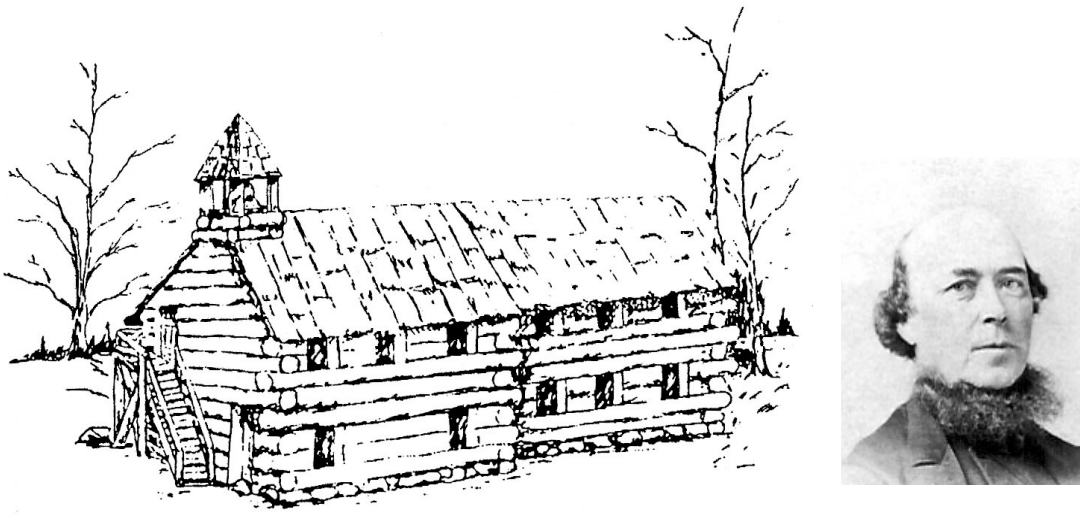
# TWO WESTERN QUEBEC FAMILIES AT THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ILLINOIS AND WISCONSIN

*Serge A. Thériault*[1]

The Christian Catholic Church (CCC) comes from a reform originating in the French Canadian parish of St. Anne (Kankakee), Illinois, in the middle of the 19th century. Achille Chiniquy, Michel Drolet, Moise Langelier, Joseph Martin, Louis Mercier, Abraham Pelletier, Anselme Robillard and the priest Charles Chiniquy (1809-1899) direct the first society, registered at the Court of Kankakee September 13, 1859.[2] In 1885, parishes were founded among the French-speaking colonists of Wisconsin, by the Reverend Rene Vilatte (1854-1929)[3], trained at St. Anne, IL, by Father Chiniquy. The synod had him consecrated bishop (1892) by the Syriac Patriarchate of Antioch. The CCC took root, under him, in Ontario (ON) and in Quebec (QC), originating in Wisconsin (WI). Its centre is in Gatineau, Western Quebec (Outaouais).[4]



**Church-school of St. Anne (Kankakee), Illinois, in 1852, and Father Chiniquy**

We work to link the French Canadians who helped Father Chiniquy establish the church in Illinois with those who founded it in Wisconsin with Mgr Vilatte. Through research we have discovered two families from the Outaouais area, who played a primary role: the Laviolettes and the Robillards. This text gives a brief outline of their genealogy and their contribution.

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[1] With appreciated assistance received from the Rev. Sr. Gynette Butterworth, S.P.B.

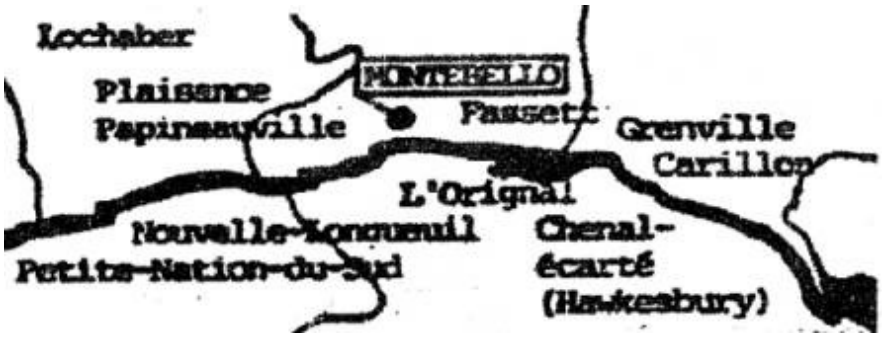
[2] Document reproduced in the annex, p. 12.

