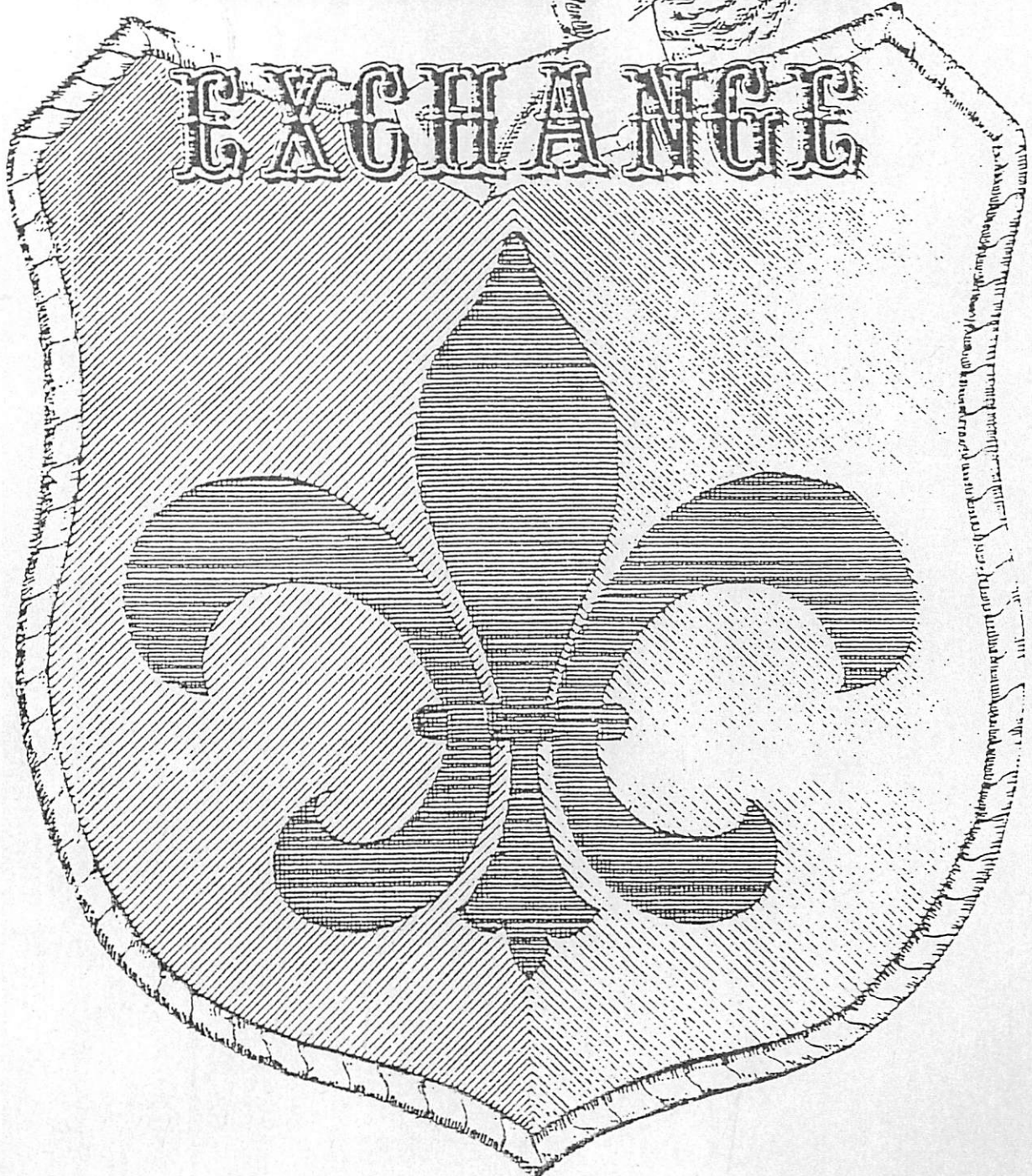


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## THE ORIGINS OF THE ACADIAN MICHEL FOREST

by John DuLong, PhD

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This will be a working paper on the origins of the Acadian Michel FOREST. I will be placing this working paper on the Internet as a web page. The address for this page is: <http://fp-www.wwnet.net/~dulongj/Forest.htm>. I have wanted to write a piece on this subject for a number of years, but it always got pushed back because of other priorities. However, due to a lively discussion in April 1996 on the Usenet News group *soc.genealogy.french*, I have decided that it would be appropriate to lay out what I know and believe about this issue in a paper rather than a string of postings and follow-ups. (For those interested in reading the Usenet News discussion, you can find them by using the Power Search feature of DejaNews at <http://www.dejanews.com>. Just search in the old files for *dulongj* and *forest*, grab one of the entries, and then select view thread).

Because this is a working paper, it is by definition incomplete. I will continue to add to this web page as my knowledge of this issue evolves.

I welcome your comments regarding this working paper. You can email me at [dulongj@wwnet.com](mailto:dulongj@wwnet.com). As I receive your comments I will incorporate any substantive corrections into subsequent drafts. I would especially appreciate hearing from anyone who has stumbled upon original documents concerning this case that I have not seen.

At some point, when I feel that the paper is complete, I will submit it for publication, possibly to Janet Jehn's *Acadian Genealogy Exchange* or to the *Les Cahiers de la Société historique acadienne*. Once the paper is published I will turn over photocopies of any documents or letters I used to prepare this paper to the Centre d'études acadiennes at the Université de Moncton, New Brunswick.

I want to thank Denis Forest and Caroline-Isabelle Caron (who is doing her doctoral research at McGill University on the process of writing the Forest family genealogy) for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. Any mistakes you find remain mine.

In July, 1998, I received a draft of the French translation of the first half of this paper from Denis Forest. He is doing a wonderful job on the translation that will be published in the newsletter of the Association of Forest, Foret and deForet of America (AFFDFA). In light of some of his comments, I have made some modifications and improvements here to the English version. Also, I have been in communication with Lois Stewart of the Society of Descendants of Johannes de la Montagne. The de la Montagne are descended from the Walloon de Forest family. She has summarized this paper for the readers of her society's newsletter (Stewart 1998). In addition, she is encouraging her society to cooperate with the AFFDFA to conduct more research on the Forest family in the Netherlands.

### Introduction

Compared to French Canadians, it is difficult to find the origins of many Acadian families back to France or other parts of Europe. This is due in part to the poverty of the early settlement, to illiteracy among the Acadians, to a lack of officials responsible for keeping records, to the continually shifting political control over the colony, and to region's turbulent history and consequent destruction of records. According to Rev. d'Entremont (Entremont 1991) the origins of only about a hundred male immigrants to Acadia are known for sure, based on surviving records. Consequently, finding the French or European origin of an Acadian ancestor is an important accomplishment.

