from an individual in a population where narrative sources are almost non-existent. This was the story he told, probably under duress, to the officials in Albany. What story would he tell in Michilimackinac? In La Prairie? In Montréal? Surely, it would not be the story recorded by the Albany court officials. Joachim's narrative, however truthful, was situational. It was tailored for the -- very uncomfortable -- situation in which he found himself. As a means of survival, he had learned to use the language of war and diplomacy in telling his story; this was the language his interrogators wanted to hear. Arguably, he had little choice about what to say in this context. It is reasonable to assume that any fairly competent young man in his situation would have offered information about battle readiness in New France. As a source about Joachim's identity, or self, this narrative is not introspective. However, it provides considerable information about his knowledge, his language, his affiliations and his understanding of his environment.

His activity at the time of his capture is critical to interpreting his narrative. If he was taken captive at or near La Prairie, for instance, while tending a crop,

he could relate his account similarly in Albany and, later, in Montréal upon his return. If he was trading illegally, providing information to the Albany officials in return for some other consideration, or engaging in traitorous activity, he could not have provided the same account in both places. On his return he would readjust his narrative to his situation. His narrative and perhaps, as a result, his sense of his place in the world, would shift a bit with each retelling.

In addition to the existence of his narrative, there is another remarkable "coincidence" about this testimony. What is extraordinary about his involuntary appearance before the court in New York is the timing. Joachim appeared alone in the court in the region where his stepsister, Anne, had been living for nine years. It is worth underscoring that he did not, in his testimony, mention his family members, and did not ask for assistance from his half-sister or her husband. In the following year, perhaps while Joachim was still in New York, his brother François and his uncle Jacques Leber were both in Iroquoia. Jacques, in fact, had just been given an Iroquois youth in exchange for his son Jean/Jacques Leber dit La Rose who had died defending La Prairie. Four members of this family: Anne, Joachim, Jacques and François were in the New York region during one twelve-month period. At first glance it would appear that some members of the family might be engaged in activities which endangered the lives of other members. Their goals and intentions were different, but were their goals related?

It is difficult at this distance to say, but it appears likely, and later events support the possibility, that these members of the Leber family were assisting each other in their journeys, trade and settlement in Iroquoia and New York.

Knowledge of passable routes, prices of furs, and news about the arrival or departure of a new governor or Protestant minister were vital to travel, settlement and trade in this region. This is the kind of knowledge that Anne Leber Barrois, Joachim Leber, François Leber and Jacques Leber would have gleaned from their time in Iroquoia or New York, and would have been able to pass on to other family members or trusted associates. It also appears clear that information about raids, counter-raids and preparations for war could travel easily along this "information highway." For instance, Anne Leber was in New York in 1690 and 1691 when plans for the attack on her home community were made. Her stepmother, stepbrothers and stepsisters still lived in La Prairie. Is it likely that Anne knew of these plans. Did she attempt to warn the residents of La Prairie? Did anyone else? Did any warnings arrive at La Prairie? It is hard to know for certain. It does seem clear that members of this family, a family which spanned and peopled the Albany fur trade route, a family which knew, intimately, both poles of that route, sorted information and choices constantly. The narratives that they told about their lives were necessarily complex and malleable -- tailored for each situation.

This simple story, Joachim Leber, engagé, François Leber, engagé and prisoner, Anne Leber wife and mother, and Jacques Leber, their uncle, a merchant, ends where it began, in the village of La Prairie. It also moves from La Prairie to Albany, to the castle of the Onondagas, and to major affairs of state. However it describes these events not by following official correspondence, but rather by following the movement of individuals.

The "fate" of the Leber family in the 1690s begins to look more sculptured, less arbitrary, in light of the information provided by linking the New York records with the records from the St. Lawrence Valley. Many of the other members of this family lived at La Prairie: Joachim's mother Jeanne Testard, his wife Jeanne Cusson. These residents of La Prairie knew and perhaps spoke of the absence of their family members. It is certain that the members of this family were concerned about the well-being of other family members in the difficult first years of the 1680s and 1690s. The story of this family was taking critical turns during these decades.

