



The Virginia Huguenot Society

An organization of descendants of French Protestants who,
due to religious persecution, fled France.

frenchhuguenots-virginiasociety.org

Fall/Winter 2025 Newsletter



As we issue in the season of thanks for our country and all the blessings that flow, let us remember our beloved Huguenot ancestors and their celebrations in America.

Helen Evertson Smith, writing in *The Morning*

News of Delaware on December 26, 1892, provides a vivid description of Huguenot Christmas customs: "To the French Huguenots Christmas was a day of rejoicing, thanksgiving, family festivity and neighborly greeting. They drank almost no strong liquors, and their mild, pure wines served but to aid digestion and impart gayety to the spirits. Rarely indeed was drunkenness known among them."

William E. McKenney, writing in Delaware's *The Morning News* on December 6, 1945, describes this tradition: "At French Christmas gatherings, the man who finds the hidden bean

in a cake becomes king for the night and chooses his Queen from the women present. The pair rules the party the rest of the evening." This custom of the *galette des rois*, with its hidden bean and selection of a king and queen, added an element of whimsy and social interaction to local Christmas celebrations.

Gardy Epp, writing in *The News Journal* on December 21, 1975, provides a detailed description of this elaborate meal: "All day on Dec. 24, the women prepare and cook for the *Le Réveil* Mass. This supper always includes seafood hors d'oeuvre, jambon (ham) and *pate de foie gras*, goose with chestnut stuffing, vegetables, salad, many cheeses, and, of course, the *bûche de Noël* and *mendiants* (nuts). *Bûche de Noël* is the traditional French Christmas cake of *genoise* cake and cream rolled and decorated to look like a log." The Midnight Mass, or "*La Messe de Minuit*," carries great weight in

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Virginia Huguenot Society Fall Meeting October 25, 2025 Ford's Colony Country Club, Williamsburg, VA



Virginia
Huguenot
Society

The Fall meeting of the Virginia Huguenot Society took place

on October 25, 2025 at Ford's Colony Country Club in Williamsburg, Virginia. After a brief reception, the meeting was called to order by president Constance Paradiso at 12:20 PM. An invocation was given by Chaplain Heath

Thompson.

The Ritual then followed with all standing, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States, and Pledge to the Huguenot Flag. Lastly,

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Le Serment Solennel, or the Sacred Oath, was read in French by Gus Lewis, followed by the English translation in response.

New members were introduced: Patricia Rouzie Haile, Madeline Sue Rouzie Townsend, Charlotte Wilcher and Shirley Seaborn. Guests included Patrick Duma, with Ms. Wilcher, and Leon Via, from the Manakin Huguenot Society. Shirley Seaborn will be turning over the Presidency of the Manakin Huguenots to him tomorrow. Also guests included Mrs. Katherine March, wife of Louis March, David Southworth, husband of Cat Southworth, and Tom Seaborn, husband of Shirley Seaborn.

Our chaplain Heath Thompson commemorated those members who had passed away. Ann Darst, who had been our treasurer and a former President of the Society died this past summer. Other former Presidents who are now

deceased are Carla Odom and Elane Strange. Recently we lost Kathryn Edwards. She and her husband had been regularly attending our meetings.

The President called for officer reports. David LeGrande, Vice President, reported that he is working on a venue for the Spring meeting and that he will be doing a presentation on Huguenot silversmithing. Cat Southworth reported that eight applicants have been approved for membership since the last meeting. Gus Lewis read the minutes of the March meeting and they were approved as read. In the absence of the new treasurer Randolph Williams, our president reported that our bank balance is \$17,712.46 and that she, our treasurer and Gerald Runyan will seek approval to be signers on the account.

Gerald Runyan reported on the Special Project Committee focused on the Huguenot backgrounds of our U.S. presidents. There are supposed to be 28

presidents who have Huguenot ancestry. Gerald is looking to contact a writer/editor to move forward with publishing a small book documenting what we are able to gather.

