

A Single Clue-- By Ginger Anderson, Member #887

Beginning genealogists are always advised to talk to their oldest relatives about family when they start their research. What happens when they don't want to talk?

Hilda Lafleur Anderson, my paternal grandmother did not have much patience with family history—especially hers. All she would say about her grandparents was that as a girl she dreaded visits with them because “all they spoke was French.” Luckily for me, one of Hilda's cousins had done a pretty thorough job of researching her paternal (Braza dit) Lafleur line.

But there was scant information on Hilda's maternal grandparents, Joseph and Leah (Simmons) Labare (*Herbert*) outside of town and census records. Leah's father had the impressive name of Ezekiel Simmons, and I knew Leah had several sisters as well as a brother named Adolphus. The family had apparently moved around as their children were born in several different Vermont towns. Census records indicated Leah's parents had been born in Canada.

I found Simmons in and around Franklin County (Vermont), but none of them lead reliably beyond Ezekiel. I did not know his wife Julia's surname. I got a lead on a John Simmons of the right age to be Ezekiel's brother, so I chased him to New York State. He seemed to be German, which could fit given that Ezekiel had named a son Adolphus. I also found an Ezekiel Simmons in the State of Georgia. Both leads seemed unlikely to me, though. Hilda had clearly said all of her grandparents spoke French, so wouldn't that mean her great-grandparents spoke French as well?

Several people I consulted (including some from VFGCS) suggested I look into Simoneau lines. This didn't get me very far, even though it made great sense. I Googled her parents as “Ezekiel and Julia Simoneau.” No luck there or with Leah or the siblings I knew.

I was looking at some old newspaper clippings for another ancestor when I saw a David Simoneau connected to a visit with a member of the Simmons family in Franklin County. I hadn't known of David before, so I honed in. I discovered he had been born in 1842 in Compton, PQ. I dug a little deeper.

David's father's name was Isaac Ezchiel Simoneau and his mother was Juliette Laventure. I had found my line! This information allowed me to trace my Simmons/Simoneau line to Rene Simoneau dit Sanschagrín from France.

So even while trying NOT to be helpful, my grandmother had given me a vital clue to climbing the family tree! It just took me 15 years and a little luck to get there!