

## **Jean-Baptiste-François Deschamps de la Bouteillerie, One of the first Quebecois entrepreneurs**

Jean-Baptiste-François Deschamps de la Bouteillerie was born around 1646 in Cliponville, a small Norman village not far from Rouen. Jean-Baptiste was one of at least 11 children born into the noble family of Jean Deschamps de Boishébert and Elizabeth or Isabeau de Bin. His family, by some reports, could trace its line back at least to the third crusade. Jean-Baptiste's father was Seigneur de Costecoste, de Montaubert, and des Landes and had been honored by Louis XIII in 1629 for the service that he and his family had rendered to the kings of France. In keeping with the practice and laws of the times, Adrien, the third Deschamps son, inherited the family's title and the not inconsiderable land holdings since the first son died without having married and the second became a priest. Adrien went on to have a long lineage in France. He died December 17, 1703 in Cliponville, leaving two sons.

Although not the primary inheritor of his family's estate, Jean-Baptiste did inherit the title *La Bouteillerie* from his grandmother, Suzanne Le Bouteiller.

With little chance of much inheritance other than the title from his grandmother, Jean-Baptiste decided to test his abilities and find his own way. His future traditionally would have been limited to joining the military or the church. Instead, he chose a third way: adventure. He decided to explore possibilities in New France.

Apparently in return for the promise of a substantial land grant from the King, Deschamps agreed to invest his own money and to use the grant to help colonize French Canada. He gathered those eight men (including Robert Lévesque from nearby Hautot-Saint-Sulpice and Damien Bérubé from Roquefort) and contracted with them for three years of service to help clear the land and build him a home on his land. In exchange, he promised them passage to New France, room and board for those three years, and land grants of their own upon completion of their contracts.

In late June, 1671 they left the port of Dieppe for Canada. Deschamps's arrival two months later did not go unnoticed by the King's Intendant Jean Talon. After a meeting with Deschamps and some of his colleagues, Talon wrote to the King's Minister of Finance Jean-Baptiste Colbert in November, 1671, commenting, in a passage paraphrased by me, "If men of this quality come to Canada, we will have no problems colonizing New France."

Intendant Talon officially granted Deschamps a seigneurie situated 148 kilometers north-east of Quebec City on October 29, 1672. Measuring 9.65 kilometers wide along the St. Lawrence River, by 7.24 kilometers deep extending into the valley beyond, or around 43.45 square kilometers, it was one of the most easterly seigneuries to be granted on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River at the time. It was named "Rivière-Ouelle" reportedly in honor of Louis Houel, a companion of explorer Samuel Champlain and possibly a friend of the Deschamps family. It was also known as "La Bouteillerie," in honor of Deschamps's grandmother, Suzanne Le Bouteiller.

One year after arriving in Quebec, having resolved the location of his land grant, Jean-Baptiste-François Deschamps de la Bouteillerie signed a contract to marry Catherine-Gertrude Macard on October 16, 1672. They were married eight days later in Quebec City. Among those attending the wedding was Comte de Frontenac, the newly appointed Governor of Quebec, Intendant Talon, along with other members of high society and the new government.

Catherine-Gertrude was not quite 17 years of age at the time, having been born in Quebec on November 15, 1655. She had deep family roots in New France. In fact, Catherine-Gertrude's great grandparents, Marie Rollet and Louis Hébert, were the first couple to establish a home in Quebec City less than a decade after its founding.

The couple had five sons. The oldest, Charles-Joseph became a priest and two other sons built careers in the military. The fate of the fourth son is unknown. Catherine-Gertrude died November 21, 1681, giving birth to their last son, just a few days after her 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her baby son died with her.

After the death of his wife and son in 1681 and with his three surviving sons living apparently in Quebec City with their godparents, Jean-Baptiste dedicated himself to the development of Rivière-Ouelle, in fulfilling his contract with the King. He spent the majority of his time in his seigneurie, leaving it only to visit Quebec City for baptisms and other family events. He subdivided his estate and made grants of land to those who had helped him in clearing it and later to newcomers who were committed to living on their grants. In 1684 he ceded a part of his estate so that a church could be built and a cemetery created.