Cat Southworth stated that she is aware of proof that James Monroe has a Huguenot ancestor and will share that information with the committee.

Constance reported that Patricia Haile was nominated and voted on to be a member of the Council in place of Randolph Williams our new treasurer.

There being no further new business we turned to the day's program which was presented by our Society member, Gerald Runyan, and entitled "Huguenot Pirates and Privateers."

This presentation was originally prepared by Deb Edlund for the Manakin Huguenot Society.

With the early start that Portugal and Spain had in exploration of the New World, the

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Status of the Book Project

The VHS is currently researching the possibility of publishing a book that lists all of the US Presidents that have Huguenot heritage. We have found that there may be as many as 28 of the 46 Presidents who have Huguenot heritage. This speaks well for our own ancestry. Several members are working on researching presidents and we have made an initial contact with a possible publisher.



other European countries were left behind in the treasure they were able to accumulate. The Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 divided newly discovered lands outside of Europe between Spain and Portugal, establishing a line of demarcation that significantly influenced colonial expansion in the Americas. Privateers from countries like France who often had government commissions to capture enemy merchant ships began to turn to

piracy and after the Reformation some of the corsairs were Huguenots. Gerald provided an extensive list of these men who resorted to attacking many Spanish and Portuguese vessels and ransacking their settlements. Few had long careers at this, dying as violently as they lived. Some had tried to establish settlements like in Brazil or Florida but were doomed to fail. There was some French success in what is now Canada and down the Mississippi with establishment of trade in furs and with spread-

ing Christianity (not the reformed faith).

At the conclusion of his presentation Gerald described a recent trip to France where he and his wife were treated to some very special experiences as guests of the American Friends of LaFayette Society.

Following a Benediction given by Heath Thompson, a motion was made that we adjourn and all were in favor. The meeting ended at 2:42 pm.

Augustine Lewis, secretary



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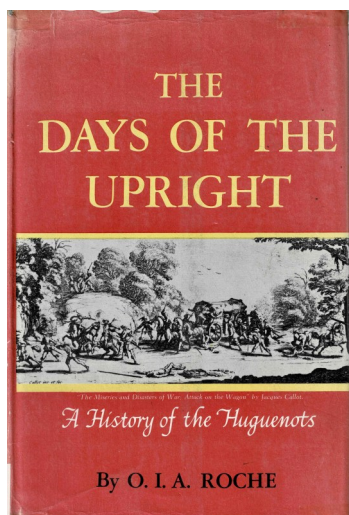
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*Please welcome our newest members of VHS since
the publication of the Spring/Summer newsletter*

“The Days of the Upright: A History of the Huguenots”

By: O.I.A. Roche

New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1965. 340 pp.



This book is about the story of John Calvin's followers in sixteenth and seventeenth century France which period was a religio-political tragedy. The Catholic crown and the Huguenots were both equally convinced of the rightness if not the righteousness of their cause. With inimitable charm and fullest historical competence, the author has described this drama of the rise and near destruction of the Huguenots. In twenty-one chapters the dramatis personae march across the pages of this volume. They stand in bold relief—Catherine de Medici, wicked, resourceful, cunning; her weakling son Charles IX; the noble Huguenot Admiral Coligny, felled by the assassin's dagger just prior to the gruesome St. Bartholomew Massacre of August, 1572; the five Henrys engaged in fratricidal strife; Philip of Spain, the eternal plotter—these together with fanatical Catholic Leaguers, the militant Jesuits of the day; Cardinals like Richelieu and Mazarini; and thousands upon thousands of Huguenots, nobles and merchants, artisans, and professionals, harassed, haunted, exiled, butchered, and all this in the name of a unified France and the most holy Catholic and Established Religion of France.*

This book ends with two chapters on Diaspora and America. It is well written and researched and written in more formal language than a current author might use (written 60 years ago). The author was certainly of Huguenot descent and a Calvinist.

