

Devantier family history at a glance



I would like to take you on a journey; the Devantier family's journey from France to Germany and beyond.

We have traced our family back to current France and so far we know that Pierre Devantier was born ca. 1637 in a small village, called La Gorgue in the province of L'Alloeu, about 1 hour's drive from Lille in Northern France, very close to the border to

Belgium. At that time in history, this area was a province of the Spanish Netherlands.

Pierre was a farmer. A couple of the things that he grew were two of the new crops that came from America, namely tobacco and potatoes. I assume that they were industrious and talented. If you read the history books, this is the impression you get. The Huguenots were considered, to be some of the best farmers in 17th century in France.

One thing that had great influence on the future of the Huguenot family was the fact that King Louis the 14th. Are been brought up to hate the Reformed. When he took absolute power in France in 1661, he did everything possible to prevent the Reformed from working and even living. He persecuted Huguenots with death, banishment to galleys (slave ships) or deprived them of everything they owned. Another thing happened during this year; the French king started a war in northern France in attempt to get the whole region back to France. He won. The area was again part of the French Kingdom.

The Devantier Family must have suffered under the King's hate. The only way to avoid persecution was to convert to Catholicism or to flee to neighbouring countries. The Devantier family chose to flee from the country. Shortly after Louis came to power in 1661.



There were enough reasons for all the Huguenots in Northern France to leave the country. They fled to Friesenheim, located in The Principality Palatinate in Germany. Today, the area is called Rheinland-Pfalz and it was reformed at this time. Here, the Huguenots were welcomed with open arms. The prince knew that they were good farmers and so the reformed refugees got many privileges, which made it possible for them to start a new life. Our family continued as tobacco and potato farmers. The Devantier family got some good years here. Pierre Devantier married Marie La Bouve from Calais. They settled down and started a family. All their children were born there. We know of eight children that grew up and got married. Possibly there were more children, who died as infants. There are gaps between some of the birth years.

In the 1680s, disaster struck again. Principality Palatinate got a new prince. After pressure from France, the prince converted to Catholicism. In addition, he began to pursue the Reformed. He demanded that they should transfer their properties to the state.

At that time, the Reformed had been in the country for so long that they had good farms; but now the Huguenots' livelihood was in danger. This was the case for the Devantier family. The Devantier family fled from the country in 1688.



This time they fled further east to the Duchy Brandenburg (north of Berlin). Here they were welcomed with open arms. Over 20,000 refugees fled to Brandenburg. In Brandenburg they were granted large areas of land, which had been devastated by wars and epidemics. The area was called Uckermark, located between The Baltic Sea and Berlin. The Reformed started a dozen colonies, which quickly became real villages. Many of the names still exist, including Battin, Bergholz, Klein and Gross-Ziethen, Gramzow and Woddow.

The Devantier family moved to Woddow, where they started all over again with farming. Again, it was tobacco and potato that were their primary crops.

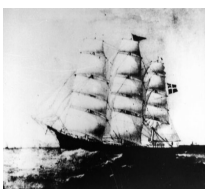
All this persecution and fleeing proved to be too much for Pierre Devantier. I can easily imagine that he was tired and worn out now; he died in 1692, only 55 years old. It looks like it was the fourth child (Isaac Devantier) who took over the farm in Woddow. There are still Devantier descendants living in that village.

The next generations are now ready to take over. The Eight Children were (Pierre, Marie, Jacob, Isaac, Jeanne, Abraham, Sara, Elisabeth) and all the descendants we know today. Come from the five children that are underlined.



In 1719, The Danish King invited a group of Huguenots to Denmark. They were invited to a city called Fredericia (in Jutland), where there was religious freedom (for Catholics, Jews and the French Reformed- Huguenots was inspired by Jean Calvin). The rest of Denmark were Lutheran Christians. It was mainly because of tobacco that the reformed were invited to Denmark. The Danish king thought it would be good business. They tried for almost 100 years, but the climate was not the best for growing tobacco. Shortly after America's independence, production began to decline, since too much cheap tobacco was imported from the New World.

Jacob Devantier, son no. 3 of Pierre Devantier, was one of the Leaders in the group. Some of the other family names were Deleuran, Honore, Dupont, Le Fevre, Louison, Armand (Hermann), Dufresne and Blond. All the reformed families received many privileges. Tax freedom for 20 years and the King paid for school, a new church and many other things. In 1723, Jacob was able to buy his own farm.



None of the descendants in Germany and Denmark left their countries within the next 100 years. However, many things began to happen in Europe after the Napoleon wars. In the 1820s, the first of many Devantier descendants decided to look for new opportunities in other places instead, of Germany. From that time and onward, a lot of families and individuals began a journey, which resulted in descendants in many countries around the globe

The branches from Iceland, Norway, Canada and New Zealand came from Denmark. There are also several branches in USA that come from Denmark. The other USA branches came from the German branch, the same goes for the Brazilian, South African and the Australian branches



Today there are different ways to spell the name. In Denmark the name, Devantier, is spelled both with and without the "R", or spelled like Duvantier. In other countries, it is spelled like DeVantier, de Vantier, or De Vantier.

We must not forget all the family members with other surnames. No one mentioned, no one forgotten!

All of us come from the same ancestors.

Narrated by Torben Devantie - The Devantier Family Tree – www.devantie.net