Gentilly Township

Gentilly Township and Gentilly, the settlement village, in Polk County are made up mainly of descendants of the French Canadians who settled here in large numbers during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Nobody seems to know how the township or village got its name, but it most likely was named after Gentilly, Quebec, Canada where some of the early settlers came from.

The village of Gentilly is built along the Gentilly Creek which is one of the natural drainage systems of part of the township. There is also another natural coulee north and east of the village of Gentilly that is a natural drainage system. The natural elevation drop across the township linked with road and drainage ditches makes for a well drained township.

Gentilly township lies in the ancient bed of Lake Agassiz and the eastern part of the township makes up part of the Campbell Beaches. It has more types of soil than most townships. The soils range from rocky, sand, and gravel to heavy clay with fine black top soil, which is some of the finest land in the Valley.

The Pembina oxcart trail that crossed the Red Lake River at Huot headed across Gentilly Township in a southeasterly direction.

In 1873 a petition was signed to organize the township of Gentilly in Polk County. In 1874 the outline sections of Gentilly Township were surveyed. There were two different groups of surveyors that surveyed the township. The second group finished the township surveying a few years later.

In the spring of 1876 Joseph Beaudette came to the Red River Valley with some fifteen others, driving a team from St. Paul to Red Lake Falls. He took a claim of 160 acres in what is now Gentilly Township and put up a claim shanty. This is the first legal record of a claim and is recorded on page 475 in the Album of Biography by the Alden Egle Company in 1889.

In 1878 the township of Gentilly was formally organized. Joseph Beaudette not only had the first claim shanty in Gentilly Township, but also had the first Homestead Patent in Polk County for Gentilly Township. (Homestead Patent dated September 4, 1879 — Whereby the United States of America gave and granted to Joseph Beaudette and his heirs and assigns the northeast quarter of section 30 in township of Gentilly 150 N. Range 45 W.Filed for record March 1, 1880 — Book of Deeds, page 328.)

In 1879 J. B. Bottineau, son of famous Pierre Bottineau, brought 119 French families to settle in Gentilly Township and the Red Lake Falls area. Some of the prominent first settlers were Joseph Beaudette, Edward Lancot, Chas. Regimbal, Joseph Suave, Joseph Lafortune, Ted Are, Basil Dufault, J. B. Dufault, Joseph Martel, Frs Pinsenanteau, Remi Fortier, and others. Some of the settlers homesteaded and others purchased land that was the odd sections from the Railroad Land Grant. After a dispute of title on the railroad land was settled in favor of the railroad, the railroad land was taken up fast.

Gentilly the inland village was a rest stop and a change over for horses for the stage line. The stage hauled passengers and mail seven days a week, weather permitting, from Crookston via Louisville on the east side of the river to Red Lake Falls. The Gentilly stop had a saloon, and eating and sleeping accommodations.

The first school was organized in the village February 4, 1880 and continued to operate until 1970. This school lasted longer than any other school located in the township. Most of the township schools consolidated with the Gentilly village school which had an average of 42 pupils in attendance from 1901-1969 when the school consolidated with the Crookston Public School system. The five school districts in the township were districts 1609, 1617, 153, 191, and 1665.

Rev. Theillon promoted diversified farming in Gentilly Township and started the Gentilly Dairy Cooperative. A cheese factory was built in the village and in the fall of 1895 went into production. Gentilly cheese took first prize at the Minnesota State Fair and also at the Dakota State Fair at Grand Forks, beating all old established cheeses. Cheese was made until 1948 when the Gentilly Dairy Association stopped making cheese. There is still some dairying in the township but most farmers now grow grain and some row crops.

A quiet winter day in Gentilly about 1908. Note the frame church in distance.


SAINT PETER PARISH HISTORY, GENTILLY

The French were possibly the first white men to tread the Pembina Trail which then wound its way over the present territory of St. Peter's Parish of Gentilly.

But it appears that no permanent settlement of the white man was made until after the Old Crossing Treaty at the Red Lake River in 1863.

Bishop L. LaFleche of Three Rivers, Quebec, Canada, traveled from Fort Gary, Manitoba, along the Red River down to the Minnesota River in 1868, attending to the spiritual needs of the fur traders, some of them very likely to Polk County.