One interesting point the author brought up was that while the Church feared the rising Reformed Religion, the King also feared the rising new middle class—both represented by the Huguenots.

While out of print you can get copies on Amazon and eBay for prices ranging from \$10 to over \$300, most were around \$35-\$50 dollars.

* Above commentary taken from the “Journal of Church and State” Vo. 8; Is. 3; Autumn 1966.

Huguenots and Pirates

At the Fall meeting Gerald Runyan gave a presentation on “Protestant Privateers and Pirates.” The talk and slide show were prepared by Deb Edlund of the Manakintown Huguenot Society.

It was a very well researched and professional quality presentation which Gerald was honored to give to our group. Thank you, Deb, for sharing this presentation.



Ledger-keepers Descended from an 18th century Scotsman

Catherine Moncure of Stafford County simply doesn't know how she wound up with a box of old ledgers and papers in her attic. But she's sure of one fact – her marriage to George Vowles Moncure IV made her part of a family with a penchant for saving ephemera from times gone by.

Mrs. Moncure generously donated the collection of 11 ledgers to the Heritage Center (in Fredericksburg, VA), and the materials will be available for research by the public once they are catalogued. The ledgers detail financial transactions pertaining to personal, farm, and business affairs of various Moncures and their relatives and neighbors.

Moncure was of French Huguenot stock, his family having left France for Scotland to escape the violence and religious persecution that engulfed France for nearly a century and a half beginning in the late 16th century. The name "Moncure" is French, "mon coeur," which means "my heart."

When Moncure arrived in Virginia, he first found work as a school teacher. But he envisioned entering the ministry, so he studied divinity and was soon ordained in the Anglican faith.

In 1738, he came to Stafford to become curate in Overwharton Parish for the Rev. Alexander Scott, with whom he lived for a time.

At that time, Aquia Church was a 40-year-old wooden structure, the second building on the site after having been established in 1667, three years after the formation of Stafford County.

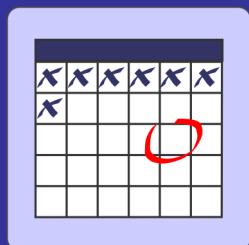
In 1757, Moncure oversaw construction of the fine new church which still stands today, built of Flemish bond brickwork and Aquia sandstone.



Aquia is the oldest active church in Stafford County, and it is the spiritual home of many native Stafford residents, including a wide circle of worshipers descended from the Rev. John Moncure and his wife Frances and their four children. Many descendants are buried there.

As late as 2003 Payton S. Moncure was a member of our Society. She once gave a program on the Moncures.

Thanks to Nancy Agee for finding this article. Our Society once had a meeting at this church along with lunch and a tour, likely in the late 1990s.



Save the Date!
Our next meeting is March 28, 2026
(Place TBD)

Pierre Le Grand

A French Huguenot settled in Virginia in 1700 at Manakin Towne, Virginia. There is very little information at hand about Pierre Le Grand, who his parents were, and about his background before his marriage and subsequent arrival in Virginia.

The passenger list confirms that the Le Grands were aboard the “Peter and Anthony” which arrived in Virginia on September 20, 1700. From Manakin, the Le Grands moved into the western areas of Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky; and into later migrations as new land was opened for new settlements.

Pierre Le Grand was born ca. 1662 in Normandy, France, and died March 27, 1707, in Henrico County, VA. Pierre married Judith Vril July 10, 1682, St. James Place, London, England. She died in 1719 in Henrico Co., VA.

They had six children. One of their children, John Peter Le Grand, married Jane Michaux. Jane was the daughter of Abraham Michaux, born 1672 and died 1717. And Suzanne Rocket “Little Nightcap” of Sedan, France who emigrated to Henrico County, VA. Suzanne escaped as a child from France in a Hogs Head and to Amsterdam, Holland aboard a ship. The ships Captain saw that she arrived safely and met her two sisters there who were attending boarding school. If she had not made it I wouldn't be here today.

