

Finding French-Canadian Roots for McGee: A Library and Internet Research Adventure

By Kathy Lund, MGS LRC volunteer coordinator

He came in one day in mid-March asking to speak with John Schade, our library director and Canadian-Metis expert. John had knowledge of a Maillé dit McGee name in the Montreal, Quebec, area, but he referred the patron to me because of my experience with Irish research. Many families in French Canada used a "dit," or nickname, to differentiate themselves from other branches of a large family. In this case, we thought the McGee family might have been a branch of the Maillé family.

Patron McGee had information apparently drawn from censuses 1851-1901 in the Morrisburg area of Dundas County, Ontario. The patriarch of the family was Joseph McGee, born about 1802, and his wife Mary, born about 1806. Family lore was that the patron's great-grandparents shared the same surname prior to marriage. Pencil lines connected possible sons, a daughter, and grandsons. The men were carriage makers and wheelwrights.

McGee thought all had been born in Canada, although his information did not report birthplaces. All seemed to have married French-Canadian women, and all listed themselves as "French" in the Canadian censuses that asked about ethnicity. None of this was typical for Irish immigrants in Canada, raising some question about whether the Irish-sounding name was, in fact, Irish. The patron's goal was to separate the Irish from the French in his family history.

This was intriguing. Over several weeks, a story began to emerge from census information on ancestry.com, the Library and Archives of Canada, vital records, and church records on Family Search and in Ancestry's Quebec Drouin Collection. The MGS collection of Quebec marriage repertoires gave another boost to the research.

The task was to work backwards from McGee's ancestors who were known to have settled in Minnesota in the 1880s. This was the family of Joseph and Mary's son, John McGee, and his wife, variously named Julia, Magual, Bidual, and even Nellie! Oral history identified John and Julia as second-cousins bearing the same surname. The 1900 census of Oneka Township in Washington County, Minnesota, reports that they immigrated to the United States in 1884. Two sons and two daughters were living with Canadian-born John, 48, and Julia, 52. Also in the household was a married daughter Mary McClain and her two daughters, Josie, 8, and Cora, 6, as well as a 27 year-old boarder, stenographer Anne Connors, born in Wisconsin of Canadian-born parents. This family fit the profile laid out by the patron.

Subsequently, the family was traced back through the 1895 and 1885 Minnesota state censuses. They had been in Oneka Township in 1895, but in Knife Falls, Carlton County, in 1885. The family's older children appeared in these censuses. Further research found the John and Julia McGee family in the 1892 Washington State census of Pierce County (Tacoma area). Their married daughter, Mary, was with the family, but her husband was not. This document showed that the eldest daughter shared her mother's elusive name. The Washington State information was consistent with the patron's knowledge of the family.

The 1920 U.S. Census of King County, Washington, lists our probable John McGee: 68 years old, a widower, born in French Canada, and having immigrated in 1886. He was a lodger with none of his family present. A Pierce County, Washington, death certificate found on the Family Search website names a John McGee, 73, who died on 6 October 1923 in Tacoma, Pierce County; his spouse was named Julia. As suspected, his parents were Joseph McGee and Mary Laporte, another French wife! Patron McGee had some doubt about John's parentage because he had been born when Mary LaPorte was about 45-years-old.

John and Julia McGee are not found in the 1910 Minnesota census, although son Joseph is. Julia was not found in the Minnesota Historical Society's online death record index, but a search of Family Search's index of Washington death certificates revealed a Julia McGee death registered in Toppenish, Yakima County, Washington, in 1917. While the age of 69 seemed to fit, her father's name is given as Albert McGee. A copy of the full certificate might help determine who gave the information and if this is the correct Julia. The family apparently has a picture of Julia taken in Washington State in the 1920s.

