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MASSONNEAU, CLAUDIUS GERMAIN

Born: 1769 in Angoulême, France
Died: June 19, 1846 in Red Hook, New York
Buried: Lutheran Cemetery, Red Hook, N. Y.
Married: Catharine Livingston,
daughter of Robert G. and Mar-
garet Hyde Livingston, of Dutchess
County, New York.

1st Generation of Massonneau's in America



One account states that Claudius Germain Massonneau was a scion of a house which traced its ancestral lineage back to the days when France of the Bourbons was at the height of its glory. This seems the more likely account, as the descendants have heirlooms with crests engraved on them, painted miniatures, dueling pistols, a beautiful French clock with chimes, etc. The crest, above, was copied from one of the spoons left by this French gentleman. Description of crest, etc. follows later.

Claudius Germain Massonneau fled France because of the French Revolution, or perhaps

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because of religious persecution, and came to America in 1790, after stopping first at Haiti with his brother Pierre. That he was a man of considerable education and wealth can be tested by his occupations when he arrived here.

He landed at Santo Domingo and then the next we hear of him he was in Charleston, South Carolina, then he settled in Red Hook, Dutchess County, New York. His brother Pierre (Peter) Massonneau (of Santo Domingo) was married in New York City and a record of this is on file in 1794. It is thought that both Pierre and his son died of cholera in New York City. There was an epidemic there at that time.

According to an account in the "Red Hook Advertiser" Claudius Germain Massonneau was a man, though ~~highly educated~~ highly educated, was unable to speak the English language. That he was one of the ablest of men, who made their home in Dutchess County. He mastered the English language in intricate detail, finally, and earned an enviable reputation as a school ~~master~~ master. This shrewd Frenchman entered into the mercantile trade with a general store, which venture proved exceedingly profitable, and the owner was able to amass considerable gain both in money and in property. Another account says that he started a silk mill, but that this project failed. In fact this latter may be very true, as he might very likely have been a manufacturer of silks in France and wished to carry on this occupation in America.

Seism Block in Red Hook used to be known as Massonneau Block and was laid out by Claudius Germain Massonneau and was held and owned by the family for nearly 150 years. There is also a pond in Red Hook called Massonneau Pond.

"In the 18th Century" (Vol. 14 of 1929 of the Year Book of the Dutchess County Historical Society) "trade relations between the Unit

states and the West Indies were very close, and, as a result of which interesting communication many men bearing French names came from the Islands in the last quarter of the century. Also there was an exodus from France to America in the 1790s, due to the French Revolution. Contemporaneous with Chandonet, de Cantillon and de Vemont, were 5 men of French extraction in what is now the town of Red Hook. Pierre Joseph Preissac (first husband of Catharine Livingston), Claudius Germain Massonneau, Peter de Labigarre, Claudius Gabriel Fontaine and Daniel Brizac or Priscock.

"H. Preissac (a son of the Marquis de Cardillac, Chevalier de St Louis of the Parish of Saint Michael, San Domingo,) came to Red Hook, married Catharine Livingston, whose parents Robert G. and Margaret Hude Livingston lived near the present Hook City, N. Y.. He died in 1794 or 95.

"The will of H. Preissac was witnessed by Pierre Massonneau, who was presumably the "Petot Massonneau of Santo Domingo, whose marriage in New York City in 1794 is on record.

"In this association of the names Preissac and Massonneau may lie some explanation for the fact that H. Preissac's widow (Catharine Livingston) married for her second husband Claudius Germain Massonneau (Born 1769, died 1846, another of the Frenchmen who lived in Red Hook, Dutchess County, New York."

THE COAT OF ARMS

According to a Heraldic book from the International Institute, Flushing, N. Y. and now at Lord and Taylors in New York (a French book) none of the three Massonneau crests exactly tally with the sketch on the previous page. It has been copied here, however, as the right side of the crest does resemble one description. Quite often the wife's crest was added

to the husbands, so that eventually the original crest lost signs of its "shield". Copied below are the three French descriptions with their (near) English translations. Take your choice. A trip to France might prove something on this.

