



chez nous

NEWSLETTER OF AOUT-SEPTEMBRE, 1990

VOL. 12 NO. 1

La société canadienne-française

Editor: Dick Bernard

Co-Editor: Jerry Marie Forchette

INTRODUCTION TO NORA REMEMBERS

In August of 1988 a reunion of the Sylvestre and Mercil descendants of Joseph O. Sauve and Rose Delima Bergevin was held with the generous cooperation of AFRAN (L'Association des Français du Nord). There were beautiful decorations and displays of family pictures, charts, artifacts, memorabilia, etc.

Presentations were made of the family genealogy, history and settlement in the Red River Valley. Dr. Virgil Benoit reviewed the history of Gentilly, Minnesota where Joseph Sauve had been one of the early residents.

After dinner with the French motif, including wine of course, there was story telling, a sing-a-long and French music and folk dance instructions presented by Jeanne and Tom O'Neil. The second day was devoted to attending a special Mass at Gentilly and to social activities.

One of the highlights of the reunion was a reading of "Nora Remembers". Nora Mercil Brusseau, a granddaughter of Rose Delima and Joseph Sauve was unable to make the trip from her residence in Vancouver, Washington. Nora felt bad about her absence. Her niece, Rosalie Brusseau kindly offered to write down Nora's reflections so she could attend the reunion in spirit. The article had the effect of shaming me into writing some reminiscences of early days - if she could do it at her age and health condition, what's wrong with me, her brother.

We deeply appreciate the efforts of Rosalie Brusseau and dedicate the publication of this article to Nora who is now confined to a nursing home in Vancouver, Washington with the horrible Alzheimer disease. (Lowell H. Mercil)

NORA REMEMBERS

by Nora Mercil

We lived on a farm about three-quarters of a mile from the small town of Gentilly, Minnesota. We spoke only French at home, so when I started school it was necessary for me to learn to understand and speak English, before I could learn the usual school subjects. It was not easy, hearing only French at home and only English at school. It was a one room country school with eight grades, so the teacher had no extra time to spend with me. My parents decided that I must go to the Catholic boarding school, St. Josephs in Crookston. Here I would be around English speaking people all the time. Papa and I rode the ten or so miles from the farm to the Convent, in a horse and buggy. The first few miles went slow, because I was so anxious to get there, a bundle of excitement. However, the farther I got from home, frightening thoughts started to take over, would the other girls like me? Would someone speak French to me sometimes? How would I ever learn English? Then papa told me that I could not come home every weekend during the winter, it would depend on the weather, a blizzard or ice would leave me stranded at school. Then I started to worry; when would I see mama and papa and Al again? We drove up in front of the school and papa hitched the horse to the hitching post, and helped me down. Any other time I would have scrambled and jumped to the ground the minute papa said, "whoa" to the horse. He reached for my luggage, nothing fancy, just one small bag. Papa took my hand in his, it was so big and warm, it reminded me of home. We walked up to the front door, and even after all these years my mind is a blank as to what happened next? My memory is of lying in bed with my head buried under the pillow and under the quilt. I was sobbing as if my heart would break, and whispering, "I want to go home," over and over again.

NORA REMEMBERS, continued

A buzzer type bell rang to awaken the dormitory girls in the morning. We hurried to dress in our navy blue skirts and white blouses, then to Chapel and Communion. Breakfast was a bowl of oatmeal and milk to drink, but on special occasions, we got hot cocoa.

The academy was a large building, at least so it seemed to me in those days. The basement contained the kitchen, laundry, boarders dining room and the gym. The non-boarders brought their lunch and ate it in the gym. We all hurried to the playground after wolfing down our lunch. First floor housed classrooms for the first through eighth grades. The second floor housed the Chapel and classrooms for the high school students. The third floor was the girl's dormitory (our home away from home). Fourth floor was home for the Sisters. All the work at the school was done by the Sisters, no lay people to help. One Sister was the cook, one the laundress, and several teachers. One taught music, piano included, one math, and my favorite, Sister Margaret, the French teacher. Sister Alice, was very strict, she was a large strapping woman, very strong. She always carried a ball of string in her pocket along with a few nails. She taught math to the eighth grade boys, plus instructing the Altar boys in their duties. In later years, a huge house located behind the school, was purchased as a home for the Sisters.

There were some chores for the live-in children, One was to clean the blackboards and the erasers --remember! We went outdoors and slapped the erasers together and how the dust flew (this was cleaning?) Someone was assigned to sweep the floor, it was kind of tricky, to get under all the desks. Then when we were of an age to use pen and ink, the job of cleaning ink spots from the floor was an unforgettable chore. The Sisters gave us something like steel wool, to rub out these dark ink spots.

When the weather kept boarders at school over the weekend, the laundress did the laundry and ironing for the elementary students. The days ran together, my English was not becoming my second language very rapidly. Homesickness was overwhelming me. What were papa and mama doing now? How much had Albert grown? Would he still know me when I saw him again, if I ever did?

Sister Margaret was so good to me, she had come from France. I wondered if she understood me so well because she'd had

these same homesick feelings when she came to Crookston, from her homeland. Then there was Sister _____ oh, I can't remember her name, but she was something else. She ate my candy! Mama had made divinity for me and sent it to school. Maybe I would never had known, but the next time I went home, mama asked me if I had liked the candy and had I shared with the other girls? When I got back to school, I told Sister Margaret that mama had sent me a box of divinity and it should be coming soon. Sister Margaret tracked down the package. There were only a couple of pieces left, it seems that the other SISTER thought the candy had been sent to the Sisters, so naturally she opened the package and tasted. That night again, I cried and cried, hoping no one would hear my sobs, muffled by the quilt and pillow.

During the winter if the weather was nice, papa would come for me; put me in the sleigh and tuck me in with one of mama's quilts. Those rides were so much fun, but seemed slow because I was so anxious to get home. Sunday afternoon when I returned, I could never stay warm, even with the long underwear on and mama's quilt wrapped around me, of course, the reason was because I hated to leave home and family.

The Sisters taught me not only to read and write English, but how to read and write French. I had a good education at that school but my memories of that academy are of "one very, very homesick little girl."

Life on the farm was hard, but we were a happy family and there were lots of fun times. We children were all born at home. I, Nora, was the oldest, next Al and then Lorraine, those births I don't remember. When Jerry's birth was near, Lorraine, Al and I were sent over to the neighbors to wait. No telephone to call us home, instead the signal of the new arrival was a bed sheet hung on the clothesline.

Mama was of quite a serious disposition, she was sick often, as I remember, but as I think about it maybe she was just tired. Just the necessary work to be done included washing and ironing clothes, baking bread, making meals, churning butter, planting and harvesting a garden, canning meat as well as berries, apples and garden produce. Still that was not all, she carded and spun wool. She would buy a gunny sack full at a time. She sewed not only for our family, of six children, herself and papa, but she sewed for
continued, page three

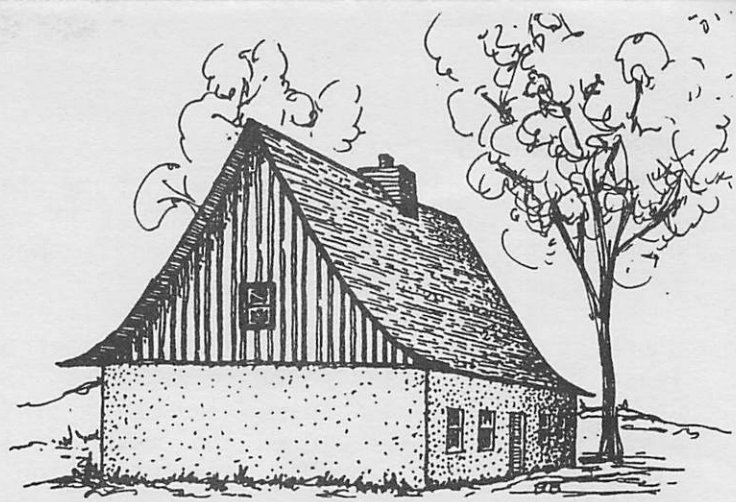
NORA REMEMBERS, continued

many of the families in town, she was a very accomplished seamstress.

Papa was a very kind, quiet man, not strong but a hard and willing worker. Don't think he ever insulted anyone in his life. Papa had lots of work to do. I, Nora the oldest child never had to do chores in the barn or field but carrying water and wood, that I did. Oh! yes, that I did.

Our house was situated on a hill, the well down below, an artesian well. Artesian comes from the French word, "artois" a provence in France, where this type well was first discovered. This type well was supposed to be very special, but I never understood why. We still had to carry our water up hill, for drinking, bathing, and laundry, then haul it out of the house after using it. Why didn't they build the house down by the well?

There was no electricity at our house, so your're thinking, "oh no lights! Yes, thats right, and no water heater, no washing machine, no hair dryer, no clothes dryer and lots more noes. So we hauled the water, heated it on the range (stove), washed clothes on the board and dried them in the sun, used flat irons, and heated our curling irons in a lamp chimney, which we used for light after the sun went down. The lamps had to be filled with kerosene, the chimneys washed and dried and the wicks trimmed. How often this cleaning process took place depended on how often and how long the lamps were used. Pail after pail of water I carried up the hill to fill the copper boiler and the two wash tubs. Papa helped me or did I help him - this was in the days before Al and Lorraine were big enough to help. It wasn't just water to be hauled up the hill, but also the wood papa had chopped. Wood kept the stove roaring to keep heating water for the laundry. Mama scrubbed clothes with soap on the wash board for several years before we got a washing machine. That meant wringing by hand, rinsing and wringing again, then hung on the clothesline outdoors, a far cry from your automatic washer and dryer of today. After the last of the clothes were washed and hung on the line, it was time to haul the water out, pail after pail. As the clothes dried and were brought into the house, you noticed such a lovely fresh aroma, there is nothing to compare it to, and found only on clothes dried out of doors in the sunshine. Hanging clothes out of doors in the winter was a



MEMORIES:

Our gift to those who follow us.

bone chilling job. When the clothes were frozen, they were then brought into the house to hang on lines through out the house. We always laughed at the frozen long underwear, like a ghost without a body.

Now it was sprinkling time, you spread each piece of clothing out on the table, one at a time with a pan of water near. You dipped your hand into the water, and then shook your hand over the item, you did this several times then it was rolled up tightly and put into a basket. You continued sprinkling till all of the clothing was dampened and ready for ironing the next morning.

Flat irons were set on the range to heat. These irons were in two parts, one the flat iron and the second part was the handle/cover which was put over the flat iron. A little clamp held it in place. Mama would test the iron to see if it were hot enough by putting a finger to her mouth to wet it and then she touched the iron, sssisst! if it sizzled it was ready. As soon as the iron cooled it was necessary to exchange it for a hot one. It was a hot steamy tiring job, due to the combination of the heat from the roaring fire in the range, the labor of ironing and the hot humid weather of summer. In the winter sprinkling was omitted as clothes were ironed while still damp.

Now on a quiet evening as I stare out of my window at the beautiful sunset, I am thinking back, way back, to my childhood on the farm. Shush! Shush! Can you hear it? It's Al teasing voice chanting:
NOR--A-----MER---CIL---
CROOKS----TON---MINN---
BORN---IN---A---PIG---PEN
NINE---TEEN----TEN

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NORA REMEMBERS, continued

That little ditty was yelled at me for years, not only by Al, who started it but Jerry, Lowell, and Ray as well. These fellows were always full of mischief.

Churning butter was not an easy job but at least there was a tasty end to our work. The churn was a barrel shaped container into which the cream was poured and cover put in place, then the cranking started. You'd turn the crank and this would agitate the cream. As you turned the crank the barrel would go end over end. The cranking went on and on for ages it seemed. Finally you would hear flop flup, flop flup, now the butter was forming and as you continued a louder flop plop was heard which meant that a chunk of butter had formed and was hitting the ends of the churn as it was cranked. Now the top was turned and unscrewed a little, and a milky liquid (buttermilk) was poured off. I never cared to drink this, but papa did. Now the butter was packed in little molds and put in a cool place. Ummmm, so good on fresh baked bread.