With this profile of the family, research now shifted to the 1860s and 1870s in Ontario. Censuses show the John McGee family in Leeds Rear, Leeds County, in 1881, and in Onabruck, Stormont County, in 1871. His wife and infant daughter were named Magual. Moving back to 1861, John was single, living with his parents, Joseph and Marie, and his married sister Philomene's family in Williamsburg, Dundas County, Ontario. The patron's family had been of the belief that John had been born in Ontario and his wife in Quebec, but the 1861 census stated that all members of the family were Quebec-born. Joseph McGee and Marie Laporte were not found on the 1851/2 census in either Ontario or Quebec. Their eldest

- "nurse," but not a head nurse in a London hospital. See notes 78 and 79.
- 74 1851 census of England, Oxfordshire, Village of Islip, entry for Elizabeth Carr (age 46), PRO HO 107, Piece 1729, Folio 118, Page 26; FHL microfilm 193,638.
- 75 1871 census of England, London, Popular, St. Stephens, entry for Elizabeth Carr (age 64), PRO/RG10, Piece 583, Folio 43, page 18; FHL microfilm 824,896.
- 76 England, General Register Office, certified copy of An Entry of Death for Elizabeth Carr, 1873; death in the Sub-district of St. Sepulchre, City of London.
- 77 See note no. 3.
- 78 Salchow, Descendants of Jacob Wiltse, Linus Frost, Henry and Francis Dice, 67, 68, 208.
- 79 1851 census of England, Oxfordshire, Village of Islip, entry for Elizabeth Carr (46); 1871 census of England, London, Popular, St. Stephens, entry for Elizabeth Carr (64).
- 80 John Badger – Ann Smith Family Group Record, supplied by Judith Palmer.
- 81 Oxford St. Michael at the Northgate: Baptisms 1758-1923, Marriages 1754-1922, Burials 1759-1941, entry for "James Carr, bach," and "Elizabeth Clarke, wid," wit John Badger [and] Rebecca Badger"; Oxfordshire Records Office, Oxford, England.
- 82 John Badger-Ann Smith Family Group Record, supplied by Judith Palmer.
- 83 1851 census of England, Oxfordshire, Beckley, page 134A, household 34, Maria Carr household; FHL microfilm 193,636.
- 84 England, General Register Office, certified copy of An Entry of Death for Maria Carr, 1851; death in the Sub-district of Saint Clement, County of Oxfordshire, "widow of James Carr, a Baker"; England, General Record Office, certified copy of An Entry of Death for Elizabeth Carr, 1873; "Beckley Oxfordshire Parish Registers," entry for burial of James Carr, buried 5 August 1840, typescript transcript, Oxfordshire Records Office, Oxford, England.
- 85 England, General Register Office, certified copy of An Entry of Death for Maria Carr, 1851; "Ann Badger present at the death Beckley."
- 86 See note 19.
- 87 England, General Register Office, certified copy of An Entry of Marriage, Caroline Sally Beckett and Edward Love (1853); marriage at St. John's Church, in the Parish of Bethnal Green, London.
- 88 Boarstall Parish Church (Buckinghamshire, England), Parish registers, Baptisms 1796-1812, "Baptisms from Lady day 1802 to Lady day 1803" [at top of page], Elizabeth Badger baptism (1803); Buckingham Record Office, Aylesbury; also FHL microfilm 1,967,037. Bob Badger's cousin, Gillian Phillips (née Badger), in England, located this record, which in turn Bob Badger sent to me.
- 89 John Badger – Ann Smith Family Group Record, supplied by Judith Palmer. How far can the Internet take you in genealogy research? In the case of McGee, a patron of the MGS Library and Research Center, quite a ways!

Census Puzzle

Can you decipher the relationships between these two Colorado households?