[3] He taught in Gatineau (St. Antoine School, Hull sector) between 1872 and 1875.

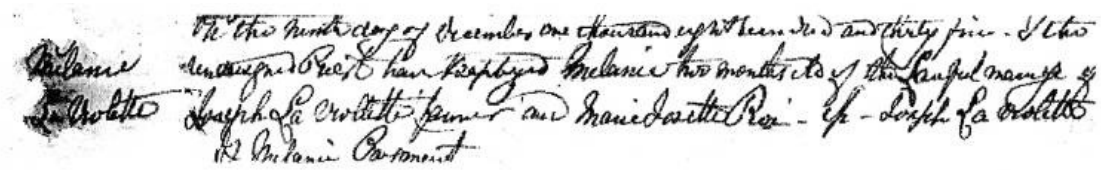
[4] Parish of St. Bernard and St. Gregory, P.O. Box 2043, station "Hull", Gatineau, Quebec J8X 3Z2.

# The Laviolette Family

Séraphin Laviolette and his wife Éléonore Robitaille were at St. Anne, Illinois, with Father Chiniquy, who baptized their son François August 8, 1854.[5] His parents were Joseph Laviolette and Marie-Josette Roy from Petite-Nation, a municipality founded in 1845 [6] in the seignory of the same name.[7] It followed the Ottawa river from Grenville to Lochaber (Thurso) near Plaisance, as shown in the following plan, taken from *Répertoire des baptêmes, mariages et sépultures de la paroisse Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours de Montebello, 1815-1900 (* Society of Genealogy of the Outaouais, 1992).




The names of Joseph and Marie-Josette Laviolette (nee Roy) appear on the following act, written for the baptism of Seraphin's sister Melanie, on December 9, 1835.[8]



On the 9th day of December 1835 I, the undersigned priest, have baptized Mélanie, two months old, of the lawful marriage of Joseph Laviolette, farmer, and Marie-Josette Roy. The godparents were Joseph Laviolette and Mélanie Paiement.

J.M. McDonald

Séraphin and his family emigrated to Wisconsin and were in Green Bay in 1856.[9] From there, they established at Little Sturgeon (township of Gardner), Door County, in the parish of Précieux-Sang (Precious Blood), founded in 1885 by Mgr Vilatte.[10] Here is the genealogy of this family who has been a pillar of the church in Wisconsin, especially the son David and his wife Hélène (Langevin), buried in the parish cemetery.

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[5] Scholastique Robitaille, sister of Eleonore, was there also with her husband François Besse. She was buried by Father Chiniquy August 2, 1854.

[6] Under Louis Joseph Papineau (1786-1871), whose son and successor Amédée (1819-1903) joined the reform movement led by Father Chiniquy (1893).

[7] Given (1674) by the Compagnie des Indes occidentales (East India Company) to the first bishop of New France, Mgr. François de Montmorency Laval, who ceded it to the priests of the Seminary of Quebec (1681). Obtained from them (1801) by the notary Joseph Papineau (1719-1841), father of Louis Joseph, who was the first lay lord and sent for settlers and lumbermen (1807).

[8] In the chapel of Nouvelle-Longueuil (now L'Orignal, ON) dedicated to St. John the Baptist.

[9] Mrs. Laviolette (Éléonore Robitaille) died and was buried in Green Bay on that year.

[10] Now an Anglican Rite English-speaking parish of the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac.

