

L'Heureux Ancestors in North America

and

The Evolution of the Family Name

By George C. L'Heureux, Sr. 9 Dec 2023

Introduction

Tracing the genealogy of my family has also served to trace the evolution of the spelling of my family name. L'HEUREUX is not an uncommon French name, but the beginning of its use by my family in its present form is actually fairly recent, having occurred in the 20th century.

Well into the 19th century, most of our ancestors were illiterate and could not write their own names, much less spell them. The educated and literate people were often the priests and the notaries, and to them fell the responsibility of maintaining records. These learned individuals often had no easy means of confirming the historical spelling of names and so often spelled them in their records as they thought they should be spelled based on the way that they were pronounced, leading to variations in spelling. In the 20th century, as inroads were made in literacy, spelling finally became more standardized.

In this chronology, my ancestors are named and spelled as they appeared on their birth certificates, or in the absence of birth certificates, as they appeared in their baptismal records, which were often more apt to exist and served the same purpose. It's interesting to watch how the surname evolved from LEREAU (which has no particular meaning in French) to L'HEUREUX which translates into English as "he who is happy" or "the happy one".

And in a way, the spelling continues to mutate. With the widespread use of computers and digital records, and their aversion to the use of apostrophes in names, the name L'HEUREUX is inexorably morphing into LHEUREUX.

Simon Lereau (1626 – 1670)

Credit must be given for many details of Simon's life, and his children, to Gérard Lebel, C.Ss.R., *Our Ancestors*, Vol. IX, 117-124. Published by *The Ste-Anne Review*.

Simon was born in 1626 (though some say it was 1624) in the Lower Normandy region of France known as Perche. In 1790, during the French Revolution, that area would become part of the newly created department of Orne. Simon was baptized at the church of St. Martin in Igé, in Perche. His parents were René Lereau and Marguerite Guillin from Saint-Cosme-de-Vair in the diocese of Mans, later called Saint-Cosme-en-Vairais in Maine. A plaque inside the church now honors Simon and the other brave adventurers who left for North America to be among the first to settle in New France.



In 1627, with an epidemic (possibly a re-occurrence of the Black Death, i.e. the bubonic plague) raging in Perche, an enterprising man named Robert Giffard of Mortagne-au-Perche left France and landed in Canada, then known as New France, and settled in Beauport. Eager for prosperity in New France, Giffard made several trips back to Perche to recruit new settlers. He organized numerous information meetings in Perche to convince other local inhabitants to follow him to New France. In Saint-Cosme-de Vair, Giffard held his meetings at the Hôtel Cheval Blanc (White Horse Hotel), which was one of the most famous hotels in the country at the beginning of the 17th century.

Early in 1650, Robert Giffard had spoken sincerely and convincingly in addressing the inhabitants of Saint-Cosme-de-Vair at the White Horse Hotel. Simon might have been in the crowd of excited listeners, and probably dreamed of the adventure and fortune to be had in New France. In 1652 (though some say it may have been 1655), Simon sailed from La Rochelle, France and arrived in New France, probably spending his time on the Côte de Beaupré, perhaps at the spot that would someday be named Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. He worked for three years, perhaps indentured, and in 1654, while clearing some land, he came to know the settler on the neighboring property, Maurice Arrivé.

Maurice Arrivé was a pioneer and a mason, and in 1654 he had married a woman named Jacquette Touraude, who had had a daughter by her first husband. The daughter's name was Suzanne Jarrousel.

Suzanne's father, Pierre Jarrouseau, had died in Perigny, France (near La Rochelle) in about 1650, and so she had sailed to New France with her mother to meet up with Jacquette's sister Françoise, who was married to another pioneer. Suzanne and her mother had travelled as "Filles à Marier" (marriageable girls) – a group of 262 young women who travelled to New France between 1634 and 1662 to find husbands, create families, and help to populate the country.

Filles à marier were courageous pioneers indeed, coming to the new world with the sole purpose of seeking the possibility of a better life. Their courage was especially remarkable considering the reputation of Canada at the time as a wild and savage land.

