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chez nous

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LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE

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Spirit of the Voyageurs

Beginning about this time of year in the later 1600's, preparations were beginning for the boatloads of Voyageurs who would be leaving Lachine, near Montreal, for the eight week trip to the west. Furtrading as an enterprise did not really begin until the establishment of Montreal in the 1630's; it did not expand to the west until, tragically, the Indian tribes along the way - the Hurons, the Algonquins, etc - had been decimated by white man's diseases, as small pox and measles. Ironically, it was the British entrepreneurs who organized, and for the most part profited by, the fur trade. It was the primarily French-Canadian Voyageurs who became the workers.

The traders primarily sought the beaver pelt - it was highly valued in Europe. In time, the commodities traded increased in amount and variety.

In our part of the world, Grand Portage (MN) became an early center of the fur trade, establishing in 1768. The Montreal canots arrived at this post in July of each year.

(For a "snapshot" of the Voyageurs, see page six of this issue of Chez Nous).

At about the same time that the Montrealers arrived, another group - the homme du nord - arrived from points inland from Grand Portage. They came from the far interior - some from far north in Canada.

At this meeting place, Grand Portage, the traders, the voyageurs, and the homme du nord met to celebrate the completion of the trade at mid-summer. "Rendezvous" was an annual event, after which the return trips began. For the Montrealers the route was across the Lakes Superior and Huron, thence via the French and the Ottawa Rivers to Montreal. For the Homme du Nord the route went via the Rainy River and on into Lake Winnipeg and north as far as Lake Athabaska.

By the early 1800's, the loci of the Rendezvous moved north to Fort William, which is now a part of the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Both Fort William and Grand Portage re-enact the Rendezvous in mid-summer. Contact them for details. And listen for the chansons of the Voyageurs, who still, in our spirit, row the rivers and rapids of the north.



CHECK OUT SUMMER EVENTS:
For Travel Information in Canada:
QUEBEC: call collect 0-514-873-2015
ONTARIO: 1-800-ONTARIO
MANITOBA: 1-800-665-0040
for other provinces: 1-612-332-4314

Life in the "good old days" - a K. C. perspective

EVERY NOW AND THEN.....

a treasure comes our way and the following is a wonderful example. Sit back and enjoy 1911-1941 as recounted by John Cote in extracted parts of his Diamond Jubilee History of All Hallows Council #270 of the Knights of Columbus. (Moosup, CT)

While not known for sure it appears that All Hallows was 75% French-Canadian with Irish making up most of the rest.

1911...

The council is looking for a new home, furniture must be bought and records re-written. In fact a total re-organization must be made. A three man stove committee is appointed in August and as late as November, 1911, no agreement is reached as to which stove would be suitable. The members are complaining about the coldness of the rooms. Wood has been ready since October, but no stove is available. Finally in December, a wood stove is bought for \$27.23 from C.D. Salisbury and the members now have heat.

The financial condition of the council was pathetic and to help along the saving of money is discussed and tried. One of the funniest is the reduction of the light bill which averaged \$2.80 a month as of February 1912. A three man committee is appointed with instructions to reduce the bill. The fact that the committee did it's job is evident from the reports of the following ten months which show a steady reduction of the light bill. It went from \$2.80 to a low of \$.60 for the month of October. The committee is congratulated on this savings but by November the bill is up to \$1.00. Much is made of the increase until the committee is reminded of it's duty to cut the monthly cost of lights. The committee heroically does it's job by cutting out more unnecessary lights until the members are complaining of the darkness of the stairways and rooms. How the committee is getting along with the members is not known, but this saving of electricity continues until June 1913 when a low of \$.32 for the light bill is recorded. Also the fact of continuous complaining by the members of no lighting. Finally candles are ordered for the rooms.

A ten dollar pledge to the Parish Bazaar cannot be met, but the council gratefully acknowledges the charitable act of William Bellavance who donates the pledge in the name of the council. Thus the obligation is met.

Along with this sadness the council raises to great heights of concern and care of others who are suffering and in no better shape than themselves. At this time in the history of the council's existence is a splendid example of what the Knights stand for. It is inscribed in the record. It is to be known as "The Titanic Resolution" which still thrills and inspires the reader with it's message of care and concern of what was then a national tragedy.

"In Memoriam" whereas in view of the terrible calamity which happened to the steamer Titanic when she collided with the field of ice on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York the night of April 14, 1912.

Therefore, be it resolved that All Hallows Council No. 270 in regular meeting assembled do hereby tender to the relatives of the disaster our greatest sympathy and unite with our church in a heartfull requisite in peace and be it further resolved that we urge the enactment of proper laws to safeguard the traveler on land and sea. Be it further resolved that this resolution be entered for record on the minutes of this meeting and be hung on the walls of our hall. This resolution was passed unanimously and a letter sent to the federal officials in Washington concerning proper safety for the traveler. Truly this shining example of action and case is outstanding. Harassed with their own survival the members thought about others.

