

## The Labonte Mystery

Grandmother Grace was "adopted", but we know she knew who her bio parents were later in life. The family Bible had two names added: Jeff Labonte & Mary Buckley. We have found all of Mary's family, but Jeff Labonte has been a decades-long mystery. Here are the clues we have:

1870 Census Cameron; Shippen; Pennsylvania

**Ze LeBont**; 26 years old; male; white; laborer, Birthplace: Canada; father foreign; mother foreign (as Ze Le Bent)

**Mary LeBont**; 27 years old; female; white; keeping house; Birthplace: Penna

(We know Mary was born in 1847, Annin Creek, PA as Mary Hannah Buckley. Her father is Daniel Buckley (1815-1881) born NY. Her mother, Sally Sarah Evans (1820-1849) died when Mary was about 1 ½ years old. Mary is listed in the 1850 census as living with her paternal grandparents, in Wirt, NY, as a two-year-old. She might have been a servant in 1860 census in Elmira, NY.

**Emma** – 4 years old; female; white; at home; birthplace: Penna; father foreign

**Ellen** – 3 years old; female; white; at home; birthplace: Penna; father foreign

### No further records of Ze/Jeff Labonte, ever!

1880 Census Maine, Penobscot, Drew

**Mary Buckley** is now living in Maine, married to a **Charles Lovely**. She has three children with her now, but three of her children with Labonte (**Emma, Ella,** and **Grace**) are not listed.

**Frank H** – 10 years (child of Labonte) Birthplace: Pa; birthplace of father: Maine

**Alice M** – 8 years (child of Labonte) Birthplace: Pa; birthplace of father: Maine

**Bessie W.** – 5 months (child of Lovely, we think) Birthplace: Pa; birthplace of father: Maine

1900 census Maine, Aroostook, Fort Fairfield

**Mary Lovely** indicated that she had 11 children with only 6 children living. (We know of 7 at least)

## Children of Ze/Jeff Labonte & Mary Buckley

- Emma** Emma (b. 1865). We have never located her anywhere except in the 1870 census living with Ze and Mary, and sister Ellen.
- Ella** Ella (Ellen) Mary (1867-1943). We have tracked her down. She went to live with the Julius & Annie Neefe family in Sweden, PA. She is listed as their daughter (age 13) in 1880 census. In 1900 & 1910 census, she is married to William Snyder and says both parents were born in PA. In 1920 census; she is married to James Fish and list her father as born in Canada – English; mother born in PA. On her next marriage license, she lists her father as La Bonte; born in France; mother Mary Buckley. On Ella's death certificate, filled out by her fourth husband, her mother was listed as Mary La Bonda.
- Frank** Frank Henry (1870-1948). Mary was pregnant for Frank at the 1870 census time. She kept him. Frank grew up using his stepfather's name: Lovely. In his mother's 1907 death notice in the paper, however, he was listed as a son, Frank Labonte. He is all over the place with saying where his father was born: Maine (1910 census), Pennsylvania (1920 census) His name may be a clue as there are no Franks or Henrys in Mary's family tree.
- Alice** Alice Maude (1872-1910) Alice is another child that her mother kept. In 1900 census, she lists her father as born in Maine. In 1910 census, she lists her father as born in Canada; English. Alice died 8 Nov. 1910 in Maine, and her death certificate names her father as de Labonte; birthplace of father: France
- Grace** Grace Gertrude (1873-1951) Grace was adopted out. We don't know how old she was and if she was renamed. She was listed in the 1880 census as the daughter of Byron Wilson and Julie Burluson Wilson in Eldred, PA. (Interesting tidbit, in the Eldred, PA 1880 census, they were living next to a person from Maine.) She was raised as an only child. Grace found out about her other siblings late in life. There is a picture of Grace, Ella, and Frank in the 1930's. She is my grandmother. It is her Bible that was written the name of Jeff Labonte & Mary Buckley.

## Children of Charles Lovely & Mary Buckley

- Winnie** Bessie Winifred (1879-1942). We think she is Charles' daughter. She was born in PA, but Charles was from Maine. Her father is consistently listed as born in Maine.
- Nona** Iola Nona (1882-1967). Nona wrote a letter to Grace's daughter-in-law after Grace died in 1951. "I have always felt it was such a sad mistake that I never knew about my sister for I would so loved to have been able to have seen her." Nona Brayson
- Benjamin** Benjamin (1885-1977).

## Musings.....

1. The children and family members were not reliable informants, and census takers could have made some assumptions based on the current family living together. Adopted children may not have known they were adopted. The children didn't know the whole story, and as they learned more the stories evolved.
2. A catastrophic family event seems to have happen between the births of Grace (1873) and Bessie (1879). Labonte may have died/or abandoned the family. Something happened that convinced Mary to "give away" Ella and Grace, and maybe Emma.
3. The name Labonte is iffy. After listening to your Episode #2, I'm guessing the name may have been a dit. The spellings were all over the place: Le Bont, La Bonte, De Labonte, Labountie, La Bountie
4. The family "story" went from father born in PA, Maine, Canada – English, to France! Is he French Canadian? I think so for a couple of reasons. The 1870 was completed by either him or his wife listing his birthplace as Canada. Those were close first-hand sources. The name appears to be French-Canadian.
5. We have been thinking Labonte might have hailed from close to the Maine/Canadian border based on where Mary was in 1880 census. But, if Lovely's first child with Mary was born in PA, then maybe Charles was the one to travel to PA and ended up taking them to his home state. In that case, Labonte could have come down from the Ontario area or Quebec or anywhere!
6. DNA - We have clear DNA through the Buckley family. I also think we may have matches with three of Mary's children, Grace, Frank, and Nona descendants. Wish I could figure out the Labonte line.