Our own VP, David LeGrande, has this book and is very familiar with it since it is a record of his family. It is title “Pierre LeGrand in Virginia 1700.”

The above article was submitted by Brenda Graves, our member from St. Augustine, FL. It was written by her friend, and Huguenot, Atwood Abbitt Brewton. Of course our Vice President, David LeGrande is also a descendent of Pierre LeGrand.



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French Christmas celebrations. The night that follows the late feast is very short. The children know that while they are asleep, Papa Noel will fill their shoes with toys and gifts. They wake their parents very early to share the happiness and joy of Christmas. Then the candles on the Christmas tree are lighted.”

Our Society's October meeting and luncheon brought us together in Williamsburg for an excellent presentation by our own Past President Gerry Runyan of a Manakin Huguenot Society program on Huguenot Privateers. Great history smartly done.

The loss of our beloved Ann Darst was unexpected and L. Randolph Williams has assumed

the office of Treasurer of our Society for the remainder of this term. Thank you Randolph! Past Presidents Gerry Runyan and Louis March have been assisting with the transition.

Our Huguenot Presidents project is moving along. We have found a local writer, editor, researcher and publisher and are now working with her on a rough draft of the first chapter. Once we get a better idea of the estimated cost, we can proceed at a faster pace. Our committee has added another talent in Shawn Martin, one of our newest members.

Mark your calendars for the next meeting of our society on **March 28, 2026**. Until then,
Joyeux Noël!

Constance Paradiso
President, Virginia Huguenot Society

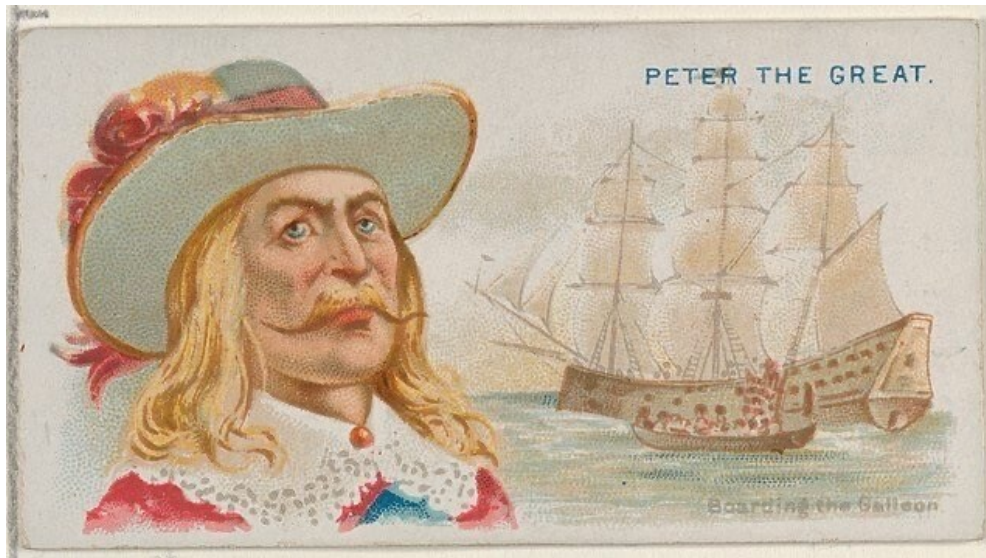
Complementing this article and our program at the fall meeting about Privateers and Pirates, David has sent in the following article about a Pierre LeGrand

Pierre le Grand was a French buccaneer reportedly active during the 17th century. He is known to history from only one source, Alexandre Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America*. The accounts that Exquemelin gives of Le Grand and another buccaneer named Pierre Francois are also remarkably similar. It is possible that Exquemelin, who was not an eye-witness to these events, was confused. Pierre le Grand could have been a nickname for Pierre Francois. However, there does seem to be at least one reference to Le Grand in historical records other than Exquemelin. C. H. Haring's well-researched "The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century" (1910), note 1 on page 135, refers to a Spanish report that credited Pierre Legrand with leading a raid against Spanish settlements in Cuba and Havana in 1665. English records, however, credit Edward Mansfield with leading these attacks.