1900 U.S. Census, Denver, Arapahoe County

Lloyd, Harriet, head, b. Mar 1850, 50, England, England, England

_____, George A., son, b. Oct 1873, Iowa, England, England

Armstrong, Mary A., daughter, b. Dec 1876, 23, Iowa, England, England

_____, James E., S-in-law, b. Dec 1871, 29, Canada (Scot), Cananda (Scot), Canada (Scot)

Armstrong, Edward L, G-son, b. Mar 1900, 2 mos., Colorado, Canada (Scot), Iowa

James, Anna E., daughter, b. Dec 1880, 19, Colorado, England, England

_____, Frederic M., S-in-law, b. Dec 1875, Michigan, England, England

Lloyd, Lillie M., daughter, b. Nov 1885, 14, Colorado, England, England

1910 U.S. Census, Fruitmere, Fremont County

Giem, John, head, 48, b. Minnesota, F: Germany, M: Germany

_____, Mary, wife, 38, present marriage 1 yr., 3 children, b. Iowa, F: England, M: England

_____, William A., son, 15, b. Colorado, F: Minnesota, M: Minnesota

_____, Arthur A., son, 12, b. Colorado, F: Minnesota, M: Minnesota

_____, Alta F., daughter, 11, b. Colorado, F: Minnesota, M: Minnesota

Armstrong, Edward, step-son, 13, b. Colorado, F: Iowa, M: Iowa

_____, Alice, step-son, 11, b. Colorado, F: Iowa, M: Iowa

_____, Cecil, step-son, 7, b. Colorado, F: Iowa, M: Iowa

Find the solution in the Fall 2012 issue of Minnesota Genealogist.

apparent sons, Joseph and Samuel, were enumerated with their wives in Williamsburg, Dundas County, Ontario.

Further research in Ontario's civil birth and death records on Family Search revealed a malformed child of John and his wife, stillborn in September 1869, and the births of Mary in 1874 and Theodore in 1876. Two Catholic Church records from Morrisburg and Brockville, browsable at Family Search, are revealing. The first, from September 1870, is for Medule McGee, daughter of John McGee and Medule McGee. So that was the mysterious name. The second, for Joseph in 1872, says his parents were John Maillé and Medule Maillé. The couple did have the same name, but it was in the process of shifting from Maillé to McGee! The first use of the McGee name in Ontario appears to have been for Samuel and Joseph Jr. in the 1851-2 census of Williamsburg. The Morrisburg church records hold marriages and baptisms for these collateral McGee families, but make no mention of the Maillé name.

At this point, the patron volunteered that John's brother Gregoire had been baptized in 1840 in St. Columban, Quebec, deflecting the research trail from Ontario into Quebec. St. Columban was an Irish parish in Deux-montagnes comte. Gregoire's baptism was there – the only one written in French – and his parents were Joseph Maillé and Marie Laporte – matching the 1923 Washington death record for John McGee. What had started as Irish research was veering French-Canadian!

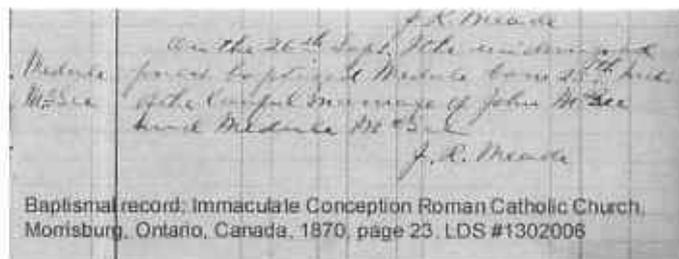
With this realization, search results began to pop in Quebec church records on Ancestry. Joseph Maillé and Marie LaPorte had married in 1823 in Ste.-Therese-d'Avila-de-Blainville. Two sons, Joseph (1825) and Anselme (Samuel) (1827), were baptized there. In the 1831 census of head of household, Joseph appeared with four family members. The Drouin church records sent us on a merry chase for Maillé/Mayé and Laporte lines through Ste.-Therese-d'Avila, Ste-Anne-des-plaines, Ste-Rose-de-Lima in Laval, and St. Louis-de-Terrebonne records, all the way back into the mid-1700s. Baptisms and marriages are mixed in the records but are indexed on Ancestry.com. They are in French and some images are faded. Quebec marriage repertoires in the MGS library helped clarify and define the lines. Since these transcriptions of Catholic

church records always name the parents of the bride and groom – or the deceased spouse of a widow or widower – it is possible to jump from marriage to baptism quickly. Not all the family's records were found, of course. Some may have been damaged or lost. Others may have been too difficult to read or index when the repertoires were compiled. Unfortunately, the marriage record for John and Medule was not found; nor were their baptisms.