**Tombstone of David and Hélène Laviolette, nee Langevin, Precious Blood cemetery.**

| Spouses & Parents | Marriage | Spouses & Parents |
|---|---|---|
| Joseph | 1757.01.31 | Léveillé, Marie Louise (Guetier dit) |
| Étienne / Catherine Mercadime[11] | Charlesbourg, QC | Louis / Marie Poitras |
| Pierre[12]<br>B 1769 St Vincent de Paul QC<br>D 1790 Nouvelle-Longueuil[13] | 1789.02.02 | Moreau, Marie Catherine<br>B 1771.02.18 Saint-Ours, QC<br>D Nouvelle-Longueuil |
| Joseph / M-Louise Léveillée | Vaudreuil, QC | Joseph / Françoise Labonté |
| Joseph[14]<br>B 1791.09.18 Vaudreuil<br>D Grenville | 1815.10.09 | Roy, Marie-Josette[15]<br>B 1795.05.22 Oka, QC<br>D Grenville |
| Pierre / M-Catherine Moreau | Rigaud | Antoine / M-Louise Séguin |
| Séraphin[16]<br>B 1824.04.04 Petite Nation<br>D 1911.04.03 Gardner, WI[17] | 1846 | (1) Robitaille, Eleonore[18]<br>B 1828.02.24 Petite Nation<br>D 1856.xx.xx Green Bay, WI |
| Joseph / Josette Roy | Nouvelle Longueuil | Charles / Adelaide Valcourt Morin |
| | Green Bay, WI, 1857 | (2) Lapierre, Marie, 1816-1879 |
| David[19]<br>B 1848.04.23 Montebello, QC<br>D 1927.11.30 Gardner WI | 1873.07.23 | Langevin, Hélène<br>B 1857.11.05 Algoma WI<br>D 1937.11.14 Gardner WI |
| Séraphin/Éléonore Robitaille | Algoma, WI | |

[11] Etienne Laviolette and Catherine Mercadime came from France where they were married 1745.12.31.

[12] Brother of Jean-Baptiste (b 1758), Marie-Louise (b 1762) and Joseph (b 1765).

[13] The township of Nouvelle-Longueuil was named after Sir Knight Jopseph Lemoyne de Longueuil. He was the lord of this territory of New France that the constitutional Law of 1791 attached to Upper Canada. This resulted in the municipality of L'Orignal, Ontario.

[14] Brother of: Pierre (Marguerite Charlebois, Rigaud, 1802; Catherine Seguin known as Laderoute, Rigaud, 1810), Ignace (Marie-Anne Landriault, Montebello, 1822), Louis (Scholastique Seguin, Clarence Creek, Ontario, François (Marguerite Carpentier) from Alfred, Ontario, father of Elisabeth (Guillaume Robillard, Montebello, 1837).

[15] Sister of: Angelique (Pierre Jussiaume, 1826) and Hyacinthe (Alphonsine Leblanc, 1869).

[16] Brother of Joseph Jr (Louise Asselin), Louise, Georges, Eulalie, Rosalie (Mrs. Xavier Villeneuve, 1826-1906), Gédéon, Pierre (Sophie Roy), Melanie (Louis Robillard, 1852), Philomene (Pierre Robillard) and Jeremie (Adeline Bourdon, Thurso, 1871). Remarried to Marie Lapierre (1816-1879) in Green Bay (1857). One son from the second marriage: Jeremie (1859-1941) buried in Gardner, WI. Seraphin's baptism is recorded in Montebello parish register 14 July 1924.

[17] Buried in White Star Cemetery, Gardner.

[18] Sister of: Scholastique (François Besse), Adeline, Antoine, Celestin, Marie-Louise, Rosalie, Charles, Jean, Joseph, Narcisse, Philomene and Marcelline. Eleonore's baptism is recorded in Montebello parish register 16 July 1828.

[19] Brother of: Seraphin Jr (Mary Carr, Muskegon (MI), 1870), Godefroy (Elise Gigot, 1871; Zoe Herlache, 1903) and François. David's baptism is recorded in Montebello parish register 10 June 1848.