Pierre was born in Dieppe, France. Nothing is known of his life before his arrival in Tortuga at some time in the mid-17th century.

Pierre le Grand is known only for his attack on a Spanish galleon near the coast of Hispaniola in the 17th century.

Pierre had recruited a crew of 28 men on a single small boat and sailed in search of Spanish ships to rob. After a long, fruitless cruise, his buccaneer band spotted a ship, a straggler from



the Spanish treasure fleet. They voted to pursue it, and shortly after sunset, they drew alongside their prey without being seen.

The legend says that Pierre ordered the

crew's surgeon to cut a hole in the side of their own boat and sink it, to inspire the men to fight their hardest for lack of a means of retreat. Then the pirates climbed up the side of the galleon, armed with swords and pistols.

Surprise was complete. The pirates took the galleon's captain unawares while he played cards in his own cabin. Pierre's men also seized the gun room, preventing the rest of the Spanish crew from obtaining weapons to defend themselves and their ship. The galleon's sailors had little choice but to surrender.

Pierre le Grand then forced some of the Spanish crew into his service, set the rest ashore, and took his captured ship and his men to France. He then disappears from history. However, there is some indication that he may have emigrated to Canada, as his name appears in the immigration records as arriving in Montreal in 1653.

The Hunt for Huguenots

The Jerome Family: Drama and a Swindle

Timothy Jerome, a French Huguenot, arrived in Meridian, Connecticut, between 1710 and 1717. He was born in Isle of Wight, England. One of his descendants, Jennie Jerome, was well-known as the mother of Winston Churchill. Another was Chauncey Jerome, a businessman and clockmaker who was swindled by P. T. Barnum.

When Timothy Jerome died in 1750, he was a Captain of the local militia and apparently very wealthy, as his estate was valued at £7,000. Perhaps he entertained large groups at home or ran a tavern as the inventory listed, among other items, seven punch bowls, a case of bottles, large drinking glasses, and sixteen pewter tankards. The latter seems more likely. He was a farmer judging by the number of tracts of land he left to his children.

The Jerome family is said to have fled France when the Decree of Nantes was revoked, which gave Huguenots religious freedom. After Timothy arrived in Connecticut, he married Abigail Rich of Massachusetts, and fathered four sons – Timothy, Samuel, William, and Zerubbabel, and three daughters – Isabel, Abigail, and Elizabeth.

Jeanette “Jennie” Jerome, granddaughter of Samuel and daughter of Leonard Jerome and Clarissa Hall, was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1854. She was “gorgeous, witty, wealthy,” and “much sought after.” During a trip to Europe, she met the Prince of Wales, future King Edward VII, and maintained a “relationship” with him for about two years. She and several

other well-known ladies, including Lillie Langtry and Sarah Bernhardt, were invited to witness his coronation.

In 1873, Jennie met Randolph Churchill at a ball in England honoring the Tsar of Russia. They were engaged within three days of their meeting. He was the son of a Lord, and his family was not pleased. Even though Leonard Jerome of New York City was deemed an “acceptably” wealthy businessman, the British aristocracy considered him “vulgar” because he invested in the stock market. After a monetary negotiation, they married and produced two sons, Winston and John (Jack). The lives of the Churchills were filled with drama and scandal. When Randolph died at the age of forty-five, he left Jennie a large estate heavily in debt. When Jennie was forty-five, she married George Cornwallis-West, who was the same age as her son, Winston. After divorcing George, she married Montagu Porch, who was even younger than Winston. In 1921, while preparing to attend a party, she fell down the stairs and broke her ankle. After gangrene set in, her leg had to be amputated above the knee. Two weeks later she died of a hemorrhage in her thigh as a result of the amputation. She lived a full life (she had a tattoo on her wrist!) and even at the end an amputated leg did not keep her spirits down.