Was young Medule Maillé found? Based on her unusual name, her birth year, and her presence in the border area of Quebec and Ontario, she was probably the child recorded as a 5-year-old in the 1851/52 census of St. Janvier, Canada East (Quebec), with her parents Charles Maillé and Genevieve Laporte; her siblings Norbert, 7, Marie Thais, 3, and Marie-Louise, 1. Baptisms for Norbert and Marie-Thais were found in two different parishes. There is an elder half-brother Edward, and two possible half-sisters, although they are listed as servants. Charles was a 44-year old blacksmith. This was Charles' second marriage; his first being to Marie-Anne Savoie. The family seems to have fallen apart, as it does not appear on the 1861 census. Genevieve, then a widow, was buried from the Basilica of Nôtre-Dame in Montreal in September 1871. What happened to Medule's siblings? Did she and John marry in Quebec or Ontario? Possibly they never married due to consanguinity. These questions remain.

Church records prove that Charles Maillé (born 17 April 1806) and Joseph Maillé/ McGee (b. 19 September 1804) were brothers, sons of Alexander Mayé and Josette Forget. Marie LaPorte (b. 1 July 1806) and Genevieve LaPorte (b. 8 August 1817) were granddaughters of Jean-Baptiste LaPorte and Archange Lorion.

This research was complicated by the morphing of the surnames and multiple residences. This much is certain. The family that moved to Minnesota was not Irish. It was French-Canadian. John and Medule were first cousins on their fathers' side; they were second cousins on their mothers' side. The family story was true – and then some!



1910 Minnesota Farm Crop and Labor Reports: What Did Our Farmer Ancestors Grow?

By Duane Swanson

Anxiety over security during World War I led to establishment of the Minnesota Commission on Public Safety (MCPS) in 1917. The Commission produced two important record sets of interest to family history researchers: alien registration records (see *Minnesota Genealogist*, Fall 2009) and farm crop and labor reports.



These farm crop and labor reports tell which crops our farmer ancestors grew, acreage, how many animals lived on the farm, and if additional farm laborers were needed during World War I.

The MCPS considered one of its highest priorities to be ensuring that Minnesota produced as much food as possible for its own citizens and the entire nation. Governor J.A. Burnquist in 1917 exhorted Minnesotans that it was "their patriotic duty of highest import to do all things that may maintain the greatest possible yield of food-stuffs from Minnesota for all the world." On 12 March 1918, the MCPS issued Order Number 27 providing for a crop and stock census to ascertain the type and quantity of crops harvested and livestock raised and the need for agricultural laborers. Local township, city and county tax assessors were directed to ask each farmer on the assessment roll to complete the census. The local assessors forwarded the census forms to the county auditor, who sent them to the state auditor for tabulation. Most completed forms are dated May 1918.

The farm report contained the county and local jurisdiction (township, village, city); the farmer's name, post office address and nationality; and the nearest shipping point and which railroads served that point. Each census form recorded the number of acres of 15 selected crops that the farmer planted in 1917 and 1918 (see Table 1); the number of hogs, horses, milch [milk] cows, other cattle, poultry and sheep that were on the farm in those years; and the number of silos on the farm

and the number planned for construction in 1918. The census also asked the number of farm laborers needed and when, for how long, and for what work. The farmer could state a nationality preference for the laborers.

**Table 1
Crops Covered in the Census**

Barley	Potatoes
Beans	Rutabagas
Beets	Rye
Buckwheat	Spelts [a type of wheat]
Corn	Sorghum
Fruit	Sugar Beets
Hay	Wheat
Oats	

The state auditor collected the census forms, and after tabulation by the University of Minnesota, the extant forms became part of the records of the MCPS. Ultimately, they were transferred to the State Archives in the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). In 1995, the MHS hired a contractor to microfilm the deteriorating forms, and the originals were destroyed.