For several years, there has been a theory expressed concerning the origins of the Acadian Michel FOREST. He was the founder of an Acadian family that has many descendants now living in Canada and the United States, hence the importance of this theory for his many descendants. According to this theory, Michel FOREST is part of the deFOREST family of Huguenots who lived in the Netherlands before coming to North America. The history of this prestigious bourgeois family is covered in several books (E. DeFOREST 1914; J. W. DeFOREST 1900). The deFOREST genealogy

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reaches back to Gaspard deFOREST who in 1450 was living in Avesnes, French Flanders. The deFORESTs, because they were French-speaking Protestant Walloons from French Flanders, sought refuge from religious persecution in the Netherlands. Several of them became involved in various New World colonization efforts including the New Netherlands (New York) and French Guyana.

Unfortunately, as this paper will show, the evidence linking Michel FOREST to the deFOREST family is weak and questionable. This general theory that Michel FOREST is part of this deFOREST family comes in two specific formats. One of these sub-theories has already been abandoned by its proposers, and the subsequent sub-theory they advocated relies on a single document that cannot be found. Over time people come to accept even vague genealogical theories as truths just because they have been published. Novices in particular ignore the contradictions and lack of evidence, and continue to pass it on to other unsuspecting friends and family. When this happens we deprive ourselves of a chance to investigate a theory further and either come up with better solid evidence to prove it or move on to another theory and search for evidence to test it. I believe that the wide acceptance of the general de FOREST theory has harmed the search for Michel FOREST's origins. A genealogical theory lacking adequate support but that has received wide acceptance due to it being published in a variety of reference works by its nature eventually invites criticism. This paper will be a criticism of the Walloon deFOREST theories of Michel FOREST's origins.

I also feel obligated to write this report because in the past I tried to clarify the theories involving the origins of Michel FOREST in letters that were published (DuLong 1981 {repeated in Jehn: 1972 - 5:ii-iii; 1988, 7-8}, and mentioned in Oubre: 1986, 746}; DuLong 1987). I now regret that I wrote these letters precipitously before I had completed much of the research and analysis that will be found in this report. Therefore, I, too, have been more part of the problem than part of the solution. I hope to rectify this situation here.

What do we know about Michel FOREST?

We know very little about Michel FOREST. He appears on several census records. However, to my knowledge, there are no parish register records (DeVille, Rieder & Rieder 1975-1983) or notarial records for him. According to the following censuses we know the following about him:

1671: Census of Port Royal. Michel deFOREST, laborer, age 33. His wife Marie HEBERT, age 20. Their three children: Michel age 4, Pierre age 2-1/2, and René, age 1. His land under labor is two arpents, and he has 12 horned beasts (cattle) and 2 sheep (L. Forest 1977, 38; P. Gaudet 1905, 58; Hébert 1980, 461). His first wife, Marie HEBERT, was the daughter of longtime Acadian colonists Etienne HEBERT and Marie GAUDET. She was born about 1650 and married Michel around 1666 (L. Forest 1977, 38).

1678. Census of Port Royal. Michel FOREST, a widower, no age given, is recorded as owning four acres, three cows, two calves and one gun (d'Entremont 1971, 230; 1979, 56). He had six children: Michel age 12, Pierre age 10, Renée, age 8, an unnamed male (probably Jean Baptiste), age 3, Gabrielle age 6 and Marie age 4. From this report, we gather that his first wife died sometime between 1675 and 1678.

1686. Census of Acadia. Michel DeFOREST age 47. His wife Jacqueline BENOIST or BENOIT, age 13. Their six children: Michel age 19, Pierre age 18, René, age 16, Gabriel (sic) age 13, Marie age 11, and Jean Baptiste age 9 (Hébert 1980, 503). He is reported as owning one gun, 8 cows, 4 pigs and 5 acres. His second wife, Jacqueline BENOIST, was the daughter of Martin BENOIST and Marie CHAUSSEGROS. She was born about 1671/72 according to the 1678 census (d'Entremont 1979, 56, n. 29) and died at the reported age of 82 in October 1755 while in exile in Virginia (L. Forest 1977, 38). Given her reported age, about 14 or 15, she probably married Michel around 1686.

1693. Michel does not appear on the census. His three eldest sons, Michel, Pierre and René are on the census (d'Entremont 1979, 56, n. 29). His second wife appears as the spouse of Guillaume TRAHAN on this census.

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The censuses do not state anything about Michel's origins. They do give us a rough estimate of his age. We can guess that he was probably born between 1638 and 1639. We can also infer that he must have arrived in the colony by 1665 since his first child is born in 1666 or 1667. We know that he died between 1687, the birth of his daughter Marguerite, and 1691, the remarriage of his second wife, Jacqueline BENOIST (d'Entremont 1979, 56, n. 29).

Abbé FOREST (L. Forest 1977, 29) indicates that Michel was given land east of Port Royal on the Dauphine River (now the Annapolis River). However, to my knowledge, there is no document clearly establishing Michel's ownership of any land. This lack of documentation is not uncommon for many Acadian parcels of land.

Lastly, concerning his origins, there is a family tradition among the FOREST descendants living on the Gaspé peninsula of Québec that their immigrant ancestor was from French Flanders and that he had converted to Catholicism (L. Forest 1977, 6, 49-52). However, no document found in Acadia contemporary to Michel supports this tradition. It is unclear when this tradition started, but it at least goes back as far as Charles FOREST, who was married to Marie-Anne POIRIER at Bonaventure on 3 November 1820. Apparently, this oral tradition was current around the mid-1830's when Charles told it to his sons. Oral traditions can be notoriously incorrect (for example, see the analysis of Alex HALEY's use of oral tradition in Mills and Mills 1981). They may contain some truth, but they must be verified by documents.

This is the sum of the information we know with relative confidence regarding Michel FOREST.

What are the theories regarding the origins of Michel FOREST?

L.-U. FONTAINE, a columnist for *La Presse* of Montréal, reported on an address that Virlet d'Aoust made to the société de géographie in Paris, France, on 5 February 1892 (Vincent-de-Lérins 1955, 17). In his talk d'AOUST mentioned that Jessé deFOREST and his sons founded New York. FONTAINE mentioned that there were some FORESTS living in l'Assomption County, Québec. Soon after this report, the prominent genealogist and archivist Placide GAUDET responded on 25 February 1892, in *l'Evangéline*, that "*Ce n'est pas le cas*" (This is not the case). He was concerned that people would jump to the conclusion that the Québec and Acadian FORESTS were related to the New York FORESTS. He stated that the FORESTS of Canada do not descend from Jessé deFOREST but from Michel FOREST who was born in France in 1638 and probably came to Acadia with Governor d'AULNAY around 1650 at the age of 12 years. Vincent-de-Lérins objected to GAUDET's probabilistic approach to Michel's origins. Thus starts our controversy with the theory that the Acadian FOREST family might be related to the FOREST family of New York. (I want to thank Caroline-Isabelle CARON for clarifying this controversy [Caron 1997])

There are actually two specific theories that fall under the general theory that Michel was a member of the Huguenot deFOREST family that settled in New York. To avoid confusion, I will label these sub-theories as the Jessé theory and the Gérard theory after the purported grandfathers assigned to him.