MASSONNEAU - Poitou (this is in the district of Angoulême): D'argent à cinq truques de sable, 2 - 1 et 2. (Five truques in dark brown on silver, 2, 1 and 2)

MASSONNEAU - Lorraine: De gueules à trois étoiles d'argent rangées en bande. (Three silver stars arranged on a red band)

MASSONNEAU - Bonn (near Germany): (An. 18 oct. 1861) Coupé ondes d'azur sur ar. à une massue de couleur brunâtre posée en pal, brochant, sur le tout, soutenu d'un torse de singe en pointe et surmonté d'une étoile d'argent. Crest: un sauvage de carnation, ceint et couronné de lierre, posant la main dextre sur sa hanche et tenant de sa senestre une massue, appuyée sur son épaule. (Mantle) d'argent et d'azur. (Having silver sword on blue with a club of brownish color posed like a fencing sword (dominant). Background: a pointed green hill surmounted by a silver star. Crest: A ferocious man (purple savage) girded and crowned with ivy, his right hand placed on hip, his left hand grasping a club that rests on his shoulder. Mantle is of silver on blue.

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MASSONNEAU, CLAUDIUS GERMAIN (con't.)

MASSONNEAU, Catharine Livingston (Proieeac
wife of Claudius Germain
Massonneau.

Born: 1768

Died: Apr. 3, 1832

Buried: Lutheran Cemetery, Red Hook,
N.Y.

Married: 1st. M. Pierre Joseph Pre-
issac (son of the Marquis de
Cardillac, Chevalier de St.
Louis of the Parish of St.
Michael, San Domingo), who
died about 1794-5

2nd: Claudius Germain
Massonneau

Two children: Robert Claudius and
Catharine

**Fifth Generation of Livingston's in
America**

**Daughter of Robert G. and Margaret
Hude Livingston who lived
near Rock City, Dutchess Coun-
ty, New York.**

**Catherine Livingston's father (4th
generation of Livingston's in
America) was the First Chan-
cellor of the State of New
York and also Minister to
France.**

EARLY LIVINGSTON HISTORY

1st Generation: ROBERT LIVINGSTON was born,
Dec. 13, 1654 in Ancrum, in Tovioldale,
Roxburghshire, Scotland. He was the first
ancestor of the Livingston family in Amer-
ica. His father, John Livingston was a
Scottish Presbyterian divine, who was ban-
ished in 1663 for nonconformity and went
to Rotterdam, where he died in 1672.

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Robert Livingston (1st gen. in Ameri-
fied with his father to Rotterdam and
learned the Dutch language in his adop-
ed home and in 1674 emigrated to Ameri-
two years after the death of his father.
In 1676 he held respon-
sible employment in Albany as secretary
of the commissaries, which office he held
until Albany became a city in 1696.

In the latter year he received from
Gov. Thomas Dongan a grant of a large tra-
ct of land, which in 1715 was confirmed by
royal charter from George I, erecting this
and other lands acquired by purchase of the
Indians, into Livingston Manor. The first
conveyance to land to Robert Livingston was
dated July 12, 1683 and was for 2,000 acres
on ~~REELIX~~ Reel of Jansen's Kill. The deed
was executed by 2 Indians and 2 Squaws.
This patent bears the date of July, 27, 1683
and comprised 100,000 acres on the
Hudson River. The additional privileges
of electing a representative to the
general assembly of the colony, and two es-
tables, were conferred upon the tenants.

Of the Manors created in New York, the
principal of which were those of Rensselaer
Livingston, Cortlandt, Philipsburg and Bee-
man, that of Livingston was, with the ex-
ception of the first, the largest, though
not comparatively the richest or most
valuable. This manor embraced large part
of what are now the counties of Dutchess
and Columbia, N.Y. Nearly 6,000 acres
were taken away from it as a settlement
for the Palatines, who came out with Gov.
Robert Hunter in 1710, which grant was
called Germantown.

Robert Livingston (1st Gen.) married,
about 1683, Alida, widow of the Reverend
(sometimes called Patroon) Nicholas Van
Rensselaer, and daughter of Philip Pieter
Schuyler, by whom he had 3 sons:

(Livingston con't.)

- 1 - Philip
- 2 - Robert Jr.
- 3 - Gilbert

Robert Livingston (1st gen.) died in Albany
Apr. 20, 1726

County Clerk in 1721-749 and member of the Provincial Assembly
Philip Livingston (2nd Gen.), who succeeded to the manorial estate was born in Albany July 9 1686. He was for some time deputy secretary of Indian affairs under his father, and, on the resignation of the latter, in 1722, succeeded to the secretaryship. In 1709 he was a member of the Provincial Assembly Council until his death in New York City, Feb. 4, 1749. He married Catharine, daughter of Peter Van Brugh, of Albany, and, during the latter part of his life entertained with great magnificence at his 3 residences in New York City, Albany and the Manor. Among his children were:

ROBERT LIVINGSTON, 2nd (3d Generation in Amer.) who succeeded to the Manor as its last lord. His children were:

- 1-Peter Van Brugh, merchant of N. Y. C., who married Mary Alexander, sister of Lord Stirling
- 2- Philip, signer of the Declaration of Independence
- 3 - John, also a merchant of New York
- 4 - William, Governor of New Jersey
- 5 - Sarah, wife of William Alexander, Lord Stirling
- 6 - Alida
- 7 - Catharine

Robert Livingston, 2nd (3d gen) was the first proprietor of Clermont. He was born Aug. 1718. In 1760 he became judge of the Admiralty Court; in 1763 Justice of the New York Supreme Court. He also served in the Provincial Assembly and the Stamp Congress. He married Margaret, daughter of Colonel Henry Beckman (and here these de-

scendents become related to Franklin Delane Roosevelt, President of the United States). His daughter Janet married Gen. Richard Montgomery, who died heroically at Quebec. His son:

ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON 3d. (4th Generation of Livingston's in America). Born: Nov. 27, 1746 was minister to France and the first Chancellor of New York. There are several books and genealogies written about this gentleman, some can be found at the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society 122 East 58th Street, New York City. He died Feb. 26, 1813. He had two daughters:

- 1 - *Mrs. Livingston*
- 2 - Catharine *W. J.*

CATHARINE LIVINGSTON married Claudius Tormain
Hassonneau

SPERO MELIORA - Hope for the best



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MASSEMEAU, ROBERT CLAUDIUS

Born: May 3, 1797 in Red Hook, N. Y.
Died: Dec. 10, 1877 " " "
Buried: Lutheran Cemetery, " "
Married: Elizabeth Waldorf,
daughter of Christopher and Regina
Benner Waldorf.

8 children: 1 - Robert Livingston
2 - Peter - insane at 21,
3 - Edward lived in an as-
4 - Charles ylum and died
5 - Catharine (aged 71) there
6 - Mary
7 - John
8 - Cecelia

2nd generation of Massemeau's in America

Robert Claudius Massemeau taught school from 1819 to 1823. On March 24, 1823 he founded a mercantile establishment that was famed far and wide as the foremost of its time and which brought him great prestige and financial gain. He gave land for a street in Red Hook, N.Y. with the understanding that it was to be named "Elizabeth" Street in honor of his wife Elizabeth Waldorf Massemeau. It was called "Railroad Ave." for years until recently, when the officials were consulting old records to have markers made for streets and had the street marked properly. June 1, 1940.

He helped found the Red Hook tobacco Company and kept a general store in Red Hook.

During the Civil War, this old son of the French Hugree, Claudius Germain Massemeau, was a staunch upholder of the Union cause and it was

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often rumored that his house was one of the many stations of the "UNDERGROUND RAILWAY" by means of which so many negroes slaves escaped and found their way to Canada and freedom.

Sometime in 1855 the original building was moved to a site on what is now Factory Street, where it still stands (Aug. 18, 1932) and is used as a dwelling house.

After this change had been effected Robert Claudius Massemeau erected a fine brick building on the corner. This building still stands and is the finest in the entire block (1940).

Massemeau, Elizabeth Waldorf(ph), wife of Robert Claudius Massemeau.

Born: Jan. 23, 1808

Died: Dec. 25, 1874

Buried: Lutheran Cemetery, Red Hook, N.

Married: Robert Claudius Massemeau.

She died of a hemorrhage of the lungs or throat on Christmas morning, sometime between breakfast and dinner. She was the daughter of Christopher and Regina Benner Waldorf, farmers of German descent, and T. H.

The original Waldorf home is still (1941) standing. It was built by William Waldorf(ph) in 1786 west of Red Hook, N.Y. on the road to Barrytown. A plaque still rests in the wall of the house, now owned by Miss Anne A. Abendshain. It is the second oldest house in Red Hook.

Of the 8 children: Edward, married Virginia Holini (Italian) (no children). Charles W. engaged in the manufacture of Arnicin, Iodine, Porus and Strengthening Plasters and in the publication of the "Aurora Borealis", one of the leading quarterlies of its time.

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MASSONNEAU, ROBERT LIVINGSTON

Born: Oct. 3, 1825 in Red Hook, N. Y.

Died: March 14, 1898-9 " " "

Buried: Lutheran Cemetery " "

Married: Oct. 27, 1859 Emma Clark Strobel
daughter of Rev. William Daniel
Strobel, D. D. and Abby Anna (Engs)
Strobel and granddaughter of
Philip Wanton Engs, a wine mer-
chant of New York City.