It is possible that settlers who came from the Parish of Gentilly on the right bank of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec gave this name to their new hamlet seven miles east of Crookston.

The first pastor and missionary of Red Lake Falls, Pierre B. Champagne, celebrated the first Mass in the Gentilly schoolhouse in 1880.

A small chapel and modest rectory were constructed in 1882, under the direction of Father Alexander Bouchard, the first resident pastor.

Father Clement Gamache enlarged the church in 1885. The parish at that time counted 118 families, comprising 769 souls, all of French-Canadian nationality except two Irish families.

Bishop Rupert Seidenbusch of St. Cloud was the first Bishop to visit Gentilly in 1882. He confirmed 25 of the faithful in
1884.

A cavalcade of 39 horsemen greeted Bishop James McGolrick of Duluth as he and Father E. Fayolle of Crookston were driving to Gentilly for the confirmation ceremony, June 16, 1890. When the procession arrived in the village, decorated with green branches and flowers, some 600 faithful knelt down for the episcopal blessing, and then acclaimed the bishop with cheers, the explosion of giant firecrackers and the peals of the church bell. 115 children were confirmed that morning.

The cavalcade again formed ranks in the afternoon to conduct the bishop and the clergy to the mission of Louisville where they were met by another escort of 30 horsemen.

FATHER ELIE THEILLON

On a chilly, dark day in November, 1888, a young priest ordained six years before in southern France, arrived in poverty-stricken Gentilly.

Dejected people, mortgaged farms and the exodus of families to Yakima, Washington or back to Canada — these dishheartening conditions faced Father Elie Theillon.

Realizing the possible crumbling of the parish within a few years, theundaunted pastor studied the problems affecting the farm population.

Elie Theillon had been reared in a dairying sector in France. He knew the benefits of mixed farming, and like most Frenchmen, he was a connoisseur of cheese.

The young pastor, after months of study of the local agricultural methods, launched a campaign of diversified farming. He explained the necessity of rotating small grain seeding with corn planting or other herbs, because of the light soil. He then induced the farmers to devote more of their acreage to milking cows and the construction of suitable shelters for the animals.

In 1890 the smiling priest proposed to the destitute farmers the setting up of a cheese factory in Gentilly.

undaunted by the doubtful attitude of many of his parishioners, Father Theillon, with the assistance of the village storekeeper, H. T. Gendron, initiated the cooperative enterprise which in the course of years became a remarkable example of community solidarity and prosperity.

The parish priest and the storekeeper toured the countryside by horse and buggy over rough and muddy trails, discussing the venture of a cheese factory with the farmers. Taking a census of the milking cows in the community, the farsighted pastor lent some of his savings to help his people purchase more cows.

On April 29, 1895 plans for a cheese factory were discussed at the first meeting of a group to be known as the “Gentilly Dairy Association.” Later in the summer a bank loan in the amount of $1,000.00 was taken out for the construction of a modest structure for cheese production.

Organized on a cooperative basis, this rural association soon proved to be a very successful and competitive enterprise. Of the five cheese factories in Polk County when it first began production in the fall of 1895, the Gentilly cheese factory was the only one operating in the County by 1915.

The cooperative from its very beginning was fortunate in employing excellent cheese-makers. Gentilly’s “First Premium Cheese” won the annual Minnesota Dairy and Food Commission award for the best cheese produced in the state for many years, and also the top prize at the Minnesota State Fair and other smaller expositions. Gabriel Bernou, whose brilliant career was interrupted by an untimely death in 1924, gained a wide reputation for the excellence of his cheese.

Before accepting the role of the manager of the Gentilly cooperative, Father Theillon, through the request of his bishop, obtained a dispensation from Rome authorizing him to engage in business. One of his best known activities as manager of this rural cooperative was the nationwide promotion of the “Gentilly Premium Cheese”.

Traveling extensively by train he conducted a business that spread from Chicago to Montana and points south. A personal friend of the railroad magnate, James J. Hill, and of other influential people, he marketed his cheese through reputable firms.

A guest at city hotels, he demanded “apple pie and a piece of Gentilly cheese.” “What no Gentilly cheese? It is the best in the world. Bring me the manager”, in his unmistakable French accent.

Thus he sold the product of the factory to large hotels and to the dining car service of railroads. And the cheese proved all that he claimed for it. In the year 1930 the product of the small cooperative brought a higher average price at 19.6 cents a pound than in any other county of the state. The 44 co-op
members divided more than $25,000, the produce of their 350 cows for the year.

