

Jimmie; A.L.

History 3

9739 E

May 1983

RESEARCH PROJECTPREFACE

I have tried to trace the origins of my grandparents on my father's side and mother's side. A fair amount of success has been achieved, though some avenues explored have drawn a blank. the people whom I interviewed spoke freely, but somewhat rather vaguely and hesitatingly, but clamped up the moment I attempted to record our decision. It is strange, but my family and relatives who over the years spoke willingly about our forebears, suddenly became reluctant and suspicious the moment pencil and paper was detected in my hands.

My father was born in 1904 in Mooi River, in Northern Natal. I was unsuccessful in all my attempts to trace the origin of his family. I had never met them but as a child, I was told that my grandparents died young, whilst my father was still a child. He never mentioned any other relatives, not even a brother or sister, except that his father was a labourer. His mother was a Coloured person and his father was part African. In those days it was common for those two ethnio groups to marry or live together. I am not suggesting that such bonds of matrimony do not pertain to-day. I was also unable to trace much about my father, only that he worked as a chef in hotels at Mooi River and in Durban. Being the eldest of a family of ten children, I could not rely on any information from my brothers and sisters, since they knew even less. My father died at the age of fifty years at Mc Cord Zulu Hospital in Durban, on 2nd May 1954. Enlosed is a copy of the Death Certificate. ①

I made a few enquiries around the old shops in the vicinity of the old "Top Market" in Victoria Street.

① Photo Copy enclosed

People whom I knew to be my late father's acquaintances had long since died. The reply, "he's no more here", simply meant the person in question had long since ceased to exist. All my efforts drew a blank.

Perhaps I am partly to blame for my unsuccessful attempts at tracing my family background and origin. It never interested me much to enquire where I came from. Hence the apathy on the part of the few people who knew my father. They just did not wish to relate the past, especially to someone who ignored them over the years.

On the other hand, I have achieved some comfort regarding the origin and background of my grandparents on my mother's side. Ironically, it was less difficult to trace their origin, although they and my mother were born overseas. My mother and her parents were born on the Island of Mauritius. My mother was born on the 3rd January 1896. (Around the year 1908, my mother's family) My mother was born on the 3rd January 1896. Around the year 1908, my mother's family comprising both my grandparents, my mother and her teenage brother, emigrated to South Africa.

They emigrated with a family with the surname of Bax.

They first settled in the Maidstone/Felixton area, which was the centre of the sugar industry at the time. My grandfather had the experience of working in a sugar-mill in Mauritius, so obviously he was readily employed at the mill in Maidstone. Later his son joined him at the mill. This young man died of malaria in 1929. I wrote to the Mill manager at Maidstone, where my grandfather was formerly employed, but received no reply. Presumably the Mill has ceased to function.

My mother worked as a domestic maid for the manager of the Tinley Manor branch of Hulett's Sugar Company. Incidentally, I remember my mother telling us that she worked for the equivalent of twenty cents (two shillings)

① Photo copy of original is enclosed

per month, as a child labourer in Mauritius. Of course "rations" were provided, but one does not require much of an imagination to ascertain what the rations consisted of. Strange, but it was easy to detect that the needy were kept in a subservient position by the Colonists throughout their lives with no manner of improvement. Needless to say that this was typical of Colonial "days".

My grandfather died somewhere around 1925 and my grandmother then moved to Durban around 1926. My mother ^(b) married in 1927. My mother and grandmother continued to work as domestics (house girls), for white people living on the berea, Durban. My grandmother enjoyed good health. She was a above average height and was quite a buxom person. I can recall her as being very excitable and strict towards any one her junior. She was very religious and I am grateful to her for inheriting this character trait. We are all staunch Roman Catholics. Her father was an immigrant from France - surname "Labonne" - whose wife was an indigenous woman of the Island. My grandmother's name was Marie Leonciné Victorien. She had a tendency to be cruel and unsympathetic at times. She was relentless in her dealings with wrong-doers. This I found was characteristic of the native indigenous peoples of the Island. My mother told me that the original "black" people of the Island came from Madagascar and Mozambique. As is known the peoples of Africa have a tendency to love rhythmic movement and music. This is evident even whilst working. The people of the Island are known for their "segae" dancing. A group of "segae" dancers were in Durban this month to advertise the opening of a certain hotel in Mauritius. I had the good fortune of meeting some of these lovely people. They were astonished to find people domiciled outside Mauritius who were fluent in their 'creole' language. They did not believe me when I related the background of my mother and grandparents. Only documentary proof convinced them that I was of 'Mauricien' stock. My visit to the Island

one day will be most rewarding. My daughter visited the Island for two weeks in July last year. She managed to trace some of our relatives there, who were told by their grandparents of the mass emigration from the Island at the turn of the century.

