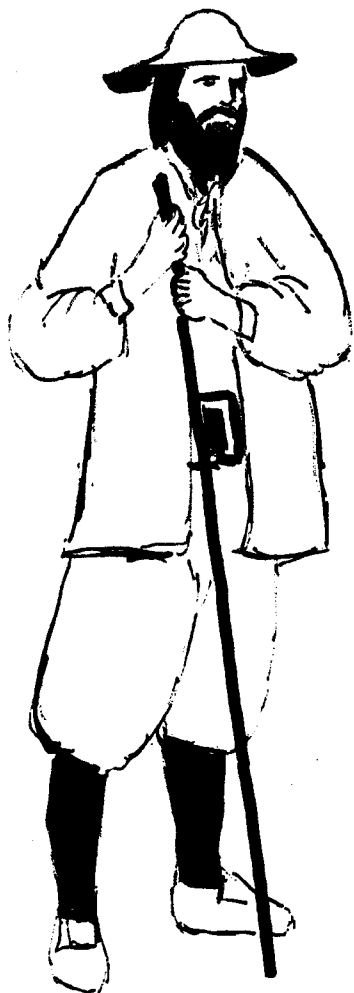


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JOSEPH PRINCE: AN ELUSIVE ANCESTOR

-- John P. DuLong

Many of us probably have had the experience of finding at last a long-elusive ancestor. Sometimes the ancestor just seems to have slipped through the gaps in record-keeping; at other times we find the difficulty lies in our own preconceived notions. Whenever a researcher can shed light on a dim or muddled past, he/she should feel a responsibility to set the record straight.

With this in mind, I would like to present to you the information I found about my great-grandfather, Joseph Prince, who evaded my efforts for several years.

Joseph Prince moved to the Green Bay area of Wisconsin, probably around 1848. He settled at Duck Creek near Fort Howard, Brown County, where he may have worked in the lumbering business. On 16 January 1849 in Green Bay, Joseph was married by Orson Cramer, Justice of the Peace, to Angeline Allie. Angeline was born on 18 September 1832, probably at Baie-du-Febvre, Yamaska County, Quebec, and was the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Allie and (Marie-)Josephte Rousse dite Comptois.¹ Her parents appear to have moved from Quebec to Two Rivers, Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, in the 1840s. Joseph and Angeline were married for a second time by a Jesuit priest, Rev. Fr. Anthony Anderley, on 1 December 1849 at St. John's in Green Bay.²

Thirteen children were born to Joseph and Angeline, but only six survived to adulthood and lived to be married. The children were: Joseph (1st), Olive, David, Joseph (2nd), Mary Elizabeth (Siefert), Madeline M. (Gallagher), Mary M. (Wardle), Louis J., Ida L. (Spring), John L., George, and Rose Olive (Stanton). All children were born in Wisconsin except Rose, who was born in Michigan.

The family moved from Green Bay to Superior, Wisconsin, and finally settled in Michigan's Copper Country at Houghton. It was in Houghton that Angeline died on 11 November 1891. Several years after her death Joseph moved to Marquette to live with his son Joseph (2nd) who owned a restaurant there. While visiting his daughter, Madeline Gallagher, in Baraga, Joseph fell sick and died there on 28 October 1906. He was buried two days later in Forest Hill Cemetery at Houghton, next to Angeline.

Before his death Joseph had made his living as a timber cruiser, a job which involved searching through the forest for sections of timber to be logged for the copper mines. This meant that he had to spend many days in the bush, probably living very much like an Indian. A tradition held in the family is that Joseph was part Indian, but I have found no evidence to support this belief. Joseph's knowledge of Indian ways--and perhaps a little of their languages--probably gave rise to this tradition of an Indian heritage in the family.

It took me several years to find all of this information about Joseph Prince, but I still did not know his birthplace or the names of his parents.

I was continually frustrated by missing information. Joseph's death certificate was never filed, his burial record was muddled, his obituary was uninformative, and his parents' names were not recorded on either of his marriage certificates. My only hope was to locate the record of his baptism in Quebec. I knew from the Prince family Bible that he had been born on 15 March 1823, but the place of birth was not recorded.