**Children of David and Hélène Laviolette (nee Langevin)**

- Éléonore, married to Eugène de Namur, 1898.01.26
- Aline (1888-1952), married to Georges Sawdo (1904), and to Vital Counard (1927)
- Marie married to Frank Kuehnel of Whitelaw, Manitowoc County, WI (1904.05.03).
- Suzanne (1884-1912), married to Benjamin Copley (1910.11.22)
- Jean, married to Mary Braun (1910)
- Michel (1876-1957), married to Alvina Vetter (1911.09.26)
- Rose (b 1893), married to Chester Jensen (1914.06.18)
- Omer, married to Dorothy Vertz (1920.12.20)
- Clara married to Harold Mutaw

**Family of David and Hélène Laviolette**

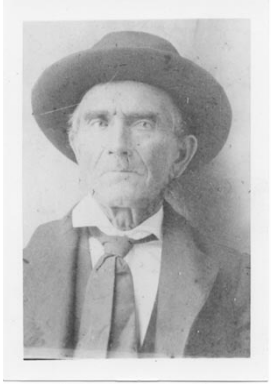
## Robillard Family

Another important Christian Catholic family is that of the Robillard. Presents in Illinois and in Wisconsin, they were related by marriage to the Laviolettes. Melanie, Seraphin's sister and David Laviolette's aunt, was married to Louis Robillard "who had influence and drew many to the CCC" wrote Fred Katzer, the Roman Bishop of Green Bay.[20] He "had a large circle of friends (and was) very sociable."[21] Louis was the son of Augustin and Marguerite Laviolette, also from

[20] Letter to Louis Robillard, farm no. 36, dated September 3, 1885.
[21] Obituary published in the Door County Democrat in August 1908 and titled **Death of an Old Resident**.

Petite-Nation. He was a relative of Anselme Robillard,[22] a founder member of the CCC at St. Anne, who in 1859 was among those who signed CCC founding document reproduced in the appendix. Here is the genealogy of the Robillard family.

| Spouses & Parents | Marriage | Spouses & Parents |
|---|---|---|
| Robillard, Nicolas (+1751)[23]<br>B 1684.08.01 Champlain, QC | 1709.04.28 | Cecire, Françoise<br>B 1692.01.31 Lachine, QC |
| Claude / Marie Grandin[24] | Lachine, QC | Claude / Marie Leger |
| Nicolas[25]<br>B 1710.08.13 Lachine, QC | 1732.05.05 | Lalonde, Marie-Anne (+1754)<br>B 1815.04.08 S Anne Bellevue |
| Nicolas / Françoise Cécire | St. Anne de Bellevue, QC | J-Baptiste / Jeanne Gervais |
| Robillard, Jean-Baptiste [26]<br>B 1733.08.06 St. Anne Bellevue<br>D Vaudreuil | 1757.02.14 | Sauvé, Marie-Anne<br>B 1737.05.15 S Anne Bellevue<br>D 1799.10.21 Vaudreuil |
| Nicolas / M-Anne Lalonde | St. Anne de Bellevue | Pierre / M-Louise Ranger |
| Augustin[27]<br>B 1772.11.18 Oka, QC<br>D 1856.03.15 Thurso [28] | 1812.10.12 | Laviolette, Marguerite<br>B 1794.09.30 Vaudreuil<br>D 1832.11.xx Grenville, QC |
| J-Baptiste / M-Anne Sauvé | Rigaud | Pierre / Catherine Moreau |
| Louis[29]<br>B 1823.01.13 Grenville[30]<br>D 1908.08.05 Gardner WI | 1852.01.07 | Laviolette, Mélanie<br>B 1835.10.13 Grenville<br>D 1926. 03.26 Gardner WI |
| Augustin / Marguerite Laviolette | Ottawa, ON | Joseph / Marie-Josette Roy |



**Louis Robillard**

**Mélanie Robillard, nee Laviolette**

[22] The son of Augustin Robillard's cousin Michel (Josette Plouffe). He was married to Lucie Laporte (Lavaltrie, 1845).

[23] Brother of: Marie-Jeanne (J Trottier), Claude (A Cecire), Adrien (D Sacochicoua, Illinois), Marie-Therese (JB Moisan), Jean-Baptiste and Pierre (C Coutu).

[24] Came from France (Rouen, Normandy). Born around 1654. Married in Champlain, Quebec, in 1672.

[25] Brother of Marie-Angelique (P Ranger), Claude (E Daoust), Lambert (J Merlot), Pierre (C Leger-Parisien), Joseph (J Ranger), Marie-Anne (A Pilon), Veronique (T Leveille), Amable (L Sauve), Elisabeth (H Ranger), Charlotte (P Poirier).