The Jessé theory claims that Michel is the son of Henri deFOREST and the grandson of Jessé deFOREST. This theory was fully expressed in the first edition of the Père Vincent-de-Lérins *Histoire de la famille Forest* published in 1955 (Vincent-de-Lérins 1955). Père Vincent-de-Lérins, S.O. Cist., was born Jean-Pierre-Lévi FOREST in 1882 and died in 1972 (D. Forest 1996). Before we proceed with Père Vincent-de-Lérins' version of Michel's origins, let us review what is known about the characters involved in this theory (this summary is based on E. DeFOREST 1914; J., W. deFOREST 1900; L. FOREST 1977; Vincent-d-Lérins 1955, 1965).

Jessé was the son of Jean or Jehan deFOREST and Anne MAILLARD or MAILLART. Jean had married Anne around 1570. They were originally from Avesnes in French Flanders, lived for a while at Sedan, France, and eventually fled to Leiden in the Netherlands to escape persecution for their

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Protestant beliefs. They had at least four children: Melchior, Jessé, Gérard, and Anne (J. W. deFOREST 1900, 46; E. DeFOREST 1914, 1:9).

Jessé deFOREST married Marie DuCLOUX, originally of Sedan, around 1601. They had three children, including Rachele, Henri and Isaac. Jessé was involved in an aborted attempt to found a colony in Brazil, actually French Guiana. He died on 24 October 1624 in French Guiana. His children did not follow him to South America, but instead settled at New Amsterdam (New York City) several years later. Some have mistakenly credit Jessé with having been a founder of New York (for example, J. W. DeFOREST 1900) but he never even visited the city.

Henri deFOREST (or Hendrick deFOREEST in Dutch) was born on 7 March 1606 at Sedan, France, and married on 1 July 1636 at Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to Gertrude BORNSTRA, of Friesland. He departed on 25 September 1636 for New Amsterdam, Gertrude staying behind. Henri died on 26 July 1637 of a fever off the coast of Virginia. The couple had been married for only just over a year, but they had been separated for much of this time. According to the Jessé theory during this three month period they conceived a son named Michel who eventually migrated to Acadia and settled there. There is no evidence in any document uncovered to date to support this theory. Gertrude eventually came to New Amsterdam with her second husband, Andries HUDDE, in 1639. In the settlement of Henri's property, there is no mention made of any children, which would normally appear in such a case (E. deFOREST 1914, 1: 99-101; 2:355-356). Specifically, Riker (1904, 128-129), the historian of Harlem, New York, states that Henry died childless and his estate fell to his wife.

According to Père Vincent-de-Lérins (1955, 14-16), version of the Jessé theory, HUDDE and Gertrude returned to the Netherlands (Riker 1903, 130). Père Vincent-de-Lérins speculated that Michel came to the New Netherlands after the death of his mother. He further suggest that when he arrived he found that Doctor Jean de la MONTAGNE, the husband of Rachel deFOREST, his aunt, had possession of his father's property. Frustrated, when Michael came of age, he decided to join TEMPLE's expedition to Nova Scotia. There are no documents submitted to back up this theory.

The role of Thomas TEMPLE in both theories is important, so I will review his career here (Ryder, 1979). Acadia had been captured by Major Robert SEDGEWICK of Massachusetts for the British in 1654. TEMPLE, an Englishman, became the governor of captured Acadia, which the British referred to as Nova Scotia, in 1657. He remained governor of Nova Scotia until 1670. During the period of his governorship TEMPLE spent most of his time in Boston, an absentee governor. However, he did arrive in Nova Scotia on 1 May 1657 with a party of settlers. TEMPLE is an interesting man, a real survivor. Appointed governor by CROMWELL, he ended up being knighted when Charles II was restored. His governorship of Nova Scotia was much more an economic arrangement for him, a business deal if you will, than it was a political career.

According to both theories, Michel was supposedly among the settlers who arrived in Nova Scotia in 1657. Once in Nova Scotia, Michel settled down and married a local woman and decided to stay in the colony when the French took it back from the British in 1670. By then he had already assimilated to Acadian culture and had a family.

By 1965, the second edition of the *Histoire de la famille Forest*, the Jessé theory was abandoned. There were no primary documents or secondary publications to support it. Despite the elaborate weaving of a circumstantial tale, the theory just did not fit well. In particular, the chronology of Michel's conception and the lack of mention of any children for Henri and Gertrude doomed this theory.

The Jessé theory was repeated in Arsenault's *Histoire et généalogie des Acadiens* (1965, 1978). Despite its original proponent abandoning the theory, it continues to resurface and will probably take decades to disappear. I cannot help but wonder how many genealogists have stumbled upon this theory, gone of the same materials others have, arrived at tge same conclusion that the theory is false, and then started out again searching forthe truth. I fear that they are in the minority and that many FOREST descendants still have the Jessé lineage record on their pedigree charts.

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In 1965, in the second edition of the *Histoire de la famille FOREST*, the Gérard theory arises out of the ashes of the Jessé theory (Vincent-de-Lérins, 1965, 26-30). Père Vincent-de-Lérins is still the author of this edition, but in collaboration with Abbé Lorenzo FOREST, P.S.S. and Albert FOREST, a civil engineer. This new theory claims that Michel is really Gereyt deFOREST, the son of Crispin deFOREST, and the grandson of Gérard deFOREST, who you will recall is the brother of Jessé deFOREST and the son of Jean deFOREST. A quick review of the basic genealogical facts of this lineage is called for at this point. These facts are verified in surviving primary documents, including the Walloon register (Bibliothèque Wallonne de Leiden, 1518-1811, microfilm 0199828) and other sources (see E. DeFOREST 1914). For the remainder of this article I will rely on the 1977 version of this story found in third edition of the *Histoire de la famille FOREST*. Abbé Lorenzo FOREST is the prime author of the third edition with the collaboration of Père Vincent-de-Lérins and Albert FOREST (L. FOREST 1977). This edition contains the same Gérard theory. There is now a sixth edition available, which I have not seen, but I understand it also contains the same Gérard theory (L. FOREST 1990) (I want to thank Denis FOREST for recently sending me a copy of this edition. As time permits, I will read through it and adjust page citations to point to this edition when appropriate. I believe this book can still be ordered from the Association des Forest, Foret and deForest d'Amérique, whose address is listed below.

Gérard married Esther delaGRANGE, about 1610, probably in Leiden, the Netherlands. This couple had Crispin as one of their six children (L. Forest 1977, 18, 21). Crispin married Marguerite BORNSTRA on 1 July 1636 at Amsterdam, the Netherlands (L. FOREST 1977, 22, 27); E. deFOREST 1914, 1:75). Marguerite was the sister of Gertrude who married Henri DeFOREST, Crispin's cousin, in a double wedding. None of these facts regarding Crispin and Marguerite are in question. However, it is the assumed facts regarding one of their children, who is the center of attention in this theory, which are troublesome.

According to this new and improved theory Michel FOREST is really Gereyt deFOREST, the son of Crispin deFOREST and Marguerite BORNSTRA. In order for this theory to work a number of points must be accepted. I have listed here these points with my observations about them as counterpoints:

1. Point: According to the census records, Michel was born about 1638 or 1639. Gereyt was born at Leiden on 18 June 1637 (L. Forest 1977, 22)

Counterpoint: Just because two people with the same surname were born about the same time does not prove a common identity.