I had searched through Arsenault's work on Acadian genealogy and had found that most of the Princes had settled at St-Gregoire after they had been exiled from Acadia.³ I also found that Michel Prince and Madeleine Bergeron had four sons: Joseph, Pierre, Michel, David. Three of these brothers gave their children names which had certain similarities to the names of Joseph's and Angeline's children; for example, Olive, David and Georges. These names were relatively uncommon among the Acadians of Quebec in this period. This led me to believe that one of these brothers may have been my Joseph's father.

I had already found Pierre Prince on the 1850 census of Wisconsin at Fort Howard and I knew that he was a boatman on the 1860 census. I also knew that his two sons, Pierre and Louis, were farmers in the Fort Howard area around 1860. I inferred that *he* was Joseph's father because I had learned that Pierre Prince and Jean-Baptiste Allie had married sisters. (Josephite and Marguerite were daughters of Joseph Rouse *dite* Comptois and Elizabeth Robidas *dite* Manseau.⁴) But this would make Joseph Prince and Angeline Allie first cousins and I assumed that it simply could not be. My bias against the obvious convinced me that Pierre and Marguerite could not have been my Joseph's parents.

Fortunately, Mr. Jean Prince⁵ was able to avoid my prejudice and locate my ancestor's baptismal certificate by tracing the children of each of the four brothers. He found that Joseph Prince was baptized on 16 March 1823 at Baie-du-Febvre in the church of St. Antoine. His parents were recorded as Pierre Prince and Marguerite Rouse *dite* Comptois. Pierre, although born in Quebec, was of Acadian blood and was descended from Jacques-Nicolas LePrince.

The Roman Catholic Church does not regularly permit marriages between first cousins without a dispensation for consanguinity.⁶ I am still making inquiries to find a record of this dispensation, but without any luck. I suspect that they never bothered to acquire one. As the genealogist, Mr. Prince, suggests, Green Bay was far away from the influence and authority of the French-Canadian clergy.⁷ Furthermore, the shortage of women on the frontier may also have played a role in Joseph's decision to wed his cousin Angeline. What reaction their parents had to this marriage, or what conflicts may have arisen because of it, will probably remain a mystery. But it is possible that Joseph and Angeline were ostracized. Although Angeline may have kept in contact with some of her siblings, Joseph appears to have been relatively isolated from his family. Also, the fact that Joseph and Angeline were cousins seems to have been kept a secret at least from their grandchildren. Finally, keeping this fact a secret may account for the confusing and lacking information on records pertaining to Joseph's parentage.

Among the important lessons I learned from my search for Joseph Prince's background is to not let my assumptions lead me off the trail. The search for our ancestors--especially the elusive ones--can teach all of us valuable lessons. Many of these lessons will only be about how to do genealogical research better. However, some of us will be fortunate enough to learn more valuable lessons from our ancestors--lessons about their courage, self-sacrifice, and resourcefulness. I may also have learned something about Joseph's and Angeline's love for each other and their rebellion against social convention.

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NOTES

¹Angeline's birthdate is recorded in the Prince family Bible; her place of birth and the names of her parents are recorded on her burial certificate at St. Ignatius church in Houghton, Michigan.

²Both marriage certificates can be found in the records of the Green Bay courthouse. The first marriage is in vol. 2, p. 244 and was filed on 9 February 1867; the second marriage is in vol. 5, Record 25, and was not filed until 5 June 1869. Apparently the court clerk had copied these certificates from previous records. The religious ceremony is also recorded on Page 20 of the St. John's Marriage Book. In none of these records do the names of the parents appear.

³Bona Arsenault. *Histoire et Généalogie des Acadiens*. 6 vols. Quebec: Editions Lemeac Inc., 1978; vol. 2, pp. 738-749 and vol. 4, pp. 1423-1427.

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⁵Jean Prince operates L'Arbe Historique Enr. His address is 610 Prevost, Trois-Rivieres, Quebec Province, G8Y 4A5.

⁶C. Henry. "Consanguinity." New Catholic Encyclopedia, 15 vols. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967; vol. 4, pp. 192-196.

⁷Letter from Jean Prince to John P. DuLong, Trois-Rivieres, 1 August 1980.

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