Thanks to the leadership and shrewdness of Father Theillon, the once poorest township in the county gained the reputation of being the leading farming area in northwestern Minnesota with its comfortable homes, modern barns and high grade livestock. His parishioners were counseled unceasingly on the value of thrift. When a member of the cheese cooperative needed money in advance of the fall dividend he had to come to the manager personally for the loan. As the pastor of the parish, the manager also deducted the annual church pew rent from the dividend.

For more than fifty years the spoken language in the Gentilly community was mostly French. Services, instructions, confessions, business transactions were all in French. The good and charitable priest loved his people. "Quel peuple!" he would say with a smile.

A beautiful brick church in modified Gothic structure and its graceful spire dominate the peaceful village and the neighboring farms, a monument to a life time of service to the flock of Saint Peter's parish.

Fathers John J. T. Philippe and Victor Cardin, the successors of "Father Theillon," have, with continued repairs and improvements, preserved not only the "White House" of Gentilly and the towering church, but also the memory of a resourceful and devoted priest. May Father Elie Theillon who left this world on December 4, 1935 enjoy his eternal reward.

J. B. AMIOT

J. B. Amiot was born in 1852 in Quebec, Canada and came to Minnesota in 1878 to homestead on Section 12 of Gentilly Township in Polk County. He and his wife, the former Celina Bouthiller, were born in St. Turban, Quebec, Canada in 1852.

Grandfather, Joseph Amiot, was born in 1881 and was one of the thirteen children of the Amiot's. He was 17 when his father died. The family stayed together and the boys helped with the farming. Joseph stayed at home until 1904 when he married Olive Fortier whose parents came from Canada about the same time the Amiot's and La Bonte's came.

Joseph Amiot rented land for a few years and then in 1913 he bought land on Section 11. In the early years a granary was built and used for a house. Each boy was given an ax to cut down trees in order to clear the land to build their home.

The children in the Joseph Amiot family were Theodore, Delia, Arthur, Napoleon, Olivine, and Anna. It was a lot of hard work to clear the land. The Amiot's always had cattle, horses, hogs and chickens. Most of the farmers raised their own food. The crops raised were potatoes, wheat, barley, rye and flax.

The first car the Amiot's had was a 1917 Baby Grand Touring Chevrolet. It had to be cranked in the front, to get it started. It had "Presto" lights which had to be lit with a match. They were gas lights. The top came down as the tops on our convertibles do today. The tires lasted for only two thousand miles.

Grandfather Amiot was on the school board for many years. He was also on the township board for 31 years, and was treasurer for the Catholic Order of Foresters for 25 years.

The boys played baseball on Sundays in the summer because that was the only day they didn't have to work. In the winter the family played cards and other games. When the boys were old enough, they helped their Dad to hitch the horses and get cornstalks and hay to the cattle. When the boys grew older, many took horses and bobsled to get wood for their stove. Some winters when the snow was very deep, the horses would travel in snow up to their necks. They had to go about three miles to get the wood. This trip took them between a-half to an hour to cover those miles with the horses they would take their dinner with them; but by dinner time the sandwiches would be frozen and had to be put on a stick and thawed out over a bonfire. They had to keep busy chopping wood in order to keep warm.

Arthur Amiot was married to Jeanette DuFaut on August 26, 1940 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Crookston. In 1941 they bought a quarter of land on S.E. Quarter, Section 4 Fairfax Township. This is the land on which they still reside. He moved on this quarter in 1942. On September 4, 1943, I was born. Then on September 21, 1947, my brother Roger was born. In 1950 an addition was built on to the house. In 1956 and 1964 my Dad bought two more quarters of land. My brother, Roger, and I helped farm the land with Dad until he retired and rented it out.

These are the community activities that my father, Arthur Amiot, was involved in. He was a member of the school board for 10 years, President and linenman of the Riverside Co-op Telephone Company, Township assessor for 10 years, crop reporter for ASC for 12 years. Director for Gentilly Farmers Mutual Insurance Company and Waseca Insurance Company, Director and President of the Crookston Conservation Club, Recording Secretary for the Catholic Order of Foresters, Senior Counselor of UCT, Knights of Columbus, Eagles, Elks, Kittson Community Club, Captain on the Bowling Team, and Church Usher.