Filles à marier were recruited by individuals, such as merchants or lords, or even religious societies such as the *Société Notre-Dame de Montréal* or the *Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal*. The women signed a contract in France, normally to work as servants. It was understood, however, that their primary

objective was marriage and settlement. Tellingly, the contracts did not include return passage to France. Once the contract was signed, a *Fille à marier* would board a ship for Québec from La Rochelle or Dieppe. She normally travelled alone, not as part of a larger organized group.

These single women could expect a ship voyage of at least six weeks crowded with other passengers, crew, animals, water reserves, cannons and various merchandise. Passengers slept in extremely cramped quarters in the ship's hold and conditions were far from hygienic, especially when people were overcome with sea sickness. Almost 10% of passengers died while crossing the Atlantic Ocean on their way to New France.

While fulfilling the duties outlined by their contracts (and waiting to be married), most of the women were housed by religious societies such as the Ursuline nuns in Québec or the *Filles de la Congrégation Notre-Dame* in Montréal. Others stayed in colonists' homes.

In this new world, the women faced dangers that would have been non-existent in France: threats from the Iroquois and long, harsh Canadian winters. The land that colonists were given to settle was most often wooded and needed clearing, and their "home" would have likely consisted of a ramshackle cabin. They also faced the threats of epidemics and other diseases, along with the dangers of childbirth.

So why would a single woman in the 17th century want to cross an ocean and take these enormous risks? In France, women did not have a choice in whom they married. Arranged marriages were the norm in all classes of society, with the bride's family expected to provide a dowry. Should a girl not be able to marry, her only other options were to become a nun or work as a servant. In New France, given the gender imbalance in the colony's early days, *Filles à marier* could have more of a say in who they married.

As men in New France, most new emigrants would have looked to line up a land grant and build a home first in order to place themselves in a good position to marry and start a family. But not Simon Lereau. On October 31, 1655, on the north side of the island of Orleans, almost opposite the Rivière-aux-Chiens, he arrived at the home of Maurice Arrivé for a celebratory feast to sign a contract promising marriage to Suzanne Jarrousel, Arrivé's stepdaughter. At the time, Suzanne was no more than fourteen years old, whereas Simon was almost thirty.

The marriage contract was successfully completed. Maurice Arrivé and his wife promised to give the sum of 80 pounds to their daughter Suzanne. In addition, Arrivé, being a mason, promised to build the chimney and foundation of a house for his future son-in-law. The construction would be 27 feet long and 16 feet wide. Arrivé even promised to feed his son-in-law during the construction of the house, so Simon stayed with the stepfather until the house was finished.

On November 27, 1655, the apostle of the Hurons, Father René Ménart, S.J., blessed the union of Simon and Suzanne before witnesses Jean Baillargeon and Pierre Petit, at the chapel called Chapelle Gosselin at the end of the island.

On the morning of April 2, 1656, Simon received his land grant from the notary François Badeau. His was one of fourteen land grants given out on that day to inhabitants of the island of Orleans, including one for his father-in-law Maurice Arrivé. Land grants were legal concessions and both Simon and his father-

in-law knew well ahead of time that they were getting them, as evidenced by Maurice Arrivé already having completed a roof for his shelter and Simon having had a corner of his foundation finished upon which to attach his house. With four acres of frontage, Simon became the legal neighbor of Maurice Arrivé, and at each feast of St. Remy, that is the first day of October, he would have to pay 4 pounds of land tax and 48 pennies to his landlord Charles de Lauzon, the lord of Charny and Lirec.

Eventually, Maurice Arrivé began to contemplate retirement and with no children of his own, he sold part of his farm to Simon. By 1667, Simon had twenty-five acres under cultivation and fourteen animals in his barn – an obvious success and a testament to his hard work, though he could neither read nor write. Meanwhile, Simon and Suzanne had seven children – Marie (1658), Pierre (1661), Catherine (1663), Catherine (1664), Anne (1665), Sixte (1667), and Madeleine (1669); both Catherines died within just days of their births.