Another job we don't bother with anymore is soap making. We saved fat from pork at butchering time and bacon grease. Then lye was mixed in and boiled for several hours until it was golden taffy colored, it then had to cool, usually till the next day. The top layer was usually white - it was cut into bars and dried, then used as hand soap. The second layer was yellow, cut in larger bars and dried - used for laundry, the third layer was brownish jelly like consistency at the bottom of the kettle, this was used for heavy cleaning, scrubbing floors and the privy. It's much easier to go to the store and buy soap don't you think?

Preparations for Christmas began right after Thanksgiving. Mama made mincemeat, cooked donuts, and baked cookies. We were especially fond of oatmeal cookies with raisins. Then there was "Blood Sausage", maybe I would have liked it if it had a different name. It was considered quite a specialty. Then there was "Head Cheese" another product that was tasty but what a name. It was made from the pig's head. When I made it I used shoulder pork boiled with onions and seasonings. It was then cooled and boned. The meat was put through a grinder and enough water that it was cooked in, to be mushy, then poured into pans and refrigerated, then sliced to serve,

delicious! The name pork loaf sounded better to me. Another favorite was Mock Duck, my recipe follows. Try it you will like it.

Early Christmas morning we went to Mass. It was usually cold and we walked three fourths of a mile to the country parish of St. Peter. We went to the Sylvester home for Christmas dinner, Mrs. Sylvester was my mama's sister. Mama always brought some of her goodies-Blood Sausage, Head Cheese, and divinity.

The three Sylvester children Harry, Ed and Henrietta, were our cousins and we were six children so it was a noisy, happy, exciting day for all of us that passed all too quickly. One year I got a beautiful doll with a porcelain head and long curly hair. What a treasure, mama made me several dresses and a coat and bonnet. I was so proud of that doll.

Now you know some of my memories, and how we lived and worked when I was a girl, so long ago, but you know something, there are times it seems like "ONLY YESTERDAY."

MOCK DUCK

Dressing
2 pounds ground beef
1 pound pork sausage
Brown and pour off fat
Add large onion, 1 med. cubed raw potato, 2 slices bread, moistened in water, torn apart
Salt and pepper and continue cooking
When potato is cooked mash the whole mixture
Meantime-
Cut one large round steak into cubes and brown, put half of the dressing in a pan, cover with steak pieces, top with remainder of dressing. Bake 350 til steak is tender.

New Years always called for "Tourtrers" remember?

1 pound ground pork
1 pound ground beef
onions and celery
2 tsp. corn starch
1/4 cup oatmeal
1 cup water

Blend ingredients thoroughly. Simmer 40 min. or so.

Pour into pastry lined pie tin.
Bake 450 for 10 min. then 250 for 35 min.
Cool and freeze and heat up for
NEW YEARS

ED. NOTE. As I typed this I noticed yet another spelling for tourtiere!

A CAJUN WRITES

by Lynda Guidry, Lafayette, LA

They came to Southern Louisiana from Acadia in Canada. These Acadians became known as Cajuns and developed one of the most unique and colorful cultures of all of the United States. The language is colorful, distinctive and a beautifully melodical dialect of the French language. Cajun French traces it's beginnings almost four centuries ago. It evolved from the Acadian French of Canada and the native French of southern France; Cajun French is a very very antiquated version of the mother tongue.

Cajun French is heard less widely today than in the years prior to World War II, as Cajuns have continuously joined the great melting pot of the mainstream American culture.

Cajun food is some of the most uniquely American culinary developments of all time. Using locally caught and produced food items and seasonings, Cajun cooking has evolved into a fine art. Cajuns (or just about anybody else in Louisiana) consider food an art. We don't just eat to keep our bodies alive, we eat to keep our spirits alive. For us, eating is part of our culture, lunch is an event, even on a tight workday schedule. When we eat out, we prefer our restaurants to invest in the quality of what they serve as opposed to the quality of their wallpaper. For Cajuns, any meal is an event. That is why you really have to try hard to find a bad restaurant in South Louisiana...they just would not stay in business.

Cajun music is another local art with unique and varying roots. The instruments played can vary from locally manufactured accordians to electric guitars to massive bass fiddles. The sounds they make are festive...Cajun music is party music and is very much a part of their culture.

In fact, in recent years there has been much emphasis placed on the preservation of that culture. Such has been the case of Vermilionville, a commemorative center of living history featuring the Cajun and Creole cultures of South Louisiana at a site in Lafayette, LA.

Vermilionville has beautiful examples of buildings and displays of items used

by the early settlers. Continuous demonstrations of how life was lived and tasks performed are a major part of this village. And what really makes it enjoyable for visitors is the opportunity to try their hand at any or all of those things.

There is a cooking class, a boat builder, duck decoy carver, spinner, weaver, chair caner (using corn shucks, cane and rusk), quilter, dollmaker, rug maker, furniture maker, fiddle maker, toy maker, blacksmith, tatting, butcher, plus delightful story tellers, bands (Cajun and Zydeco), a dance company, folklore troupe, gospel singers and dramatic presentations.

And there is a farm, where a couple simulate daily life-with meals cooked on the open hearth and chores completed-and they carry on their conversations in first person in Cajun French. Some 85 of the employees are bi-lingual and interpret whatever is desired by visitors.

Vermilionville is a great project that has been built with the cooperation of public agencies and private endeavors. And it has been well planned with a primary purpose of preserving the Cajun culture. The Acadians who first settled in South Louisiana led hard lives, but they enjoyed life and had many customs that deserve to be preserved in some way so that future generations will be able to see first-hand how things were done and the reason behind some modern culture habits.

You may have seen Cajun country on the T.V. or in movies, or heard the music on the radio, but you haven't lived until you've seen it, tasted it and heard it for yourself.

ED. NOTE: We shared our newsletter with Lynda this spring, and her gift to us was the above article, which we much appreciate receiving.

Chez Nous is to be enjoyed, and shared. Pass your copy along to someone you think might be interested, and encourage them to join La Societe, too!

Deadline for the next issue is September 25. Mail to Dick Bernard, MEA, 1000 E. 146th St #140, Burnsville MN 55337.

Lafayette left his marquis on America

By TOM TIEDE Milwaukee JOURNAL
Newspaper Enterprise Association July 21, 1989

LAFAYETTE, La. — Nobody enjoys a party more than Francophiles enjoy a party, and they are enjoying a big one right now. The French Revolution took place 200 years ago, and so, ooh la la, the French are celebrating the bicentennial of their plunge into the liberty, equality and fraternity of Everyman.

The revolutionary plunge took the better part of a year to complete. But it was set in motion by a single bold stroke. The French stormed the Paris Bastille on July 14, 1789, to take over the symbol of the old authority, and the date is serving as the focal point of this year's 12-month commemoration.

The date might also serve to remind Americans of their own fight for independence, because one of the architects of the French Revolution was instrumental in the American Revolution as well.

He was the Marquis de Lafayette, the only man to become a famous hero in the two most portentous events in the chronicles of democracy. The marquis has not been remembered so fondly in France, it turns out. Yet he has become a familiar and lasting presence in the United States. He is indeed the most notable French personality in American history, owing to the fact that hundreds of counties, towns, streets and sundry places have been named in his honor. Even a car.

There are at least 10 US communities and five counties, including one in Wisconsin, named for



Marquis de Lafayette

Lafayette. And the number of mountains, valleys, waterways, squares and institutions has never been accurately counted. Lafayette, La., for example, has a Lafayette St., a Park de Lafayette, and it is located — where else? — in Lafayette Parish. [Milwaukee has a Lafayette Pl.]

The namings are curious, of course. Americans have not glorified any other visitor in this way except Christopher Columbus. Besides, the marquis was an unlikely hero at best, in a revolutionary sense; he was a blueblooded dandy and his full name was Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, marquis de La Fayette (the French spelling).

Nevertheless, he had mettle. He was born to the aristocracy in 1757, and served as a courtier at the court of King Louis XVI. He was no warrior; he'd never been in battle. But when the American Revolution began, he defied the king's orders and, in 1777, came to this country with his own small army.

Lafayette was only 19 at the time, and thus was greeted at first with amusement. He soon caught the eye of George Washington, however. After he agreed to serve the cause at his own expense, the Frenchman was given the rank of major general — mainly to impress King Louis, who eventually would contribute mightily to the American effort.

Lafayette fought often and valiantly in America. And he was wounded at least once, at the Battle of Brandywine. He served Washington all the way to Yorktown, where he was instrumental in attracting the French blockade that isolated the British forces and brought an end to the long conflict.

The marquis then went home to join the growing movement for political reform in France. He became a leader of the liberal gentry, for example. He likewise made significant contributions to the implementation of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen," designed to create a constitutional monarchy.

Lafayette died in 1834 at the age of 77. This means he lived long enough to see his reputation somewhat diminished. American historians began to write that he was as much an opportunist as a radical; and they said he was motivated on this side of the ocean by his hatred of the British rather than his sentiments for democracy.

Worse, the marquis became a figure of contempt in France. In 1791, when people took to the streets to demand the king's abdication, Lafayette ordered Parisian troops to fire on them. He has not to this day been fully forgiven.

Still, it's impossible to fully forget him. Particularly in places like Lafayette, Ala.; Lafayette, Calif.; Lafayette, Colo.; Lafayette, Fla.; Lafayette, Ga.; Lafayette, Minn.; Lafayette, Miss.; Lafayette, Mo.; Lafayette, Ore.; Lafayette, Pa.; Lafayette, Tenn.; and — deep breath — the two Lafayettes, La.

The local Lafayettes are perhaps the most befitting of the lot. The area was settled by French Acadians and the parish was named when the marquis revisited America in 1824. This city was originally called Vermilionville. It was redesignated in 1884 when another Lafayette, La., dissolved its charter.

Today there is a statue of the marquis in the town center, a Lafayette Art Gallery, Lafayette Bargain Store, Lafayette Bowling Lanes, Lafayette Cable TV, Lafayette Drug Store, etc.

There also is a Lafayette Library. A woman there says there has been a lot of interest in material about the French Bicentennial, "but when I ask them if they also want things about the marquis, they sometimes shrug and say they don't know who he is."

REMEMBER:
CHAUTAUQUA
at HUOT CROSSING
(between Red Lake
Falls and Crookston MN)
August 25-26, 1990
Details? SASE to
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chez nous

NEWSLETTER OF OCTOBRE-NOVEMBRE, 1990 VOL. 12 NO. 2

La société canadienne-française

Editor: Dick Bernard

Co-Editor: Jerry Marie Forchette

BRIDGES TO THE PAST. . . AND TO EACH OTHER by Dick Bernard

In the Juin-Juillet issue of Chez Nous we began a mini-debate: was the position of the American Indian Movement (AIM) correct in condemning the celebration of Columbus Day (October 8 this year); in companion, were our French ancestors any different from their peers in their manner of working with - or against - native Americans.

Of course, history happens on a daily basis. The ink was scarcely dry on Chez Nous when it was reported in the June 22, 1990, Minneapolis Star-Tribune that Elijah Harper, an Indian in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, singlehandedly worked to scuttle the controversial Meech Lake accord which would recognize as a "distinct-society" the French culture of Quebec. Harpers point which was widely supported was that if the French portion of Canada were to be recognized as a "distinct society", surely the Native Americans of that country, long second class citizens, should get equal treatment.

Very shortly thereafter, in early July, Mohawks near Oka, Quebec, got into a major conflict with the local, then Quebec and national governments, over a parcel of land to be used for expansion of a 9-hole golf course. That conflict, which has been major news for several months, is not yet resolved and I believe the Indians were correct in their outrage.