These are the activities of my mother, Jeannette Amiot. Graduated from Bemidji State University, member of the Alpha Delta Kappa, member and historian of AAW, Catholic Daughters, Fairfax Homemakers, MEA, NEA, CEA, and UCT Auxiliary.

My brother, Roger, graduated from Bemidji State University. His wife Rita graduated from the University of North Dakota. They have two children, Charles and Robby. Roger and his family live in Grafton, North Dakota where he teaches Business Education and is in charge of the Yearbook. Rita works at the Squire Shop in Grafton.

I graduated from Mayville State College and my husband Robert graduated from Moorhead State College. We are both teachers. I teach fourth grade and Bob teaches fifth grade in Fertile, Minnesota. He is also the assistant wrestling coach there. We have two children, Jennifer and Christopher.

MR. AND MRS. ROGER AMIOT

Mr. and Mrs. Roger Amiot were married July 20, 1968 at the Cathedral in Crookston, Minnesota.

Roger Amiot, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Amiot, was born September 21, 1947 in Crookston. He graduated from Cathedral High School in 1965. Roger helped his father with farming and spent his spare time with motorcycles and cars. He was also active as a 4-H member, receiving his Key Award. Roger has one older sister, Janet Amiot Thorson.

Roger attended St. John's University for one year, the University of North Dakota for two years, and graduated from Bemidji State University in 1969 with a Bachelor of Science degree in business education.

Since then he has been teaching typing and accounting in the Grafton, North Dakota High School. Roger is a member of the National Guard and is also the yearbook advisor for the senior high school.

Rita Capistran, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albany Capistran was born August 28, 1950. She has two older brothers, Wayne and James Capistran. During grade school and high school years, Rita became very involved with baton twirling and participated in many international baton contests, winning many trophies and medals. Rita began teaching baton in Crookston in 1965. She became an accredited baton teacher and judge with the National Baton Twirling Association. Since then she has been very active in teaching and judging baton contests all over the U.S. and Canada. She has taught in the following area
Mr. and Mrs. Roger Amot
Charles and Robby.

The eighteen children of Mr. and Mrs. Toussaint Brule.

5'1" and the boys not more than 5'5".

Mother was the quiet type, unlike Dad who was always full of stories. Her ironing was done by folding the more simple pieces and sitting on them while she mended or tatted. Tatting was her favorite hobby. Mother heated the coals and bricks to put in the sleighs when the girls were getting ready to go to dances in the winter. If, when the children were younger, she heard an owl hooting she would count her chickens like a good mother hen that she was. She thought her chicks were lost and were crying for help. She passed away suddenly at 75 years of age.

We had our own entertainment at home. Almost every Sunday friends came to our home after church for dinner. In summer, there were horseshoe and ball games; in winter, card playing and popping corn. There were some who were musical and the talent passed to the future generations. Some had their own orchestra, as Leo Dufault and Lillian Kelly have.

The family was very fortunate in not losing anyone during the Wars: however, Joseph was wounded in the First World War.

The family is pretty well scattered about now with one sister in Canada. Marie returned to her home land after coming to Minnesota with two other sisters. Laurie, Mrs. William Brunelle, and Lucien Brule are in Yakima, Washington; and Euchariste is in Portland, Oregon. Villa Brule, Melvina, Mrs. Joseph Brunelle, Edna, Mrs. Eldage Brule, are in Crookston, Minnesota and Alice, Mrs. Glenn Smith, in Park Rapids, Minnesota: Mrs. Caroline Brule, the oldest brother's wife, is still living at the age of 90 in Gentilly, Minnesota, not far from where the family was raised.

MR. AND MRS. ALBANY CAPISTRAN

Albany Capistran and Rana Gullingsrud were married June 18, 1941 at the Cathedral in Crookston, Minnesota. They farmed west of Crookston from then until 1946 when they bought a farm in Gentilly township where they now reside.

Albany was born February 28, 1911 at Crookston, Minnesota to Mr. and Mrs. Ben Capistran, early pioneers in that community. His father had come here with his parents and family from Sorel, Quebec in 1883 and his mother's family Mr. and Mrs. John Conneran, from New Jersey in 1879. They farmed in the Crookston area all their married lives.