In 1670, Suzanne's mother Jacqueline died and Suzanne inherited another acre and a half of land. A few months later, Simon became ill and checked himself into the Hôtel-Dieu, the hospital in Quebec City, where he was attended by a surgeon. On November 2, 1670, from his hospital bed, Simon took part in the reading of the marriage contract for his older daughter, Marie. Ten days later, he gave his last breath after entrusting his final wishes to Father Charles of Lauzon-Charny. History has left us no documents concerning Simon's burial.

As for Suzanne, she then married again to another pioneer emigrant from France named Robert Coutard, and bore him an additional five children. Coutard for his part helped raise the younger Lereau children, and Suzanne made sure that they would share in her and Simon's estate after her death, which was said to have occurred on November 1, 1694.

Interestingly, since Simon's last name was written by several different people as they thought they heard it pronounced, it carried various spellings on different legal documents, including Lereau, Lerreau, Laireau, Leureau, and Lhéros.

Pierre Lereau (1661 – 1711)

Pierre Lereau was born in 1661, the oldest son of the original pioneer Simon Lereau and his wife Suzanne Jarroussel. His baptism would have taken place before church records were available. He would have grown up helping his father on the farm on the island of Orleans in Quebec.

The big concern and discussion topic at the time was the British. The population in New France in 1680 was not quite 10,000 people, whereas the British settlers to the south numbered over 200,000. The French-Canadiens were very aware of those overwhelming numbers and the French monarch Louis XIV was concerned enough about the lack of French settlers that he sponsored a program to entice French women to emigrate to New France to help expand the population. These women were called “Les Filles du Roi” (the King’s Daughters), and the King paid for their one-way travel to New France and endowed them each with a dowry. Between 1663 and 1673, it is estimated that approximately 800 women took advantage of the king’s sponsorship. But it was too little, too late; the British continued to vastly outnumber the French in North America.

In January 1687, Pierre signed up to be a sailor with the Compagnie du Nord. The Compagnie du Nord (also referred to as the Northern Company) was a French colonial fur-trading company, founded in Québec City in 1682 by a group of Canadian financiers with the express intent of competing in the beaver pelt business with the English Hudson Bay Company. They did not compete simply in the business sense; they also attacked outposts of the Hudson Bay Company and took prisoners in order to attempt to drive the British out of what they felt was French territory. In that sense, Pierre was probably somewhat of an adventurer, and he may have felt some pride that he was doing his part to try to keep the British in check. But the costly military expeditions, along with ruinous taxation, bankrupted the Compagnie du Nord by 1700.

On February 7, 1689, in Notre Dame Basilica in Quebec, Father François Dupré officiated as 28-year-old Pierre arrived from Holy Family parish to marry Marguerite Badeau. She was the daughter of Jean Badeau and Marguerite Chalifour, and she was not yet sixteen years old at the time of the wedding. Like his father Simon (and all the other men at the wedding), Pierre was illiterate and was unable to sign the marriage record.

Together, Pierre and Marguerite settled in Charlesbourg and had twelve children that included two sets of twins – Pierre (1689), Angélique (1691), Madeleine (1694), François and Louise (1697), Thérèse (1699), Simon (1701), Simon (1703), Marguerite and Catherine (1706), Joseph-François (1708), and Joséphe (1710). It would have been a busy household ...

... and a short-lived one. Marguerite died at age 38 of unspecified causes in May of 1711, leaving Pierre to provide and care for a house full of children – four of them being five years old and younger. But then only months later, he was crushed to death under a stack of hay on November 23 and buried in Charlesbourg. Documents do not state what happened to his children after that, though it may be assumed that the older ones stepped in to care for their younger siblings.

While some researchers have opted to spell the family name for Pierre as Lheros or L’Herault, the spelling in his actual historical documents was universally Lereau, except for when it was spelled Lhereau in his wife’s church burial record.

Pierre Lereau (1689 – 1771)

Pierre Lereau was the oldest child of Pierre Lereau and Marguerite Badeau. He was born in Charlesbourg on December 8, 1689 and was baptized that same day at Notre-Dame-des-Anges in the city of Quebec by Father François Dupré, a priest of Quebec. Pierre's godparents were Jean Badeau and Françoise-Genevieve de la Durantaye, and what was notable was that they were both able to sign the baptism register!

