

Drouillards are Old Sea-Faring Family of Brittany



The Mayor's father and mother, the late Mr. Alexander Drouillard and his wife.

Are Still Faithful To Fine Traditions

Riverside Mayor Is Member of Ninth Generation Since Fathers Settled in Canada

THEY say that the sea gets into the blood, and once a lover of the sea, one always returns to it. This is certainly true of the Drouillard family. Born of old Breton stock, they have followed the ancient calling of fishing for generations, and while they have lived inland, they have lived up to the best traditions of the sea—strength, bravery and hardihood. East Windsor and Riverside number many of the family among their citizens, devoted, most of them, to the broad river that first invited the early progenitors of the family to its wooded shores.

The first of the name of which we have record, is John Drouillard of Marennes, Diocese of Xaintes, Brittany, France, who, we are told, married Jane Chevreau of the same place. Of their children, Simon, then called Argencour, who was born at Marennes in 1668, came to Canada and married at Quebec, on the 25th of November, 1698, Margaret Ferret, born at Pointe aux Trembles, Quebec, on the 7th of March, 1681, daughter of Peter Ferret and Mary Lussan. Margaret Ferret was buried at Quebec in 1711. Simon Drouillard, dit Argencour, married again at Levis, to Ann Cadoret, and was buried at Detroit on the 21st of October, 1733.

Settled at Walpole

The earliest annals of the Drouillard family in Essex County show that they had settled at Walpole Island. It is said that they received a grant of the island from the Indians, and this gift, written on such bark in Indian characters, was a prized possession in the Drouillard family, up to the last generation, but was then, through some mischance, most likely through a fire, lost. Of the children of Simon Drouillard and his wife, Margaret Ferret, the branch which is now resident in Riverside and East Windsor, traces its descent from a son, John Drouillard, who was born at St. Francois, Island of Orleans, on the 14th of February, 1707, and married at LaSalle in February, 1731, Elizabeth Babin, daughter of Jean Baptiste Babin, and Catherine Joliffe, dit La Paire. This John Drouillard was buried at the church of the Hurons, Sandwich, May 30, 1781.

His son, Francois, born at the Huron Mission at Sandwich in 1736, married Mary Ann Villiers, dit St. Louis, daughter of Louis Villiers, dit St. Louis, and Mary Joseph Morris. Both bride and groom, it is said, resided at the south coast of Detroit, and obtained "permission from the pastor of St. Anne's Church to be married at the church of the Hurons, on consideration of the difficult passage du passage de la riviere."

And it was a passage "presenting great difficulty." Had this special permission not been given, the small boat containing the bride and groom might have been wrecked in crossing, and the story of this branch of the Drouillard family would never have been written.

The next in direct descent was Alexis Drouillard, who married Chloé Godel, dit Marquette. His son Francois, who married Rosalie Geline, was in the sixth generation from the original progenitor of Marchessault, and his grandson, Francois Xavier Drouillard, who married Eleonor Sullivan, daughter of Francois Sullivan of Sandwich and Rose Pare, was the seventh. The latter was the grandfather of the present mayor of Riverside, Mr. Harry Drouillard, who is thus in the ninth generation, and has grandchildren of his own. In fact, not only can this family count many generations in Canada, but the Mayor's immediate family tree, including only the immediate descendants of his parents, Alexander Francois Drouillard and Ellen Pare, comprises almost 300 members—one of the very largest in Canada. Mayor Drouillard is himself the youngest of nineteen children; his sister in Mount Clemens, Mich., has 17, her daughter has fifteen and her granddaughter has

seven, while the mayor was married at twenty-one and was a grandfather before he was forty.

Luxon Road Grant

Other branches of the Drouillard family settled in Sandwich and Tecumseh, and we find them married to the Melchies and the Desjardins and other prominent early French families, but those who now reside in what is now Riverside made their original home on the land granted to them at the corner of Luxon Road. Here Francois Drouillard, great-grandfather of the mayor, spent his declining years. He was always a majestic figure. Tall, commanding, well over six feet in height, he possessed, as well as an air of dignity, a pair of piercing dark eyes and a straightforward mind, which accounted for his success in dealing with the Indians, with whom he was most familiar both in his childhood, up to seven years of age, when he moved with his family from Walpole Island to the coast of the Ottawa, and during the rest of his life. He virtually lived with the Indians as a small child, and when the family were asked, with other French families, to leave Walpole Island to the Indians, and were given grants of land on the mainland by the British Government, he had to learn to speak French all over again.