Albany graduated from Crookston Central High School in 1930. He was very active in 4-H Club work winning state championships and going on to national competition in Chicago. Later he became interested in local history and is a director of the Polk County Historical Society and the Red River Valley Historical Society. In that capacity he has given lectures at schools and other gatherings.

Albany, together with his brother Virgil, farmed extensively and were later joined by Albany's son, Wayne. In early years they raised a lot of hogs and had a large milking herd. When they quit that, Albany raised potatoes, but later went to strictly grain farming. During the wet years Albany invented a swath lifter which helped save the grain and is still in use today. They were also among the first to have a grain dryer in the area.

Rana Gullingsrud was born near Goodridge, Minnesota on

communities: Climax, McIntosh, Fosston, Fertile, Grand Forks, Bemidji, Grafton, and Stephen.

Rita is also involved in other activities: piano, trombone in the high school band as well as majorette, dance, tap, and ballet. She was a 4-H member and received the Key Award.

After graduation from Central High School in 1968, she attended one year of college at Bemidji State University. She then attended one year at the U of M Technical College and received an associate degree in Fashion Merchandising. From there she attended the University of North Dakota and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Distributive Education.

Since graduation from college, Rita spent one year substitute teaching and three years working at the Squire Shop in Grafton, N.D. working as merchandise manager and buyer. In Grafton, she is involved with teaching baton, homemakers, bridge club, and sports.


TOUSSAINT BRULE

Toussaint Brule was born in 1856 and was married to Marie Louise Morrel when she was twenty and he was twenty-three. They came from St. Barthelimi, Canada with thirteen children; two grandparents; his sister and three of her children. Dad said they came to Gentilly, Minnesota, because the farms in Canada were too small to raise a large family and he had heard what good land there was here. He bought a 240-acre farm which now belongs to Phillip Dufault. They lived in a log cabin. This log cabin was filled with bed bugs and by 1901, they built a spacious home. Five more children were born, no twins. Mother never had a doctor, always midwives. There were ten girls and eight boys of whom eight are now living. Adrienne, who would have been 91 on October 1, 1975 has passed away. These Brules have thirty-one grandchildren and one hundred seventy-five great-grandchildren besides many great-great-grandchildren. Most of the boys were farmers, two barbers, and six of the girls learned dressmaking. I, Alice, worked at the Agriculture College in Crookston where I met Glenn Smith. We were married in 1930. Melvina and Laurie married Joseph and William Brunelle. Joseph and Willard Brunelle family had an almost tragic incident. They were caught in a flash flood on the Robert Larson farm. Many sheep were lost at the time. Five Brules married five Dufaults, maybe because it was during the horse and buggy days when they couldn't go far.

In spite of such a large family we were always well fed. Dad taught us how to earn our living by working in the field. The girls took part in milking and raising a vegetable garden. Dad used to say, "Go rake around those shocks of grain, girls, or you won't get your bread and butter tonight." He was a gentle man and I never saw him whip any of us. He loved his pipe and read his French newspaper, the "En Roullant Ma Boule", which means "In Rolling My Ball". His hobbies were making moccasins and making chairs, often in the evening he would make cut-outs out of paper that looked like snowflakes. He lived to be 90, the others also lived to be in the late 80's. He was of short stature, as were all the family; the girls, none over
August 1, 1914. She was the youngest of six children born to Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Gullingsrud who had homesteaded in that area in 1908. The family lived there until 1926 when they moved to Nielsville, Minnesota. They farmed there until they retired.

Rana graduated from Nielsville High School and East Grand Forks Teacher Training Department. She then taught school in Polk County for ten years. She was active in 4-H club work before she was married and later with her children as 4-H leader and a member of the Council. As a member of the East Fairfax Homemakers, she served in several offices and was President of the Polk County Homemakers' Council.

She was a member of St. Lucy's Circle and later St. Anthony's Circle of the Cathedral, serving in different capacities. She also belongs to Lady Foresters, Eagles Auxiliary, and Sons of Norway.

Albany and Rana have three children, all of whom graduated from Central High School. Wayne was born September 13, 1945 in Crookston, Minnesota and is associated with his father in farming. He is married to Nancy Brolsma and they have one daughter, Karen.