My grandmother subsequently died of breast cancer at Durban's Addington Hospital on the 30 June 1937. She somewhat had a premonition of death, since before being admitted, she disposed of all her possessions even her clothing. Her death was a great blow to me, since by then I was old enough to understand and know who was my immediate family.

by now my mother was unable to hold a steady job, since my long line of brothers and sisters were following each other annually. Nonetheless, she continued to work part-time doing washing and ironing. Hence, I feel I have done well, being a Principal of a Primary School; Supervisor of Adult Education (Evening Classes); and owning a house, and after coming off a 'washer-woman's' back at that.

My mother raised a large family practically on the 'smell of an oil-rag', since my father was the sole earner. My mother was also a midwife. Unfortunately, her references are in tatters, but these she obtained from the late Dr. Seedat. During the 1930's and 1940's he was the foremost medical practitioner in Durban. Mohamedy's of Berea Road, Durban; parents of student leader, Strinni Moodley, knew my late mother well in this field of work. The Poonen family of Durban, who have long since emigrated overseas, also knew my mother in line of occupation.

Last week I was fortunate in meeting a Creole seaman from Mauritius. I mentioned my grandparent's surname such as Pottier, La Brasse, Berthelot and Victoriene.

He informed me these were popular surnames in Mauritius and that many of the people had intermarried with Chinese. These people came to the Island around 1850. I hope to acquire more information from this acquaintance who promised to make certain enquiries on my behalf. He left me his name and address:

Monsieur Regis Cazalens
28 Route Saint Martin
Rocht-Bois
Il Maurice

I was a regular correspondent to Monsieur Ramgoolam Sewgoolam and Albert Duval. The correspondents were impressed when I used my creole name i.e. Antoine Louis, instead of Anthony Louis

My mother, after many years of hardship and abject poverty, died a diabetic at Durban's Shifa Hospital on the 11 March 1974, at the age of seventy-six. Only about two years prior to her death, did her health fail her. She was as strong as an ox almost to the end. It was heart warming to meet a wealthy family, A.P.Naidoo & Sons, from Tinley Manor and Stanger, who were acquaintances of my mother, at the end of the Second World War. They were also at her funeral. They said she 'had brought them into the light; obviously making reference to her occupation as a midwife.

Recently I wrote a letter to the Mauritian Embassy in Durban, requesting some information regarding the arrival of Mauritian immigrants into South Africa, at the turn of the century. I was immediately referred to a Mr Bax, here in Durban. Mr Joseph Bax, a relative ⁽⁴⁾ of the former immigrants, is now Director of 'Savignac' (Pty) Ltd, Exporters and Importers, sixth floor, Tuiton House, 328 Smith Street, Durban. Thanks to this project, it is now revealed that our family is in for a small windfall in Mauritius waiting to be claimed.

(4) Phoned Mr J. Bax at 'Savignac'

In conclusion I would like to say that the friends and relatives I spoke to, made this project possible. It is wonderful to hear people speak "of the good old days".

"Le travail de beaucoup, mais moi répondez à la question pour moi famille. Bon soir mesdames".

FOOTNOTES :

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25th April, 1956

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that we interred the late Charles
Perman Jimmie, who died on the 2nd May, 1954, aged 50 years, race -
coloured, in West Street Cemetery, Durban on the 4th May, 1954.

Yours faithfully,

WILSON, DAVEY (PTY) LIMITED.

E H Dunham (Mrs)

SECRETARY.

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T. S.

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HEAD OFFICE: L.B.K./N.
209 WEST STREET.
DURBAN.
P.O. Box 248.

December 20th. 1923. 192

To whom it may concern :-

This is to certify that Miss Nelly Berthelot has been working for me for the ten years as a Nurse and General help in the house.

She is very reliable girl and very motherly with the children, she is a good worker, does the Laundry work & etc. and I can strongly recommend her to anyone as a Good House - keeper and General help in the house.

For Sir J. L. HULETT & SONS LTD.

James H. Coats

Manager.

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P.O. Box 248.

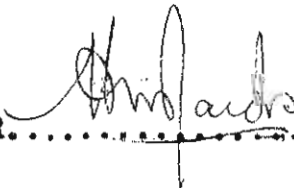
November 11th, 1925.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

Miss Nellie Berthelot has been for two years in my
employ as Housemaid & Nurse and has given me satisfaction.
She is leaving owing to illness.

I have no hesitation in recommending her to anyone
who may require a girl for similar service.

MANAGER.....



Mr. & Mrs. P. C. JIMMIE
request the pleasure of the company of
Mr. & Mrs.
at their Silver Wedding Celebration
On Saturday, 24th* May 1952
at 21, Neville Lane, Durban
at 3 p.m.
R.S.V.P.
21, Neville Lane, Durban.

With Best Compliments from
Mrs. M. Victorien,
(WIDOW)
on the occasion of the marriage of her youngest daughter
Nellie Bastelat
with
P. Jimmy Charles
on Thursday the 3rd May, 1927,
at 46 Bexton Street, Durban

Auct. No.