Legend has it that, so proficient in the Indian language were all the members of this family that, with their wonderful knowledge of the woods and the trails and all the lore of the woodsman, they were chosen in preference to Indian guides.

It is even said that one of them, possibly the Francois Drouillard who married the daughter of that other well-known pioneer family, Mary Ann Villiers, dit St. Louis, was chosen to guide Lewis and Clark part of the way on their famous expedition. This is only legend now, and cannot be proven by any documentary evidence, but certain it is that this intrepid voyager, whose only pathway was the river and the Indian trails, knew the latter far from home, and went hither and yon in his adventuring.

Certain it is, and no mere hearsay, that his grandson, Francois Xavier Drouillard, was well known as a guide to those needing someone with an intimate knowledge of the woods and the rivers. So much was he preferred to the Indians in this capacity that the latter became very jealous, and on various occasions threatened his life. On one occasion he was guiding a party up to Fighting Island, and under cover of the woods an Indian shot at him, the arrow going through his left arm. As quick as a flash, Drouillard



The late Francois Xavier Drouillard, Grandfather of Mayor Harry Drouillard of Riverside.



The Mayor's eldest daughter, Marie, Mrs. John Martin of Riverside.



Richard (Dick) Hanson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Hanson, and grandson of the Mayor, who was two years old this week.

Drouillard pursued the Indian, engaged with him and soon conquered him. He was a familiar figure, in the prime of his manhood, in the fifties and sixties, and much admired for his prowess and bravery.

Called "Papa Rouge"

Even as an old man, he was a most commanding figure, in his high boots, riding breeches and familiar red woolen shirt, which all guides wore to distinguish them in the woods, which earned for him among his grandchildren the sobriquet of "Papa Rouge." They were very fond of sitting at his feet of "Papa Rouge," and listening to his stories of early days in Upper Canada, as he was a marvelous raconteur, and possessed of a wonderful memory.



Mayor Harry Drouillard of Riverside.



The Mayor's family at the old family home.



Wilfred Drouillard, brother of the Mayor.

gerful memory. Though a man of such hardihood and daring, he was devoted to his church, and was untiring in his attendance. With his splendid ability to speak the Indian language, he would represent the Indians in the annual celebration of the St. Jean Baptiste festival, dressing in full Indian costume, and responding in their language. His son, Francois, who also spoke Indian most fluently, will also be remembered in the same capacity, and was a familiar figure in the yearly celebrations. The latter also gave the land for Our Lady of the Lake Church, and was instrumental in building it.

Mr. Randolph Drouillard, son of

Francois, and grandson of Francois Xavier, inherits a great deal of his grandfather's spirit and his excellent memory. Though a man up in his seventies, he has not forgotten an incident of his early days, and can relate many an interesting tale of early days in the Border Cities. Belle Isle was a familiar spot to him, while it still went by the name of "Hog Island." He used to spend a great deal of his childhood there with his father, hunting and fishing. When he was about nine years of age, he remembers, he spent about a month there. His father having been asked to watch the fish in his absence by one Charles Pitre, who had fishing rights there,



The Mayor at 16, with his cousins, Louise and Zoe Laforet.



The Mayor's family at the old family home.



The Mayor of Riverside at twenty years of age.

Edmund Drouillard, great-grandson of the late Francois Drouillard, and cousin of the Mayor.

and whose wife having died, he had to take her down to Sandwich for burial.

At that time there was a bear on the island, who had become quite a pet of the fishermen. One morning when the boy lay, still asleep, his big black dog beside him, the bear came around, and hearkened, was full of curiosity. The boy was badly frightened, but feeling brave on account of the nearness of his father, he felt it his duty to guard his little master in his father's absence away with the boat. He quickly realized that the bear did not mean to do him any harm. Human beings were not always so harmless though, as a little later two rough men appeared, and it had not been for the dog, might easily have molested him. But the dog promptly chased them away and then guided him through the bush right to the spot where his father was. The dog was a big Newfoundland and could easily tackle a man or two men and put them to flight. Dogs were not only pets in those days but proved often useful.