[26] Brother of Nicolas, Genevieve, Josette, Marie-Rose, Charlotte…

[27] Brother of: Joseph (b 1768) married (1792) to Marguerite Metivier (b 1768), Jacques (Marguerite Montreuil), Marie-Genevieve (b 1760), Marie-Josephte (b 1762), Marie-Rose (b 1764), Marie-Charlotte (b 1765), Marie-Louise, Eugenie, Marie-Veronique (b 1771) and Paul (b 1778).

[28] Buried 17 March 1856 in Lochaber (Thurso) Cemetery. Recorded in the register of St. Luc Parish, Curran, ON.

[29] Brother of: Zoe (b 1819, m Théodore Birabin, Montebello 1836; Félix Groslot, 1846), Theophile (b 1820), Pierre (b 1824, m Philomene Laviolette), Henriette (b 1827), Louise (b 1828), François (b 1830) and Joseph (b 1832).

[30] Baptism (Jan 28) recorded in the register of Montebello parish.

**Their children:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Melanie<br>B 1852.08.03 Thurso<br>D 1934.04.29 Gardner | 1874<br>Gardner, WI | Jenquin(ne), Antoine (1)[31]<br>(son of Pierre from Belgium) |
| | 1919.05.31<br>Gardner, WI | Gigot, Henri 1849-1943 (2)[32]<br>(Henri / Therese Sardinois) |
| François-Xavier (Frank)<br>B 1855.09.27 Thurso[33]<br>D 1935.02.28 Gardner WI | 1878.03.31 | Montquin, Adolphine[34]<br>B 1862.09.15 Belgium<br>D 1945.03.23 Gardner WI |
| Louis / Mélanie Laviolette | Gardner, WI | Jean Joseph / Joachime Gillard |
| Eleonore Lucie<br>B 1860.03.07 Thurso<br>D 1917.01.18 Sturgeon Bay WI | 1883<br>Sturgeon Bay WI | Gigot, Waid, 1879-1903 (1)<br>Hengartner, J. Anton (2)<br>B 1849.04.24 Germany<br>D 1925.08.04 Gardner WI |
| Jeremie (Jerry)<br>B 1866.08.18 Thurso<br>D 1937 Kewaunee WI | 1893.01.15<br>Kewaunee WI | Novak, Anna<br>B 1872<br>D 1968 |
| Henriette (Harriet)<br>B 1869 D 1890 Gardner WI | 1890.04.07<br>Gardner, WI | Tallier (Taliet), Salomon[35]<br>B 1866 |
| Rose<br>B 1876. D 1959 Sturgeon Bay | 1892.12.26<br>Sturgeon Bay WI | Clafin, Charles, 1871-1932<br>William / Mary Jane Parker |

**Mélanie (2) , Lucie (3) and Henriette (4) Robillard with their mother**

[31] A widow. First married in Belgium to late Marie Courtois. Their daughter Adèle (1847-1908) married J.B. Herlache. Had following children with wife Mélanie Robillard: Mélanie Jr (1874), Sylvestre (1876), Lucie (1878), Arthur (1881) and Marie (1886)

[32] A widow. Married first to late Anne Joséphine Lalune, second to late Sophie Balza. Father of William (1872), Joséphine (1875), Auguste (1877), Louis-Joseph (1880) and Agnès (1885).

[33] Baptism (1855.12.25) recorded in St Luc parish register, Curran, ON. Godparents: Pierre & Philomene Laviolette.

[34] Sister of Désiré, husband of Edwina Tahlier (Talliet). She was sister of Salomon (Henriette Robillard).

[35] Son of Antoine who provided the land for the Church of Précieux-Sang, Gardner.

**Louis and Melanie Robillard with Rev. J.B. Gauthier and Rev. Étienne Côté** (3rd from left)**, founder of Montreal Parish, in front of Precious Blood rectory, in 1907**

**Family of François-Xavier (Frank) and Adolphine Robillard in 1893** [36]

[36] Photograph found in the church archives.

