

French-American Heritage Foundation of Minnesota

ARTICLE TRIMESTRIEL QUARTERLY ARTICLE

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Meeting of Marie-Anne and Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière with First Nations people, circa 1807.
Engraving from *La Première Canadienne du Nord-Ouest* by L'Abbe G. Dugast (1883).
(Glenbow Archive, Reference no. NA-3694-1.)

La Première Canadienne
French-American Heritage Foundation of Minnesota

Mission Statement: To foster a greater understanding of the rich history and heritage of French-speaking people who helped form what is now Minnesota. Website: fahfminn.org. YouTube: FAHF Minn.

THE POWER OF FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

I started researching my own family history in the 1990s. Since my ancestry is 100% French-Canadian, there were many resources available to help with my research, but it was still a time-consuming hobby that came and went depending on the availability of my free time. Initially it was just a hobby for my own personal interest.

I had more free time to work on my family history after retiring in 2018, and something happened that changed the complexion of my research. I was contacted by a distant relative (through a DNA match) about a family reunion for descendants of David Gaboury and Louise Meunier dit Lapierre, who had settled on a farm near Little Falls, Minnesota, in the 1880s. I was not one of their descendants, but I jumped at the chance to meet Gaboury cousins living so close to my home in Fargo, North Dakota. I started researching that branch of the Gaboury family after the reunion and realized that all the Gabourys in North America might be related. To find out, I would have to build a family tree that spanned the entire 360-year history of Gabourys in North America.

It took a year of fulltime research to construct the entire Gaboury family tree from 1640 to the 1940s. Public records start to run out after 1940, so I turned to Facebook to connect with living Gabourys that could tell me more about the recent generations of the family. This would be a test of the family tree I built. If it was complete, any Gaboury I talked to should connect somewhere in the tree. After five years of talking to Gaboury cousins, I've never failed to connect a Gaboury to the tree, so the tree I built seemed complete. One Gaboury man who landed in Québec in



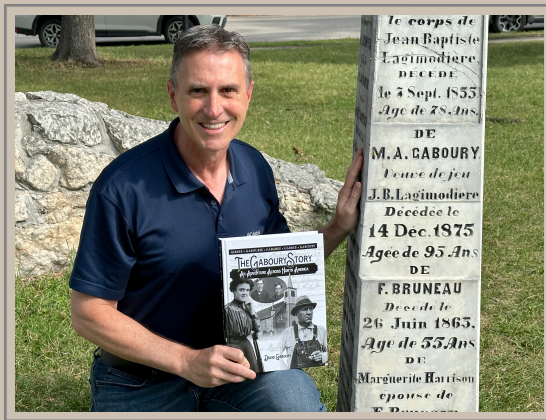
1659 was the ancestor of all Gabourys living in North America today. I was thrilled to learn that I had so many cousins living in so many places.

Once I had the family tree constructed, I started analyzing the data and saw interesting patterns in the way branches of the family migrated to different parts of North America. It was so interesting, that I decided to write a book about it. To facilitate my research for the book, I created a Facebook group where all the Gaboury cousins could talk about family history. They were extremely interested in my project and joined by the hundreds. People love talking about their family history, especially with relatives having the same last name. Close relatives shared stories they could only vaguely remember, helping each other build more complete memories of their family history. Distant relatives found it interesting to see how their French-Canadian culture had been preserved in each branch of the family through language, food, and other family traditions. It became a virtual family reunion, and the people involved were genuinely touched by it. They built ties to new cousins and strengthened the connection to their French-Canadian heritage.

Facebook is a handy tool that many genealogists overlook. In addition to connecting researchers with relatives that might have information of interest, it has specialty groups that can help in many ways, including the translation of source documents, deciphering old handwriting, finding histories of specific locales, and connecting with branches of a family tree. Also, the built-in translation provided by Facebook makes it easy to chat across languages. In my case, it let me continue my research with Francophone cousins in Quebec.

While this online research continued, I dove head-first into the book project. It wasn't going to be just a recounting of names, dates, and places. I wanted the book to tell the stories of each branch of the family. It had to stitch together family events and historical content in a way that was interesting and compelling to read. The cousins that

assembled online contributed hundreds of photos for the book, putting faces with the names. To that I added maps, charts, and tables that explained the Gaboury history. After three and a half years of fulltime work, the book was ready to be self-published. In June of 2023, I released the book called "The Gaboury Story: An Adventure Across North America." The responses from people have been overwhelming, telling me how much they've enjoyed connecting with their ancestry and with their living relatives.



Author David Gaboury shows a copy of his new family history book at the gravesite of Marie-Anne Gaboury, an important historical figure in the history of the Gaboury family.

The group who had planned the Gaboury family reunion in 2018 started talking about another reunion in 2022. Since I had tracked down Gabourys from all branches of the family, I suggested that the reunion could be open to everyone. The organizers liked the idea, so six of us started planning a large Gaboury reunion to be held in August of 2023. We decided on Winnipeg, Manitoba, as the location for three reasons. First, it was somewhat central to the population of Gabourys. In the end we had attendees from Quebec to British Columbia in Canada, and Maine to California in the United States. The second reason for choosing Winnipeg was that it was home to Marie-Anne

Gaboury, the most famous person in the Gaboury family tree. She was the first woman of European descent to settle in Western Canada, and was also the grandmother of Louis Riel, considered by many to be the father of Manitoba. The third reason for choosing Winnipeg was that it has one of the strongest French-Canadian communities outside of Quebec. In addition to sharing the typical French-Canadian culture, Winnipeg has its own unique culture built on the relationships between the French and Indigenous people in the fur-trading days, and the generations of Métis people that have lived in Manitoba since that time.



Attendees of the Gaboury family reunion, held August 11-13, 2023, at the Norwood Community Centre in the Saint-Boniface section of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Gaboury reunion was held in Winnipeg on August 11-13, 2023. It included presentations about family history, presentations about Manitoba history, tours of the Saint-Boniface Museum, a local Métis dance group, family history displays, food, and a lot of informal family discussion. With strong support for Franco-Manitoban culture, the local news media (print, online, and radio) covered the reunion and book release with great interest. Everyone left the reunion overwhelmed by the information they learned and the love of their newfound family. Family history research is a fun hobby, but it can also be a powerful tool

that brings families together in meaningful ways. It has for the Gaboury family of North America.

For more information on the Gaboury book, I can be reached at gabourybook@gmail.com.



The Norman Chief Memorial Dancers performed traditional Métis music and dance at the Gaboury family reunion.



Le Musée de Saint-Boniface Museum in Winnipeg, Manitoba, offers exceptional tours (in English or French) of the Museum building as well as the neighboring cemetery and cathedral.