

Jean Georges Besancon
(1708-1756)

Jean Georges Besancon

- Born: 1708, Etobon, Montbeliard, Alsace, France ⁶⁶
 - Marriage (1): Jeanne about 1730 in France
 - Marriage (2): Catherine Boutilier on 20 May 1753 in St Johns Anglican, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada
 - Died: Jan 1756, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada at age 48 ⁶⁶
- Other names for Jean were Jean George Besancon, ⁶⁴⁹ ⁶⁵⁰ John Georgh Besancon, ⁶⁶ John George Besanon ⁶⁶ and Jean George Bezanson. ⁶⁶

General Notes:

A detailed history of this family can be found at:
<http://www.bezanson.ca/history/Dorothy%20Evans.htm>.
"The Bezansons From Nova Scotia" by Dorothy Evans.

While the Besancon name is French, it is noted that family origins could be from Piedmont, Italy. In writing, there is only the notation by Canon Harris – “Family tradition that they came originally from Piedmont, Italy, refugees for religion.” They may have travelled to France during the time of the Piedmont Massacre in Jan 1655.

Beyond that, there are stories. One has it that ancestors “fought alongside of” and “perished with” Coligny. There is nothing to confirm this. A descendant of Joseph, eldest son of Jean Jacques, was told by her grandfather (whom she remembered well) that “ he was descended from le Comte de Besancon du Plessis”. She sent her own sketch of a coat of arms copied from something in her possession “with a man’s head on it”, and wrote on the back of the sketch “The Moor’s head signifies that they fought in the Crusades...” etc. Although this woman was inclined to weave a romantic tale out of very slight evidence, the sketch was a surprise because “Uncle” Charlie Bezanson, who was not inclined to spin imaginary tales had told, that there was “a coat of arms with a man’s head on it”. “Uncle Charlie was dead when the aforementioned sketch was received. A member of another branch of the family had a different insignia, which was seen in two widely separated parts of Nova Scotia, but this proves nothing. It would require documentary evidence other than these sketches to prove decent. It is better to remain skeptical.

As for the family in Nova Scotia, it is on firm ground. They were among the Foreign Protestants who settled Lunenburg. An excellent reference book on this subject is Dr. Winthrop Bell’s book THE FOREIGN PROTESTANTS AND THE SETTLEMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA was published, in 1961, by the University of Toronto Press. Also another book highly recommended is an article by Terrence M. Punch, MONTBELIARD: AN UNKNOWN HOMELAND, published in the Nova Scotia Historical Review, Volume 5, number 2, 1985, page 75. Mr. Punch was instrumental in having a monument to the Montbeliard settlers erected in Lunenburg in July 1988. Descendants of Montbeliard settlers visiting Nova Scotia should be sure to see this monument.

The Bezanson family is listed with the Montbeliard settlers who came down the Rhine to Rotterdam, where they embarked on the snow SPEEDWELL, listed by John Dick as 190 tons burthen, but the tonnage entered by the navel officer was only 70, probably indicating very crowded conditions. The SPEEDWELL set sail from Hellevoet Roads 16

May 1752. 216 souls embarked at Rotterdam, 203 landed at Halifax, toward the end of July. All of the Besanson's survived the journey. An inquiry did not locate Jean George Besancon in Montbeliard, and another descendant believes they were in the Netherlands. It is certain, however, that they were passengers on the SPEEDWELL.

The Montbeliard immigrants were put on St. George's Island for many weeks, worked on the fortifications, suffered from cold and exposure as the weather began to change, and it is probably there that Jeanne, Jean George's wife, died October 1752. He then married the daughter of another of the French-speaking immigrants, Catherine Boutaillier. She was about half his age. The family went to Lunenburg in 1753. Jean George drew a lot in the Clearlands, but evidently exchanged it for lot # 36, NWA. Jean George died in 1755. His daughter Susannah Catherine was born after his death. His widow married Etienne Mariette, a widower with sons, on January 1st, 1756, and subsequently had several children by her second husband.

The Besancon's (his own signature), in a sort of script, looks like Besanson – possibly the second 's' his way of writing 'c' cedille) were: "Jean George Besanson, age 44, farmer, 1 man, 2 women, 3 half freight, 1 free, heads 7, Jean George, Jeanne, Marie, Nicholas, David, Marie Catherine, Marie".

There is no record of Jean George's death in the Lunenburg parish records, but family tradition says that he was scalped by Indians and died in his own dooryard.

Noted events in his life were:

- Arrival, 1752, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. [649](#)
- Immigration: Aboard the vessel "Speedwell" with 5 children, May 1752, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.
- Property: Distribution North West Range B-55 (Clear Land Back Range D-5) - <http://www.seawhy.com/lg30aa.html>, 1753, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada.
- Property: Registry North West Range A-36 - <http://www.seawhy.com/lg30aa.html>, 1760, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Jean married Jeanne about 1730 in France. (Jeanne was born in France and died in 1752 on Voyage, Speedwell, 1752 From France To Halifax.)

Jean next married Catherine Boutilier, daughter of Jean Georges Boutilier and Sarah Grange, on 20 May 1753 in St Johns Anglican, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada. (Catherine Boutilier was born on 7 Jan 1724 in Etobon, Montbeliard, France, died on 26 Oct 1796 in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada [120](#) and was buried on 27 Oct 1796 in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada.)

Other notes:

JEAN GEORGE BEZANSON WAS AMONG THE FOREIGN PROTESTANT SETTLERS WHO WERE RECRUITED IN EUROPE TO POPULATE THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA IN THE 1750'S. HE TRAVELED ON THE SPEEDWELL ON MAY 16 1752 WITH HIS WIFE JEANNE AND 3 CHILDREN MARIE, NICHOLAS AND DAVID.

IT WAS DOCUMENTED THAT THE FIRST FRENCH PROTESTANTS THAT CAME OVER IN 1752 MADE THE TUNNELS LEADING TO- FROM AND AROUND GEORGES ISLAND. JEANNE

DIED THAT WINTER AS THE SHIP WAS DOCKING IN HALIFAX HARBOUR, SHE WAS BURIED IN HALIFAX.

FOR ALMOST A YEAR THE SETTLERS WERE KEPT ON GEORGE'S ISLAND BEFORE BEING SETTLED IN LUNENBURG. JEAN GEORGE WROTE A LENGHY PETITION TO THE GOVERNOR BEGGING HIM TO GET US OFF THIS GODFORSAKEN ISLAND. JEAN GEORGE WAS FIRST GRANTED LAND IN WHAT IS NOW THE TOWN OF LUNENBURG BUT TRADED THIS LOT FOR ONE FUTHER DOWN THE COAST, WHERE HE DIED IN 1755.

THERE IS A **STORY** WHICH SAYS THAT HE WAS SCALPED BY INDIANS IN HIS OWN BACK YARD IN VIEW OF HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN.

JEAN GEORGE BOULITIER CAME OVER ON THE SALLY 30 MAY 1752 WITH HIS WIFE SARAH GRANGE AND 7 CHILDREN: CATHERINE, NICHOLAS, JEAN GEORGE, JEAN NICHOLAS, PIERRE, JACQUES AND JEANNE. JEAN GEORGE AND SARAH GRANGE DIED WHILE MAKING THE TRANSALANTIC TRIP, LEAVING THE 7 CHILDREN TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES. JEAN GEORGE BEZANSON AND CATHERINE BOULITIER MARRIED 20 MAY 1753 IN THE DUTCH REFORM CHURCH IN LUNENBURG NOVA SCOTIA .