Many other items of interest sprinkle the record. Many are routine but in looking back some are humorous even though they are of great importance in that year. One item is most famous, "Watch Fob Raffle" - Two watch fobs (chains) are donated by an unknown member in March to be

used as prizes in a raffle to raise money. Tickets are printed, a committee is made up and a great selling campaign is underway at ten cents a ticket. Seven months later in September, the winners are announced to be Clarence Chapman and A. Frazier. Profit \$1.28.

The Fowl Incident: Brother Dennis Dougherty donates a fowl to the council in September for a Thanksgiving raffle. Tickets are printed, a committee is appointed and history repeats itself. While tickets are being sold, the council is informed that the cost of feeding the fowl is increasing and that the raffle should be held soon. The raffle is finally held in December and a profit of \$11.40 is made. The cost of the feed is \$1.80. The council receives a complaint that the fowl is very skinny. It's condition is caused by the lack of feed due to the cost being too high. The keeper of the fowl said he kept the bird underfed to gain a greater profit.

Another funny incident recorded is the one that follows: The reader is asked to remember that this is 1912 and the code of acceptable behavior as different then. A dance committee was appointed to put on a dance with the following restriction: "Improper dancing will not be allowed or tolerated." What was improper then is not stated, but one wonders fifty years later.

So goes the year 1912 as it draws to a close. Membership is 120 and finances are low. Problems beset the members and improper dancing will not be tolerated. Raffles are not going well and fowls are skinny, but the council survives into the year 1913 when important matters occupy the members.

What is probably the shortest meeting ever recorded for any organization happened on June 23, 1914. All that is known is the meeting convened at 8:35 p.m. and adjourned at 8:38 p.m.; three minutes. All that is written are a few words to the effect that the Grand Knight opened and closed a special meeting on matters of great importance. Routine items are noted.

Mentioned before was the heating committee of 1913 which had been silent for the past two years or so, ignoring the complaints that the meeting rooms were cold. In February of 1915, they were asked to investigate and report on the possibility of purchasing a new stove to heat the rooms. After three months had passed the council was informed as follows: "keep the old stove". You can be sure a new stove was finally purchased and heated rooms available.

The year 1918 begins and a movement that had been gaining ground and support is mentioned: Woman's Suffrage. At the meeting of January 13, 1918 the Women's Suffrage delegate is given twenty minutes to address the members. Who she was or what was said is not reported.

Continuing the history we are now in the period of October, 1922. This is written in the record and remembering that we are speaking of 50 years ago, the first humorous fact that we see is when the house committee is ordered to buy 22 spittoons. A simple request turns into a much discussed problem as to what style, size, needs and color would be adequate. This situation is finally resolved and the members must of had chewing good times.

The year 1929 came in with the usual good times. Little did the people expect the events which were waiting in the wings and would soon affect everyone. The year 1931 is more of the same with the exception that the crunch of the depression is just being felt. This affects the council and it starts to meet with reverses. Members are dropping out due to inability to pay dues and insurance premiums. With money becoming tight everywhere, affairs are not self-sustaining and attendance is not as good as before. May 1932 finds Reverend Massicotte addressing the members with the following message: "The people should cooperate and not lose

courage over the depressed condition of the country." With the throttle wide open, no hands to guide it, the depression gathers speed, even a new president advocating that "there is nothing to fear except fear itself" has no effect on the country. The depression is here to stay.

December finds a ten-man committee appointed to help members with unpaid dues and insurance premiums and in distress if it is possible. The council was in dreadful financial condition and could not help but in a limited capacity. The year 1933 comes in and it is more of the same. One bright spot is the response to a plea for assistance from brother Knights in distress in Southern California due to a major earthquake. The highlights are that times were tough and expected to get harder. The council is struggling for it's very existence and funds are not available to meet the barest necessities. It survived due to the members working for the good of the council and to nurse the dream until times would be better. It was a good council and did survive the times. Truly the members of those hard times saved the council and tried their best to keep it together. By 1934, the effects of the depression were felt more nationwide. The council was having trouble. The remaining few Liberty Bonds were cashed to maintain financial stability, but it was a stop gap measure. The initiation fee of ten dollars was slashed to five dollars with the council absorbing the other five dollars in hopes of off-setting the loss of members.

A humorous note is injected at this time. March, 1935, a bladder for a punching bag was bought. April, new punching bag bought. Wonder if the members were taking out their frustrations on the punching bag? Much was attempted to help out the economic situation and relief of the townspeople by having Whist parties for their benefit; purchasing health bonds, letting the rooms to other societies and raising funds by various means for the poor and relief cases, even movies shown at the theatre with the admission being one can of food to be donated to the needy and collecting clothes to be donated to the less fortunate. The dream was not dying, but it was a difficult situation. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief when 1935 gave way to 1936.

