

Our Cummings Ancestry : 10 Generations



First Generation to Arrive in New France: Vivien Jean

Vivien Jean, born about 1618, and Elisabeth Drouet are the parents of our first Cummings ancestor to emigrate to New France with their son Pierre. Their first child was Marie, born October 15, 1669. And it is their second child Pierre, born September 19, 1672, from whom we are descended.

Vivien and Elisabeth Jean were part of the wave of French colonists recruited by Intendant Jean Talon in the 1660s to breathe new life into the foundering colony. Wikipedia summarizes how Talon created the conditions for these young couple to succeed.

Talon was highly organized in his establishment of settlements. New villages were established as close as possible to the capital and the settlers were grouped around a central point to encourage mutual help and defense. Proper dwellings were made ready to receive the newcomers. Talon proceeded to fill these dwellings with settlers, trying to have some skilled artisans, such as carpenters, shoemakers, and masons in each village.^[16]

Talon's colonization policy was to give grants of settlements to soldiers and habitants. They took possession of the land and received an ample supply of food and tools required. They would receive payment in clearing and tilling the first two acres. In return, they had to clear and prepare another two acres in three or four years so that the two acres could be given to the next round of incoming settlers. (Wikipedia, "Jean Talon")

In 1672, after three years of hard work, the couple sold their rights to the land in Bourg Talon and moved to Beaumont to buy land on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence River. In 1696, the couple willed all their earthly goods to their daughter Marie and her husband. In return, Marie and Pierre Bourget were to take care of all the needs of her parents, to have them buried after their death, and to pray for the repose of their souls.

Historian Christopher Moore comments on the onerous life of these farmers.

His life has passed in clearing and building. For those who endured, the later years might be eased as the farm became productive and a growing family shared the burden. This arduous process, as heroic in its way as any of the epic battles of New France, was the essential element in creating a permanent, settle population along the St. Lawrence. (History of Canada, p. 131)

During his lifetime, Vivien Jean started to use a shortened version of his first name as his last name. His death record duly records the death of Vivien Jean in 1708, at the age of 90. But in the margin is written, "Burial of the said Vien." His son Pierre makes a complete transition to Vien. His name and that of his children started to appear in documents as Vien, Viens, or Vient.

Here is an interesting sidelight. Preliminary research misled me to believe that the earliest historical records show that our Cummings family is descended from Vivien Jean, born about 1590, and his wife, Marthe Joslain, born about 1592, who lived near La Rochelle, France. This was a fascinating family. They had four sons, all of whom emigrated to New France, and four daughters who stayed behind. The son believed by many to be our progenitor, Vivien Jean, married Catherine Gateau, one of the famous "Kings Daughters." Remnants of their ancient family home still exist near La Rochelle. And there is voluminous documentation of the busy lives of these four brothers in Canada.

Alas, these are not our ancestors, although many family genealogists remain convinced that they are. Luce Jean Haffner in his book, Les Quatre Freres Jean de La Rochelle a Quebec, demonstrated that our ancestor is another Vivien Jean, born about 1618, who married Elisabeth Drouet. Perhaps it was inevitable that there would be some confusion about tracing our Jean ancestors because Jean is a very popular surname in France and more than a dozen men bearing this name emigrated to New France during this period.

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Second Generation in New France: Pierre Viens

The second child of Vivien and Elisabeth Jean was Pierre Viens, born on September 19, 1672. In 1696, his parents signed over all their property to his sister Marie Bourget in return for their care in the home. As part of the bargain, Pierre received title to 100 acres of land owned by the husband of his sister. In 1697, Pierre married Marguerite La Casse, the daughter of their neighbors in Beaumont. Pierre and Marguerite had 12 children. Our ancestor, Louis Viens, the ninth child, was born August 21, 1716. Luce Haffner in Les Quatres Freres Jean, says this about the couple: the family Pierre Jean-Viens seems to have had a peaceful and stable life in Beaumont with no judicial proceedings and no additional land except that obtained by a swap with brother-in-law Pierre Bourget in 1696. (pp. 244-245.)

Third Generation in New France: Louis Viens

Our direct ancestor Louis Viens, the son of Pierre and Marguerite La Casse was born on August 21, 1726 in Beaumont, where he lived his entire life. Louis married Angelique Derome on September 17, 1742, with whom he had four children. Two years after Angelique died, Louis married Catherine Martel on Feb. 1, 1751. The first child, Pierre Vien, of this second marriage, born on December 20, 1751, is our direct ancestor.

Fourth Generation in New France: Pierre Viens

Born on Dec. 20, 1751, in Bellechase, Quebec, Pierre married Agathe Rouleau on Aug. 4, 1778. The parents of Agathe were Charles Rouleau and Genevieve Gosselin. Their sons were Ambroise and Charles Viens.

Fifth Generation in New France: Ambroise Vient

Ambroise Vient was born on April 16, 1784 in Bellechase, Quebec, and he died there in June, 1857. With this generation, the family began spelling the last name with a "t." Ambroise married Marie Josephpte Chabot (1789-1849) on January 10, 1815.

Sixth Generation in New France: Joseph Prudent Vient

Joseph Prudent Vient was born in Nicolet, Canada on May 5, 1818, but he made the move to Minnesota, where he died in Minneapolis on October 14, 1910. He married Marie Phelonise Lebel (1835-1910) on July 4, 1854 in Nicolet, Canada. They had 9 children: Charles 1859-1948, Clara 1861, Adeline 1869-1943, Telesphore 1872-1953, Calix, Flora, Andre, Mamie, and Ida.

Seventh Generation (in Minnesota) C.V. Cummings

Charles Vient was born on May 1, 1859 in Quebec, but for business reasons he changed his name to Cummings in Minnesota, where he died on August 7, 1848. He married Catherine Belland (December 14, 1864-June 4, 1953) in Centerville, Minnesota, on May 19, 1884. Their 8 children were George about 1887, William 1887, Alexander 1889, Louis 1890, Alfred 1892, Clara 1894, Erving 1896, Rose.

Eighth Generation (in Minnesota) Fred Cummings

Alfred Lawrence Cummings was born in Oneka Township/Hugo on September 21, 1892, and he died on November 11, 1918, at the age of 26, a victim of the Spanish Flu. Alfred married Marie Peloquin (1894) on May 19, 1913. His daughter, Irene Cummings Sieracki was born on April 16, 1915, but he died just months before the birth of his son, Alfred Leonard Cummings, born on December 21, 1918.

Ninth Generation (in Minnesota) Irene Cummings Sieracki

Irene Cummings Sieracki was born in Hugo on April 16, 1915, and she married Ervin Sieracki on April 3, 1934 in Winona, Minnesota. They had six children: Gerald, Roger, Robert, Carol, Charles, and Michael.

Tenth Generation (in Minnesota) Charles Sieracki

Charles Sieracki was born on August 1, 1944 in Winona, and on August 24, 1968, he married Micaela Bennett.