The July 19 St. Paul Dispatch quoted a Kanistake Mohawk involved in the Oka dispute as follows: "It all started with Jacques Cartier. My ancestors should have shot him." He was referring to the French explorer who (according to the newspaper) "discovered" Canada in 1534. Of course all that Cartier discovered was land new to him as well as people who were already there. He was "the new kid on the block".



When it comes to discovery of America, it was the ancestors of the Indians who really discovered it; of course those ancestors most likely didn't know, or care, what it was they had discovered. From wherever they arrived, or when, their only goal was likely survival and not conquest. So it most likely was for most of our French ancestors when they finally reached the shores of America in the 16 and 1700's.

So, how about the Issues: are we guilty, and how were our ancestors with the native Americans?

In this issue of Chez Nous is a description taken from a college textbook on French history which describes the environment from which nos ancetre came. You will quickly note that our ancestors, who presumably were peasants for the most part, did not come from cities of gold. They did

continued

"BRIDGES" from page one

come to do the business that the landed gentry of the time wished, and it appears that the landed gentry among our ancestors was more willing to accept the indigenous population as equals than were their brethren from Spain, England or other colonial countries.

In several independent resources, I have read that the French policy towards their new subjects was, for the time, relatively humane and accepting.

Recently, for example, I read that "French law [in the 18th century] obliged every owner to have his slaves instructed in religion and prepared for baptism. The law, further, protected female slaves from molestation, disallowed separation of families by sale, and forbade extreme punishments. The French were not as inclined to racism. . . ."

While the book quoted above referred specifically to blacks in St. Louis in the 1700's, it is reasonable to assume that the general policy towards Indians too was one of acceptance (though one would be a fool to presume that there was not exploitation as well).

Also, the indigenous population of North America was certainly decimated by "white man's diseases" in the early years of colonization. At the same time, no one knew they were spreading these diseases, nor what their outcome would ultimately be for the native populations.

Of course, there are no winners in debates such as these. For example, the entire history of Christianity has been tied up in anti-semitism because of what happened in biblical times 2000 years ago. We all seem to have a penchant of trying to convict those in the present of the sins of the past, when we have enough guilt just living from day to day.

The best we can do, I think, is to try to understand, appreciate and accept those of other cultures and backgrounds. And to understand as well the myths we have all been taught and attempt to modify our own understandings as we learn new information.

Should Jacques Cartier have been shot? No, in my opinion.

CHEZ NOUS is your newsletter, and without your active interest and contributions of material we cannot thrive. If you have comments, recollections, old photos, short histories. . . anything that someone might be interested in let us know. We publish every other month. Send your materials to: Dick Bernard, 7632 157th St W #301 Apple Valley MN 55124. Merci.

CALENDAR

Nov. 5 - at St. Louis Church, St. Paul 7:30 p.m. Dr. Milda Hedblom, Director of Canadian Studies and Chair of Political Science at Augsburg College, will speak on the topic CANADIAN CULTURAL POLICY IN MASS MEDIA. Dr. Hedblom is a consultant in communications and telecommunications policy and has completed a study of Canadian communications policy. Invite your friends to this meeting of La Societe.

Dec. 14 CHRISTMAS PARTY. Details in next issue of Nouvelles Villes Jumelles.

Apr. 25-28, 1991 FESTIVAL OF NATIONS, St. Paul This years theme is "FABLES AND FAIRYTALES". We will again participate. We will need your ideas and help. MARK YOUR CALENDAR

IDEAS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS to BRUCE BEDORE, president, LSCF, 487-0623.

This is your club.

Should they expand a golf course in Oka, Quebec? No.

Should they recognize the French, or the Indians, as "distinct societies"? No, in my opinion.

Should Columbus Day be eliminated? Probably not, though it certainly should be used as an opportunity to more accurately portray the rather harsh realities of the time, including mans inhumanity towards his and her brothers and sisters.

I do thank A.I.M. for opening my eyes a little on a piece of history I never really understood, except from the school boy perspective.

I do thank AIM for opening my eyes a little on a piece of history I never really understood, except from the school boy perspective.

I hope for a better day in ethnic understanding and relations.



Dick Bernard

1 - "The Religious Roots of Black Catholics of St Louis MO" by Madeline Barni Oliver and William Barnaby Faherty, St. Stanislaus Historical Museum, Florissant MO 1977

BACK TO FRANCE

Have you ever wondered about your ancestors' life BQ (before Quebec)?

The below comments may give you a clue, since they refer to France about 1700's, and it is around that time in history that migration to Quebec took place.

To the author of the text below, our apologies. Foolishly when we copied this several years ago we neglected to take down title/author, etc. of the book. We continue the search and will, in time, find out. . . and pass along the info. D.B.

"France in 1750 was the most populous of European states. Louis XV's subjects totalled approximately 22 million, which meant that one of every six Europeans west of the Russian frontier was a Frenchman.

Of Louis's subjects, barely two per cent belonged to the socially and legally privileged nobility and clergy. The First Estate, which included members of the monastic orders as well as priests and bishops, numbered about 130,000; the Second Estate, the hereditary nobility, is usually estimated at about 300,000 (of whom 80,000 belonged to the "old" nobility). All the rest were commoners; either members of that ill-defined category called the bourgeoisie, or ordinary peasants, artisans, workers--le menu peuple, as they were usually called. Nine out of ten lived by agriculture, either on isolated farms or in small village clusters. Few of them ever saw a city; at most, they might look forward to a rare visit to the nearest bourg, a commercial town of five or ten thousand people. Paris, with a population of half-million, was the only metropolis; no other city except Lyon exceeded a hundred thousand.

Along side the aristocracy as a privileged order stood the clergy, whose label "First Estate" seemed to suggest even greater pre-eminence. Although there was a clear line distinguishing the clergy from the other estates, it's members by no means constituted a class, in any sense of the word, or even homogeneous stratum of society. It was, rather, a professional category enjoying certain social privileges; it's upper ranks were almost entirely from the nobility, it's middle and lower ranks from the bourgeoisie and the peasantry. Although a strong corporative spirit--and in some cases a common

intensity of faith--held these diverse elements together, the gulf between hierarchy and parish priests was growing steadily wider and more obvious during the eighteenth century. Many village curés resented the contrast in income between the upper and lower ranks--a contrast roughly of 140 to 1. The village priests were, however, better off than the average wage earner, and they enjoyed greater social prestige. Dissatisfaction was sharper in the middle ranks of the church hierarchy--the cathedral chapters, for example, and the seminary teachers. Many of these posts were held by bookish young men of bourgeois origin, who chose the clerical career for reasons similar to those that inspire their modern successors to become university teachers. There had been a time when the able and ambitious ones might hope to rise to so distinguished a post as a bishopric; but the interesting difficulties of advancement in the eighteenth century were producing a sense of exasperated frustration among them.

The line that separated the nobility and the clergy from the ninety-eight per cent of Frenchmen who made up the Third Estate was not, strictly speaking, a line between privilege and non-privilege. Historians of the period keep reminding us that privilege, in the sense of vested legal rights or special dispensations granted to certain groups, was varied and widely shared in the hierarchical society of the old regime. Not only the nobility and the clergy, but many well-to-do commoners, many cities, whole provinces, were exempt from direct taxation; while on the other hand even the nobility in certain provinces had to pay the direct land tax called the taille. The idea of equality of treatment for all citizens was still in the future. The fact remains that some Frenchmen were clearly more privileged than others, and that the nobility and clergy as a whole bore a far smaller share of the tax burden than did the commoners. To speak of them, then, as the privileged orders may not be technically correct, yet it does convey the deeper reality that marked the system.

Among the unprivileged, the great bulk of Frenchmen lived and worked on the land. With rare exceptions, these peasants were free men who had long since shaken off all but a few annoying remnants of feudal servitude. It is not easy to reconstruct the rural life of that time; travellers' accounts were sketchy and full of contradictions, and statistics are remarkably inadequate. Some of the evidence

continued next page

BACK TO FRANCE, continued

suggests an almost incredible degree of degradation and misery; mud floored huts, ragged clothing, undernourishment, frequent famine. Other testimony supports the view that, however primitive the existence of the French peasantry, conditions had improved over the previous century and were probably better than anywhere else on the continent.

Most peasants were tenants, sharecroppers, or day laborers on estates owned by the privileged orders or the bourgeoisie, but a great many, perhaps half of all the peasants, had achieved virtual ownership of at least a bit of land. A few of these, the so-called *laboureurs*, were on the way of becoming a kind of rural middle class; they were expanding their holdings, acquiring herds of stock, even hiring field hands and lending money. The great mass of *manouvriers*, on the other hand, lived at a precarious subsistence level, supplementing their meager crops by working part-time on the large estates or taking employment in the rural textile industry which allowed them to spin or weave at home. Their eagerness to acquire land amounted to a passion; but they were even more dedicated to preserving such remainders of the medieval rural structure as the right to graze animals and collect firewood on the common land of the village. The bulk of the peasantry was clearly precapitalist and intensely traditionalist in outlook--except that it wished to free itself from the tag-ends of feudalism.

It was in the cities and towns, not in the countryside, that the ferment of social change was at work. The bourgeoisie, an amorphous and varied category that included industrial and commercial enterprisers, financiers, professional men, bureaucrats, shopkeepers, and some independent artisans, had been making steady income gains during the eighteenth century. Some of this new wealth was plowed back into business expansions, but more of it was used to purchase town houses, country estates, government bonds, government or church offices, or army commissions. This was, on the whole, a professional rather than a business bourgeoisie; the capitalist urge to innovate and expand was not its dominant trait. Its goal for the most part was to gain social status, to broaden out its share of special privilege within a society of inequality, to "live nobly" after the pattern of the aristocracy. To view the social conflict of the old regime as one that pitted a rising capitalist class against a medieval

feudal class is tempting, in an age so strongly marked by Marxist ideas as ours, but it is also more misleading than it is accurate. Classes were much less clearly defined, and their value systems much less clearly in conflict, than the Marxian model would require.

If France had possessed a rigid and impermeable caste system, no such idea of sharing aristocratic privilege and adopting the aristocratic value system would ever have occurred to the bourgeoisie. But over the centuries there had been opportunities to rise; difficult and devious perhaps, but always available to the opportunist. Some bought office and carried noble status; some married their daughters to an impecunious aristocrat (who might speak contemptuously of the need to "manure his land," but who nevertheless gave noble status to his half-bourgeois sons); some were content to move a few steps up the ladder by the purchase of a minor army commission or a middle-rank church post. Enough opportunities had been available in the past to keep the bourgeoisie generally satisfied with the system and to make them want to share its advantages. To what degree did the situation change in the mid-eighteenth century? On this crucial point, recent years have brought an active historical debate. Many historians have argued that a drastic change did occur--that an "aristocratic reaction" saw the old nobility embark on a successful campaign to monopolize all high offices in the state, thus blocking the upward channels of mobility against the ambitious bourgeoisie. By the 1780's they point out Jacques Necker was the only remaining top-level bureaucrat who was of common birth. There had been twenty non-noble bishops in 1740; the last one disappeared in 1783. By a royal decree of 1781, officers' commissions in certain army regiments were reserved to men who could show four generations of noble lineage. The result, as these historians see it, was the gradual alienation of much of the bourgeoisie. Forced to abandon its aristocratic aspirations, it began to adopt the views of the reforming philosophes, either in a mood of bitter frustration or in the hope that criticism might make the aristocracy retreat. By the 1780's--so goes the argument--enlightenment ideas were in general circulation in bourgeois salons and publications. Like Moliere's doctor, the French bourgeois was becoming revolutionist in spite of himself.

continued next page

BACK TO FRANCE, continued

One other segment of eighteenth-century society remains to be mentioned. At the very bottom of the social pyramid, marked off from the petty bourgeoisie by no clear line of division, was the small but growing category of urban wage earners. Only Paris and Lyon contained sizable groups of this sort. Most of them were skilled artisans or handicraftsmen who worked in small shops, in intimate association with a bourgeois employer. Frequently they crossed the line that separated them from bourgeois status simply by setting up shop as independent enterprisers, with one or two assistants. Below them, ranging down into a kind of urban underworld that lived by it's wits, was an almost submerged category of unskilled laborers who worked irregularly at menial or rough tasks. Many of them could not have survived without regular recourse to charity; in periods of economic stress, half of them--indeed, half of the skilled workers as well--might be unemployed. Early in 1790, according to official records, one Parisian in five was on some sort of relief roll, public or private. Even in prosperous times, the line between human and subhuman conditions in the urban slums would have been hard to draw.

SE RECUEILLIR

by John England

Mordecai Spector gave us a banquet of food for thought in his article printed in the June *Chez Nous*. He rips the historical image of Columbus apart with the vigor of a pit bull and goes on to mention the clash between Indian Nations and European plunderers. Is Mr. Specktor including the French in this broad spectrum of caucasian devils? I certainly hope that he does not. Indeed, most of the relationships between the Indians and the French appear to be harmonious.

It is my understanding that the English and the Spanish were unduly hard raw-hiders extra - ordinaire when dealing with their Indian brothers. Dr. Robert Fogarty, Professor Emeritus at St Thomas remarked in a lecture that the Spanish were in the habit of removing a foot from their Indian charges in order to prevent them from running away. And the English were no better. Their inhuman treatment of the Irish qualified them for bigger and better things in North America in their dealings with the Indians and French Acadians; a point Fogarty failed to

mention. However, the good professor did state that the French treated the Native American with greater dignity than any other European group settling in North America. The Metis are living proof of this.

The Catholic faith of the French I suppose had a great influence on the manner in which the explorer, the trader and settlers treated the Indians. Eve Gagne, P.H.D. a respected educator submits that there existed a wide difference in the way the Francos and Anglo-Saxons treated the Indians, based on religious beliefs. French Canadians accepted the teachings of the Church of Rome. One of those teachings was that all men possess souls, and in that respect, at least, all men were equal in the eyes of Catholics. Indeed, the Bishop of Quebec urged priests to treat the Indians and the French with equal consideration. Several of these priests took the Indians' hardships to heart and accepted the fate of the Indians for themselves. For example, in 1838, Reverend Father Benjamin Petit joined the Potowatomie Indians of his parish in their forced relocation march to the Southwest. Reverend Petit as well as many of the Indians died on that march.

An example closer to home involved Bishop Whipple of the Episcopal Church and Alexander Faribault. After the Dakota uprising of 1862, these two gentlemen provided help, food and land east of Faribault for Dakota refugees. The local newspapers attacked the men in print as if they were traitors instead of complementing them for their charity.

Monsignor Augustin Rovaux was another great friend of the Indian people. He is known to have nursed and ailing Dakota women and to have baptized many Dakota men before their execution at Mankato.

It is to the credit of the French that they adopted Indian customs as voyageurs and intermarried with them. Such unions were not always socially acceptable. And some marriages were intended to improve economic relations. Nevertheless, this new role produced a proud race of people, solid citizens like Pierre Bottineau, Alexander Faribault, and Louis Riel. and yes, Mr. Specktor, I have Metis ancestry too.

continued, next page

IN LOVING MEMORY OF GRANDPA
by George LaBrosse

Eulogy for George J. LaBrosse (1894 - 1990)
St. Michael's Church, West St. Paul, MN
September 22, 1990
by George A. LaBrosse

It was only 11 years ago last June, grandma and grampa were married in this very church. Most of us were here for the wedding. Time seems to have gone so fast.

When I was born, my mother and father decided to name me George as grampa's namesake. It was a name he always gave me reason to be proud of.

Grampa was a faithful and devoted husband and father. His responsibilities to his family were never ignored. His faith in God and the Church was always evident and unwavering.

His abilities as a carpenter were in demand many times and he was always there to help.

His standards have set an example I will always strive to achieve.

But I will remember more than this.

He loved fishing. He used to count the days to summer when it would be warm enough to sit on the lake all day and fish.

He thoroughly enjoyed his lakehome at Forest Lake. Everyone was always welcome and I have many fond memories of our trips up to the lake.

He loved football and baseball. He told me when he was a young man, he wanted to be a pitcher, but he knew he didn't have the ability. The Chicago Cubs were his pet team but he followed the Twins, too.

He loved to play cards. His favorite game was 500. He was a competitive player, sometimes a bit of a tease, but always sociable.

He loved looking at brand new station wagons on the showroom floor. And he bought many of them.

He enjoyed birthday parties and many times would lead the birthday song. Only a week ago, he sang happy birthday to my mother while he was laid up in bed.

All his grandchildren had nicknames: Mix Mox, Baby Karen, Goldilocks, Pip Squeek, Pudgy, Smiler, Jack, and Baby Suzy. And he knew all his great-grandchildren's names by heart. He was thrilled to be the adopted father and grandfather of Marion's three sons and their family.

And if some spoiled young boy about 10 years old decided to run away from home and hide in the choir loft at church, he was there to find him, ease his doubts, and bring him home.

These are only some of the memories I will carry with me until I go to meet him.

I'd like to read a poem someone gave me last week. It's called "Safely Home". The author is unknown. If grampa could talk to us from where he is, this might be what he'd say:



Safely Home
Author Unknown

I am home in heaven, dear ones,
Oh, so happy and so bright.
There is perfect joy and beauty
In this everlasting light.

All the pain and grief is over,
Every restless tossing passed.
I am now at peace forever,
Safely home in heaven at last.

Safely home at that lakehome by the still water,
Where the big fish bite on every cast.
Where all my friends and family come to visit,
And we talk about good times past.

Did you wonder I so calmly
Trode the valley of the shade?
Oh, but Jesus' love illumined
Every dark and fearful glade.

And He came Himself to meet me
In the way so hard to tread;
And with Jesus' arm to lean on
Could I have one doubt or dread?

Then you must not grieve so sorely,
For I love you dearly still.
Try to look beyond death's shadows;
Pray to trust our Father's will.

There is work still waiting for you,
So you must not idly stand.
Do it now while life remaineth;
You shall rest in Jesus' land.

When that work is all completed,
He will gently call you home.
Oh, the rapture of that meeting;
Oh, the joy to see you come.

Goodbye, grampa.

SE RECUEILLIR, continued

I would suggest that Mr. Specktor cease in dealing with generalities when addressing the subject of the relationships between the whites and Native Americans. I would further advise him to sow seeds of unity rather than discord.

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NEWSLETTER OF DECEMBRE-JANVIER 1990-91 VOL. 12 NO. 3

La société canadienne-française



CHRIST IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM

There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields taking care of their flocks. An Angel appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone over them. Do not be afraid, I am here to bring good news... This very day in David's town your Savior was born - Christ the Lord - Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God.

JOYEUX NOËL ET BONNE ET HEUREUSE ANNÉE

LE JOUR D'ACTION DE GRACES
(Thanksgiving Day)

by Don Gribble, Hibbing MN

At our September meeting of La Societe, the question arose as to whether there was a French Thanksgiving Day. Toward an answer to that query, the following is extracted from Francis X. Weiser's Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs (N.Y., Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1958.)

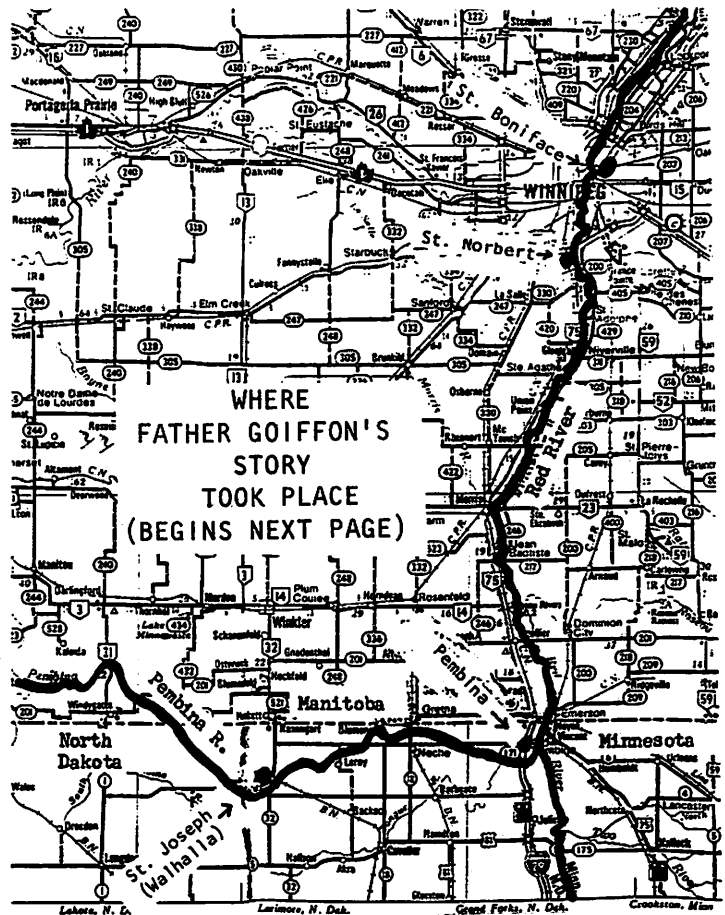
One special, yearly thanksgiving celebration going back to ancient times took place at the successful conclusion of the harvest. Thus, everyone as far back as one goes in the knowledge of religions and cultures, he finds harvest festivals with thanksgiving rites.

In northern France, harvesters seated on top of the last load brought home from the fields, chant an ancient traditional tune to the text Kyre-o-ole. This is an interesting folklore relic dating from Carolingian times when shepherds and field workers cheered their solitary toil by singing the Kyrie Eleison as they had heard the monks sing it at High Mass.

In southern France the last sheaf of grain was tied in the form of a cross and decorated with ribbons and flowers for the harvest celebration. Afterward it was placed in the best room of the house to be kept as a token of blessing and good fortune.

The most common, almost universal harvest and thanksgiving celebration was held on the Feast of St. Martin of Tours (Martinmas) on November 11. It was a holiday in Germany, France, Holland, England and in Central Europe. People first went to Mass and then spent the rest of the day in games, dances, parades and a festive dinner, the main feature of which was the traditional goose dinner, they drank "St. Martin's wine," the first lot of wine made from the grapes of the recent harvest.

Martinmas was the festival commemorating filled barns and stocked larders, the actual Thanksgiving Day of the Middle Ages. Even today, it is still kept in rural sections of Europe, and dinner on St. Martin's Day would be unthinkable without the luscious, golden-brown Martin's goose.



THOSE WHO READ CHEZ NOUS thank us for it. "Share the wealth" with your friends and relatives who may be interested in LSCF and in Chez Nous.

"I truly enjoyed the newsletter and I am interested in contributing material in the future."

P.S. Desrosiers dit Dargis
Hayward, WI

"I have greatly enjoyed your newsletters. My family and I now live in eastern Wisconsin. However I am originally from Minnesota where my great-grandfather, Pierre Auguste LaCroix, settled in Hugo MN after leaving Quebec. Indeed my grandfather, Hector LaCroix, moved from Hugo to St. Paul and was employed by L'eglise St. Louis from approximately 1932 until the time of his death in 1949."

Brian LaCroix
512 S Christine St
Appleton WI 54915

"I have my sister reading your Chez Nous and she is enjoying it as much as I do, and I read it over and over."

Anna Himel
Houma, Louisiana

(Ed. Note: watch for some articles on Mardi Gras in the bayou country of South Louisiana in the next issue, courtesy of Anna.)

MEMORIES OF FALL, 1858

by Father Joseph Goiffon

ED. NOTE: In Juin-Juillet, 1990, Chez Nous we reprinted Father Goiffon's recollections of his trip by Red River Oxcart from St. Paul to Pembina, Dakota Territory, in late summer 1858.

Here we continue his recollections with his commentary about the first few months in his new home.

These recollections were probably penned sometime after 1881 at either Centerville or Little Canada MN, and were translated sometime later by Charlotte (Mrs. Henry) Huot of St. Paul. They are reprinted as they appear in the translation.

"At last I arrived at St. Joseph of Pembina, which was the capital city of Dakota. It was a town about a mile long, spread on the left bank of the Pembina river, about 35 to 40 miles from its mouth and dotted, from place to place, with tiny homes of logs of a single story and covered with hay mixed with clay. One house of about 50x28 covered with shingles with a basement and a story and a half was an exception. I directed myself towards this home thinking it was the residence of the Rev. George Belcourt, grand vicar of St. Paul. But no, the basement composed of 6 rooms was the home of the new community of sisters of Mr. Belcourt, and the upper floors served as a church while waiting till they could build a bigger one. I asked where dwelt the grand vicar and they showed me, a block from there a house of single story 16x24, covered with branches, and recovered with hay mixed with clay and grass. It was the home of Mr. Belcourt. It was divided in two. The front room 16x16 served as a work shop, the second 16x7 or 8 was his bed chamber and study.

I noticed but a poor bed that Mr. Belcourt wished me to use for the night; but having refused I spread an old buffalo hide on the floor and passed the night as in the journey in the prairie. All was so poor in that little room that the vicar general for more privacy thought better to divide the room. For that purpose nothing better was found than an old piece of oiled canvas which had been used to cover the cart and protect it from the rain during the voyage from St. Paul. It was nearly as black as the rod that it covered. The next day I was making myself a little cupboard in my little part of the room, in which to put my clothes, and made myself a little table to write on, thinking

of spending the winter at St. Joseph, but that evening, or the next day, Mr. Belcourt told me that he had received complaints from the inhabitants of Pembina who had learned that there were two priests at St. Joseph and reclaimed one for themselves. The demand appeared just to us. Pembina was a mission of 425 Metis catholiques. It is situated on the Red River, where the Pembina River joins it, and about 35 or 40 miles from St. Joseph. The house of St. Joseph was founded by Mr. Belcourt, belonging to the diocese of St. Boniface and was situated at 1½ miles from the Canadian limits. It had been about abandoned three years ago, by Mr. Belcourt because of the inundations which, for two successive years had upset most of the houses and destroyed most of the cultivation then in progress. The majority of the Metis had followed Mr. Belcourt in the new mission of St. Joseph, and the others had stayed at Pembina. They were nearly abandoned for 7 years concerning spiritual guidance. I resigned myself to go to evangelize them and Mr. Belcourt took me there the next day.

Arriving at Pembina, I found a village in the middle of the prairie, consisting only of a poor little church, made of oak logs and measuring about 20x30; by its side there was a small house inhabited by two sisters of the new society of Mr. Belcourt. Those were teaching school.

The settlement of Pembina had been well established by the time Goiffon arrived in 1858. According to Elwyn Robinson's History of North Dakota (University of Nebraska Press 1966) "in 1848, Father George A. Belcourt, a Catholic priest, built a mission nearby. . . Father Belcourt had been driven out of the Selkirk settlement for siding with the metis against the Hudson's Bay Company in the struggle over free trade. . . After the flood of 1851, Father Belcourt and Kittson chose a new site for the settlement thirty miles to the west, on Pembina Mountain. . . The metis at St. Joseph lived a civilized life. They built one-story houses along the Pembina River, planted fields of barley and potatoes, secured a reaper and thresher, and built a gristmill and sawmill. Grasshoppers or floods damaged or destroyed the crops, and pemmican long remained the staple food."

At about a block distant, Mr. Belcourt showed me a miserable cabin, 12x12, which served him formerly as a blacksmith shop, telling me that I could live there for the winter. I answered that I did not think it a suitable lodging for a priest, but, as the church had no sacristy, I was thinking of building a small addition to it, in which I would make for myself a small room and a sacristy.

Then, Mr. Belcourt called together the principal members of the congregation, and made them a convincing discourse in order to show them the privilege and advantage and happiness they possessed, to have from now on a priest in their midst to instruct them and look after their spiritual welfare. And the next day Mr. Belcourt returned to St. Joseph.

When the next Sunday came, I gathered all the little eloquence I possessed to try to prove to my new parishioners that I had come amongst them for their good and explained to them that, having no lodging, I proposed to make a small addition to the back of the church. I invited them then, to come the next day and bring the necessary wood and



raise a frame work, for this little addition. (I did not know the Metis who like to have a priest sacrifice himself for them but who do nothing for him.) The next day I only saw one young man, coming without tools. From that you can judge how much work was done. The next Wednesday Mr. Belcourt having returned to get what he had left at Pembina, and seeing that we had done nothing told me again that as the winter was approaching, I would do well to go and settle in the old blacksmith shop. Realizing already that if I would make an addition to the church, I could not count on my Metis, I answered "let us go and see". It was a tiny house of oak logs 12x12, and not fitted, and 7 or 8 feet high; it had a wooden floor and the roof was dovetailed. It appeared more beautiful within than without. And I was satisfied, thinking I could take it such as it was. I was much mistaken in my calculation. The winter was approaching; I had no stove; and it was not easy to find one in that section, and the house having no chimney, I was forced to make one, but how?

I could not begin the work because there was in this house a poor family who had begun to build elsewhere, promising day by day to leave but remaining forever. After I had waited a whole month, in the beginning of October, the tenant, at last ready to leave, told me "are you to keep the floor? It is mine and I need it in my new home." "If the floor is yours, you can take it up, I have some slabs of pine wood and will make a better floor than yours; anyway I wish to make also a cellar." It was a big undertaking for such a poor carpenter as myself who had nothing but tools even poorer, because these pine slabs were nothing but the leavings of logs from which Mr. Belcourt had made boards. And these slabs were too large and thick at the big end, too small and thin at the other end.

Anyhow, with perseverance, I finally was able to make a good enough floor. It was only a small beginning. My floor finished, the tenant asked me "are you going to keep the door? The door is also mine." "If the door is yours, you may take it, and I will make a better looking one." I had some boards and I made a door of which the wooden hinges made such a noise that I did not need a bell to announce the arrival of visitors.

At last I thought myself settled in my home when my man came for the third time and told me "are you going to keep the window? It is a window that I borrowed and I must return it." (It was a poor window frame attached against the logs, because the hole which it closed was without shape.) I started making fun of him a third time telling him that he could take away his window and I would make something more suitable. As I had watched the men, the winter before, making window frames for the Cathedral of St. Paul, I tried to imitate them and I succeeded in making a nice frame, which I did not put against the logs but fitted into the opening, and so made a fairly good looking window. When my house was enclosed, I divided it into two parts and in that way making four rooms, two above and two below, one serving as living room, the other as a kitchen, sitting room and bed room. I needed to have a chimney not having a stove. In order to make one, I cut five logs from the bottom of my cabin and replaced them by a wall of earth, as did the people of Lyons. This wall was a foot and $\frac{1}{2}$ thick. I made an oven, thinking of having something to cook in it, and built on the wall of earth, a fine chimney with a

French cornice. I used clay mixed with hay, as was the custom of the country, and made a chimney which went above the roof. I had no sand, no bricks and no cement. The house fixed, it was necessary to have furniture. With a slat of white wood, left from the floor, I made myself a three legged chair. As I had no bed, I made one in the corner of the room which was six feet wide. Above the bed I built myself a closet, and there I was completely established. I was only lacking of kitchen utensils. They soon came. Mr. Joe Rolette brought me a large tin pot, two plates, two forks, two spoons, and four or five pounds of flour, also two pounds of tea and some sugar. There I was furnished with everything and happy as a king in my beautiful castle.

My house ready, I had to think of the Good Lord. My church was of logs, but very poor. It had neither benches nor chairs. Every one, children, men, girls and women, all sat on the floor. There was a tabernacle on the altar, but it was only a little box, without ornaments and without a key. There was also a candle box, I think. I made myself a lathe with two branches affixed to a beam which held them together, two posts to hold

EDITORS NOTE: in our last issue we printed without attribution (and with apology to the author) an article about France in the 1700's.

Some detective work has resulted in a solution to our dilemma. The book from which the article came is France in Modern Times by Gordon Wright New York, Norton, 1981. Our thanks to Prof Johannes Postma, teacher of French History at Mankato State University for the information.

my wood to turn, a large arc above my two branches, and a cord attached to the one of my arc. With the aid of my foot, I turned the wood that I wanted to make beautiful. Then I turned four nice posts for the tabernacle, and fitted a key to it.

As I did not want to sit on the floor, like my parishioners, I continued to turn post for chairs, and soon found myself comfortably seated with my two altar boys. There was no stove in the church, but when we are young we can get along without one. I did not worry about that.

Having everything fixed in the church and in my castle, it was necessary to think of making provisions for the winter. As in the year of 1858, the grasshoppers had destroyed all the crops, and that, beside very few

concluded next page

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MEMORIES OF FALL 1858

people seeded their land. I went with one of my neighbors, who was a poor as I, to make my provisions at St. Boniface, which was 70 miles from Pembina. Having a poor horse it took us two days to get there, and not without misery, as we were obliged to sleep in the open, during very cold weather.

After having made about 60 miles our horse was exhausted. Fortunately we had arrived at St. Norbert, the first parish on this side of the diocese of Mgr. Tache. There I made the acquaintance of the good father Lestant, a young French priest, who received me as a brother and had the kindness to let me have his horse to make the 10 miles of prairie to reach St. Boniface. There also the provisions were scarce, the grasshoppers having destroyed most everything. I arrived at Mgr. Tache's, who was the biggest farmer of that section. He received me with the greatest cordiality, as if I had been one of his children. He gave me a sack of potatoes, one of peas, several cabbages, and refused to accept any payment. Our return to St. Norbert was happy as we had a good horse. But our luck ended when we had to take back our own horse which we had left there on the way up. My companion who had not taken any provision for the voyage, counting on his gun for dinner and supper, marched far ahead of me to find some game, not thinking that I might have some trouble with my old horse. One of the wheels of my cart dropped into a deep rut just the width of the rim; my horse sat down. To try to make him advance was to take a chance to have him make a side jump and break my wheel which did not have in its construction even the reinforcement of an iron nail to make it solid. I had to unload. I was not strong; it was only with the greatest difficulties that I was able to reload my sacks.

To avoid falling into other ruts which were frequent on the prairie roads, I was obliged to lead my horse by the bridle for about 20 miles, as far as the river Gratiats where we arrived at sun set. Hardly had we made camp when the rain came to trouble us, and continued throughout the night. Having nothing to protect ourselves, but the large wheels of our cart. The next morning I would like to have slept, the weather had turned fine, but it was a Saturday and we still had 30 miles to travel to reach Pembina and say the Mass on Sunday. As old Peter Eden had joined on with an oxen, also carrying provisions, my man found himself with a new companion. I left him in charge of the horse and I went on afoot.

After I made my provisions, I visited my parishioners to take the census. I found 424 on the American side and 24 on the English side. It remained for me to learn the language of the Chippeways that my mission might be more fruitful in my efforts to evangelize these poor savages who were all or nearly all pagans.

Already having copied all the grammar of the Chippeways and thinking and I was contemplating living quietly and happy in my little parish when Mr. Belcourt, in the month of March, 1859, went to Big Canada leaving me in charge of his parish at St. Joseph, which had a population of 900 souls and was about 35 miles from Pembina."

To be continued in future issues.
In spring, 1991, we will go on one of the last buffalo hunts with Fr. Goiffon and the Metis.

Our most sincere thanks to Lois Tuckner of Woodbury MN who kindly provided Fr. Goiffon's memoirs.