2. Gereyt had cousins, the children and grandchildren of Jessé, living in the New Netherlands. Also, his grandfather, Gérard, had signed a contract on 8 August 1636, to finance half the cost of establishing the settlement of Fort Orange (Albany, New York) (E. DeFOREST 1914, 2:350-352). This colonial initiative was under the leadership of Kilian van RENSSLAER (L. Forest 1977, 27-28).

Counterpoint: There is no dispute with this well-documented information. However, the presence of relatives in the New Netherlands would make it less likely that Gereyt would relocate in Acadia where he had no kin at all.

3. Gereyt had motivation to leave the Netherlands and come to the New Netherlands. He was the only son of Crispin and therefore heir to his father's share of his grandfather's investment in Fort Orange. Abbé FOREST and his colleagues (Forest 1977, 28) state that Gereyt came to the New Netherlands because of this inheritance.

Counterpoint: The whole issue of an inheritance at Fort Orange is problematic. Gérard died in August 1654, in the Netherlands. According to J. W. DeFOREST (1900, 55, 186), the probate records of the Hague indicate that the estate of Gérard deFOREST, widower of Hester de la GRANGE, was partitioned on 7 June 1656. His heirs are listed as Chrispin desFOREST, Sara desFOREST, widow of Barent von de KASKELLEN, and David deTOIT, husband of Hester desFOREST. They are dividing an estate valued at 15,325 florins. J. W. deFOREST does not mention Gereyt as one of the heirs. Nor

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does he discuss any outstanding sums owed by van RENNSELAER to Gérard, or any properties at Fort Orange. It seems unlikely that Gérard still held any property interests in the New Netherlands at the time of his death. It is possible that van RENNSELAER may have already settled accounts with Gérard long before 1654. In fact, it might be that Gérard still owed van RENNSELAER money, since E. DeFOREST (1914, 1:78) reports that Gérard had trouble paying his share. Abbé FOREST (1977, 309) points out that the records for Fort Orange were destroyed in a fire in 1911. Thus, we cannot verify in original documents whether Gérard had any active interest in the settlement around 1657. Furthermore, we do not know whether Crispin was dead in 1657, when Gereyt supposedly migrated to the New Netherlands to claim an inheritance he would have received through his father's death.

4. Gereyt came to the New Netherlands about 1657 at the age of 20 (L. Forest 1977, 28). When he was in the Dutch colony he was supposedly unable to claim his inheritance. Frustrated, according to this theory, Gereyt decided to join TEMPLE's expedition to Nova Scotia.

Counterpoint: There is no evidence that Gereyt ever came to the New Netherlands. This is pure and unnecessary speculation. Since TEMPLE's expedition left from England, it would just as easy to argue that Gereyt left for Nova Scotia from there rather than meeting up with it in Boston, Massachusetts. I find it somewhat amazing that a person who is the heir of his father and his grandfather, a man of modest wealth, would find it necessary to leave the Netherlands to make a life for himself. Were there no assets back in the Netherlands for him to live comfortably on? Also, I find it difficult to believe that he would not have verified his inheritance in the New World before departing the Old World. Lastly, if he wanted to settle in the New World, then why did he not stay in the New Netherlands, where his cousins lived, and which was Dutch and would remain so until 1664 (Morris and Morris 1976, 53). I just do not understand Gereyt's motivation in this scene.

5. Gereyt is found on a list of colonists brought to Nova Scotia by Sir Thomas TEMPLE. This document clearly names him, his parents, and his birthplace. According to Abbé FOREST (1977, 29) a friend from England provided the following information (my translation):

We have found in the archives of the Minister of Colonies, at London, in the papers of Thomas TEMPLE, a list not dated - but probably from 1658 - giving the names of a certain number of recruits for Acadia., at that time in the hands of the English since 1654.

At the op of this one reads the name of "Gereyt de FOREEST, son of Chrispyn de FOREEST and Margrita BORNSTRA from Leiden."

Counterpoint: This is the centerpiece evidence that the whole case rests on. I will deal with it in the next section.

6. While Acadia or Nova Scotia was under the control of TEMPLE, the only way someone could settle in the colony was under British auspices.

Counterpoint: TEMPLE's control of the colony probably only extended to the immediate neighborhood of Port Royal and a few other sites. The Acadians were known as an independently minded people (Griffiths 1992). Their indifference to authority, whether French or British, often frustrated administrators. There is no reason why a French fisherman or laborer could not have moved into a site upriver from Port Royal and settled in with the Acadians despite TEMPLE's tenure. We must keep in mind that on the small fringe of British-controlled Nova Scotia much of Acadia was still open territory. Moreover, it is possible that he might have landed in Acadia before the British came.

7. Chronological inferences that can be derived from the Acadian censuses indicate that Michel most likely came to Acadia during TEMPLE's reign as governor of Nova Scotia. Otherwise, he would have had to come to Acadia at a young age, and would have remained single for about sixteen years (Vincent-de-Lérins 1955, 17).

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Counterpoint: Michel's marriage about 1666 does lend credence to the idea that he came during the period of British control, 1654-1670. However, Placide GAUDET was the first to suggest that Michel de FOREST came over to Acadia as a youth with Governor d'AULNAY about 1650 before the English takeover (G. FOREST n. d., no. 80-032). It was not uncommon for young children to be apprenticed or placed in service at a young age during the seventeenth century. According to BUJOLD and CAILLEBEAU (1979, 38), Governor d'AULNAY was recruiting young men to voyage to Acadia between 1645 and 1650. Furthermore, a delay of sixteen years is understandable. He had to mature to adulthood, perhaps wait for his period of servitude to end, maybe spend some time setting up his own farm to become independent, then had to wait for an eligible bride to mature, given the shortage of marriageable women in the colony. This could take up sixteen years. Surely, the fact that his second marriage was to a girl of 14 or 15 indicates that there was a serious shortage of eligible women in the colony even as late as 1686.

8. The archives at Amsterdam and Leiden fail to mention anything else about Gereyt after his birth. There is no marriage or death information for him in the Netherlands (L. Forest 1977, 29)

Counterpoint: The fact that available records, consulted so far, do not mention Gereyt after his birth is not proof that he migrated to Nova Scotia. It is unclear what records FOREST and his colleagues checked. In fact, we do not even know if Gereyt survived to adulthood. Compared to births and marriages, deaths were the least likely to be recorded during this period. For instance, we do not have a recorded death for Crispin. The deaths attributed to the other deFORESTS in Gereyt's lineage are just approximations derived from other records (L. Forest 1977, 18). Gereyt could have come to Nova Scotia with TEMPLE in 1657. However, he could also have died in childhood, become a Dutch soldier and died in battle, died at sea, migrated to England, Ireland, Germany, or South Africa, etc. We just do not know Gereyt's fate until an exhaustive search is done to recover other records dealing with him. And it is always possible that he simply slipped into obscurity and his death was never recorded anywhere.