3rd Generation of Massonneau's in America

5 Children:

1 - Robert Livingston, Jr. m. Anna
Caroline Coe - 5 children

2 - William Strobel m. Katie Town-
send Walter Frey. 1 daught-
er, Elizabeth Drexel Mass-
onneau (Cole).

3 - Eliza Franklin m John Bunting -
no issue

4 - Edward Philip m. Caroline Branch
1 daughter - Carol Branch
Massonneau (Baldwin)

5 - Emma Engs m. Paul du Breuil
Russell - no issue.

Robert Livingston Massonneau was a very honest, honorable gentleman of exceptionally fine character, an intelligent thinker and a prodigious reader (used to read Dickens through every year of his life.)

He was shy and reticent, sensitive, generous and tender hearted, a constant champion of the under-dog (contributing to the "Underground Railway" before the Civil War and aiding the slaves at every opportunity.) When a man would come around with a dancing bear on a hot summer day, he would give the owner of the bear a liberal contribution and see to it that the bear

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was permitted to sit in the shade until it grew cooler, instead of performing for his pay. His wife would get provoked with him when he would give what seemed to her too large a coin to the organ grinder when he would play the "Marseillaise". In his youth he had spent much of his time with his grandfather, Claudius Germain Massonneau, who was a native of France, and he always loved to hear France stirring national anthem. He spoke French with his grandfather and from him learned to speak the language well.

His first business was in the Tobacco Factory which his father helped to found. Later he was one of a committee appointed to handle details pertinent to the organization and founding of a banking institution at Red Hook; then as a member of the building committee for the construction of a permanent home for the fast growing FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF RED HOOK. This is the same site as that on which the bank building occupies today (1941). Robert Massonneau was named one of the directors of this Bank and later became its President. His great grandson Robert Livingston Massonneau 3d, has a five dollar bill with his great grandfather's signature on it. This was an obligation which Presidents of banks had to do at this time.

He would settle the estate of his friend for nothing and his son Robert could have had a scholarship to Hamilton College on his mark at De Garmo Institute, but the father wouldn't let him accept it, saying he could afford to pay his way while the parents of many another deserving boy might not be able to do so. He also expected to send his second son, William, through college, but the son was in love and anxious to get into business, so, when there was an opening in the bookkeeping

bookkeeping department of the bank, he gave his son the choice. William chose the job and left school before graduation. His father gave him a handsome gold watch to make up some of the difference. To show that William was his honest father's honest son, he refused his diploma from De Garmo Institute, when it was offered to him a month or so before graduation, saying that he didn't want anything he hadn't earned.

Robert Massonneau was a very clean minded man and if any one would make an outre remark or tell an off-color joke, he would stalk out of the room with a disgusted "HUMPH!" His "HUMPH! POOH! CHAH!" became a family joke.

He slept very poorly and would go to bed early and look from his dark room out at the stars, as he knew quite a good deal about astronomy. He had a long lingering illness, in bed at least a year, before he died of locomotor ataxia. This illness depressed him greatly and he seemed to turn to the stars for comfort and solace. He was a much loved man and his younger daughter once said ~~even~~ that her deep love for him was probably one of the most lasting emotional experiences of her life.

MASSONNEAU, EMMA CLARK STROBEL, wife of Robert
Robert Livingston Massonneau
Born: Dec. 19, 1839 on Mott Street,
New York City, which was then
a very fashionable section of
that city, but is now a part
of Chinatown. She was named
for her father's first wife,
Emma Clark, who died without
issue.
Died: Aug. 24, 1906 in Red Hook, N.Y.
Buried: Lutheran Cemetery " " "
Married: Oct. 27, 1859 Robert Liv-

ington Massonneau in the Lutheran Church Red Hook, where her father was minister.

4th Generation of Strobel's in America

Emma Clark Strobel Massonneau was a very fine woman and of great influence in the community in which she lived. She was a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the fact that her husband occasionally drank a little whiskey when he felt like it, rankled her no end, even though he never drank enough to become befuddled or cross or impatient.

The people who remember Mrs. Massonneau say she was of a very noble character, gracious, sweet, religious, generous, patient and calm. She kept such a lovely home, and her younger daughter would so much prefer to eat meals at home, that when she was inveigled into accepting invitations elsewhere, she ~~was~~ would be sad throughout the meal (to the point of tears) and joyfully race back to her home and to her parents ~~as soon as she could~~.

She disliked petty talk and gossip and made very few close friends in the town of Red Hook. She died at the age of 66 of heart trouble.