

PETER VALLEAU, U.E.

by Nora Valleau

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The first Valleau (pronounced "Vallo") to cross the Atlantic was Isaiah, born in 1638, who married a Suzanne Descard and became a successful merchant at St. Martin, France. He and his wife were among the religious fugitives, the Huguenots, who fled from France at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, October 18th, 1685. They escaped with their lives and all their personal effects were confiscated.

The Valleau family reached New York in 1685 after a long and dreary voyage, settling at a place called by the refugees "New Rochelle", near the shore of Long Island Sound, a short distance from New York. Probably in calling this place of refuge after the city from whence they fled, they managed to soften the bitter recollections they must have had of their motherland. At this place they became prominent citizens, land owners and artisans. The old home which first sheltered the Valleau family is still standing, having been built in 1700, and is known as the old Drake homestead.

Peter, the second son of Isaiah Valleau and his wife, Suzanne Descard, of New Rochelle, was born in 1751 and remained loyal to the British Crown. It is from this Peter that was established the Valleau family in the Bay of Quinte district. Peter married Jannetie Lazier, widow of Andrew Zabriskie, in Bergen county. Peter was one of those patriots who at the time of the American Revolution left their homes to remain under the British flag. With his two sons, Hildebrand and Cornelius, he joined the company of Loyalists who, in 1784, settled in the neighbourhood of the Bay of Quinte. He and his family are among those listed in Adolphustown records of 1795. Their last child, Mary, was born in Canada. Here they were compelled to begin life anew, to face privations and suffering which only pioneers can fully know.

Peter Valleau, also called Petrus, lived in Adolphustown for eleven years before settling permanently on the High Shore in Sophiasburg. The old homestead contained some 300 acres of land. It is worthy of note that five generations of Valleaus have lived in this old home.

Later, in the records of the town meetings in Adolphustown, the name of Peter Valleau is frequently mentioned. The record of a town meeting held in Sophiasburg, Prince Edward County on the 3rd of March, 1800, refers to him as "one of the most respectable inhabitants". He was township treasurer at the time.

Peter Valleau had two sons, Hildebrand and Cornelius, and one daughter, Mary. He lived his later years with Mary, then Mrs. John Benson, dying at the advanced age of ninety-four. He and his wife lie buried in the old Conger Methodist burying ground, with son Hildebrand and his family, and daughter Mary and her family.

Cornelius Valleau, son of Peter, was seven years old when the family came to Canada. He

married Ann Rowe in 1798. He had a large and influential family numbering eight children of whom Peter Valleau of Hillier was the eldest. Peter was one of Hillier's most respected and prosperous citizens and left behind a large family. He died at the age of eighty and lies buried in the Burr Cemetery, nearby the home he had built and lived in for nearly sixty years.

William Valleau, the second son of Cornelius, was by all accounts a man prominent in church work and was referred to as "one of the sweet singers of his day". He and his wife, Catharine German (Germaine) raised eight children and are buried in the old Methodist burying ground at Selby, near their home.