Name of Depositor

Boothel May 27th 1894

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Inf

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Date of Deposit or Withdrawal	Amount of Deposit or Withdrawal in Words.	Amount in figures	Signature of Clerk	Signature of Cashier	C. B. No.	Initial of Controller
1907		Rs.	cts.			
Jan 7	Received seventy rupees	70				
May 30	Interest	70				
July 1	Balance	70 70				
Oct 1	Paid twenty five rupees	25				
		45 70				
Dec 19	Paid fifteen rupees	15				
1908		30 70				
Jan 30	Paid five rupees	5				
		25 70				
Feb 4	Paid five rupees	5				
		20 70				
	26 Paid five rupees	5				
		15 70				
April 15	Paid twelve rupees	12				
1909		3 70				
June 30	Interest to date					
July 1	Balance	5 16				
Jan 25	Received five rupees	5				
Feb 4	Received five rupees	5				

Carried over

1873.

BIRTH in the District of

Grand Port

in the Island of Mauritius.

No.	When born where.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Nat. o Leg ma	Name and Surname of Father and Mother, Profession and Domicile.	Name and Surname of Informant, Profession and Domicile.	Names and Surnames of Witnesses, Profession and Domicile.	Marginal Entries.
	On the twelfth June 1873 at Grand Port in the afternoon at M. Labonne	Marie Leonine Labonne	Female		Honoré Labonne. Constable of Police and Marie Leonine Labonne, nee Brasse, both residing at M. Labonne	The Father	Embrasse Rade- mond Carrier and Jean Arthide Mamedy Capen th of age and Labonne	
		Spinatier Jean Bassin 20 years parental Jean Bassin						

So declared by the above named Informant in the presence of the above named Witnesses who, after I have read over this Act to them, and signed with me, Clerk of the District of Grand Port, this Seventh day of July One thousand eight hundred and seventy three, the others declare their inability to do so.

Signature
of
Informant.

M. Labonne

Signature
of
Witnesses.

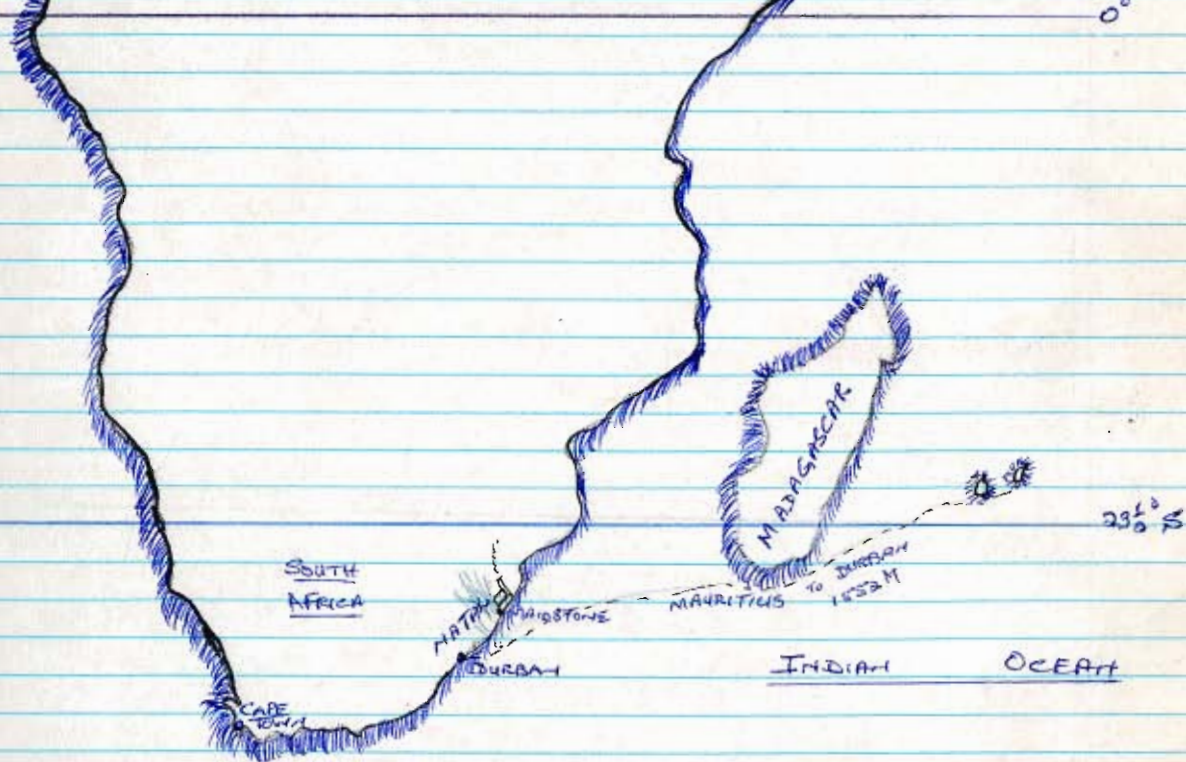
Embrasse Rade-
mond
Jean Arthide Mamedy
Capen

Signed

Officer of the Civil Status of the District of Grand Port
A true Extract

Officer of the Civil Status
of the District of Grand Port

19th
73
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MAP ILLUSTRATING POSITION AND DISTANCE BETWEEN
MAURITIUS AND DURBAN: