

Families without borders:

a case from the Beaubien, Benington, Davidson, and Pinsoneault families of Montreal, New Orleans, and New York

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August 9, 2021

When families from Quebec started emigrating to the United States in significant numbers in the late 19th Century, most of the children in the first generation married into families already living where they moved. However, some emigrant families maintained strong links to Quebec and cross-border marriages followed. This note is about one such couple, my grandparents Herbert Hingston Benington (1897-1972) and Lucette Beaubien (1897-1984). Herbert was born in New York of a Quaker-turned-Catholic British journalist father, Arthur Benington (1865-1924), and a Canadian mother, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Davidson (1858-1943), a Presbyterian-turned-Catholic of Scottish and Irish descent¹. Lucette was the daughter of [Joseph Beaubien](#) (1865-1949), long-time mayor of Outremont, and Joséphine LaRue (1868-1957), of mostly French Canadian descent. Herbert and Lucette married in Montreal in 1924 and settled in New York. They had no known shared ancestors after 1650. What could have brought them together?

The answer, I believe, is that Davidsons and Beaubiens both married into a third Montreal family, the Pinsoneaults², in the 1870s, and that there is a dense set of connections between the three families, revealed by attendance, and even officiating, at each other's births and marriages. Links will also be shown to the Hingstons of Montreal, Maguires of Rivière-Ouelle and New Orleans, and Giraldis of Montreal and New York.

Herbert Benington's early years

In January 1917, at the age of 19, Herbert arrived in London as a buyer for W.R. Grace, at that time primarily a shipping and fertilizer company. In October he returned to New York and the following January he registered at the US Consulate in Montreal as a buyer for Grace Canada. He signed up for the WWI draft in Brooklyn, declaring that he was working in Canada. He returned to New York on January 20, 1919 after one year in Montreal, during which he lived at 9 Bishop St., the home of his Davidson grandparents³.

¹ All birth, marriage, death, and residence information is from Ancestry.com.

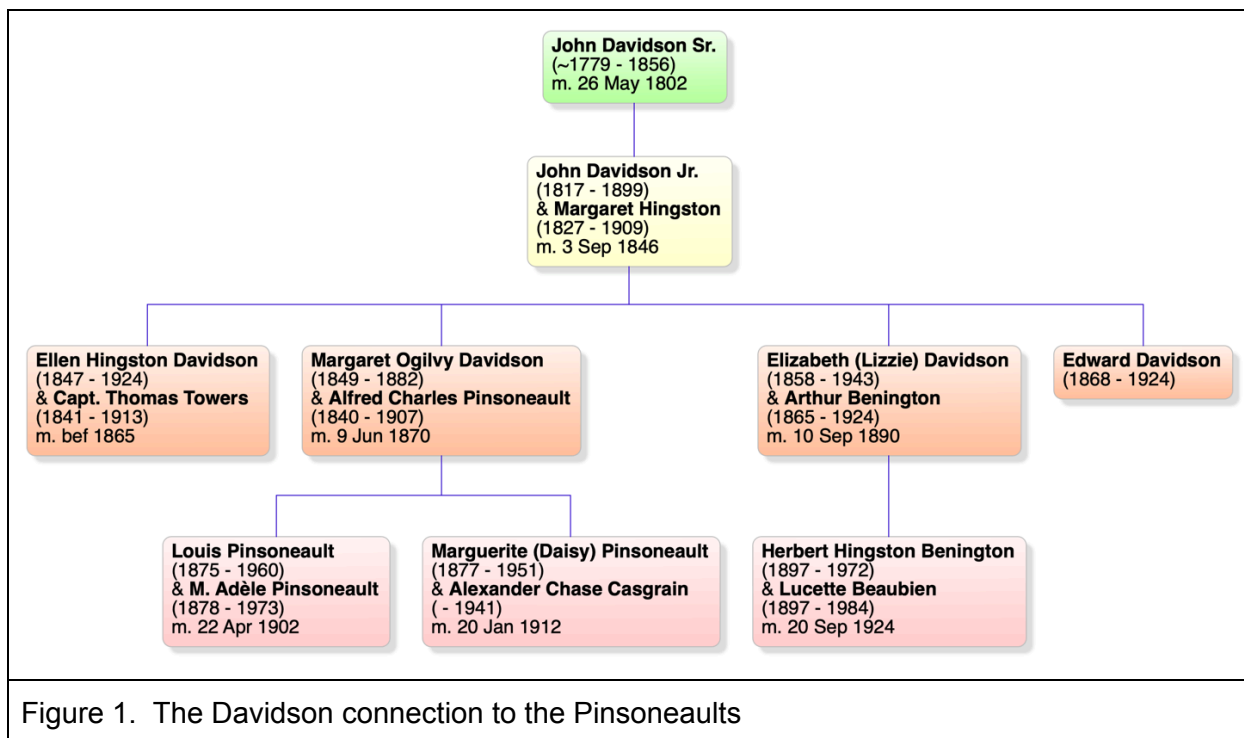
² The spelling of this family name has many variants. The dominant spellings in Quebec now are Pinsonneault and Pinonnault, but the people mentioned in this story quite consistently spelled their name Pinsoneault, so that is what we will use here.

³ The fact that having registered for the draft he actually spent the war working for a shipping company suggests that his work was in support of the war effort.

But he was not done with Grace and Montreal. After spending 1920 in New York working as a shipper, he returned to Montreal, this time with his older brother George, and both spent 1921 working as importers. They were again living at 9 Bishop St, with their three Davidson spinster aunts. By early 1922, Herbert was back in New York. So during the period 1918-1921, he spent two years in Montreal, in close contact with his Davidson relatives.

Herbert Benington's connection to the Pinsoneault family

To understand the connection between the Davidson and Pinsoneault families, it is useful to go over some highlights of the career of Herbert Benington's grand-father, John Davidson Jr (1817-1899). John Davidson emigrated from Scotland to Canada with his parents and was raised in Dundee, in southwestern Quebec. Like his father and his father-in-law, Samuel Hingston (1775-1830), he was active in the militia raised in the Dundee area to put down the *Patriote* rebellion of 1837-38, and was appointed to a regiment in Montreal. He married Margaret Hingston (1827-1909) in 1846 and in 1851 took a position as storekeeper and bookkeeper at the copper mine in Bruce Mines, Ontario, owned by the Montreal Mining Company (MMC). The first three of their children were born in Quebec, and the remaining seven, including Lizzie, in Northern Ontario. John was initially quite successful as a storekeeper, being commended in a company letter for managing to supply the store despite supplier failures to deliver, though he was eventually dismissed for granting too much credit to employees. He served for at least a year as an Indian Agent, a representative of the Canadian government to one of the area's reservations for the Ojibway tribe, and another as storekeeper at a different mine at Silver Islet. He and his family returned to Montreal in 1871.



On 9 June 1870, Lizzie's sister, Margaret Ogilvy Davidson (1849-1882), married at St. Jacques Cathedral in Montreal Alfred Charles Pinsoneault (1840-1907), son of Jacques Alfred Pinsoneault (1812-1874), a lawyer, landowner and seigneur of Léry⁴, and his wife Louise Hollowell. Margaret's parents were not present at the ceremony, and her father is described in the marriage act as an Indian agent. Her witness was her uncle, [William Hales Hingston](#) (1829-1907), later Sir William, a physician and later Mayor of Montreal⁵. Also present were Eleanor (Hingston) Smith, Margaret's aunt and later an important Montreal landowner, and her son Richard Hingston Smith. The ceremony was conducted by the groom's uncle, [Pierre-Adolphe Pinsoneault](#), one-time Bishop of London, Ontario. Figure 1 shows members of the Davidson family and how they relate to the Pinsoneaults.

Alfred Pinsoneault was an excise tax collector employed by the Canadian government and I conjecture that he was acquainted with John Davidson in the latter's role as buyer for the MMC store. It is also possible he was acquainted with Marguerite's sister, Ellen Hingston Davidson (1847-1924), who married about 1865 Thomas Powers of Sault Ste. Marie, another Scottish immigrant who was also in the shipping business.

⁴ Jean-Jacques Lefebvre, [Paul-Théophile Pinsonaut](#), in Dictionary of Canadian Biography. The Pinsoneault family descends from Jean-François Pinsonneau dit Lafleur (Saintes, France, ca 1646-Laprairie, 1731) a soldier in the Régiment de Carignan who settled in Laprairie.

⁵ Though W.H. Hingston was the senior male on the Hingston side of the family, seniority might suggest that the witness should have been Alexander Davidson (1810-1886), John's older brother, and also a resident of Montreal. The choice of Hingston may be due to the fact that Davidson was a Presbyterian and Hingston a Catholic, and the marriage was in a Catholic church. Margaret Davidson, though baptized a Presbyterian, was married and buried a Catholic.

Alfred Pinsoneault and Margaret Davidson had five children between 1871 and 1880. Two boys, Charles and William, emigrated to the US, and Raymond died young in Montreal. The other two, Louis (1875-1960) and Marguerite “Daisy” (1877-1951) we will meet again later. Margaret Davidson Pinsoneault died in 1882 at 32.

Lucette Beaubien’s connection to the Pinsoneault family

Lucette’s connection to the Pinsoneaults starts with her grandfather, [Dr Pierre Beaubien](#) (1796-1881), physician, educator and land owner in Montreal and Outremont. He married in 1829 Justine Casgrain (1804-1882), the widow of Dr Charles Butler Maguire (1791-1828), a physician who came to Canada with the British Army. Justine and Maguire married in 1819 and had five children, only one of whom survived to adulthood, with the unlikely name of Hannibal (or Annibal) Della Genga Maguire⁶. Hannibal became a physician and established his practice in New Orleans where he married Mary Leake and had four children, the eldest of whom, Marie Maguire, was born in 1855.

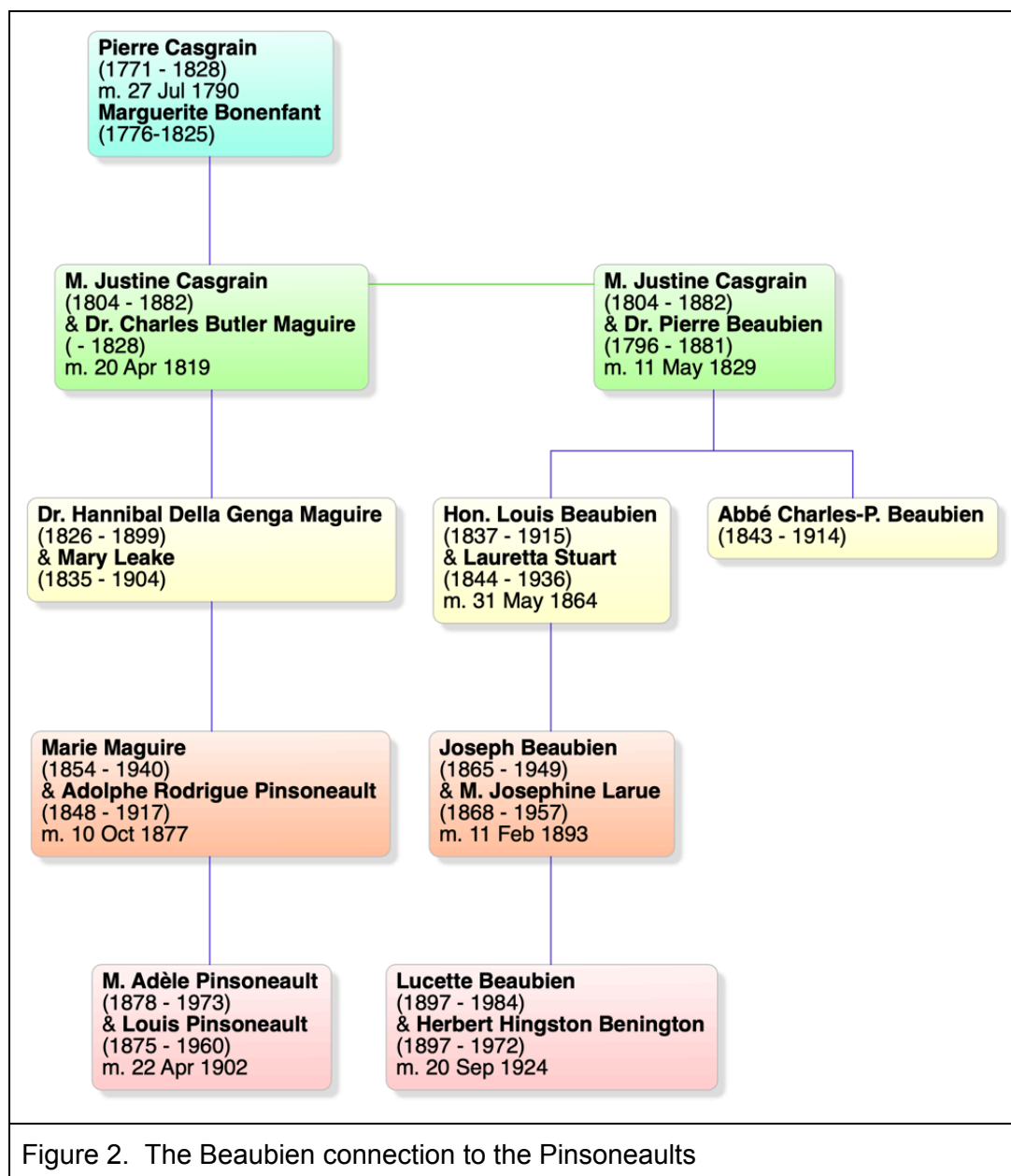
Pierre Beaubien and Justine Casgrain had eleven children, only three of whom lived to adulthood: [Louis](#) (1837-1915), who married Lauretta Stuart; Luce (1842-1897), a nun; and Charles-Philippe (1843-1914), a priest. Pierre took in Hannibal as his own child and left him one-quarter of his estate.

On 9 October 1877, in Montreal, Marie Maguire married Adolphe Rodrigue Pinsoneault (1850-1917), a civil engineer, and brother of Alfred. Adolphe is the author of [Atlas of the Island and City of Montreal and Ile Bizard](#), published around 1907. He may have worked for Pierre and Louis Beaubien in subdividing lots in their Mile-End land holdings.

Abbé Charles-Philippe Beaubien conducted the ceremony. Pierre Beaubien was witness for the bride, and is described as her grand-father. Adolphe’s witness was his brother Alfred. Other witnesses were Louis Beaubien, Marie’s step-brother, and Charles Drummond (1851-1891), who had married Alfred and Adolphe’s sister, Marian (1850-1926). The connections between the Beaubiens and the Pinsoneaults are shown in Figure 2⁷. Pierre Beaubien and

⁶ Hannibal was apparently named by his uncle, abbé Thomas Maguire, who shortly before Hannibal’s baptism had returned from Rome where he had met the pope, Leo XII, born Annibale Della Genga.

⁷ One connection that does not appear explicitly on any of these charts is that between Dr Pierre Beaubien and Dr William Hingston, both of whom were prominent members of the medical profession in Montreal at least during the 1870s. Both were faculty at the Ecole de Médecine et de Chirurgie de Montréal, the first French language medical school in Montreal, that had a tempestuous existence before becoming the Ecole de Médecine of the Université de Montréal. They were also both among the founders of the Canadian Medical Association. Hingston was a contemporary of Louis Beaubien. Herbert Benington was not a direct descendant of Sir William’s, but Hingston was his middle name.



Charles-Philippe Beaubien may have played a significant role in encouraging this union, as he had recently returned from Louisiana where he had been delegated by Mgr Ignace Bourget to found a college build a church, a presbytery and a school in New-Iberia, where Hannibal Maguire practiced⁸.