James was born April 12, 1948 at Crookston, Minnesota. He graduated from North Dakota State University in Fargo, North Dakota with a Bachelor of Science degree in pharmacy. He then attended graduate school at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and concurrently served a two-year residency in Clinical Pharmacy at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Minneapolis. He received his Master of Science degree in Hospital Pharmacy in July 1973 with minor degrees in Public Health and Business Administration.

James is a member of the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists, the Rho Chi National Pharmaceutical Honor Society, and Kappa Psi Pharmaceutical Fraternity. He is presently employed in Aberdeen, South Dakota by Eli Lilly and Co. He also lectures and conducts workshops in and around Aberdeen concerning antibiotic therapy.

He loves flying — a love he shares with his brother Wayne. His hobbies are hunting and fishing.

Rita was born August 28, 1950 in Crookston, Minnesota. She graduated from the University of N.D. She is a well-known baton twirler and teacher. She is a certified baton twirling judge and has judged many contests in the U.S. and Canada. She is married to Roger Amiot and they have two children, Charles and Robby. They live in Grafton, North Dakota.

When the children were young they all had jobs at home and worked hard. They all helped with gardening and keeping up the lawn and yard. The boys started early to run machinery and Rita loved to bake and helped with all the canning and freezing of fruits and vegetables. They all attended church regularly as a family.

**MR. AND MRS. WAYNE CAPISTRAN**

Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Capistran were married June 27, 1970 in Crookston, Minnesota. After living in Crookston for one year, they moved to the Albany Capistran farm in Gentry Township. They are the second generation living on that farm and farming seemed in their blood as all grandparents on both sides lived on farms in Polk County.

Wayne Albany Capistran was born September 13, 1945 in Crookston, Minnesota to Albany and Rana Gullingsrud Capistran. He is the oldest of their three children. Wayne attended the Catholic Elementary School for two years and the Crookston Public School System until he graduated from Central High School in 1964. While in high school he was very active in 4-H Club work, earning his Key Award in 1962.

After graduating, Wayne attended North Dakota State University for one year. He then went to California in 1965 where he lived with relatives and worked in a furniture factory, for-
merly owned by two of his uncles, Francis and Lawrence Der-
oin who earlier had lived near Gentilly. While there he built a
dune buggy which he drove back to Minnesota in 1966.

After driving a semi-truck and working for his dad, Wayne
entered Hanson's Mechanical Trade School in Fargo, North
Dakota. He received training in automotive and diesel
mechanic fields which became very useful to him.

In 1969, he began farming and entered into a partnership
with his father and uncle. Wayne does the mechanic and repair
work for the farm and enjoys modifying machinery to fit their
operation.

Nancy Brolsma was born November 3, 1950 at Crookston,
Minnesota. She is the only daughter and third of four children
born to Allen and Leah Seaton Brolsma.

She attended the Crookston Public School System until
graduation from Central High School in 1968. She was active
in many musical groups and sports activities.

Nancy attended the University of Minnesota, Duluth until
1970 and continued her education after their marriage at the
University of Minnesota, Crookston graduating in 1971 with a
degree in biological laboratory technology.

They have two children, Karen Theresa who was born

Winters on the farm have been filled with Wayne's working
part time as a diesel mechanic for Minn-Dak Mack and one
winter at the former Main Street Motors in Crookston. Nancy
owns a small ceramic studio and gives classes several times
weekly.

Together the family enjoys snowmobiling and many other
outdoor activities including flying, which is Wayne's latest
hobby. He is currently enrolled at UMC pursuing a degree in
Agricultural Aviation.

JOE COAUETTE

Joe Coauette was born in Mendota in 1857. He came to
Crookston in 1878 when he was 21 years. His occupation was
running a ferry across the River in Crookston. Later he bought
land near Gentilly. He married Cordelia Mercil. Three children
were born in Gentilly: Fred, Florence and Emma. He then
bought land in Kertsonville Township and built a house, where
Clara, Alex, Rose, Eva and Blanche were born. Joe Coauette died in 1935. The land was farmed by Delphis LeBlanc who had married Emma Coauette. Later the land was bought by Gerald LeBlanc from Cordelia Coauette.

BAZIL DUFUALT

Bazil Dufault was born November 11, 1843 at Jolliet, Can-
da to Pierre Dufault and Domital Langlois. When he was a
young man he went to Douglas, Massachusetts to work in the
factories tempering axes. After a few years he returned to Can-
ada.