9. Gereyt settled down on land near Port Royal and married an Acadia woman, Marie HEBERT. You will recall that his family were Huguenots, so he converted to Catholicism at the time of his marriage. At the same time he changed his name from Gereyt to Michel. Gereyt is not the name of a saint, so following Catholic tradition, he took the name of St. Michel. This name was purposefully chosen because his great-great-grandfather, Michel MAILLARD, was the last Catholic ancestor in his lineage (L. Forest 1977, 29). Michel MAILLARD was the father of Anne MAILLARD, the wife of Jean de FORET, who in turn were the parents of Gérard.

Counterpoint: This is an interesting point that continues to mystify me. Although Acadians were predominantly Catholic, they were not a priest-ridden people. There were few clergy to supervise their spiritual needs throughout their history in Nova Scotia. Also, these independent people probably would not have put much pressure on Gereyt to convert. There is no record of his abjuration. Furthermore, there was no need for him to change his name to Michel. Catholics are encouraged to use Christian names, that is, to select the name of a saint for their children. However, Gereyt is not a heathen name. It is Dutch for Gérard, a perfectly acceptable name. I know that it is a Dutch name because Gereyt's grandfather Gérard is referred to as Gereyt in the Walloon registers (Bibliothèque Wallonne de Leiden, 1518 - 1811, microfilm 01998828). In addition, several Dutch genealogists replied to a posting I had on soc.genealogy.benelux regarding the name Gereyt. They indicated that Gereyt is the older northern Netherlands (Frisian) spelling for the modern Dutch name Gerrit, that was also spelled Geryt, and that it is the same as Gerhardt in German and Gérard in French (Bouma 1966; Gri't 1996; Hamrick 1996; Hassebroek 1996; Louw 1996; Mazee 1996). Lastly, I checked and found out that there were several Medieval saints called Gerard (Delaney & Tobin 1961). Gereyt could have simply gone by Gérard. Furthermore, Crispin, as anyone who has read Shakespeare's Henry IV can tell you, is also a saint's name. Therefore, Michel could have named one of his children Gérard or Crispin without fear, but instead, they all have rather common French names. The story of Gereyt having to change his name to Michel is a stretch for us to believe.

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10. The Gérard theory is bolstered by the Forest family traditions originating around 1830 of a Protestant ancestor from French Flanders (L. Forest 1977, 6, 49-52).

Counterpoint: Family traditions are not trustworthy sources of information, especially after three or more generations. They can and should only be used as clues.

11. Lastly, Abbé FOREST (1977, 5-7) emphasized that Michel went under the name Michel de FOREST and that the surname deFOREST, as compared to FOREST, is widespread mostly in the north of France.

Counterpoint: Surnames in the seventeenth century were still a recent invention in most parts of Europe, as was the idea of consistent and correct spelling. We should not be surprised to see the surname appearing variously. This is indeed the case among Michel's children and grandchildren where the name can appear as deFOREST, FOREST, or FORET. Eventually, it seems that most of his descendants eventually dropped the "de." Also, the use of the particle "de" is problematic. Many people added it to their names to enhance their prestige in the false belief that it implied nobility (Trudel 1994). Or, the "de" simply meant from, as in from the forest. It is completely possible that the name deFOREST appears in other parts of France. For example, Gérard FOREST (n. d.) and Maurice Caillebeau (1980) found deFOREST families living in Poitou during the seventeenth century.

In addition to all these points and counterpoints, I ponder why a person of Gereyt deFOREST's status, background, and likely education did not play a more important role in colonial affairs. He probably would have been literate and this alone would have made him an important member of the community and likely to be mentioned in administrative papers. However, this is not the case. Like Maurice CAILLEBEAU: "Je trouvais un peu étrange que le fils d'une notable famille protestante de Flandre devienne un modeste laboureur catholique des premiers temps de l'Acadie" (Caillebeau 1980).

This Gérard theory is certainly stronger than the Jessé theory. It dovetails reasonably well with historical events and does not suffer from a tight chronology. It relies on some well-documented facts. For example, it is clear from the Walloon records and secondary sources that there was a Gereyt deFOREST. However, most of the theory delves into speculation and demands a lot of its believers. The key to the theory is the mysterious 1658 list of settlers.

What searches have been done for the TEMPLE list of colonists?

Ultimately, the entire Gérard theory rests on a single document, the 1658 list of colonists. It is this list that makes the whole story believable. To understand the status of this list as evidence we have to ask some questions. Does it qualify as a primary document? What is the importance of this list for Acadian genealogy in general? Where did the list come from? How do we know it is true? Is it a lost document? Without this list there are no original documents that back up the theory. There are only vague family traditions, circumstantial facts that do not contradict possible but unlikely events, and naming patterns that may not be reliable. All of these alternative forms of evidence are weak substitutes for the 1658 list.

As it stands, the 1658 list of colonists cannot qualify as a primary document. A primary document is a piece of evidence that was collected at or near the time of the event by someone who is knowledgeable about the event and has an interest in properly recording it (Greenwood 1990, 62-64). In contrast, a secondary document is a record that originates well after an event and includes published accounts such as family histories. Genealogists prefer to use primary documents as evidence since they are more likely to be accurate than secondary documents.

We really do not have the 1658 list. What we have is a secondary document, the FOREST family history, referring to a letter, another secondary document, that refers to the list, a possible primary document. Other than the English friend who saw the list and reported it to the FOREST family history authors, no one else has reported seeing the list. Until the list is found, properly cited, and

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analyzed, it must be considered a secondary document and therefore liable to the limitation of a secondary document.

Finding the 1658 list of settlers, and transcribing it completely, would be an important contribution to the origins of several Acadian families in the late 1650's. In particular, the half-English MELANSONS, Jean PITRE dit Bénéaque from Flanders, Lawrence GRANGER from England, and Roger CASEY from Ireland might be found on such a list (Arsenault 1978, 2: 481, 583, 686-687, 726). All of these men show up around this period in Acadia. Are they mentioned on the list? We simply do not know. Lists of settlers or passengers do surface occasionally for the seventeenth century, but they are rare. It is a tragic loss for Acadian genealogy if this rare list did exist, was not adequately cited, transcribed and analyzed, and has subsequently disappeared.

Realizing the value of the 1658 list for Acadian genealogy, I wrote to Abbé Lorenzo FOREST, the author of the third edition of the forest family history and genealogy. Abbé FOREST was kind enough to answer my questions that I put to him (L. Forest 1982, 1983). From him I learned that the English friend had sent this information to Père Vincent-de-Lérins in 1950. Abbé FOREST has never seen this letter, does not know the name of the English friend, and has been unable to locate the letter among the papers of the deceased Père Vincent-de-Lérins. Recently, Denis FOREST, the secretary of the Association des Forest, Foret et deForest d'Amérique, met with Abbé FOREST and discussed the list and double-checked the papers Père Vincent-de-Lérins left behind (D. Forest 1996a, 1996b). Again, neither the list nor the letter from the English friend were found. In fact, Abbé FOREST could not recall if Père Vincent-de-Lérins received information about the list via a letter, a copy, a telephone call, or some other form of communication. Denis Forest (1996a) reports that neither Abbé FOREST nor Père Vincent-d-Lérins actually had their hands on a copy of this list. According to him, "They were told and took note of it." Abbé FOREST also mentioned to Denis that he has hunted for the list and asked others to search for it, but without success. Lastly, Denis also reported that members of his association have also tried to locate the list.