⁸ Jean-Baptiste Allaire, "BEAUBIEN, l'abbé Charles-Philippe Trottier de", [Dictionnaire biographique du clergé canadien-français: les contemporains](#), p. 28

The Pinsoneault branches inter-marry

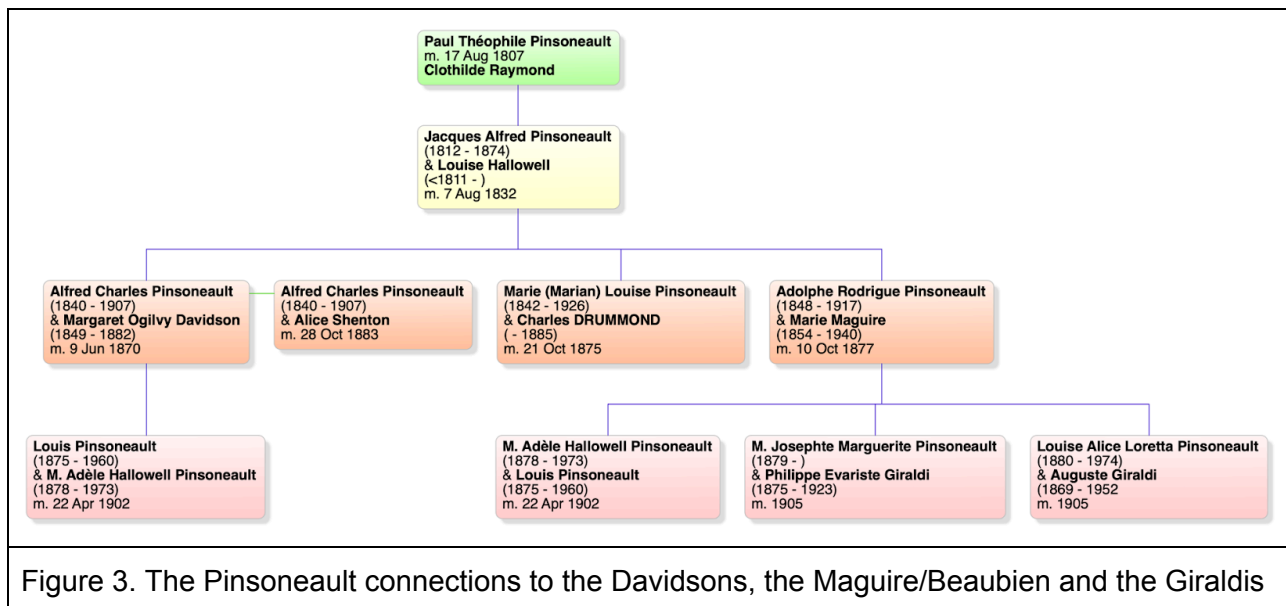
We now have a Davidson and a Maguire/Beaubien married to two Pinsoneault brothers. The next link connects the two branches of the Pinsoneault family.

Louis Pinsoneault (1875⁹-1960), son of Alfred and Margaret Davidson, married on 22 April 1902 (22 years before the Benington-Beaubien marriage) his cousin Marie Adèle Pinsoneault (1878-1973), daughter of Alphonse and Marie Maguire, thus linking the Pinsoneault-Davidson and Pinsoneault-Beaubien branches of the family. The officiant was abbé Charles-Philippe Beaubien (great-uncle of the bride). Witnesses at the wedding include:

From the Pinsoneault-Beaubien side: Lucette's father Joseph Beaubien, her grandmother Lauretta (Stuart) Beaubien, and aunt [Justine \(Lacoste\) Beaubien](#)

From the Pinsoneault-Davidson side: Herbert's grandmother Margaret (Hingston) Davidson, uncle Edward Davidson, aunts Florence and Fanny Davidson, and cousins Donald and Basil Hingston (sons of Sir William Hingston).

The Pinsoneault family members involved in this marriage and their connections to the Davidsons and Beaubiens are shown in Figure 3.



⁹ Louis was baptised Richard Gerald Louis Pinsoneault. His godparents were his mother's cousins, Richard William Hingston Smith and his sister Fanny. In the 1950s Louis was living in a house on Mentana Street in Montreal, on land that had been owned by Smith's parents, who owned a quarry in Montreal's Mile-End district, where Dr Pierre Beaubien was a major land owner. Wilfrid Laurier Park, across the street from the Mentana St house, is built on the filled-in quarry.