Emma Benoit was born June 25, 1846 to Isaac Benoit and
Charolette Guelier at La Valtree, Canada. Her mother came
from Switzerland. Emma's mother died when she was very
young. Her brothers and sisters were Lucien Benoit, Alfred
Benoit, Napoleon Benoit, Fenigie Benoit Perrault, Alphonsin
Benoit Arpent, and Eugene Benoit Hetus.

Emma stayed with her father until he remarried. Then she
got to live with her Uncle Amiable Guelier in La Valtree,
Quebec.

Bazil Dufault's brothers were Theophile, Baptist, Joe, Amie,
Pierrie, Louis and Stanislas. His sisters were Lelic, Marie, Domital, Celina and Delphine.

Emma Benoit married Bazil Dufault on February 20, 1870.
Bazil went back to East Douglas, Massachusetts with his wife
Emma. There he worked in a factory as wages were much bet-
ter than farming. Mr. Dufault had rented his farm but after
three years in 1875, returned to St. Sulpice until 1879. Then he
came to Minnesota and settled in Gentilly Township. They
evolved children. His sons were Joseph, Napoleon, Baptist,
Moses, Edward and Peter. The daughters were Delima Plante,
Permina Scully, Mary Louise Dufault and Caroline Brule.
Three daughters are now living in the Crookston Area.

My father, Napoleon Dufault, was born October 23, 1876 at
St. Sulpice, Quebec. He was two years old when the family set-
tled northeast of Gentilly. They first lived in a log cabin built
near the river in order to have available water. He worked
several years on the family farm using horses and primitive
machinery. Their farm operation included the raising and
feeding of cattle, chickens and pigs. The grain crops included
wheat, barley, oats, and flax. In 1905 the Dufaults built a large
home having about 11 rooms. The family worked very hard
and were able to save money even in the early years. Mr. Bazil
Dufault was able to help his children to get started into busi-
ness. They owned 410 acres.

When Napoleon Dufault, my father, was 21, he decided to
return to Crookston Business College in Crookston. After com-
pleting his Business Education, Mr. Dufault, Nap, as he was
called went into partnership with O. Mercil and I. Sylvester in
a general merchandising business located in the present Gen-
eral Electric Store in Crookston. In those days groceries were
delivered to homes in horse-driven carriages.

Napoleon Dufault married Emma Brule on January 11,
1904 at St. Peter's Church in Gentilly during the pastorate of
Rev. Eli Thelion. The same year they moved into their new
home at 713 North Ash Street in Crookston.

In 1926 my parents bought my grand parents house on
Washington Avenue where I lived until I was married. Our
family consisted of Albert Dufault, Diana Conati and Jean-
nette Amiot.

The grandchildren of the Dufaults are Frank Conati Jr.,
Mrs. Rosemary Starkson, Mary Elizabeth Dufault, Robert
Dufault, Mrs. Janet Thorson and Roger Amiot.

I, Jeannette Dufault, married Arthur Amiot on August 26,
1940 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Crook-
ston by the late Father Wurm. Our family consisted of Janet
Thorson and Roger Amiot. Roger has two sons Charles and
Robby. Janet has a daughter Jennifer and a son Christopher.
Our family gathers together celebrating birthdays, Christmas,
Easter, other holidays and go on many fishing trips and have
picnics. I taught 26 years, 17 years being taught in Crookston. I
received a Bachelor of Science Degree from Bemidji State Uni-

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Amiot
Roger and Janet.

Mr. and Mrs. Napoleon
Dufault
50th Anniversary.
versity. Our daughter and her husband are also teachers as are our son and his wife.

We, Mr. and Mrs. Art Amiot, celebrated our 35th Wedding Anniversary on August 26, 1975.

CHARLES LeBLANC

Charles LaBlanc came from Canada in 1877. He had four sons: Charles, Louis, Dominique and Joe. LeBlanc’s addition in Crookston was named after this family. Dominique married Clara Le May from Mankato, Minnesota, and homesteaded in Kertsonville Township in 1879. They had six sons and three daughters: Fred, Art, Alfonse, Delphis, Ernest and Ovid and Anna, Blanche, and Laura. They lived on their homestead and eventually sold it to Dennie Plante. Dominique bought land in Gentilly Township from George Gamauche. That land was farmed by Delphis and Art LeBlanc. Delphis later rented this land to the Colettes. They had four children: Vivian, Vernon, Gerald and Claudius. Delphis died in 1964. The farm was then sold to Gerald who married Marilyn Yon. They have five boys: Greg, Dan, Mike, John and Duane, and three girls: Suzanne, Janine and Lori all living at home.

