

Early Childhood memories of my Joanis Ancestors

My great-grandpère Jules Joanis, lived on La Rue Glaise in Rockland, Ontario. This was a street that ran from Highway 17, wound its way through the Village and ended up at the Ottawa River. They lived a stone's throw from the wood mills that built the Town of Rockland. These two mills were just about a city block apart and many barges and boats docked there to load & unload. I was never allowed close to it, because the river was very deep there and those huge horses pulling the lumber wagons wouldn't stop for a child.

The Joanis house was a lovely, centre door, stone house & they painted the door burgundy & it had a huge brass knocker. One side of the front of that house was pipère's office, the other, a huge living room with the sweetest furnishings of that era. I can remember feeling the beaded fringes of the drapes, and thinking how lovely that would be in our house. I could visit grandpère only when all the customers (clients?) were gone. His room was lined with bookshelves with glass doors on them. He was a Justice of the Peace, so he had law books, referral books, etc. etc. he was also the "Liberal Whip" for the area and all-round "people helper". There were many illiterate people then and they all came to him to have letters written, to solve arguments, to register deeds of any kind, etc. etc. The centre of this room was a large stage, and in the centre again, was this huge black leather chair. Both arms were used as a writing table, and leather saddle bags hung on the outside and inside of the arms, containing all the different paper forms he needed in this diverse job. He wore a white shirt with a black silk tie, a black vest complete with watch & chain & a black skull cap, just like the Jewish Rabbi. He had a big long beard & a pair of sparkling brown eyes & I just loved him. When the aunts finally let me in to see him, I was accompanied with a bowl of delicious fudge that they set on the arm of his chair & he took me on his knee & let me feast with him. This routine happened time & time again. My mother, Bernadette Joanis, was the first grandchild of the family and cherished by her grandfather & grandmother & her aunts & uncles. I suppose I was one of the first great grands to visit them and was always welcome and happy there. My great grandmother was dead. I never met her. There were the two girls Oxile, Domitilde & Azarie. They all had those sparkling brown eyes and so friendly and loving. "Family" meant all to them.

After grandpère died, the two girls & Azarie moved to a lovely house, just steps from the Church. During the war, they were the greatest Red Cross workers in Rockland. They used the old Ford to pick up & deliver bundles, ready them for overseas deliveries to the troops. Tante Oxile was fluent in English and was often busy writing to the newspaper, or clubs or different institutions. She was so interesting to speak to and always interested in new things & ideas. When I was in Grade 7 or 8 at Sacred Heart Convent, I didn't return to Rockland in summer & lost track of family.