MESSE DE NOEL EN FRANCAIS

will be celebrated at St. Louis church in downtown St. Paul on December 24th at 6:30 p.m. Please plan to attend yourself and spread the word. St. Louis church is one block south of I-94 on Cedar Street. (The St. Paul Science Museum is across the street).

CHANSONS FRANCAIS EN CASSETTE

are available by contacting Marie Bouley, 328 Pleasure Creek Drive, Blaine MN 55434. This is a brand new tape completed by Les Canadiens Errants. Songs on the tape are very similar to many sung by French-Canadians and would make a great gift for friends and relatives.

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NEWSLETTER OF FEVRIER - MARS, 1991 VOL. 12 NO. 4

La société canadienne-française

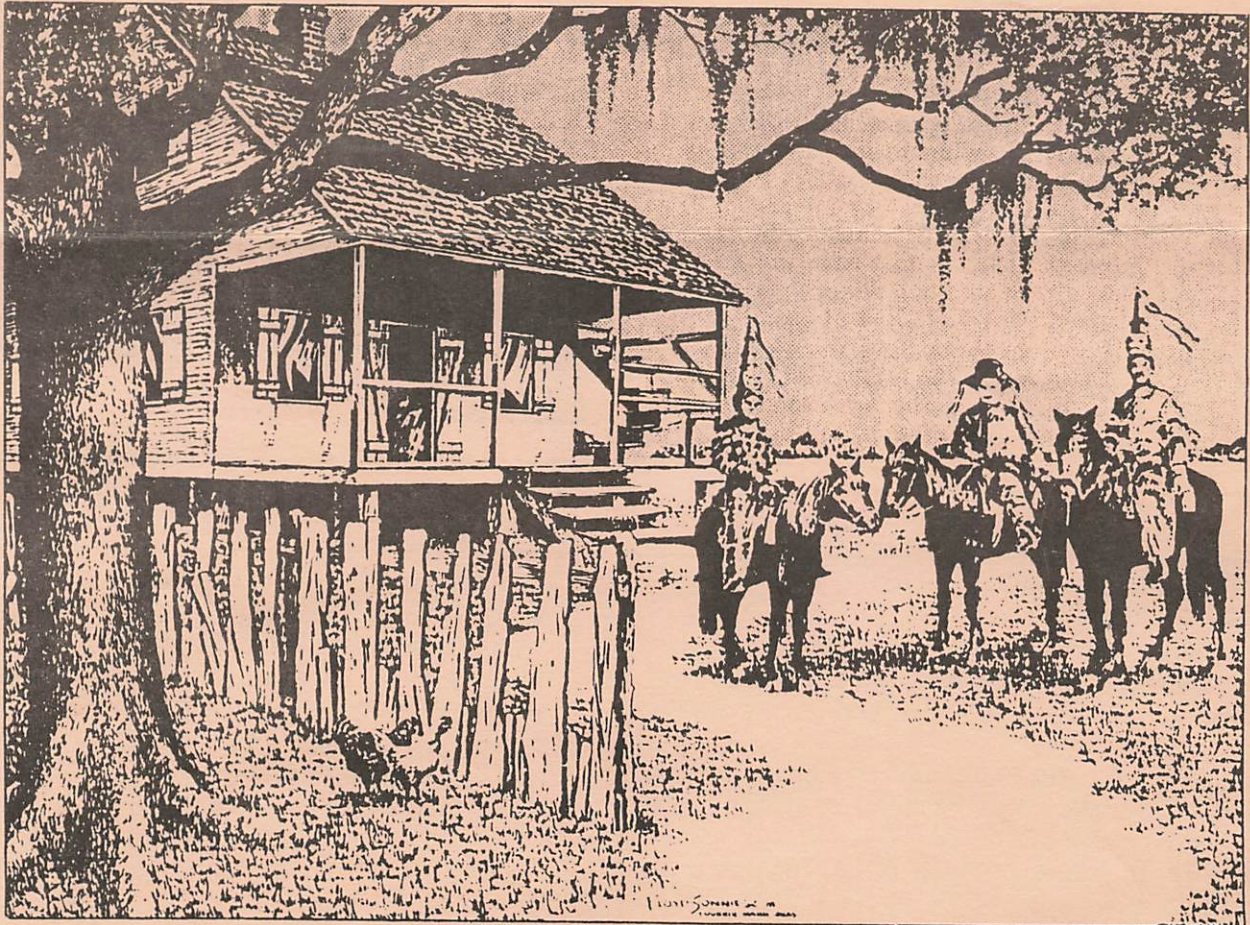
Editor: Dick Bernard

Co-Editor: Jerry Marie Forchette

October 10, 1990
Houma, La.

The Bayou  Catholic

(See article on page two)



COURIR MARDIS GRAS -- Fat Tuesday is a holiday which is filled with folklore for the Acadians. The celebration has changed a great deal over the years; however, the custom of "courir Mardi Gras" is still observed in Mamou and Church Point.

above, and on pages two and three are two articles from newspapers in Houma, Louisiana. These articles were provided by a Cajun friend, Anna Himel, of Houma. "The Acadians. . ." is reprinted from the Bayou Catholic of October 10, 1990; "Cajun Carnival. . ." is from the Houma Daily Courier of February 7, 1989. Mardi Gras? Fevrier 12, 1991.

The Acadians have colorful traditions handed from generations

By SHERWIN GUIDRY

This continues our series on "The Acadians" by Shirlene T. Cooper, Part III. Folklore is the body of traditions which have been unofficially handed down and preserved through the generations. The Acadians have a wide variety of folklore ranging from games, recipes and superstitions, to folk medicine.

One of the largest of the groups concerns the human body and folk medicine. Some of the beliefs are typified by these examples: if a person cuts his hair on Good Friday, it will grow back thick and will be good hair, if a bird weaves hair trimmings in a nest, the person who the hair belonged to will "catch a headache," if a rat uses the hair trimmings in a nest, the individual will go crazy, and a person should never cross his eyes, because they may stay that way (Del Sesto and Gibson, 1975).

Folk medicine played a major role in the lives of the Acadians. In Acadiana, the folk doctors were called "traiteurs." Even today there is more folk medicine practiced in this area than in any other part of the United States. One example of the practice of folk medicine is that if a gold wedding band is touched to sore eyes, the sore eyes will be healed. Other examples are: putting popcorn under the bed will help measles to erupt, and a sharp knife under

the mattress will "cut" labor pains (Del Sesto and Gibson, 1975).

Acadians considered the sacrament of baptism to be the first important rite of passage in the child's life. This sacrament was and is still administered at a very early age in Cajun families. This event had and in some cases still has a great deal of folklore attached to it. Two examples of such folklore are: the christening dress must never be sewed on Friday, and the child must cry during the christening in order to be a good person (Del Sesto and Gibson, 1975).

There is much folklore connected with the various holidays. One such observance is the hanging of stockings on New Year's Eve in hopes that Ti-Bonhomme Janvier will bring fruit and candy.

Another holiday which is filled with folklore is Mardi Gras. The idea of the King Cake has been extended into a very popular tradition. The celebration of Mardi Gras has changed a great deal over the years; however, the custom of "courir Mardi Gras" is still observed in Mamou and Church Point.

Good Friday has many taboos associated with it. Some of these taboos involve the acts of kneading bread, cutting bread with a knife, washing clothes and sewing. Some of these traditions and beliefs still exist in the Cajun culture, but they are becoming harder and harder to enforce with each new generation (Del Sesto and Gibson, 1975).



Xplorin' Acadiana

A VERY BRIEF REVIEW ABOUT CAJUNS AND LOUISIANA.

The ancestors of many Cajuns came initially from northwestern France and settled in what is now New Brunswick and Nova Scotia as early as 1605.

By the time the British won the colony from France in 1713, they had established a thriving and self-sufficient community. When they refused to take an oath of allegiance to the British crown they were exiled from the colonies in 1755. This event was called Le Grand Derangement.

They gradually moved down the eastern seaboard and many ended up in southern Louisiana.

Not long after they arrived, in 1763, France ceded Louisiana to Spain. By 1800 France again took over the area, only to sell it to the United States in 1803.

AS WE ALWAYS SAY, CHEZ NOUS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER. SHARE IT WITH FRIENDS, AND CONTRIBUTE YOUR THOUGHTS AND PHOTOS TO IT. Next deadline: March 20 to Dick Bernard, 7632 157th St W #301, Apple Valley MN. Since we publish every two months, you now know all the deadlines. LET US HEAR FROM YOU.

Jerry Forchette and
Dick Bernard

ALLIANCE FRANCAISE is planning trips to Quebec (September 12-17, 1991) and France (focusing on Paris, Normandy and Brittany June 15-29, 1991).

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Cajun Carnival is on horseback — 1 exception

By Janet McConaughy
Associated Press writer

NEW ORLEANS — In most Cajun towns, masked horsemen celebrate Mardi Gras as they have for hundreds of years, with a riotous ride from farm to farm to catch chickens for a huge pot of gumbo.

But the tiny community of Tee-Mamou, deep in Cajun country, is an exception. Its "courir du Mardi Gras" has used trucks since 1919, the year the horses died.

They were running pretty hard, it was kind of a long trek. They ended up running across a blue norther that was blowing in right at the end of their run," said Larry G. Miller, folklife director for the Tee-Mamou-Iota Mardi Gras Folklife Festival Association.

"They got to the farmhouse to do their gumbo, and tied the horses up. After eating the gumbo they started dancing. One guy went out ... and noticed several horses on the ground."

About two-thirds of the 28 horses died that night from pneumonia brought on by the sudden chill after a long, hot run, he said.

"It sobered up a lot of mardi gras early and it busted up the dance," said Miller, using "mardi gras" as people do in these parts, to mean the men who participate in the drunken ride, which they call the courir — or running — du Mardi Gras.

Since that night in Tee-Mamou, a community so small it seldom shows on maps of Acadia Parish, the local Mardi Gras run has been made by truck — a flatbed at first, and now a specially made wagon drawn by a pickup truck.

"Through the rough years down here there were few horses, and they didn't want to take a chance of injuring them," said Joel Cart, president of the festival association.

Though they changed the method of getting about, they kept the custom. And they've kept it on Fat Tuesday, though a number of these communities have their runs on Saturday or Sunday.

This Tuesday, the association puts on its second street festival to celebrate what Miller says is the longest-running courir in any Acadian town.

The tiny community of Tee-Mamou has used trucks for its "courir du Mardi Gras" since 1919, the year the horses died.

The tradition of masked men begging door to door for food goes back to the peasants of medieval Europe, Miller said. He said he's been told masks and costumes were worn to keep the rich people from knowing who was begging — and often stealing — from them.

He said he was startled when folklorists told him the begging gesture used in Tee-Mamou — a cupped left hand held out to beg while the right index finger points to whatever is being asked for — goes back 800 years.

"I grew up with it, thinking it was just an ordinary, extend-the-hand kind of thing," he said.

But even though the custom goes back centuries, most of the Mardi Gras clubs, or krewes as they are known, in Acadiana have had at least one 20th century hiatus, Miller said.

"Practically all that we know of discontinued running during World War II and then started later. Grand Mamou stopped for 15 years," he said.

Grand Mamou is in the next parish, about 28 miles north of Tee — a Cajun abbreviation of petit, or little — Mamou.

It has achieved distinction beyond Tee-Mamou's by getting onto the map, possibly because its 1,400 residents make it about three times as big as its name-sake.

But people down here consider Big Mamou not quite comme il faut because anyone, including women and tourists, may join its courir.

Tee-Mamou, coupled with the nearby town of Iota, welcomes tourists to its street festival, which features tales of old-time courirs by the men who rode in them; Cajun and other south Louisiana crafts; and of course a lot of Cajun food and music.

But tourists can't get into the wagon in which 60 or 70 rowdy men racket around the countryside to chase down chickens and scare women and children,

downing beer as they go.

They have made one concession to tourism, though: limits on the beer.