County St. Louis Township (City or Village) 7.124
 Name P. B. Burtner Post Office Address Coon Lake, Wis.
 Nearest Shipping Point Coon Lake What Railroads C. N.
 Nationality or descent of farmer Norwegian

FARM CROP AND LABOR REPORT

Crop	Acres in 1917	Acres in 1918
Barley		
Beans		
Beets		
Buckwheat		
Corn		
Fruit		
Hay	3.4	2.0
Oats	2.0	2.4
Potatoes	8	4
Rutabagas		
Rye		
Spelts		
Sorghum		
Sugar Beets		
Wheat	6	7

Stock	Number in 1917	Number in 1918
Hogs		2
Horses	6	5
Milch Cows	2	2
Other Cattle	5	8
Poultry	55	70
Sheep		

How many? _____
 What? _____
 For how long? _____
 For what work? _____
 What nationality? _____

Remarks: _____

The compiling statement was made on the 25 day of June, A. D. 1918.
 Signature of Farmer: P. B. Burtner

This return is made to your County Auditor, and by him sent to J. A. D. Fryer, State Auditor, State Capitol, St. Paul, Minn.

Western Lore



Charley's Butte Honors Brave Black Cattleman

Rising from the floor of the Owens River Valley in California, shadowed by the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, is a mound known as "Charley's Butte," named after a black cattleman. The story of his death reads like some tragic episode in a cowboys and Indians dime novel. Charley Tyler was a ranch hand for the pioneer McGee family, which traveled to California from Texas by ox team in 1850, settling near Visalia. They became well known in Mono and Inyo counties, where a creek, canyon, mountain, and meadow were named after them.

In the spring of 1861, Alney Lee McGee, along with his brothers John and Bart, and cousin Taylor McGee, drove a herd of cattle north into the Owens River Valley. The Paiute Indians resented this intrusion of white men onto their land, and heated conflicts arose between them.

On March 7, 1863, a party composed of Alney McGee, his mother Eliza, his little niece, cattleman Charley Tyler, and Mr. and

Mrs. Jesse Summers traveled south along the Owens River. They had just delivered a herd of cattle in Aurora, Nevada, and were making the return trip to Visalia. As they neared the hills below Fish Springs, the group saw smoke signals. Then suddenly a band of 150 Indians blocked their path.

In a frantic effort to escape, the McGee party tried to drive their wagons across the shallow stream to the east bank. But the wheels stuck in the soft mud, and their only recourse was to cut the horses loose from the wagons. The brave pioneers took flight, the women and the little girl riding horseback, Alney McGee and Jesse Summers running alongside, clinging desperately to the horses' manes. The Indians pursued, but their ponies were not able to overtake the fugitives, who reached safety at Camp Independence that night.

Charley Tyler was not so fortunate. He gave his horse to one of the women, and was last seen running and fighting amid a hail of bullets and arrows. Alney McGee believed that Charley died at the hands of the Paiutes on that very spot, but his fate was never certain. Tyler's Colt powder-and-ball pistol was recovered from a dead Indian twelve days later, west of the Alabama Hills, north of Cottonwood Creek.

After that frightful brush with death, Grandma McGee lived to be ninety-three years old. At the time of her death in 1910, she had outlived ten of her thirteen children, leaving forty-six grandchildren, ninety-five great grandchildren and thirteen great, great grandchildren.

The tale of Charley's Butte was sent to us by Rob Harper of Oakland, California, a descendant of the large McGee clan, who learned this story about his great, great uncles while tracing his many-branched family tree.

AMERICAN WEST offers twenty-five dollars to any reader whose suggestion is accepted for publication in Western Lore. We seek information (with relevant pictures, if possible) about unusual artifacts, unusual and little-known happenings, unusual and little-known people, as well as little-known facts about well-known people—all in Western history. What do you have? Space is limited; so, we have to be selective. We'll take good care of your pictures and return them promptly. Be sure to pack pictures carefully and enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return. Send submissions to AMERICAN WEST, Western Lore, 3033 N. Campbell Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85719.

Family

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