Narrative and Identity, Anne, "Anna" and Joachim

The early 1690s were pivotal years for this family, years which required a shaping of their family story for themselves, for their neighbors and for government officials. They were pivotal years for the border communities of La Prairie and Schenectady as well. In addition to the travels of Anne, Joachim and their uncle Jacques mentioned above, Anne's stepbrother, Joachim's brother François, was believed to be a captive of the Iroquois in 1693. This is the decade when the worst attacks took place on La Prairie. With the presence of Anne, Joachim and Jacques in Albany, and of François in Iroquois, these attacks take on a new dimension. In addition to the question raised earlier about whether one part of this family may have warned another about impending attacks, are other questions. With rumors flying, as they often did in both Albany and La Prairie, what choices faced Anne? Did she ask the attackers to spare certain houses? To carry a message? Similarly, if Jeanne Testard knew her son Joachim and her stepdaughter Anne and her husband were in Albany, what choices faced her as she heard rumors about attacks on "les Anglais"?

The two examples of Joachim Leber and the family of Anne Leber point out three other aspects of the effect of contact between French residents of La Prairie and the English or Dutch: the importance of family networks, the importance of oral communication, and the lack of written records about such contact in New France.

First, they were in the same family. Certain families appear to have had more contact with New York and New England than others, and the extended Leber family appears to be one that had much contact with New York fur trading networks.

Second, neither Anne nor her step-mother could read or write. During the seventeenth century La Prairie did not have a schoolmaster or a teacher, so it is unlikely that Joachim could read or write, either. Therefore it was either through written messages composed by someone who wrote, or through trips like that of Joachim, or others from La Prairie, that Anne heard of the death of her father, or that her mother, Jeanne, was informed of the remarriage of Anne to a man named "Elbrain." The dearth of surviving written material in the Albany records signals that it was largely oral information, stories, which this family sorted constantly in their decisions about travel and protection.

Third, it appears that the interlude that the Barrois family spent in New York went almost completely unrecorded in the French records. Jeanne Testard's "inventaire des bins," memos about Barrois' escape, a complaint from Claude Caron about tasks he had to perform in François Leber's absence, and a note in the baptismal records of La Prairie de la Magdalene are the only signs of the sixteen-year absence of an entire family.

A final and not inconsequential note about the movements of the Leber family during the years from 1683-99: one of Jacques Leber's sons fought as a soldier at the 1691 battle of La Fourche defending La Prairie -- Jean/Jacques Leber dit La Rose died there? In 1693 Jacques Leber travelled as part of the military campaign of 300 Canadians, 100 soldiers and 230 Indians that attacked the Mohawks in their own territory against the Iroquois. He wrote an account of this campaign which he sent to France with his son. During this campaign Jacques Leber went to Lac Saint-Sacrement (Lake George). Jacques' account relates that an Indian gave him one of his own sons in exchange for Jacques' son (probably Jean/Jacques dit La Rose). Jacques' native "son" apparently could not keep up with the group -- he was, according to Leber, laden down with things given him, possibly by women. Because he lagged behind he was killed, but Leber's report is unclear about the identity of the adoptive boy's killer. He could have been killed by English or Indians.

Jacques Leber's account is, in part, an apology for this death of one charged to his care, a death which could have had serious repercussions. However the fact that the natives remembered, three years following the death of

his son in battle, to repay a debt to him by giving him an adoptive son, indicates a strong and lasting relationship between Jacques Leber and the Onondagas.