On April 5, 1701, after twenty years of celibacy after his wife died . a period of time longer than most of the other men of his class, Jean-Baptiste-François Deschamps, seigneur of la Bouteillerie, married Jeanne Chevalier, the widow of his neighbor and countryman, Robert Lévesque. Jeanne was originally from Coutances, in lower Normandy. She had arrived in Quebec in the summer of 1671, perhaps on the same ship as Deschamps and Lévesque, Deschamps was her third husband, given that her first husband Guillaume Lecanteur had died around 1678 and her second husband, Robert Lévesque, had died on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, 1699.

Their life together was unfortunately short. In 1703, an epidemic struck all of New France. Among the victims was Jean-Baptiste Deschamps. Jean-Baptiste died on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 1703, in Rivière-Ouelle, one day before the death of his brother Adrien in France.

Jean-Baptiste François Deschamps de la Bouteillerie was buried on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 1703, under the seigneurial pew in the church in Rivière-Ouelle. It is said that his death was mourned by the whole seigneurie, in testimony to his engagement in the community. As one of only two dozen French noblemen in 17<sup>th</sup> century Canada, he may have arrived with a noble's presence and may have kept some of the vestiges of that status. He did after all have a seigneurial pew in the church, received the dues and rents that were owed him, and was honored each year by the raising of a maypole in front of his manor. However, contrary to the other nobles established in New France at the time, many of whom abandoned

their concessions in order to stay in their homes in Quebec City, Jean-Baptiste chose to live alongside his tenants.

He did not live long enough to learn that his second son died the next year in France, to see another son be named a canon of the cathedral in Quebec City in 1712, or to attend his youngest son's marriage. On December 10, 1721, 18 years after his father's death, Henri-Louis signed a marriage contract with Louise-Geneviève de Ramezay, the daughter of the Governor of Montreal. The de Ramezay family could trace its roots in France back to 1532 and was a quite prominent family in early Quebec. The marriage contract ended with two pages of signatures of prominent individuals.

Henri-Louis, who assumed the name of his French family ~~le~~ Boishébert, and Louise had four children who survived them. Their fourth son, Charles Deschamps de Boishébert, the only surviving grandson of Jean-Baptiste-François Deschamps, went on to a distinguished career in a number of military campaigns in New France against the Iroquois and the English. After the fall of New France to England in 1760, he moved to France and married his very distant cousin. He purchased an estate in Raffetot, not far from the family's ancestral home in Cliponville. He became the town's mayor for a short time. He died there on January 9, 1797. A marker in his memory sits in front of the town hall, next to the church

Charles and his wife Charlotte-Elisabeth-Antoinette Deschamps had one son, born on June 18, 1762. This son married and had two children, a daughter and a son who died without children. Thus, unlike most of his countrymen who went on to leave thousands of descendants in Canada and the United States, with the male line continuing for at least eleven generations, Jean-Baptiste's male line died out after only four. His granddaughters in Canada either joined the convent or married into the eminent Lanaudière and St. Ours families. Family members with the Deschamps de Boishébert name live in France and are descendants of Jean-Baptiste's brother Adrien.

And what about the seigneurie that Jean-Baptiste-François Deschamps had worked so hard to build? His son and grandson preferred their military careers to the challenges of managing an estate. The widow of Henri-Louis Louise de Ramezay managed to have a large piece of land added to the Rivière-Ouelle seigneurie in 1750. Nevertheless, she decided to sell it fifteen years later. Nine years after it was put up for sale, the estate was finally sold.

The village of Rivière-Ouelle has evolved and changed over the centuries, but it still has much of its ambiance and many traces of its history. For the founding and initial growth of the village, along with his countrymen Robert Lévesque and Damien Bérubé, Jean-Baptiste-François Deschamps de la Bouteillerie, as one of Quebec's first entrepreneurs, deserves more recognition than he has received to date

Written the 6 October, 2016, by Lynne C. Lévesque, Ed.D., the eighth great grand-daughter of Robert Lévesque and Jeanne Chevalier, and a descendant of one of the godsons of Jean-Baptiste François Deschamps de la Bouteillerie.