Pierre was twenty-three years old when he married Marie Dumont on October 24, 1712 in Charlesbourg before Father Boullanger, almost a year after his father Pierre had died. Marie was nineteen years old and the daughter of Jean Dumont and Marguerite Morin of Charlesbourg.

It's hoped that Pierre and his wife helped to take care of his younger siblings, but they also created a rather large family of their own. Together they had seventeen children: Marguerite (1713), Louise (1715), Pierre (1716), Charles (1717), François-Michel (1718), Madeleine (1720), twins Louise and Josèphe (1722), Thomas (1723), Charles (1724), Louis (1726), Jean-Charles (1727), Angélique (1728), Louise (1730), Joseph (1731), Angélique (1733), and Antoine (1736). Pierre and Marie continued what appeared to be the custom of re-using the same name if the earlier child did not survive long. The name Louise was particularly unlucky for Pierre and Marie; the third and longest living child by that name made it only to the age of four.

Marie died on November 1, 1749 at the age of 56 in Charlesbourg and was buried there the following day. Pierre outlived her by over twenty years; he died on February 11, 1771 at the ripe old age of 82 in Charlesbourg and was buried there two days later.

Lereau was the spelling used in Pierre's historical documents, except for his burial record in which it was spelled Lheros, and in Marie's burial record where it was spelled Leros.

Pierre Lheros (1716 – 1770)

Pierre was born in Charlesbourg on March 15, 1716 and was baptized that same day. He was the oldest son of Pierre Lereau and Marie Dumont, and the third ancestor in a row to be named Pierre, though his family name was spelled Lheros in his church baptism record.

On January 4, 1739, when he was 23 years old, Pierre signed a marriage contract with Françoise Falardeau, and on January 19 they were married in St.-Charles church in Charlesbourg. Françoise was also 23 years old and the daughter of Guillaume Falardeau and Ambroise Bergevin from within the parish.

Together, Pierre and Françoise had eleven children: Louis (1737), Françoise (1739), Josephte (1741), Pierre (1743), Marguerite (1745), Ignace (1746), Jean-Charles (1748), Charles (1751), François (1753), Jean (1755), and Louis (1764). It's interesting to see some of the same names used over and over again across generations.

Pierre died on February 9, 1770 in Charlesbourg at age 54 and was buried there the next day. It might be supposed that his father Pierre had been at his funeral since he was still alive. Pierre's widow Françoise survived for another six years but did not remarry. She passed away on June 16, 1776 and was buried the next day in Charlesbourg. It's interesting that only weeks later, history was made several hundred miles to the south with the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

In addition to the spelling Lheros on Pierre's baptism record, the spellings of Lereaux and Lhereau were also used on other historical documents.

François L'heros (1753 – 1814)

François was the third youngest of the children of Pierre Lheros, born on January 27, 1753 in Charlesbourg and baptized the following day. His baptism record for the first time clearly indicated an apostrophe in the name.

François would be my first L'Heureux ancestor to spend most of his life under British rather than French rule. The British population in North America had long outnumbered the French by a factor of at least ten to one, and by 1770, the British had seized Quebec for King George III of Great Britain, and France had capitulated, ceding its holdings to the British. However, instead of forcing its language and customs on Quebec, the British governor of the newly formed Province of Quebec guaranteed the French-Canadiens their traditional rights and customs, and the Quebec Act of 1774 further codified that practice. Lest anyone feel that the British were therefore forward thinking and liberal, it should be understood that they were seeking to mollify the French-Canadiens and secure their allegiance against the growing unrest in the British colonies to the south. But the point is that, for François, life did not significantly change under British rule.

On November 20, 1780, François exchanged wedding vows in St-Charles church with Magdeleine Bedard, a seventeen-year-old girl from Charlesbourg, ten years his junior. Her parents were François Bedard and Magdeleine Jobin. Both sets of parents were in attendance at the wedding, as were several siblings of both the bride and groom. It should be noted that after the ceremony, while François marked the marriage record above his name with an "X", his new bride was able to sign her name.