DOMINIC LeBLANC Family: Front row: Ovid, Dominick, Blanche Elling-son, Anna Benoit; Laura Patenaude, Mrs. Dominic LeBlanc. 2nd row: Arthur; Delphis; Alphonse; Ernest; and Alfred LeBlanc.

Ernest LeBlanc is 86 years old and living in Crookston. Mrs. Anna LeBlanc Benoit, Mrs. Blanche LeBlanc Ellingson and Mrs. Laura LeBlanc Patenaude are also still living. Mrs. Delphis LeBlanc lives in Crookston.

Godfrey Township

Godfrey Township was given its title at its organization August 4, 1881 for Warren N. Godfrey, an early settler at the southwest end of Maple Lake in the township. He later moved to the state of Washington, according to Warren Upham, Minnesota historian. First township officers were: W. N. Godfrey, Tosten G. Lee, David Vashbler, supervisors; Michael Horton, clerk; Alexander Adams, treasurer; P. W. Horton, justice of the peace.

Besides Godfrey, earliest settlers were two Hortons, Jacob Gerstner and Arthur Neron, who filed on claims in 1879.

Maple Bay School district 90 was organized in 1883. School was held at the W. N. Godfrey home and taught by Lottie Denniss. The first school house was built in 1884 by Simon Solberg, with Sara Houkam as first teacher.

At one time Godfrey had four school districts: No. 95 Woodland Nook, No. 86 Pleasant View; No. 90 Maplebay; and No. 113 Roadside. All have consolidated.

Maple Lake was one of the most beautiful lakes in Northern Minnesota when the first settlers arrived. It was nine miles long and from half to a mile and one-half wide. Its shores were surrounded by heavy timber and the big birches bent out over the lake. It was certainly a sight to behold. No wonder that an early townsite was laid out and platted at the west end of the lake in 1882, and a general store was established by Markham from Crookston. A Post Office was also established at the same time called the Maple Bay Post Office, which is run at the present time by Mr. Ness, who also has a general store at the same place.

Later another store was located near the county highway and operated over the years by Chester Ramberg, Leonard Rambert, Luther Johnson, Fred Johnson, and Adolph Brandwick. Maple Bay Store is now operated by Mrs. Brandwick and her son, Dr. Kenneth Brandwick, a chiropractor.

PETER BERTILS

Peter Christian Bertils was born November 5, 1848 in Hurdahl, Prestgjord, Norway to Mr. and Mrs. Bertil Norgaard. He emigrated from Norway to Fillmore County in Minnesota in the year of 1874. He married Gunhild Hellickson in the year of 1881. He and his wife and two children Bertil and Albert with three other families drove horses attached to covered wagons to northern Minnesota. They herded livestock ahead of the teams. Peter brought four cows, three head of young stock and six sheep. Naturally this sort of traveling was very slow and the travelers were a whole month on the way. They slept in their wagons at night and on the road. The men walked much of the time while the women and children rode in true pioneer fashion. When they reached the Wild Rice River they found it too high to ford, and they were obliged to detour three miles to cross on a bridge. This sort of detouring really caused delay.

The resourceful travelers milked their cows morning and night and traded the milk for butter and bread. The Bertils family went to Godfrey Township where he selected land eight miles north and one mile west of Fertile.

They had a very hard time at first. Peter built a sod house which had only a dirt floor and two small windows. The glass was purchased at Crookston. They traded first at the Aldahl store and also at the one kept by John Ladue. They went to Red Lake Falls to have their wheat ground. The first year they did some breaking of the land and the next summer they had five acres of grain.

In 1936 Peter Bertils was recognized as Chief Raconteur of Early Day Tales by the St. Paul Newspaper. The Bertils family, like its neighbors, worked hard to improve the land and develop the farm. Peter and his wife, who died in 1912, witnessed the remarkable development of the section which they first knew as a frontier into a smiling, prosperous countryside.