**Children of F.X. and Adolphine Robillard:**

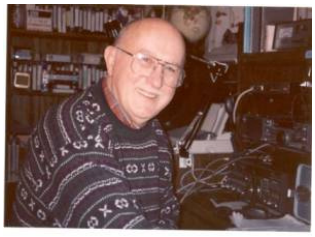
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Arthur (first from left on above picture)<br>B 1882.09.16 Gardner<br>D 1973.01.01 | 1905.09.16<br>Children: Eleonor, Frank, Edna, Elmer and Sydney. | Bischno, Agnes |
| William (Emil)<br>B 1888.05.10<br>D 1963.08.01 | 1909.07.12<br>Children: Glennie, Gilbert, Wilmer and Bernice. | Challe, Marie<br>B 1890.08.22<br>D 1979.07.21 |
| Nelson<br>B 1892.05.21<br>D 1965.02.12 | 1917.06.04<br>One son : Herbert | Haase, Anna<br>B 1897<br>D 1985.01.08 |
| Edouard (Eddie)<br>B 1885.05.16<br>D 1964.01.20 | 1909.01.26<br>Children : Byron, Therese, Heloise, Donna and Belle | Pelletier, Esther<br>(J-Baptiste[37] / L Dalebroux |
| Alfred (Fred)<br>B 1889.01.11<br>D 1964.01.18 | One son: Le Roy | Berceau, Mamie |
| Agnes<br>B 1896.01.09<br>D 1978.01.01 | Children: Rose Mary, Tom, Reginald and Maurice | Mouthuy, Rev. Leo (1)<br>Konshack, Jack (2) |
| Laura, 1897-1977 | 1916.04.19<br>Children: Archie and Gloria. | Nikolai, William |
| Exzena, 1900-1932 | 1920.06.29<br>Children:<br>Marjorie, Gail, Ruby, Shirley. | Braun, William |
| Emily, 1894-? | Children:<br>Dolores, Ronald and Perry. | Ritter, Arthur |

**Another picture of François-Xavier and Adolphine's family, including the grand children**

[37] Son of Jerome Pelletier and Esther Giguere from Sorel, Quebec.

We are grateful to Mrs. Glennie Debroux, nee Robillard (b 1910), her daughter Janice and son-in-law Charles Enigl of Green Bay who provided valued information and photographs. She was baptized, confirmed and marruied in Precious Blood Parish Church, Gardner.[38]

**Glennie** (2nd)**, her daughter Janice** (3rd) **and sister Bernice** (1st)



**Charles Enigl**

## Robillard settlement and first mission centre

We read in the book **Mgr Vilatte, founder of the Christian (Old) Catholic Church in America**, written by J. Parisot,[39] that Mgr Vilatte started his missionary work in Gardner on July 26, 1885 and that he lived with a farmer's family. We know from correspondance and from the census of the area that the farmer was Louis Robillard and was occupying lot no. 36. Later, he provided a log farm house to the missionary that became the first chapel and rectory. The religious services of the parish of the Precious Blood were held there until the opening of the permanent church nearby (on lot no. 38), on September 16, 1886. S.J. French visited the chapel and published the following description in the **Living Church**: *Landing there, walk south along the lonely shore of Green Bay for about three miles when you will see a small house facing the bay, a log cabin clapboarded over the logs, with a cross arising from the centre of the ridge-pole. This is at once the rectory and the chapel. Its outlook is most lovely. It is entered by a door in the middle of the front side. Entering either door, we are in the abode of holy poverty. The seats in the chapel are rough pIanks resting on temporary structure, the construction of which is concealed by a plain white muslin frontal. The top is covered with a fair linen cloth, the altar ornaments are made of wood by the priest himself, their roughness concealed by a coat of paint or folds of white paper. A platform a few inches high does duty for a foot-pace, and on the floor surrounding altar and footpace is tacked a strip of crash towelling. This is the chancel. The sanctuary lamp is a taper in a tumbler of oil resting on a bracket nailed to the window frame. An equally rough lectern completes the furniture. For vestments., a cheap set of white in the Roman pattern with a chalice and paten. The expediency of not violating the prejudices of the people at first by any marked changes in the appearance of altar or vestments is apparent at once. The office and the bedroom of the priest are opposite. Here there is even no attempt at a credible appearance, except that as in the chapel, all is scrupulously neat. ln the office, a small cookstove and a pine table covered with enamel cloth. Over the table is a rough shelf containing a few books, a small crucifix and photographs of Bishop Edward Herzog, Père Hyacinthe Loyson, and (Dr. Eugène Michaud). A similar shelf in the bedroom at the back contains few more books....* [40]