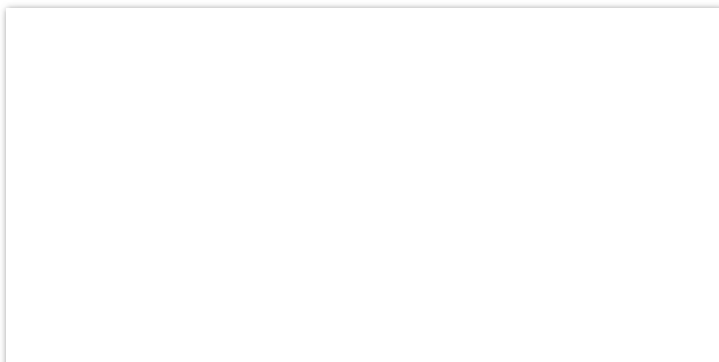
In 1694, Jacques Leber's kinship with the Iroquois was described by Teganissorens at a council between Iroquois and Frontenac. During the discussions, Teganissorens, an Onondaga diplomat and leader, announced, and confirmed with a wampum belt, that the Iroquois had adopted Sieurs de Longueil [Longueuil] and de Maricourt in the place of Monsieur Le Moyne, their father, as our children, and Monsieur Leber as our brother... They will have nothing to fear whenever they visit us, and will be received when sent by you. Jacques Leber was honored on both sides of the Atlantic; he was ennobled in 1696 by Louis XIV. In 1706, following the death of Jacques Leber, the Onondagas paid homage to him as was customary to do for French heads of state.

The purpose for this long digression is to pose a question. Of what significance is it, if any, that Jacques Leber, Anne Leber, François Leber and possibly Joachim Leber, who, after all, was interrogated in October, 1692, and perhaps had to spend the winter in Albany or Iroquoia, were all within a few miles of each other in 1693, with the most powerful of the three, Jacques, apparently endangering the others' lives. Jacques apparently, also, at this time in his life and others, cemented relationships with Iroquois, probably Onondaga, who could affect or even threaten the lives and fortunes of those who lived in Albany, or indeed in La Prairie.

They may have been responding to changes in the fur trade market. As has been observed, the Albany fur trade collapsed in the years 1689-1692. The Commander in Chief Governor Henry Sloughter, who arrived in the colony in March 1691, found, in August, 1692, the Indians weary of War and all the outsettlements forsaken... [I found Indians] very difficult and much inclined to a peace; however with great industry I have reclaimed them in New York's service, as allies. In September, 1692, his replacement, Benjamin Fletcher, found "decay of trade" and "poverty of the people" at Albany. By March, 1694, the Dutch observed, the "Indians are staggering."

The presence of at least three and possibly four members of the Leber family in Albany in 1693 could be due to several factors. The most likely possible explanation is that the Leber family was attempting to increase their profit margin in a collapsing fur market by selling more furs in Albany and returning to New France with more currency and more imported goods to sell. It is also possible that Jacques planned to take advantage of his participation in the military campaign in order to attempt to rescue or ransom Joachim or François, or to find Anne Leber.

The presence of many members of the extended Leber family in Iroquoia in 1693 adds another layer of interpretation, for their stories were brought home not only to La Prairie and Montréal, but were told also in Albany and at the council fire in Onondaga. As signaled by the example of Joachim Leber, the language used to describe one's purpose was necessarily tempered and adapted by the stories told and by the settings in which they were told. The language Joachim used to mediate his identity in the dangerous border region was the language of warfare.





Is it in the DNA? Jerry England (left) and friends at Hart Canyon Rendezvous 1987. When this photo was taken I had no idea I am descended from the Father of the Fur Trade.

My Lineage from Joachim Leber:

Joachim Leber (1664 - 1695) - 8th great-uncle

Francois Leber (1626 - 1694) - father of Joachim Leber

Marie Le Ber (1666 - 1756) - daughter of Francois Leber

Marie Elisabeth Bourassa (1695 - 1766) - daughter of Marie Le Ber

Joseph Pinsonneau (Pinsono) (1733 - 1779) - son of Marie Elisabeth Bourassa

Gabriel Pinsonneau (Pinsono) (1770 - 1813) - son of Joseph Pinsonneau (Pinsono)

Gabriel (Gilbert) Passino (Passinault) (Pinsonneau) (1803 - 1877) - son of Gabriel Pinsonneau (Pinsono)

Lucy Passino (1836 - 1917) - daughter of Gabriel (Gilbert) Passino (Passinault) (Pinsonneau)

Abraham Lincoln Brown (1864 - 1948) - son of Lucy Passino

Lydia Corinna Brown (1891 - 1971) - daughter of Abraham Lincoln Brown - my grandmother.

Posted by [Drifting Cowboy](#) at [2:33 PM](#)



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