Sources: Wikipedia.org; *The Downton Era: Great Houses, Churchills, and Mitfords* by Nancy Parrish.



Faculté Jean Calvin



Brian Wunder, of Staunton, Virginia, has the distinction of being an Honorary Member of our Virginia Huguenot Society. Brian also serves on the Board of the Huguenot Fellowship, which is dedicated to supporting the Reformed Seminary in Aix-en-Provence, Faculté Jean Calvin (FJC). A while back Brian gave a splendid presentation to our group about the Fellowship. Here Brian gives us some information about the current activities of the FJC:

There are presently about 75 students in the Bachelor/Master of Divinity program, i.e., the first 3 years of theological studies. In addition, FJC presently has 40 students in its formal Master/Master of Divinity program, i.e., years 4 and 5 of theological studies. Most of them are "on campus" students, meaning that they come to Aix-en-Provence for five intensive sessions at FJC every year. FJC is also very pleased to have five Ph.D. students at this time. FJC presently has approximately 60 "à la carte" students, 20 from Africa.



We also want you to know where and how FJC students enter into ministry. After their studies, graduates from Faculté Jean Calvin pursue a diversity of callings. At least half are called to pastor a church. Most of them serve in France because the need is very great.

Our FJC graduates are also very passionate about church planting and renewal. They also put in practice their apologetic skills (apologetics is a distinct feature of Faculté Jean Calvin). Some graduates have been called by the Lord to serve in positions of great responsibility in the French evangelical world to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth.

Brian Wunder
(edited for size by VHS editor)

Pictures and story are from the FJC website <https://www.huguenotfellowship.org/jean-calvin>

In Memoriam

Ann Booker Darst passed away peacefully with her family by her side on August 29, 2025. Ann was born to Judith Tompkins and George Booker. Ann married Jackson Darst, who was very involved in farming, history, and preservation. She joined many organizations—National Society of the Colonial Dames, Jamestowne Society, Virginia Huguenot Society, and the Colonial Dames of America—holding leadership roles in all. Ann was dedicated and respected Huguenot and leader of our Society acting as President and Treasurer for many years.



Nancy Elane Kilmon Strange passed away in Williamsburg, Virginia on June 8, 2025. She was born in Tidwells, Virginia, on August 27, 1949. Elane is survived by her loving husband of 56 years, Lauren Roger Strange Jr, and two sons and a daughter.

Elane was very active in numerous historical lineage groups, her church, and her community. Including Virginia Huguenot Society where she was President from 2011-2013.

Kathryn Elizabeth Oakes Edwards passed away peacefully in her home on October 3, 2025. She was born December 18, 1940, in Kenansville, NC.

She participated in many lineage organizations, including Daughters of the American Revolution, Daughters of the Cincinnati, Virginia Huguenot Society, Huguenot Society of the Founders of Manakin in the Colony of Virginia, Jamestown Society.

She is survived by her beloved husband of over 62 years, Robert Leon Edwards ("Bobby") and their two sons.



Carla Lucille Whitehurst Odom entered a larger life on June 3, 2025. She was born August 4, 1942, daughter to Paul Donald and Lucille Martin Whitehurst of Durham, NC. She was predeceased by her husband, LTC Charles Robert Odom USA (Ret.). Surviving are her 2 daughters.

Mrs. Odom was active in over 80 lineage societies and civic organizations during her lifetime and served as President of the Virginia Huguenot Society from 2005-2007.

At the time of her passing Mrs. Odom was not a member of our Society but had been an enthusiastic member and leader for many years until she moved to North Carolina.

Can You Match the U.S. President to his Huguenot Ancestor?