[38] Baptised July 1910 by Fr. M.J. de Villareal. Confirmed 1921.07.31. Presented by Fr. L. Lops. Married 1927.09.01
[39] Published in French by Soudee in Tours, France, in 1899.
[40] Edition of October 24, 1885.

“That log house may still be standing on our home farm, wrote Louis’ great great grandson Reginald Robillard.[41] One of the houses that he built was used for years as a sheep barn. Sometime later he built another house even larger. It too still stands and is now used as a machine shed. Then, either he or his son Frank (François-Xavier) built the farm house that my son Jodi lives in, which was made of cut boards instead of logs. This house is where Nelson lived before selling it to his son Herbert [42] who was my dad. That house is where I grew up and also probably where Louis and Melanie lived their last years. Here is a picture taken in Jody's house - aka Herbert's house, aka Nelson's house, aka Frank's house”.

At left (sitting high) is Nicole, wife of Jody. On couch at left is Kari, Jodi’s sister, then Reg’s wife Nancy with her grand son Reece on her lap, then Reg, then it's Morgan, Jody's daughter, then it's Jody. In front is Cameron, son of Nicole.

Reg Robillard revamping the tombstone of his ancestor Louis in Precious Blood Cemetery, May 2003.

[41] Reginald, born 1944.07.05, married Nancy Watters. They have 2 children: Jodi Allen & Kari Lynn.

[42] Herbert (1920-1989) married Doris Jacquart, 1919-2001 (Georges/Barbara). His descendants are Clyde (Sharon Rass, children Daniel & Crystal), Reginald and Rod (Veronica Denamur).

**The congregation of Precious Blood, Gardner, end of 19th century, and the two first rectors : J.R. Vilatte and J.B. Gathier**