The Playful Bear

The bear which had frightened the little lad might have been called the nucleus of the present zoo, as it was for many years the inter-

est and plaything of all who came to the island. It was owned by the man who kept a small saloon on Belle Isle, where the casino is now built. The little boy grew very fond of playing with the bear, and boy dog and bear used to have a good time together. The bear also used to like to play with the pigs that were kept on the island. In fact he grew almost too playful, and finally had to be chained up. One day the boy was with his father but the dog left him away to the place where the bear was. When he got near he heard people calling and crying. A young man accompanied by his girl had been teasing the bear, and had left his hand inside the cage. He turned to speak to the girl, and the bear grabbed his hand and chewed it. The bear was immediately shot, but the girl fainted and there was much confusion, and the young man had quite a time before his hand healed.

Mr. Drouillard's father used to work on Belle Isle with a man named Raccoon, who acted as the first police officer on the island. One day he was out with his father helping this man get marsh hay for his horse. As he sat up on the top of the load, his father called his attention to a pig near by. "Watch that pig," his father

said, "there is a snake there." They stopped and watched proceedings. The pig caught the snake and cut it in two. There were plenty of rattlesnakes in those days on Belle Isle, Mr. Drouillard says, but the pigs made short work of them. He remembered going with Mr. Raccoon home to dinner. He did not want to go, as he was shy and could not speak any English, but he went. While there he heard the phone ring. They were new then, and in common with the phones of those days, the mouthpiece was in the wall. The man talked into it, and the boy thought that he must be crazy. He said nothing to his host, but afterward asked his father why that man talked into a hole in the wall. His father showed him the wire, and then he wanted to know if the wire were hollow.

Three Fishing Grounds

Not long before Mr. Drouillard was married, about 35 years ago, they still had the home cats in Detroit. He remembers that where the Ambassador Bridge is now was the city limits of Detroit, the sea was both. When he was 16, Mr. Drouillard started fishing on "Bull-tonwood Point" on the island for the Booth Fish Company. Off this point lie their smallest seine, they would catch as many as \$1,000 worth in one day. There were three fishing places, Bull-tonwood Point, Middle, where the big dock is, and East, where the lighthouse is.

At these spots they used to catch from right to ten thousand herring at a haul on the run. They fished there three years, but in the last year they did not get enough to pay the men. Since then there have been literally no herring. At that time there were no gill nets used and hardly any pound nets. Only the seine nets were used. Nowadays, the use of gill nets in the lake, some of them two miles in length, blocks the fish from coming into the river.

Pêche Island was originally owned by one of the Drouillards, but later passed into other hands.

Where the Drouillards settled near Luxon Road used to be known as Drouillard's Point. Their property extended from the river right up to the railway track. Part of this was marsh land and in the spring and fall a regular creek, on which sailboats and barges could go, ran through their property. In the early days most of the visiting was done in boats. The marsh also contributed to the family property, as a thriving business was done in Detroit, in the making and sale of straw hats from the marsh grass. This was of course a home industry, as the hats were all made by hand.

Long-Lived People

The Drouillards are a long-lived race, the great-grandfather, Francois, living to the great age of 101. His wife, who was Rose Geline, died at the age of 99.

The mayor of Riverside, Mr. Harry Drouillard, is a son of Alexander Drouillard and a grandson of Francois Xavier. His father also lived to a good age, being almost 83. His first wife was Florence Sullivan and his second wife, the mayor's mother, was Helen Pare. The latter died in 1918 at the age of 74. Her father was also long-lived, as he died at 88 years.

For 30 years the mayor's father and grandfather lived at the old home at Island View, where the town hall of Riverside now stands at the back of the original property. It is peculiarly fitting that Mr. Drouillard should occupy the position of chief magistrate there, on the spot where he was born and brought up. This is his eighth year to be elected, which is another proof of his well-known personal popularity. Before becoming mayor, he served for two years as councillor and one year as justice, and has always been untiring in his work.

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