As it now stands, we have not only a missing primary document, but also a missing secondary document, the letter or other mysterious communication reporting on the 1658 list.

An important principle of genealogical research is that all acts should be well documented (Lackey 1980). Preferably the proofs should be primary documents or respected secondary documents citing original documents. Documentation must be cited appropriately so that other genealogists can find and review the documents for further analysis. This allows for the replication of work and the re-evaluation of others' work. Without the proper citation of documents, genealogy would be the simple operation of faith in what others say about heir ancestors. However, almost all of have met people who exaggerate about their ancestry to gain prestige. Also, people passing themselves off as professional genealogists will lie to their clients and present them with prestigious pedigrees (Remington 1991).

Without a proper citation we do not know the origin of this 1658 list. We cannot judge its authenticity, either. I suspect that Père Vincent-de-Lérins may have had doubts about this document as well. If not, then why did he fail to use this information in his 1955 first edition of the Forest family history? If the letter from the English friend had been sent to him in 19950, then why not use it then? However, there seems to be some confusion about the chronology of when the letter arrived. In conversations Abbé FOREST has had with Denis Forest, he has reported that the letter with information from the list arrived after the publication of the first edition of the Forest family history (D. Forest 1996a).

After writing to Abbé FOREST, I decided to try to track down the 1658 list. Consequently, I started by consulting printed guides to British documents. I searched the printed British Calendar of State Papers (Green [1884] 1965); Sainsbury 1860) in vain, looking for this list. By the way, there is no Ministry of Colonies, only the Colonial Office. I assume that this is what the English friend meant. I did find information about TEMPLE's expedition, including the following order:

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1657. April 14. Order of the Council of State. A convoy to be provided for several ships bound to Newfoundland, and instructions given to the commander to make one of them ready with all speed to carry Col. Thomas TEMPLE and his company to his plantation in Nova Scotia or Acadia, in order to his settling in the forts and government there, according to his patent and commission from his Highness. [Interregnum, Entry Bk., Vol. CV, p. 790] (Sainsbury 1860, 456)

Also, I found mention of the ship and its captain in the following source:

1657. Nov. 12.

From Capt. Peter BUTLER, Satisfaction, Down

To: Navy Comrs

After receiving Col. [Thos.] TEMPLE and his company on board, sailed for Boston, New England, and then made for St. John's Fort and Port Royal, intending for Newfoundland; but meeting with violent storms, and getting short of provisions, returned for England; neither he nor his company are ashamed to speak of the goodness of the Lord in preserving them from such great dangers. [References. Vo. 174. 69] (Green [1884] 1965, 460)

We know from subsequent events that TEMPLE and his company eventually did make it to Nova Scotia. However, this is the only information I could find about his expedition in the published calendar of papers for the Colonial Office. There is no mention of a list enumerating the members of his company.

Over several years, 1982 - 1987, I systematically made contact with any archives, library, or society that had any papers from TEMPLE and would possibly hold this list. I wrote to the Public Record Office in England (Chalmers 1983), the British Library's Department of Manuscripts (Higgins 1982), the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (Robert 1982), the National Archives of Canada's Manuscript Division (Walden 1982), the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (1987?), the Houghton Library at Harvard University (Rathbun 1987), the Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Library (Howitson 1983), and the Massachusetts Historical Society (Gutheim 1983). According to the officials who responded, none of these institutions hold the missing list or know of its whereabouts.

Several years ago I shared my growing concerns about the existence of the 1658 list with two leading Acadian genealogists: Steve WHITE and Rev. Clarence J. d'ENTREMONT.

On 18 June 1984 I discussed the case with WHITE on the telephone. He told me that he, too, had searched for the list unsuccessfully. Nevertheless, he was inclined to believe the story because the wording of the quote from the English friend sounds as if it was from the seventeenth century. On 17 August 1992, I visited the Centre d'études acadiennes in hope of finding the list there. Again I was disappointed. While at the Centre, I had the opportunity to view the manuscript draft of Steve WHITE's *Le Dictionnaire généalogique des familles acadiennes* (forthcoming). In WHITE's draft on the FOREST family (binder no. 9, pp. 13-15), I found that he thoroughly discusses the known facts and both the Jessé and Gérard theories. WHITE mentions that his colleague, Paul DELANEY of London, searched for the list and did not find it. He also states that a search of archives in the Netherlands finds no further mention of Gereyt deFOREST. He concludes that the origins of Michel remain questionable due to the lack of a reference for the 1658 list.

Rev. d'ENTREMONT's stand on the issue of Michel's origins is much more certain (d'Entremont 1989). To say that he is skeptical of the Jessé and Gérard theories would be an understatement. He finds them "imaginative," not grounded in sound facts or documents. He, too, has searched for the missing 1658 list and has been unable to find it. In particular, his letter focused on the Gaspésie tradition. He argues that the tradition of a French Flanders or a Dutch origin and Protestant background only goes back to the nineteenth century. However, the testimony of the Acadian

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refugees on Belle-Ile-en-Mer, in the La Rochette Papers, does not mention any origins for Michel (see Rieder & Rieder 1967-1973, 2:59). Furthermore, he points out that foreign origins of other family founders, such as the MELANSON brothers from England, and GRANGER from Plymouth, are mentioned. Those families that trace back to a French ancestor are silent on the origin of their ancestor, as in the case with Michel.

Recently, I have learned that Denis BEAUREGARD, who runs the impressive Francogéne web sit (<http://www.cam.org/~beaur/gen/index.html>) and produces the electronic *Généalogie de l'ancienne Acadie*, shares my skepticism of the Walloon FOREST origin theory for Michel (Beauregard 1996). He mentions that he has never found any mention about Gereyt de FOREST in any of the books regarding Albany, New York, that he has searched through at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. Likewise, I have not found any mention of him in the books on colonial New York at the Burton Historical Collection in Detroit, Michigan. On his *Généalogie de l'ancienne Acadie* web page, Beauregard (1997a, 1997b) states that it is probable that Michel came from Poitou, the home of many other Acadian settlers, but he also mentions the Gereyt de FOREST approach as a hypothesis or speculation only.

It is clear that leading Acadian genealogists have realized the importance of the missing 1658 list and are skeptical about the Gérard theory in the absence of the list.

What is the status of the TEMPLE list of colonists?

As a result of my search for TEMPLE's 1658 list of colonists, and the efforts of others, I believe that we must agree that this document's status can only be that it either once existed but was not catalogued properly and was subsequently lost, or that it never existed.

