

Ferdinand Scalabrini

Ferdinand was born in East-Farnham on December 17, 1874. He was baptised on the twenty-seventh of that same month, in Sainte-Croix of Dunham, by father J. Jodoin. His godparents were Israël Racicot and Édesse Racicot. He was single all his life.

He lived with his parents until his mother's death, then moved with his sister Marie-Estelle, first in Sainte-Edwidge and then in Coaticook. He lived with them until his death. Ferdinand had an ambiguous personality and was difficult to assess. The tributes received, described him as an unsociable and solitary character who did not like to have people around, and who rarely spoke. He spent part of his life smoking his pipe, in silence, in his rocking chair or in his room. However, it appears, that he enjoyed the visits from the family and children who considered him a pleasant and cheerful man.

Ferdinand helped many family members to start on their own farms. He was, we are told, well organised and would give a serious helping hand to those in the organisation of the work at the farm. He would also help his family in urgent and big projects such as the construction of farm buildings. He also had the reputation of having savings and occasionally would lend money to his relatives. When lending money or getting his settlement, he would always look after business in his room.

Gilberte, Marie-Estelle's daughter, recalls that he spent the major part of his life in his room. He practically never spoke to her even though they lived in the same house. Fernande, Cyrille's daughter, remember that he never got involved in conversations and spoke very little. During a visit to her aunt Marie-Estelle, where they had brought a little cat, she heard him say: "A small cat without a tail!" These are the only words that she heard him say. Hervé, Jean-Baptiste's son says that Ferdinand spoke to him only once and it was at Nectaire Rousseau's funeral in June 1948 when a cousin and Hervé had gone to help prepare the funeral. Ferdinand had told them that he would be the next one to go, which happened the next month.


Edwidge recalled that when she was a young girl, Ferdinand came to help her father, Alfred, to build a farm building. At mealtime, he would play with her and in trying to catch her she tried to escape through the window and he caught her by her skirt, which ripped, in his hands. He was very sad about that incident and begged Alphonsine, Edwidge's mother, not to scold her because it was his fault. Alphonsine, Alfred's wife, remembered that she liked to visit Ferdinand and her sister Marie-Estelle in Coaticook, at least three to four times a year and each time Ferdinand was always very happy to see them.

The story told by Sylvio, confirmed his secluded life and his lack of interest in clothing. Uncle Josaphat had gone to see his father, Cyrille, asking him to contribute towards the purchase of a suit for Ferdinand, who had nothing decent to wear for a funeral. Cyrille to this answered: "He works for you, you buy him the suit, and I will have nothing to do with that."

Ferdinand died of throat cancer on July 6, 1948. A service was held in Saint-Jean l'Évangéliste church in Coaticook.

Baptism certificate

A. 58 Le vingt septième jour de Décembre,
Ferdinand mil huit cent soixante quatre, Nous,
Scalabrini Prêtre, Curé, Sausigné, avons baptisé Ferdi-
nand né le dix sept courant du légitime
mariage de Ferdinand Scalabrini, cultivateur
et de Domithilde Racicot d'Est Farnham. Père
Israël Racicot, marraine Edesse Racicot, qui ont
déclaré ne savoir signer. Le père a signé avec nous
Ferdinando Scalabrini



Transcription and translation

This twenty-seventh day of December, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-four, We, the undersigned parish priest, have baptized Ferdinand born on the seventeenth of the current month of the lawful marriage of Ferdinand Scalabrini, farmer and of Domithilde Racicot from East Farnham. Godfather Israël Racicot, godmother Édesse Racicot, who declared that they could not sign. The father has signed with us.

Ferdinando Scalabrini J. Jodoin, prêtre