The Brooklyn Connection

Adèle Pinsonneault had two sisters, Marguerite (1879-??) and Louise (1880-1974), who may have played a further role in the Beaubien-Benington connection. The two sisters married, in Montreal, two brothers, Philippe Evariste Girdi (1875-1923) and Auguste Girdi (1869-1952). The Girdis were third-generation Italians born in Montreal who emigrated to New York with their parents, Denis Serafino Girdi and Marie Sauvageau, in about 1885. Both couples ended up in Brooklyn, living within blocks of the Beningtons who were 86 St. James Place. Auguste, a printer and later publisher¹⁰, married Louise in 1905 (when Herbert was 8), with Charles-Philippe Beaubien officiating and Edward Davidson and Louis de Gaspé Beaubien present. Louise followed her husband to New York where they lived at 136 Cambridge Place, and by 1915 they had moved a few blocks north to 37 Clifton Place.

Marguerite Pinsonneault and Philippe Girdi married the same year, with Edward Davidson, Lauretta (Stuart) Beaubien and Jacques de Gaspé Beaubien in attendance. After stays in Albuquerque, New Mexico where Philippe was already living when he was married, and in Kansas City, Missouri, they returned to Brooklyn about 1920, where Philippe appears as a printer, perhaps having joined Auguste's business. They were living at 337 Lafayette Avenue. Figure 4 shows the locations of the residences of the Beningtons and of the Girdi brothers in the 1920s, a few years before Arthur Benington's death.

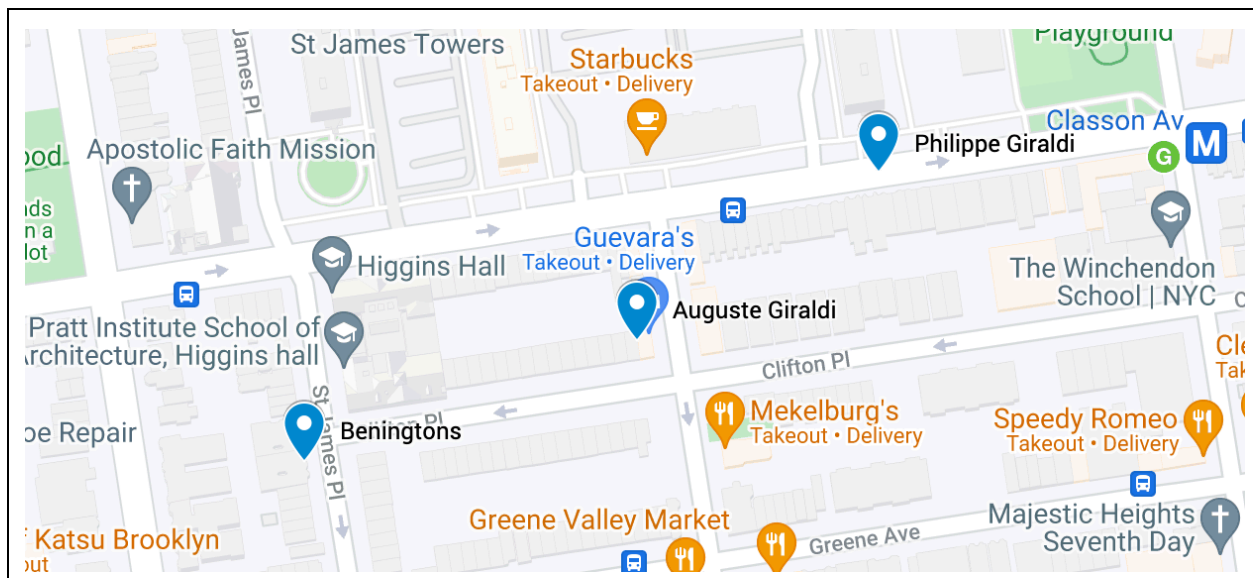


Figure 4. Benington and Girdi locations in Brooklyn, ca 1920. Apologies for the business labels

¹⁰ Girdi founded in 1930 *Le Message de New York*, a French-language newspaper, which he ran until it stopped publication in 1948. He also published a few books, notably by [William Hobart Royce](#) (1878-1963), a devotee of Balzac and founder of the Balzac Society of America in 1940, of which Girdi was once President. Girdi was also President of a chapter of the Société St-Jean-Baptiste in New York. His cultural inclinations seem definitely more French than Italian.

So both Herbert's and Lucette's parents were acquainted with the Pinsoneault-Giraldi couples no later than 1905, the year of the two marriages. It is likely that Herbert met Auguste and Louise in Brooklyn soon thereafter, and Philippe and Marguerite a few years later, and that he knew them for a decade before his extended stays in Montreal¹¹.

It is not initially obvious how the Giraldi brothers, who though from a Montreal family, had not lived there since childhood, ended up marrying the Pinsoneault sisters who had never left it. The answer, I suspect, is that the brothers and sisters were all third cousins, great-great-grandchildren of [Jean-Baptiste Raymond](#) (1757-1825) and Clothilde Girardin. That makes Alphonse Pinsonneault, the sisters' father, the second cousin of Louise Sauvageau, Denis Giraldi's wife. It seems as if there must have been some serious matchmaking to ensure that the Brooklyn Giraldis didn't stray too far from their Montreal origins¹². But matchmaking has its limits: neither of Denis Giraldi's other two sons appear to have married.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the Pinsoneaults married into the Davidson and Beaubien/Maguire families in the 1870s. One generation later, the Pinsonneault-Maguire families married the Pinsonneault-Davidsons in 1902 and the Brooklyn Giraldi's in 1905. So as of the early 1900s, there is evidence that Lucette's parents, grandparents and aunts and uncles; Herbert's parents and his Davidson and Hingston relatives; and the Pinsoneault brothers Alfred and Alphonse, and their children Louis, Adèle, Louise and Marguerite were all acquainted through intermarriage and living in close proximity in Montreal and New York. This should have provided ample opportunity for Herbert to meet Lucette while he was working for Grace in Montreal.

Herbert Benington and Lucette Beaubien's family continued to have strong cross-border links. Their daughter, raised in New York, married a Montrealer and had five children, two of whom live in Canada and three in the US. One of the children, the author, studied first in Canada and then in the US, then worked in Canada before marrying a Canadian and emigrating to the US, where their son studied in the US, then in Canada, and is now working in the US, 130 years and four generations after Arthur Benington married Elizabeth Davidson.

Appendix. The Dumoulin connection

There is one other interesting connection between the Beaubiens and the Pinsoneaults. The Beaubiens, through Laretta Stuart, are descendants of the Hon. [Andrew Stuart](#) (1785-1840), Solicitor-General of Quebec. Laretta's grandmother was Marguerite Dumoulin (1781-1838),

¹¹ One other possible link in Brooklyn between Arthur Benington and the Giraldis was Arthur's interest in all things Italian. He spoke the language, traveled in Italy in the early 1900s, and was named Knight of the Order of the Crown of Italy in 1910 and vice-president of the Dante Alighieri Society in New York in 1911.

¹² Both Denis Giraldi and his wife died in New York but were buried in Montreal, as were the Giraldi brothers and the Pinsoneault sisters.

who was not married to Stuart. Before she began her relationship with Stuart, Dumoulin married Honoré Philippe Bailly de Messein (1779-1829) with whom she had four children before he left for Ontario, never to return. One of these children, Adélaïde Catherine (1805-1883) married in 1824 Thomas Chase, a Quebec merchant, and his great-grandson, Alexander Chase Casgrain, married Marguerite “Daisy” Pinsonneault, daughter of Alfred and Margaret Davidsonth. Marguerite, though a descendant of Justine Casgrain via the Maguires, was not herself a Stuart descendant. The relationship between Alexander Chase Casgrain and Lucette Beaubien is shown in Figure 5.