Records would suggest that François was a farmer, which was likely the case for most of his siblings and predecessors. But unlike them, he and Magdeleine had a relatively small family with only six children: François (1785), Marguerite (1786), Joseph (1787), Jean (1795), Louise (1798), and Pierre (1802).

At some time around 1800, the family relocated to Jeune Lorette (now Loretteville) in Quebec, which is where François died at age 61 on December 28, 1814. His funeral and burial at St.-Ambroise were the following day. Magdeleine never remarried; she died on February 25, 1830 and was buried at St-Ambroise two days later.

Other spellings used for François in his historical documents included Lheros and Lheuraux.

Joseph Lheureux (1787 – 1859)

Joseph was the third of six children, born to François L'heros and Magdeleine Bedard on October 11, 1787 in Charlesbourg, Quebec. He was baptized that same day, but the priest might have been a bit confused because he apparently wrote up the baptism record as if Joseph had been a baby girl – Marie Josephthe Lheureux. (Josephthe is a female form of Joseph, and most baby girls were honorarily conferred with the first name of Marie.)

While still a teenager, Joseph moved with his family to Jeune Lorette (now Loretteville), where he likely continued the family tradition of farming.

On the 18th of January, 1819, Joseph, aged 32, signed a marriage contract to wed Genevieve Savard, the 22-year-old daughter of fellow farmer Pierre Savard and Genevieve Tardif Paradis. It's interesting that on the same day, another Savard/L'héro couple also signed a marriage contract – Joseph Savard and Louise L'héro, who were Genevieve Savard's older brother and Joseph L'héro's younger sister. The following day, the notary also documented a gift made by Magdeleine Bedard to her son Joseph L'héro, probably in celebration of his wedding. The double wedding took place on January 26, 1819 in St. Ambroise church in Jeune Lorette (Loretteville), Quebec. It must have been a big affair! Too bad Joseph's father couldn't have been there; he had died five years earlier.

Joseph Lheureux and Genevieve Savard stayed in Loretteville and had eight children: Genevieve (1820), Madeleine (1821), Joseph (1823), François Xavier (1824), Louis (1827), Ferdinand (1827), Marie (1829), and Jean Baptiste (1830).

Joseph died on March 3, 1859 in Loretteville and was buried at St. Ambroise two days later. While the church burial record placed his age at his death as 65, he was actually 71½. Genevieve lived on in Loretteville until her death on September 23, 1867 at age 70.

Genevieve's burial record for the first time spells her husband's last name as L'heureux, with the apostrophe. Other spellings used in their official documents included Lheureux, L'hérault, Lereau, and L'héro.

Joseph L'hérault (1823 – 1876)

Joseph L'hérault, the oldest son of Joseph Lheureux and Genevieve Savard, was born in Loretteville on January 14, 1823 and was baptized that same day at St. Ambroise church. As he grew older, he followed his father into farming.

On July 8, 1850, Joseph signed a marriage contract with Magdeleine Estiambre, the 24-year-old daughter of Pierre Estiambre and Louise Falardeau of Loretteville. Eight days later, they were wed at St. Ambroise church in Loretteville. The marriage had required a dispensation from the diocese of Quebec because Joseph and Magdeleine were related by consanguinity to the fourth degree; they both had Pierre Lereau and Marie Dumont as great-great-grandparents. This type of dispensation was not all that uncommon in Quebec because the population was relatively small, restricting the pool of available people to marry.

Another interesting thing is that Magdeleine's father was actually known as Pierre Estiambre dit Sansfaçon. The "dit Sansfaçon" (literally, "pronounced Sansfaçon") meant that he could also be called by that name as well as his family name Estiambre. As a result, some documents might refer to him as Pierre Estiambre and others as Pierre Sansfaçon. Because she was his daughter, her name also became Magdeleine Estiambre dit Sansfaçon. While "sansfaçon" translates as "simple" or "without flourish", that family designation actually went back several generations and probably originally referred to one of Pierre Estiambre's ancestors.

Simple or not, Magdeleine bore Joseph nine children: Octave (1852), Jean Baptiste (1855), Narcisse (1857), Marie (1858), twins Adelaide and Onesime (1860), Zoe (1863), Alexandrine (1864), and Philomene (1865).