I have pondered whether it is possible that the list might have existed at one time, but has been since lost. I have rejected this as unlikely. The list was found in the 1950's or 1960's. This was after World War II. Although many documents were lost during the war, especially during the Blitz, this document was apparently used after 1945. The puzzling thing is that there is no reference to this document in any of the published guides to British documents that I have consulted so far (Green [1884] 1965; Sainsbury 1860; Wilson 1992). Although calendars for archived documents can be incomplete or inaccurate, usually, even in the case of a lost document, one a document has made it into a collection, there is a paper trail. The guides will at some time clearly indicate the nature of a document even if it is now missing. For example, my wife's Anglo-Irish ancestor's will from the 1850's is listed clearly as having once existed, but the document was destroyed during the Irish Civil War of the 1920's.

If a document is not mentioned in a published index or calendar, then it would have meant that Père Vincent-de-Lérin's English friend either spent several hours hunting through uncatalogued papers, that he was a superb researcher who knew the Colonial Office collections' best-kept secrets, or that he was very fortunate. Finding a document in an unprocessed collection, or a document that is out of place, is challenging. I find it difficult to understand why if a person went to this effort, they did not do a thorough job describing the process, transcribing or copying the document, and citing it properly.

In addition, if the 1658 list did exist but was misfiled, then there were many opportunities where scholars working on TEMPLE and his period in Nova Scotia history might have found it. Several historians have used the major collections in the United Kingdom and North America (Howland 1932' Rawlyk 1973; Reid 1981; Ryder 1979). However, none of the mention seeing the document. And HOWLAND (1932) was doing his research before the 1950's. Although they are historians and not genealogists, they would likely have realized the importance of the 1658 list and mentioned it.

If we concede that the 1658 list is now lost, then we must ask whether we feel comfortable in still accepting a vague report of it as evidence. I am not opposed to using lost documents to prove a genealogical case. However, I have to have some evidence that the document really did exist and was reliable. For example, if Père Archange GODBOUT, the renowned French Canadian genealogist, who

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made several research trips to France before World War II (Godbout [1925] 1979), reports the contents of a document that has subsequently been destroyed, then I would tend to believe it. Why? For a number of reasons. Père GODBOUT would have given a proper citation for the document. I would know where it should have been found. I could also compare other documents he reported on that still survive, to see who accurately he related the information they contained. Lastly, I know who he is and understand his qualifications as a thorough researcher. In contrast, the reference to the lost 1658 list is just too weak for me to accept it.

In the absence of a reliable citation and transcription of the entire list, I believe that we must suspend belief in the Gérard theory. We simply do not have a single primary document to support any version of the Walloon deFOREST theory. We do not have a citation for the critical TEMPLE 1658 list that points to its exact location in any British collection. We do not have the contents of the full list. We do not have a photograph or complete transcription of the list. We do not know the name, or qualifications, of the English friend who sent the letter. We do not know whether the information the English friend sent is accurate. We have no way of judging the authenticity of this list. We do not know whether the document ever really existed. Without the list, the Gérard theory melts away. Consequently, I believe we must accept that Michel's origins are unknown at this time and that most likely the list never existed.

BEAUREGARD (1997b) does point out that Abbé FOREST, starting in the third edition of the Forest Family history, does add the qualifier "peut-être" (perhaps) before introducing Michel's parents as Crispin deFOREST and Marguerite BORNSTRA. However, this is not enough. The Gérard theory, with all its allure, is presented too strongly given the lack of evidence to support it.

Regrettably, the damage has already been done. The pedigree charts of many Acadian family historians now reflect either the Jessé and Gérard theory of Michel's origins because these theories have been widely published (for example, Arsenault 1978, 2:544; Cyr 1981, 4-8, 1985, 107-111; Jehn 1972 - 5, ii-iii) and is repeated on several web pages, in the International Genealogical Index (IGI) and in the Family Ancestral File. I believe that the time has come to remove these pedigree sheets and to start over with a fresh perspective on Michel's origins. To cling to the Gérard theory is to stifle the opportunities to find Michel's origins.

What other options are there for pursuing this issue?

It is time to restart the search for Michel FOREST's origins. From my experience working on the Baillon (DuLong 1997a) and Le Neuf (DuLong 1997b) projects, I am well aware of the costs, time and effort it takes to accomplish research on the origins of seventeenth and eighteenth century European immigrants. In the case of these projects, my colleagues and I had the benefit of substantial clues regarding the homes of these ancestors. We formed a research association that helped us pool our resources and divide the labor according to our respective expertise. I recommend the same team approach for the renewed search for Michel's origins.

In particular, I believe that the Association des Forest, Foret et de Forest d'Amérique (AFFDA) could play a strategic role in this renewed effort. For those of you unfamiliar with this organization, you can contact them at:

Association des Forest, Foret et de Forest d'Amérique, c/o Denis Forest, Ste-Marcelline, QC, Canada J0K 2Y0. Phone: 514.883.3255. Fax: 514.883.3215. E-Mail: [dforest@pandore.qc.ca](mailto:dforest@pandore.qc.ca). Web page: <http://www.MEDENT.UMontreal.CA/~forestd/>

The AFFDA could: 1) organize the research team and support it; 2) finance the research effort, which will involve hiring professional genealogists to do research in Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, and the Family History Library in Utah; 3) act as a clearinghouse to give out the most updated information on the research effort; 4) request donations to support the project from its members, and 5) publish the final results of the project and make an effort to replace the inaccurate information already out there. This research team could be an officially recognized subcommittee of the AFFDA.

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There are several options open for pursuing Michel's origins. Mostly, these options involve testing the Gérard theory and either proving it or discarding it with evidence. However, I also suggest another option that we could test, what I will call the Parthenay theory.

The Gérard theory should be systematically investigated to either finally prove or disprove this theory. This means a thorough and exhaustive search for the 1658 list must be conducted. Although I strongly suspect that it does not exist, I believe we have a responsibility to do our utmost to track it down. I know from the library science literature that reference librarians provide patrons with correct information only 50 to 60% of the time (Bopp & Smith 1995, 21). I do not have similar numbers on archivists, but I assume that an official responding to a letter will not invest hours in searching every possibility. Therefore, it is possible that the librarians and archivists I contacted missed the crucial document. The collections, especially the Public Records Office in England, should be thoroughly checked by a professional genealogist. If successful, then we would have the 1658 list. If not then we would at least get a list of records checked in the process.

It is also possible that I did not contact the correct institutions. Perhaps the document is sitting gathering dust in another British library or archives. Again, a professional genealogist with knowledge of British genealogical and historical sources should be consulted.

Another approach for finally testing the Gérard theory is to work backwards from Gereyt deFOREST. We could hire a professional genealogist in the Netherlands to try to trace the fate of Gereyt. On one hand, if we find that Gereyt married and died in the Netherlands, then this would disprove the Gérard deFOREST theory. On the other hand, we might find that Gereyt signed away his property rights to a kinsman in the Netherlands before departing for the Americas. I have already checked the index to Walloon church records (Bibliothèque Wallonne de Leiden, 1518-1811, microfilm 0199828), and could not find anything regarding him. However, a professional genealogist consulting Dutch notarial and court records might be able to find reference to Gereyt.