"You can't just grab a beer any time you want," said Miller's son Michael, 23. "They have a big old deep-freeze or two in the truck, and have a padlock on it. They give out a beer or two at each stop to each mardi gras...."

"Everybody wants to drink as much as they can, I guess, but you can't give an organized show if everybody's drunk."

At each farmhouse, the captains first ask if they can have food for the gumbo. If the answer is yes — and it almost always is — the men pile out of the wagon and go through another ancient ritual: the Mardi Gras chant.

He said he knows of two basic songs, one used in Tee-Mamou and the other used everywhere else.

Larry Miller said his group's song has been traced back more than 300 years. He doesn't know the other song well, but does know one thing: "The only words that are both in their song and our song is 'We come from England.' That's kind of curious."

There are two theories about why that phrase would crop up in French-speaking south Louisiana, he said. One is that it's a reference to England's tradition of mumming, with costumed peasants begging door-to-door when winter brought hard times. The other is that it refers to the

Acadians' flight from Nova Scotia after it became English territory.

After the chant and some dancing, things get really wild.

"They break out and run all over the place, chasing chickens and getting whatever charity they can get out of the farmhouse," said Larry Miller.

The charity may be a live chicken, which has to be caught. Or it may be sausages, rice or any other ingredient for the huge pot of gumbo to be made afterward.

The maskers don't always stay out in the yard, either.

"They'll frequently go in to scare the womenfolks or children. It's kind of customary for the women and teen-age girls to be deathly afraid of the mardi gras. And little boys as well," said Larry Miller.

"It's kind of an ongoing thing from generation to generation. You grow up scared of the mardi gras. Later on you become one of them."

Even the girls get their chance to become one of them, though not in the same group. The courirs are traditionally stag events, but since the 1970s, Tee-Mamou has had a women's run on the Saturday before Mardi Gras, with its own gumbo and dance afterward.

The women can get as wild as the men, said Miller, even to the custom of infiltrating the dance hall in costume, grabbing partners for a few dances, and then being pulled out the door by their captains.

LITTLE JOE

When I was growing up my Dad would quite often mention his cousin "Little Joe", Joseph Jr., the son of his uncle Joe Bernard.

Recently I received a letter from Agnes (Gourde) Bolek (5225 E Duncan St Mesa AZ 85205) who wrote, "I remember "Tit Joe" mostly (meaning Little Joe)." "Tit Joe"?

Then I reread "Cajun Carnival" and saw the comment at left: "Grand Mamou is. . . north of Tee - a cajun abbreviation of petit, or little - Mamou."

On came the light bulbs: "Little" "tit" "tee" "petit". Franglaise, Slanglaise.

By the way, Agnes is looking for information about her Pageau (Pagote, Page, Paget, etc.) roots. Let her hear from you if you have any information.

Dick Bernard

La Societe Twin Cities will next meet on March 4, 7:30 p.m. at St. Louis Church 506 Cedar Street St. Paul. We meet first Monday of the month. Every month there is a program. Plan to attend.

YES, THE IRISH CAME TO QUEBEC, TOO!

The following family history comes from Charles Bouley about his ancestors.

"My maternal great grandmother, Louise Farley, wife of Octave Remillard, had for her first ancestor in Canada Antoine Farley, son of Jean Farley and Marie Carey, of Galway, Ireland. Antoine Farley was born near the end of the 17th century in the maritime city of Galway, in the county of the same name, in the province of Connaught.

Around 1708, among the sons of "The Green Erin" who preferred exile rather than found a family in their impoverished and famine-ridden country, was this same Antoine Farley, who settled in Quebec, Canada.

In Quebec, February 17, 1710, Antoine Farley, our young Irishman, married a French-Canadian girl, Marie-Anne Basquin, daughter of Philippe Basquin and Marie Joly. The young couple settled in Montreal and on December 10, 1710, they baptized a son, Jacques-Philippe, who would be the continuer of our maternal line. About twelve years later, on September 15, 1732, Marie-Anne Basquin Farley, having become a widow, remarried in Montreal to Jean Fabre, a frenchman from Lanquedoc. She died and was buried in Montreal, May 15, 1752.

Active and entrepreneur, Jacques-Philippe Farley, more often called Jacques Farley, traveled many times in the wilderness, "En Haut", that is to say in the Canadian West, for the trading of furs. This ancestor, who learned the languages of the Indians, was also an interpreter.

Taken from the Archivistes (for the years 1822-23) there is this note:

"June 1, 1752 - permit issued by the Baron of Longueil, Governor of Montreal, to Laurent Bertrand and Jacques Farley, Interpreter, to leave Montreal with a canoe equipped with supplies and six men, to reach the outpost of Michilimackinac. It is forbidden to make any trades with the Indians other than at said post and its dependencies."

On February 9, 1739, in Montreal, Jacques-Philippe had married Marie-Joseph Dumouchel, daughter of Paul Dumouchel and Marie Louise Tessier. The latter was the grand-daughter of the heroic soldier Urbain Tessier dit Lavigne.

While we do not find any members of the Farley family having taken up arms on the battle field, nevertheless, if the family did not pay the price of spilled blood, it certainly paid in money. The registers of

the epoch mention that Jacques-Philippe made a contribution to the King of France amounting to 8,323 pounds; at that time such an amount being a considerable sum. This contribution was under the form of a loan to the French Government, but a forced contribution, not expected to be repaid, but giving the donor the distinguished title of "Creancier du Roi" or "Creditor to the King".

BON VOYAGE, GASTON.



I was saddened to learn of the death of Gaston Rheaume, president of LSCF in the early 1980's. Gaston passed away January 8.

Gaston was only 50, almost exactly my age. We were certain we were "cousins" - there were Bernards in his line - but as so often happens we didn't take the time to follow up on the possible links in our past. He was Canadienne - from Chicoutimi.

Though we saw each other seldom, I have neat memories of Gaston. The soupe aux pois he cooked in a great kettle at the 1982 picnic is vivid in my memory. His enthusiasm and wit. . . . I recall catching part of a rural St. Cloud City Council meeting on the radio some years ago. Gaston had 'em rolling in the aisles. DeWayne Mareck, in the St. Cloud Times of January 9, 1991, described his friend as "real outgoing, just a real fun person to be around. I remember him as really listening, really caring and really trying to help out" in his township government post.

I did business with Jan and Gaston's House of Lettering in St. Cloud. Remember them when you need team T-shirts, etc. They did much of LaSociete's sales products.

My condolences, Jan. Those wishing to write can do so to the Rheaume family, 3623 Creekview Road, St. Cloud MN.

Dick Bernard

IN THE GOOD OLD WINTERTIME

by John England

There's an old Remington 16 gauge in my closet that belonged to my grandpa. It's patina indicates that it was well used but well cared for. The gun reminds me of him, the stout Frenchman who loved to hunt just about any animal except deer, they were too cute to shoot. But crows, on the other hand were too darned ugly not to shoot. And so, in the winter, after everything that could be shot had been shot and skinned and dressed, it was then time to shoot crows. Emile Joseph England ascertained that crows were a repulsive, noisy nuisance. Naturally, it was his civic duty to rid rural Faribault of the crow population - those with feathers to be specific. Now the crow is a cunning twerp. Grandpa respected them for their high avian I.Q. that God had given them. I suppose Joe figured it was an even trade for beauty, which is after all, only skin deep, ugliness, however, goes right to the bone! Indeed, the only thing uglier than a crow is a plate full of mortal sins. Ask any Frenchman. He'll tell you it is true.

Crow hunting is a sport of skill and patience and revenge. It's also a sport you'd love to hate. Grandpa possessed all of these qualities. And he had a buddy called Hartley Riach who had them too. So they used to hunt together. Hart was an adopted Frenchman. He had married a beautiful French girl, Elizabeth Caron, whose roots went back to a clan of alter builders in Quebec.

Hart was an engineer on the Milwaukee Road, and like all hoggers, he had a loud booming voice. You could hear him yell and cuss at those steam engines way across town. And you always knew which train he was handling - not from the whistle - but from the foghorn voice that projected out the cab window! If Hart were around today, he could have blasted the Iraqi's army right out of Kuwait. I don't know how grandpa kept him quiet when they were stalking the clever crow. Silence was a crucial

element of the hunt and they had to be well equipped too.

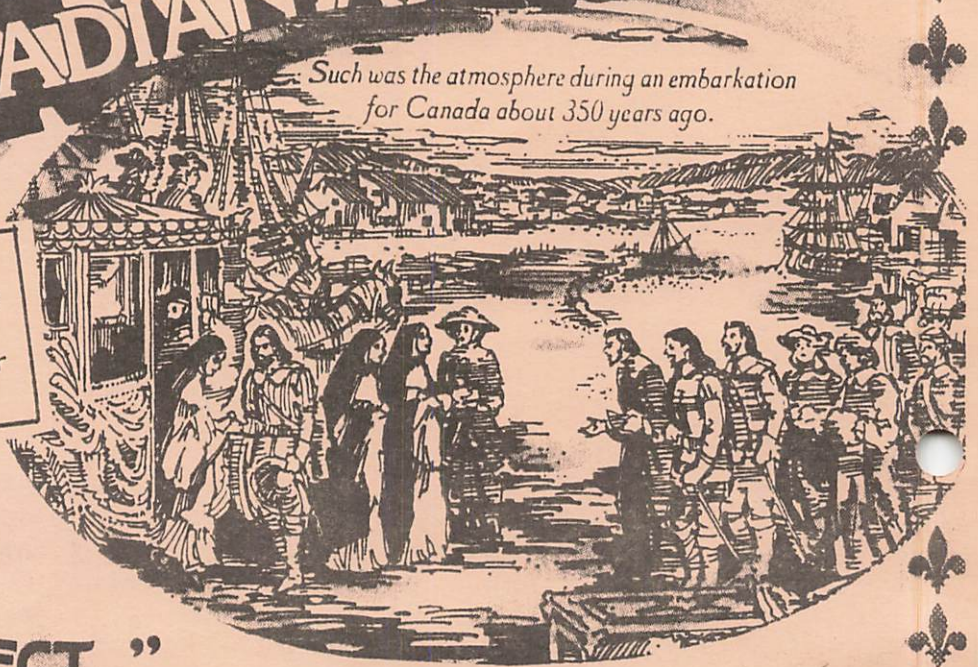
Hart and grandpa would hit the trail before dawn braced with old sheets, shells, guns and a moth-eaten stuffed owl whose hooting days had long since passed. Naturally, the weather had to be colder than a tax collector's heart with an accompanying wind to add to the festivities. They would find a fence and a stand of trees nearby. Gramps would position the owl on one of the fence posts. Then he and Hart would go back into the field about 100 feet and cover themselves with the sheet so they'd appear as a snow drift. There were holes cut in the sheet to allow the Frenchmen and their guns a sight on the foul beasties who would soon be gone to that big crows nest in the sky. All they had to do was to patiently wait for the critters to show up and investigate the owl, who was acting in all his stuffed wisdom as a decoy. The owl would arouse the crows curiosity because even they know that owls don't sit on fence posts during the day. The lead crow would silently swoop down and wrap his leathery talons on a section of the barbed wire to see if it was safe for himself and his winged comrades to start teasing the owl. He would give an all clear signal in his brash native tongue; and soon a brace of ugly devils would swarm down around the owl, taunting him with a serenade that would raise the dead.

Now is the time for action. The two bravest, toughest hunters in Faribault opened up with a volley of lead and smoke that equaled the last stand on the Plains of Abraham! But this time the French were the victors. It was dramatic; there were casualties of great proportion, two satisfied hunters; and a smiling farmer, probably French and certainly happy to be rid of the band of flying thieves who prowled about the countryside seeking the ruin of many a corn crib.

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NEWSLETTER OF AVRIL - MAI 1991

VOL. 12 NO. 5

La société canadienne-française

Editor: Dick Bernard

Co-Editor: Jerry Marie Forchette

SPRINGTIME IN THE VALLEY

by Lowell Mercil

From this valley they say you are leaving
I will miss your bright eyes and sweet
smiles
for they say you are taking the sunshine,
which has brightened my pathway awhile."