At some point, the family moved to St. Norbert d'Arthabaska in Quebec province, where on April 20th, the notary recorded that both Joseph and Magdeleine had made out their wills, so Joseph probably knew that his death was imminent. He died on May 8, 1876 and was buried two days later. His church burial record spelled his name L'Heureux – probably the first time that it was spelled as we recognize it now.

It's uncertain when Magdeleine died, though it appears that she was alive in 1884 when her son Narcisse was married.

Besides Joseph's baptism spelling of L'hérault, the spellings of L'Heureux and L'hereault also appeared in his historical documents.

Narcisse Lheureux (1857 – 1933)

Narcisse Lheureux was born on July 31, 1857 in Loretteville, Québec to Joseph and Magdeleine Louise (née Estiambre dit Sansfaçon) Lheureux. He was baptized the next day at St-Ambroise-de-la-Jeune-Lorette in Québec. Little is known of Narcisse's early life, but to no surprise, he eventually became a farmer.

Lumina Marie Savoie was born on February 19, 1865 to Edouard and Adele (née Vaillancourt) Savoie, and was baptized the following day at St-Norbert d'Arthabaska, Québec. Not unusually, Edouard was unable to sign the record. Little is known about Lumina's early life, but her father was a farmer, and she lived on the farm with her parents and siblings in Chester Ward, Arthabaska, Québec.

On July 8, 1884, 27-year-old Narcisse married Lumina Marie Savoie at St-Norbert d'Arthabaska when she was 19 years old. Narcisse's father Joseph would not have been there since he had passed away in 1876, but his mother was alive and, in all likelihood, would have been there. Witnesses included Lumina's father Edouard and Jacques Boudreau, a friend of the groom, though neither of them was able to sign the marriage record.

In 1885, Narcisse and Lumina's first child was born and Narcisse was the name that they bestowed on him. Documents cite that Narcisse was a farmer, but most farming in Quebec at the end of the 19th century was subsistence farming, which involved trying to grow a variety of small crops for family consumption. It was hard work, it was inefficient, and with a growing family it was difficult to grow enough food. It wasn't long after the younger Narcisse was born that the family moved to Connecticut in the U.S. The reason for the move is unknown and undocumented, but Narcisse might have been coaxed to come to Connecticut by his older brother Joseph-Octave, who had preceded him there to take advantage of the booming industry in New England that promised jobs and higher wages.

One example of the industrial boom was the Seymour Manufacturing Company. The company had been organized in 1878 by Waterbury, Connecticut natives Horace Buckingham and William H.H. Wooster. The brothers had established their mill along the banks of the Naugatuck River in Seymour, Connecticut, where, like many other firms located in the Naugatuck River Valley at the time, they began manufacturing and processing nonferrous metal goods. Profitable from early on, the company was incorporated on May 6, 1880 with a capital stock of \$30,000. By 1882, this had already more than doubled as the firm made its steady rise to national prominence in its field. Shortly thereafter, Narcisse, now often called Nelson in Connecticut's English-speaking environment, joined his older brother Joseph-Octave in working for the Seymour Manufacturing.

Narcisse's second son George was born in 1887 in Seymour, Connecticut, my first L'Heureux ancestor to be born a U.S. citizen. Births of Rosa, Emma and William followed in 1889, 1890 and 1892 before Narcisse inexplicably decided in 1893 to move his family back to Arthabaska, Quebec. Several more Canadian-born children followed: Albert (1894), Lumina (1896), Wilfred (1897), Rosaire (1899), Henry (1901), Lucien (1902), Emile Donat (1904), and Diana (1905).

But it's hardly likely that their return to subsistence farming in Quebec would be any more fruitful than it had been before. In 1905, only a couple of months after Diana's birth, Narcisse chose to emigrate to the U.S. once again with his family, coming across the border to Island Pond, Vermont on the Grand Trunk Railway. He probably continued on that rail spur to Portland, Maine, ultimately arriving in

Sanford, Maine, which was ripe with expansion and a growing French-Canadian population. He and Lumina then had three additional children: twins Rosilda and Louise (1907), and Joseph Willie (1909).