## Bibliography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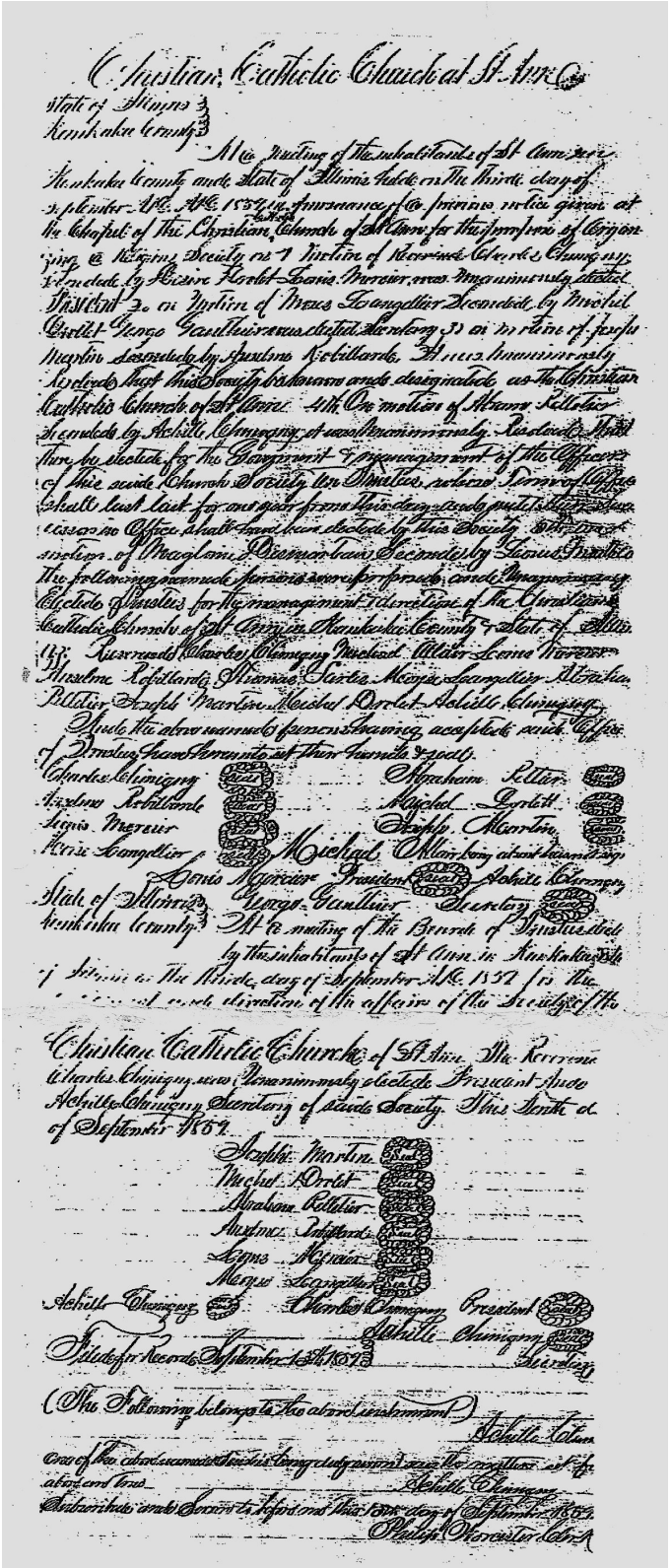
# Appendix

## Founding Document, Christian Catholic Church



Christian Catholic Church at St Anne

State of Illinois }
Kankakee County }

At a meeting of the inhabitants of St Anne in Kankakee County and State of Illinois held on the third day of September A.D. A.D. 1852 in pursuance of a previous notice given at the Chapel of the Christian Catholic Church of St Anne for the purpose of Organizing a Religious Society on the Doctrine of Reverend Charles Chiniquy Seconded by Pierre Paulet Louis Mercier was unanimously elected President and on motion of Moses Gauthier seconded by Michel Doret George Gauthier was elected Secretary and on motion of Joseph Martin seconded by Ignatius Robillard it was unanimously Resolved that this Society be known and designated as the Christian Catholic Church of St Anne. 4th On motion of Abram Pelletier seconded by Achille Chiniquy it was unanimously Resolved that there be elected for the Government and management of the affairs of this said Church Society ten Trustees whose Terms of Office shall last for one year from this day and until their successors in Office shall have been elected by this Society. The motion of Magloire Bienvenue seconded by Etienne Bradette the following named persons were put in nomination and unanimously elected Trustees for the management and direction of the Christian Catholic Church of St Anne Township Kankakee County State of Illinois Reverend Charles Chiniquy Michael Allair Louis Mercier Ignatius Robillard Ignace Martin Moses Gauthier Abram Pelletier Joseph Martin Michel Doret Achille Chiniquy

And the above named persons having accepted said Office of Trustees Each Severally and respectively did then Severally and Jointly Charles Chiniquy — Abram Pelletier
Ignatius Robillard — Michel Doret
Ignace Mercier — Joseph Martin
Moses Gauthier — Michael O'Mealey absent but assented
Louis Mercier President — Achille Chiniquy
George Gauthier Secretary

State of Illinois }
Kankakee County } At a meeting of the Board of Trustees elected by the inhabitants of St Anne in Kankakee County on the third day of September A.D. 1852 for the management and direction of the affairs of the Society of the Christian Catholic Church of St Anne the Reverend Charles Chiniquy was unanimously elected President Achille Chiniquy Secretary of said Society this tenth day of September 1852.

Joseph Martin
Michel Doret
Abraham Pelletier
Ignatius Robillard
Ignace Mercier
Moses Gauthier

Achille Chiniquy — Charles Chiniquy President
Achille Chiniquy Secretary

Filed for Record September 13th 1852

(The following belongs to the above Instrument)

Achille Chiniquy

Copy of the above named Instrument being duly examined and the same is found correct

Achille Chiniquy

Subscribed and Sworn to before me this 5th day of September 1853
Phillip Worcester Clerk