The year 1937 shows a slight improvement and the minutes of the meeting reflect a change in attitude. A variety show proves to be entertaining and the famous or unfamous talk by one of the council's most eminent and well known man-about-town bachelors came to make this talk, is a story worth telling and should be a part of history.

We will retell it as it is written in the record and related by men among us today. At one of the summer outings of 1937, it seems that some of the chairs were lost and the council was concerned about the disappearance. This upset a certain Eugene LeBlance who it so happened was a bachelor and did not attend this outing. While at the council he noticed that it was the bachelors that were lost at the outing and the council should be concerned with the welfare of the bachelors instead of the welfare of the chairs. That this discourse was well received is indicated by a cryptic note in the meeting following the outing. "The talk was well received and appreciated." So goes the story.

In the year 1941, the council is aware that it's members are liable to the "draft" and the first to leave is Alexis Bissonette in March. He also was the first to make the supreme sacrifice from the council. The Grand Knight Herbert Damato and Peter Moulin are given a send off party in March.

The recorded history comes to an end at this time due to the loss of the record book concerning that period of time from late 1941 to 1946. A through search of the old home and the present home is to no avail. Quieres to the members who had access to it brings no solution to the lost book. It is unfortunate because the gap in the history covers a period of time that saw us involved in World War Two--the course of history changed on the world scale and decisions made then that affect us even today.

World War 2....

HOMMAGE A JEAN CROTEAU

by John England

Our friend Jean Croteau, a faithful member of La Société, died on January 21st. Jean suffered at the hands of the dark demon we call cancer, but he was aided through this struggle by a loving family and friends from Notre Dame de Lourdes parish. Members of the choir to which he belonged often stopped to see him at the hospice and sang with him the French songs he enjoyed so much.

He is survived by a son and daughter-in-law Mark and Ann Marie; a sister Delores Grevious; brothers Paul, Thomas and Guillaume and two grandchildren, Sarah and Clare. We wish to extend our sympathy to them.

Jean's family settled in Dayton and later moved to Northeast Minneapolis where his father was employed with the Soo Line Shoreham shops. He told me that his father would arrange for a pass for him via the Soo Line and Canadian Pacific back to Québec to visit his Godfather, proving that a French-Canadian family is not unlike the maple tree whose roots stretch to infinity.

Jean was very active in the society. He was a member of Les Canadiens Errants, our group of chansonniers; he chaired the historical committee, served on the board of directors and did extensive research on the French families in the Dayton area. He had a lot of pleasant gallic gusto that was very uplifting to all of us. He was extremely proud of all aspects of his heritage, the music, the French language, the history, the faith. His eyes would twinkle with joy when he sang *Aupres de ma Blonde* and you could always hear some teasing and laughter when Jean was at our meetings.

Jean Croteau was a unique and gentle man. He always wore a broad smile on his face that would light up a room like a brace of Christmas trees. Back a few years ago we gathered at his home for a committee meeting. There was a glowing warmth in the Croteau house that frosty January evening, and it did not come from the furnace, it came from Jean.

DONNEZ LUI, SEIGNEUR, LE REPOS E' TERNEL.

Let us know your events: deadline May 31, 1989 to Dick Bernard, 2014 1st Ave #6 Hibbing MN 55746 or Jerry Forchette 4655 University Ave NE Minneapolis MN 55421.

L'ASSOCIATION DES FRANCAIS DU NORD
by Dr. Virgil Benoit

On April 22, 1989, I will be speaking at the Alliance Francaise in St. Paul MN. I will be talking about the use of French in our French-Canadian communities as well as the French-Indian community of Belcourt, N.D., and the cultural ties to the French-speaking world today. The presentation will include video, talk and guests who will accompany me. (NOTE: this is part of an all day program which sounds fascinating. Call 612-544-6382 - Alliance Francaise

Also, the Red Lake Falls AFRAN history awareness weekend will be May 19 and 20 at the Huot Crossing state park near Red Lake Falls. On Friday, May 19, we offer history of our area for the young. We focus on the development of the upper Red River Valley. On Saturday, we have workshops on singing, oxcart building, clothing of our ancestors, camp fire making before matches, cooking, edible plants from the forests and prairies, folk dance and more. The "more" is sometimes more interesting than what we know about. Saturday evening we will have a folk dance. All activities are at the Old Crossing and Treaty Park. We will have a huge tent in the park area.

LETTER FROM JOHN COTE, BROOKLYN, CT.
6 MARS 1989

Chez Nous- February/March well done. Exception: Legalese, 2nd paragraph line 9 word 6 should be Norman not Saxon as Normans had written law which they imposed on the Saxons.