An effort could also be made to find notarial or probate documents relating to the settlement of Gérard deFOREST's estate. These documents might show that by 1657 there was no property interests left in the New Netherlands for Gereyt to inherit. Alternatively, it might show that Gereyt did inherit property interests from his grandfather in the New Netherlands.

Although it is worthwhile to tackle these approaches, they all basically are dedicated to testing the Gérard theory. There is another theory, the Parthenay theory, not tied to the Walloon de FOREST family at all. Among the papers of Gérard FOREST, at the Centre d'études acadiennes (G. Forest, n.d.) I found that he was pursuing the possibility that the Acadian Michel deFOREST might have been related to Pierre deFOREST, from the parish of Ste-Croix, village of Parthenay, diocese of Poitiers, in Poitou (see G. FOREST, n. d., nos. 80.019 and 80.032). Pierre was 28, the son of Michel deFOREST and Renée BERNARDEAU. He came to Montréal where he married Elizabeth LANGEVIN, daughter of Louis LANGEVIN and Jeanne GATEAU of Montréal, on 10 April 1741 (Charbonneau & Légaré 1980-1990, 24:261).

Gérard FOREST evidently believed that perhaps these Parthenay de FOREST might be related to the Acadian Michel deFOREST. Certainly, the names Michel and Pierre appear in both families. There is a flurry of correspondence between Gérard FOREST and researchers in France during the 1970's and 1980's. Among the letters is one from Pierre ARCHES of Parthenay (Arches 1977), stating that he found the following marriage record in the parish registre of St-Laurent de Parthenay:

Le 29 avril 1637, Michel deFOREST, agé de 32 ans, ci devant serviteur domestique de Mme d'ORFEUILLE, fils de feu Michel et de feu Nicole PATAVIN épousa Renée BERNARDEAU....fille de feu Jean et de Françoise CHAUVIN.

Assistaient au mariage, du côté de l'époux, Perrine sa soeur et du côté de l'épouse, Pierre, Jean et Marie, ses frères et soeur.

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The chronology of these events do not fit in well with what we know about Pierre deFOREST in Québec or Michel deFOREST the Acadian. I suspect that the year of the marriage was mistranscribed. On the photocopy of the letter it looks as if it was changed from 1697, which would make more sense, to 1637. It is unlikely that a couple married in 1637 would have a 28-year-old son marrying in 1741!

Despite this discrepancy, there are tempting clues here that perhaps this Acadian was related to this clan of DeFORESTS from Parthenay. Perhaps Michel deFOREST, the Acadian, is a distant cousin of Pierre DeFOREST who settled in New France. We know that kin relationships had an influence on the decisions people made to migrate to New France (Guillemette & Légaré 1989). Michel deFOREST's move to Acadia may have inspired Pierre de FOREST to migrate to New France.

In general, when studying an ancestor, I find it is usually profitable to play the odds. That is, I try to find out what were the common patterns among the people my ancestor lived with. If most of them came to a particular area at the same time, then the odds are that my ancestor came at the same time; therefore, I should first look for data involving my ancestor during that period. If I had to play the odds with Michel, then I would guess that he was like most other Acadians; that is, he was French, Catholic, and from a province boarding the Atlantic Ocean. The odds are against him being Walloon and Protestant. The Parthenay theory fits in better with the probability that we have for more Acadian settlers. It is a theory well worth exploring.

To test the Parthenay theory, a search would have to be done of the parish registers for Parthenay and nearby villages. The Family History Library apparently does not have any of the Parthenay parish registers on microfilm. Therefore, a professional genealogist will have to be hired to go through these registers in France. Notarial records for Parthenay and nearby villages for the 164's and 1650's should also be checked. Also, the papers of Gérard FOREST at the Centre d'études acadiennes must be carefully reviews to insure that we do not cover ground he has already gone over.

We should thank Gérard FOREST for refocusing on Michel's origins, and not just accepting the Gérard theory, or the Jessé theory, uncritically. Unfortunately, he is unavailable to consult on this project. I understand he passed away either in 1995 or 1996.

Once all these approaches are investigated, and if no solution to the problem is found, then I am at a loss on how to proceed. We simply lack any other clues regarding Michel's background. Perhaps a thorough search of all available Acadian administrative documents in Canada, France, and the United Kingdom might reveal some more mentions of him. But it is unlikely that these mentions will have substantial genealogical clues regarding Michel's origins. Watchful waiting would be our only alternative. By this, I mean we will have to monitor the success of other Acadian researchers in locating the places of origins for their ancestors. If someone makes a breakthrough, then we should analyze the situation and see if it might make sense that Michel came from that same area.

#### Conclusion.

To borrow a now worn phrase form American political parlance, "mistakes were made" in the case of Michel de FOREST. The handling of the 1658 list, even for the 1950's or 1960's, was amateurish. Certainly, at that time there were many notable models of well-documented and cited genealogical works. For example, Père GODBOUT's (1968) article on the St-Jehan passengers to Acadia. Given the weak nature of this evidence, the authors of the FOREST family history never should have stated their theory as if it were a proven fact. It is not.

The bottom line is that we must get out and start looking again. There is more work to be done. Either we find the mysterious 1658 list, or we move on and try alternative scenarios. We have a long way to go. Let us make sure we document our progress as we proceed so that others will not go over the same turf. Again, the Forest Family Association could play an important role.

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I suspect that we will not find any supporting evidence for Michel's origins. We might have to settle with the probability that Michel FOREST came to Acadia from France around 1659 as a Catholic. I expect this will not please some family historians who will want to cling to the Walloon deFOREST origins for Michel. They will hold on to it tenaciously because it leads back to bourgeois origins and extends back several hundred years. I wonder if this would be an easier theory to abandon if Michel only purportedly traced back to Walloon peasants.

Given the lack of evidence available to us now, I believe the prudent thing to do is to treat the Gérard theory as mere speculation. It must be tested and proven correct or wrong with evidence, not further speculation. I realize that there will be some dedicated people out there who will continue accepting this theory despite the lack of evidence. In order to accept it, all they must do is assume that Michel joined with a New England adventure in a recently captured French territory, ignored more comfortable opportunities in the Netherlands and even the New Netherlands, changed his given name, abandoned his faith, and once appeared on a mysterious list of non-French settlers that has since disappeared. Seriously, what do you think? Possible, yes, probable, no.

Lastly, I would like to point out that I, too, am a descendant of Michel FOREST. Nothing would please me more than to be proven wrong about his origins and to find that he is indeed Gereyt deFOREST. The Walloon deFORESTS are a fine family with an interesting history. I have a surplus of peasant ancestors and am always happy to find bourgeois or noble ancestors because you can often trace their ancestry back several more generations in Europe. So, please, someone out there who is a better researcher than I, or have access to the records in Great Britain and the Netherlands, prove me wrong. If someone can find the 1658 list of TEMPLE colonists with Gereyt's name on it, then please show it to the world. It would be a significant contribution to Acadian genealogy.

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