See the back page for answers (but don't peak!)

Draw a line from the U.S. President to his Huguenot ancestor

U.S. President

Huguenot Ancestor

George Washington

Jaques Le Mahieu

Calvin Coolidge

Nicholas Martiau

Franklin Roosevelt

Andre DeVaeux

George H.W. Bush

Mareen Duvall

Harry Truman

Jean de Lannoy

Theodore Roosevelt

Jacques Le Mahieu

Ulysses Grant

Thomas Lamar

Josué Quereau

Some presidents may share the same Ancestor
and some may have two Huguenot Ancestors!



Insignia of the Huguenot Society

The Huguenot Cross has eight points which stand for the Beatitudes from the Book of Matthew in the New Testament. Between each arm of the cross is a fleur-de-lis or lily, representing purity. Suspended from the bottom is a dove signifying the Holy Spirit. The Huguenot Cross was designed and first manufactured in 1688.

Virginia Huguenot Society Website: Great Place for Information!

Visit the VHS website for all things
Huguenot!

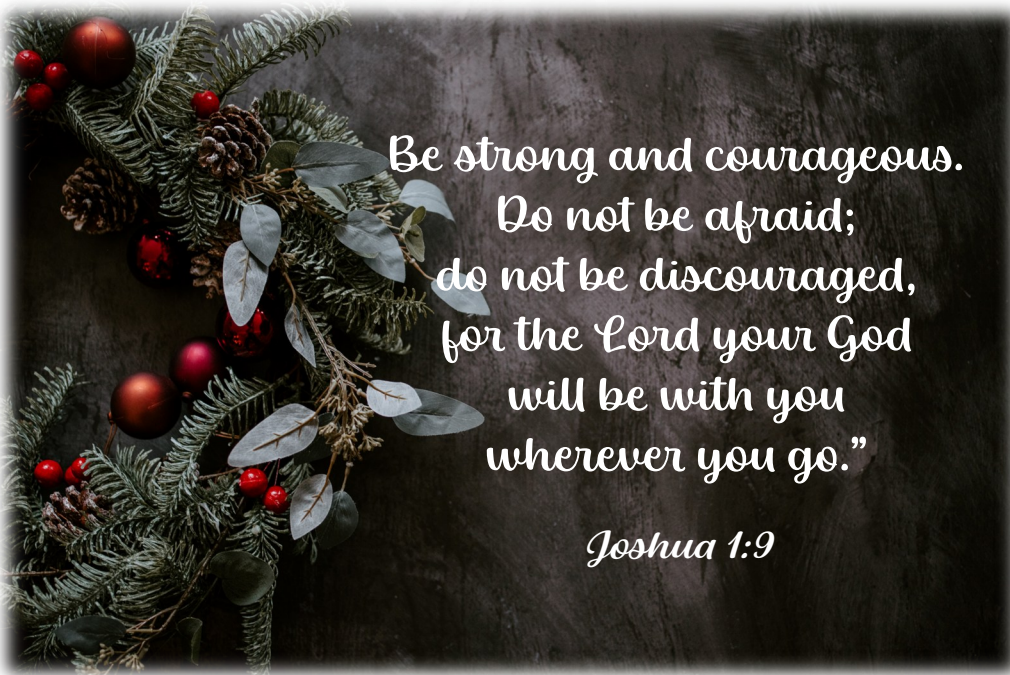
[http://frenchhuguenots-
virginiasociety.org/](http://frenchhuguenots-virginiasociety.org/)



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Connect the Presidents ancestors answers

G. Washington: Nicolas Martiau; C. Coolidge: Jacques le Mahieu; F. Roosevelt: Jean de Lannoy;
G.H.W. Bush: Jaques L. Mahieu; H. Truman: Mareen Duvall; T. Roosevelt: Josué Quereau or
Andrew DeVaux; U. Grant: Jean de Lannoy