Enjoyed the article by John England "Le Baptême de Mamière" typical Canadian attitude.

Just finished my pate and ragou de pot de chochon (pigsfeet stew). Extraordinary. Want the recipe? (Ed. note: "OUI") I now have to work on the pigs head, much better. Next week pea soup with salt pork and onions/eat till I am sick. Gallettes are fried bread dough in a black iron frying pan made with extra dough when baking bread.

A typical Canadian Sunday breakfast - cold salt pork from Saturday night's supper; baked beans with toast with honey or molasses. That my friend is scrumptious eating and a hearty breakfast; try it. I was brought up on it. It is a treat.

Also, we are seeking clip art and photos of any kind that have a French-Canadian flavor. May we hear from you?

Reflections on an 1830 Trader's License
by Cal Lamoreaux, Shelbyville, MI

"After the passage by Congress of the law of 1816 prohibiting foreigners from engaging in the fur trade by giving the President the power to grant exemptions, President Madison delegated this authority to Cass, as Governor of Michigan territory and to Indian agents, of the United States at Mackinac, Green Bay, and Chicago".

Rix Robinson "in a string of trading post on the Grand River, Michigan. I discovered his license, crumbling in a box in the basement of a western Michigan library. I photocopied it and am publishing it to give some insight into the nature of the fur trade in New France. (Remember that Indians were not citizens of the U.S.)

LICENCE

WHEREAS application has this day been made by Rix Robinson to permit him to trade with the Indian tribes at the Grand River of Lake Michigan and its vicinity.

Now therefor, by virtue of special powers in me vested, by the laws of the United States and by the president thereof, I do authorize, empower, and License the aforesaid Rix Robinson an American citizen, to trade with any Indian, or tribe of Indians, at Grand River and its vicinity, in any article of merchandise, not prohibited by the Laws of the United States, regulating trade and intercourse with Indian tribes or instructions of the President prohibiting the introduction or sale of ardent spirits to any Indian, or tribe of Indians, within any Indian country; until the fifteenth day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty one unless sooner revoked, taking with him and using in his trade, as interpreters and boatmen, the following persons, not citizens of the United States, a descriptive list of whom is hereunto annexed. (Remember, "boatman" means voyageur.)

No.	Name	Capacity	Stature Ft. In.	Eyes	Hair	Complexion	Make	By Birth
1	Charles Bouchamp	Boatman	5 4½	Light	Light	Light	Stout	Canadian
2	Michail Jalin	Boatman	5 4	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Canadian
3	Aitkin Racitts	Boatman	5 5	Grey	Dark	Dark	Stout	Canadian
4	Francois LaBrachs	Boatman	5 9	Dark	Dark	Dark	Slender	Canadian
5	Bartilmi Gouthis	Boatman	5 4	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Canadian
6	Antoins Piccau	Boatman	5 4½	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Canadian
7	Joseph Lacuyer	Boatman	5 5½	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Canadian
8	Francois Lapres	Boatman	5 6	Blue	Brown	Light	Stout	Canadian
9	Michael Gaundron	Boatman	5 4	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Half Breed
10	Jacob Bayer	Boatman	5 5½	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Mulattos
11	Matthew McGulpin	Boatman	5 6½	Blue	Dark	Lightish	Stout	American
12	Henry Mallincourt	Boatman	5 6	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	American
13	Pierre Cotas	Interpreter	5 2½	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Half Breed
14	Charles Martan	Boatman	5 4½	Dark	Dark	Dark	Slender	Half Breed
15	?? Bt. Brunett	Boatman	6 -	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Half Breed
16	Louis Default	Boatman	5 4	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Half Breed
17	Francois Lacroix	Boatman	5 5½	Dark	Dark	Dark	Stout	Half Breed
18	P. C. Duvirnay	Clerk						American
19	Joseph Numainvills	Clerk						American
20	Samuel Lasley	Clerk						American
21	Joshua J. Boys	Clerk						American
22	Louis Carons	Woman						Half Breed"

One is tempted to assume that these are ALL of Rix Robinson's employees. Persons 18-21 are listed as American by birth and would therefore seem not to be "aliens". Half-breeds are clearly identified. However, I have to guess that the Americans are Indians, therefore aliens; since I know a full blooded Ottawa family named Lasley, cf. person 20.

It is interesting to note that the job of person 22 is "woman". The licensor assumed something that we can only guess at.

The average boatman on this list is 5 ft. 5½ inches and stout. This fits the traditional picture of a voyageur that is topheavy, muscular and short.

When studying ancient documents, one has to make many guesses and assumptions that can only be supported by studying many other contemporaneous documents. I would be delighted to hear from others who disagree with me.

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