It's interesting that the 1901 Canadian census showed Narcisse as being able to read and write. The 1910 U.S. census showed that he could speak English, though his wife could not. But the 1920 U.S. census said that Narcisse could neither read nor write, which appeared to contradict the 1901 Canadian



census. The difference probably lies in what language he could read and write. Reading and writing in French was probably fine for literacy in Canada, but not being able to read and write in English probably failed the test for literacy in the U.S.

On February 25, 1910, Narcisse took the important step of applying to become a U.S. citizen, and by July 1st of that year, he was naturalized. He had a medium complexion, dark brown hair and brown eyes, and stood 6 feet and one-half inch tall, but weighed only 165 pounds – a regular beanpole. At the time, he and Lumina were living at 1 Thompson Street in Sanford, and he was working as a “Dryer” in

Sanford’s woolen mills. Then in about 1921, he and Lumina bought a home at 15 Lebanon Street in Sanford, and by about 1923, he had taken a job as an elevator operator at the Goodall Worsted Mill, a major weaving mill in town. He retired from that job in about 1931; he would have been 74 years old.

Narcisse died a couple of years later on April 4, 1933 and was buried in the St. Ignatius cemetery in Sanford. Lumina continued to reside in her home on Lebanon Street, which served as the epicenter of a huge L’Heureux family reunion in 1939. She lived there with her daughter Diana until 1941, when she moved in with her daughter Emma (Mrs. James Gauthier) at 9A Payne Street in Springvale. When Lumina passed away on July 20, 1943, she was buried next to her husband Narcisse.

While initially baptized as Lheureux, by the time of his death Narcisse’s last name had evolved from Lheureux to l’Heureux and into the now more familiar L’Heureux. But whereas most evolutionary changes to the surname involved variations in spelling, one of the changes in Narcisse’s surname took the more unusual route of varying his last name on the basis of its translation:

Narcisse’s son George was born in Oxford, Connecticut on May 25, 1887 and was baptized on June 5. It’s interesting to note that a birth certificate for George had never been unearthed, but not for lack of trying. The appropriate agencies in Oxford and nearby Seymour had been asked on more than one occasion for a copy of the birth certificate but had been unable to find one. For all we know, perhaps George was born at home and his parents simply failed to apprise the civil authorities. But George’s baptism a week and a half later at Saint Augustine Church in Seymour, Connecticut provided proof of his birth and evidence of a new surname.

A copy of George's baptism certificate that was requested in 1944 showed his name to be George Hepe (L'Heureux), with his father's name being Nelson Hepe and his mother Mary L. Savoie. His baptism sponsors were shown as Joseph and Hedwig Hepe, who would have been Narcisse's brother Joseph-Octave and his wife Hedwig Hamel.

As further evidence of this apparent surname translation, Narcisse and Joseph were listed in the 1890 and 1891 Seymour town directories as Nelson Happy and Joseph Happy, employees of the Seymour Manufacturing Company. Interestingly, Joseph and Hedwig continued to use the surname Happy in the 1900, 1910 and 1920 U.S. censuses, which listed them as living in New Haven, Connecticut with the names Joseph Happy and Mary H. Happy and their individually-listed Happy children. So the names Happy and Hepe do not seem to have been used accidentally, or if they were, my L'Heureux ancestors in Connecticut saw no need to try to correct them and simply adopted them while living among their more anglicized neighbors.

In 1893, Narcisse moved his family back to Canada and reclaimed the name L'Heureux, but then returned to the U.S. in 1905 when he relocated his family to Sanford, Maine. The town of Sanford had been settled and built up by English-speaking people, starting in 1661 when it was known as Phillipstown. By the late 1800s, advantaged by its river-sourced power and the entrepreneurship of the Goodall family, Sanford was thriving by manufacturing textiles in large mills. These mills provided numerous good-paying jobs – a serious attraction for workers, many of whom were Canadian or of Canadian descent. By the time Narcisse and Lumina had moved their family to Sanford, there was probably a large enough French-speaking population to make Narcisse comfortable with maintaining the use of his French surname.