I remember the tinge of sadness I felt
when my eldest brother, Al sang that
song with his beautiful rich baritone.
I was crushed when I later found out
that the song was not about my Red River
Valley like I thought, but about a Red
River Valley down in Texas. I did not
know that there was a Red River of the
south as well as a Red River up north.
I wondered why I never saw those cowboys
that the song was about.

We lived on Red Lake River about four
miles south of Crookston on an eighty
acre farm on the edge of that valley.
My grandfather Onesime Mercil (Marcil)
and his wife Delphine DuFault (Dufaux,
etc.) had immigrated from Saint Paul,
Jolliet, Quebec in 1878. On the other
side, my grandfather Joseph Sauve and
his wife Rose Delima Bergevin (Langevin)
had come from St. Timothee, Beauharnois
County, Quebec in 1882. As the Cajun
comedian Justin Wilson would say "you
can't get much more French than dat."
They were some of the first settlers
of Gentilly, the predominately French
community six miles east of Crookston.
Dad and mom had purchased their eighty
acre farm on the Red Lake River southeast
of Crookston in 1919.

Nothing could top the springtime in the
valley. I have enjoyed 25 spring seasons
with the succession of beautiful flower
blossoms and delightful smells in the
Washington, D.C. area, but one does not
obtain the exhilaration, or is it relief
in the Washington area that a person
experiences in the valley. I suppose
some would liken it to the sensation
one experiences when piercing a boil.
But not me! The spring of 1930, when
I was six years old, remains in my memory.

We did not have a nice lawn on our farm,
in fact, we didn't have any lawn at all
as we know lawns today. There were some
grass areas kept short and fertilized
by chickens and pet 4-H project sheep
in the summer but some areas were barren.
A sea of mud appeared when the snow that
had started falling in November began
to melt in early April. But it was fun.
The little rivulets of water trickled
down little ditches. We would take a
pointed stick or a hoe and make a path
for the water to flow from the puddles
to the ditches. Or else it was often
more fun to build little dams to see
how big of a pool we could make then
destroy the dam and follow the resulting
flood to the mouth of the channel. Our
buckle overshoes were a must - but I
seem to remember that our feet were cold
and our shoes were always wet and muddy.
and mom would let us know with emphasis:
"t' on fou, vous et an tete de pusch,
attention de votre pied et ferme le porte"
(you fool, you are a hoe-head, look at
your feet and close the door!") Apparent-
ly, we neglected to put those overshoes

on. During the early thaw this year, I made a few dams and drainage ditches and found that the pastime of the young is still fun.

We were lucky, our farm was on the high ground. The house and other buildings were located well above the river and not in danger of almost yearly floods. We experienced the full impact of nature's power when the river breakup occurred. It was fascinating to watch the huge ice chunks, some weighing thousands of pounds, being tossed around like ice cubes and piled up along the shoreline, knocking down trees and gauging out dirt, clay and rocks wherever they hit the shore. Sometimes the ice would be piled up eight to ten feet at the river's bend.

One of the signals of spring on the farm was the arrival of the chicks. We usually had some "layers", but not enough to produce the number of chickens needed to provide the meat for Sunday dinners, canning, eggs for our use and to trade for food staples at our uncle's grocery store in Crookston. Dad returned from the trip into town. The snow had partially melted so he had taken the surrey instead of the sleigh. As usual, he had brought us kids a treat of store bought round mints which we tried to suck on instead of bite into so they would last longer. To this day I am unable to consume a piece of candy without getting impatient for more flavor and biting into it.

Dad had bought several trays of chicks which were kept by the range in the kitchen until they were old enough, and the changeable weather was predictable enough, for them to be kept outside in the brooder house. The brooder house was located in the barn and heated by a portable kerosene lantern. The little yellow and red fluffy chirping creatures were a delight to have and nobody was offended by the slightly pungent order. We had it much better than the children of today, who can only have one or two Easter chicks...we had a hundred of them!

We lived about a mile on a dirt road used exclusively by us. If the road was in good condition at Easter, our grandfather, aunts, uncles and cousins would drive out in cousin Harry's big Buick and enjoy the Easter banquet at our house. Now I mean enjoy, because mom would cook the dinner and no matter what other French people say about their moms,

my mom was the best cook. She could make a feast from ingredients that others would throw away. Could mom make good pie! Now her sister, aunt Bertha was a good cook but she did have a problem with pie crusts. When she would serve us her pie we wouldn't make any comment so she would say "this pie isn't any good", which it wasn't but then we would have to argue with her to convince her that it was good. The games people play!

It was the most enjoyable to have company for Easter. One thing we could be certain of was that it had been a long winter and a long time since we had had any social activity at our house. After the big ham dinner, the men sat in a room separate from the ladies to have their cigars and pipes. Dad preferred his corn cob pipe with Prince Albert tobacco but on holidays he removed his beautiful curved, meerschaum pipe with the gold trim from its solid black leather case and lit up some special aromatic tobacco, usually passed around for sampling. I remember how much I enjoyed the security of sitting on his lap while he gently rocked back and forth and I would doze off to the sweet smell of tobacco and the droning of the French conversation which I barely understood.

Although much of the work of the unsophisticated valley farmer in the 1930's was back-breaking, nothing was worse than removal of rocks. I had always questioned whether those first French settlers were "pas tro smart", as we used to hash up the phrase. Here was that beautiful valley with what some said is the richest soil in the world and what did the French do? Instead of settling on the fertile deposits at the bottom of the old glacial lake, where the richest soil was, as those sharp Scandinavians, Scotch, Germans and Irish did, the French settled on the banks where the rocks had been deposited when the lake dried up millions of years ago.

When I first visited Gentilly, Quebec, between Montreal and Quebec City, I understood better why the French Canadians had settled where they did. Gentilly, Quebec is located along the St. Lawrence River. Gentilly Minnesota is located along the Red Lake River, much smaller than the St. Lawrence but a source of water, wood, in a wood scarce area, power, and a communication media nonetheless. There are many rocks along the

shores of the St. Lawrence just as there are around Gentilly. Although I have not been able to find specifically how Gentilly, Minnesota received it's name, I can understand that someone must have said, "this looks like home" and it then became the new home.

The first step in preparation of the land for planting was to remove the rocks that the deep frost and subsequent thawing had forced to the surface. Dad, and Al (Elphage) what a name to be stuck with, used what they called a stoneboat for this purpose.

The stoneboat was made from a large piece of heavy tin, rounded at the front like a togoggan, about five feet wide and eight feet long with a two by eight plank box forming the sides. The horses were hitched to the unit to provide the power. The stoneboat would be pulled up next to the rocks which would be tossed in if small enough or pried up with a crowbar. If the rock was too big, it was necessary to unhitch the horses from the stoneboat and re-hitch them to a logging chain surrounding the rock. Sometimes, a dangerous situation would result when the chain would slip off after pressure was applied. Then the horses had to be un-hitched and re-hitched etc. etc. The rocks were deposited along the fence lines or stacked in piles in out of the way places. All this was probably done in cold wet weather and all in all a miserable job.

Today, when I arrived on highway #2, between Marcoux Corner and Gentilly, I see a field on one side where huge rocks are scattered throughout the field. On the other side are many large stacks where the rocks have been piled by use of modern machinery. When passing I often recall the days when the job was the worst of all jobs. Incidentally, I always point out to visitors from outside the area the phenomena. How the rocks are in different stages of production like potatoes. They are grown in one field and now they are being harvested where the piles are.

By 1930, only a few farmers had started the practice of plowing fields in the fall, which would later make a very significant contribution to soil erosion. I am not sure whether plowing the fields was a matter of choice or necessity. I remember freezing our fingers in the

fall when doing the last of the harvest, the potato picking. The six year olds did their part too, acting as gleaners by picking up the potatoes missed by the regular pickers. By the time the harvest was finished the ground was too frozen to plow so the plowing had to be done as soon as the fields were dry enough for the horses.

Now the black soil did smell delightful after the soil had been worked but not so delightful before. One of the winter jobs was to spread the fertilizer over the fields, and it did not consist of imitation fertilizer as they use today, but it was the real stuff. There was not much of a problem during the cold weather when the manure was frozen; but between the first thaw and the plowing under of the surface ones comfort level was dependent on the wind direction in more ways than one WOW! Sometimes the odors were sharp!

Dad used a two bottom plow with four horses. It was long long days from sunrise to sunset. First the plow for the deep furrows, then with the disk to break up the big chunks, then sometimes with the spring tooth harrow to remove quack grass and finally with a drag to make a smooth, lumpless surface to receive the seed.

It was usually a pleasure to smell the black, black fields. On one visit to Minnesota from our residence in the east, my wife asked to stop so she could fill a little bottle with a sample of field soil. She explained that a friend from Georgia thought that all field soil was red clay colored and that the only place that black soil exists in in stores which sell bags of potting soil. Hmmm...They call us parochial!

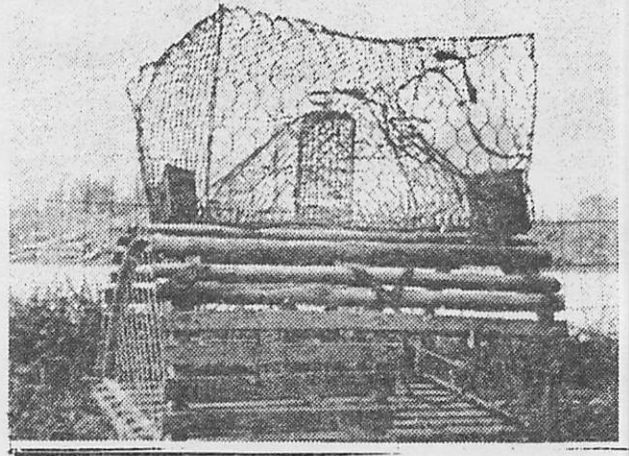
It was necessary to prepare the seed before the planting could proceed. Some of the grain from the previous year had been set aside and stored in the granary for use as seed. I still remember the musty tart smell of that granary but I remember better the four feet long, one half foot by one foot beam that served as a step into the granary. It has happened the summer before.

It was a nice warm sunny July day, I was playing around the granary and I suddenly fell off that front step. I

must of put my arm out to break the fall and instead of breaking the fall I broke my arm. Not a simple crack but a complete break of both lower bones that caused the arm to shape an L. I was told that dad was the first on the scene but he did not last long as he had a very tender nature and proceeded to get sick. (Al or a neighbor had to kill the animals at butchering time.) Mom had to take over, I suppose she made sure I had clean underwear in case I had to go the hospital. I was brought to our family doctor, Dr. Norman, at the Northwestern Clinic. As I remember I had to wait a bit in a waiting room that smelled of ether, bandages and antiseptics. I believe I was put under ether but remembered several horrible sharp pains before escaping into unconsciousness. After we arrived back home I revelled in all the love and attention that was lavished upon me. Everyone was amazed that this severe of a break could be sustained from falling off a six inch plank.

The grain seed had to be prepared before it could be planted. We had a fanning mill in granary for that purpose. It had a frame about four feet by five feet and stood about five feet high. There were a number of movable screens with holes of varying sizes that shuttled back and forth when the power wheel rotated. Since we did not have electricity, despite the fact that the Northern States Power "new dam" bordered our farm, we had to take turns to furnish the arm power for the process. The grain would be fed in on the top and be fed into grain sacks at the lower outlet. Now even though we only farmed a total of eighty acres, it took a lot of kid power to sift the large number of sacks needed for planting. It was a dusty process but the machine did take out the chaff, mustard seeds, mice droppings etc.

Preparing the seed potatoes for planting was another job that had to be done in early spring. The slanted trap-door was opened and sacks of potatoes were removed from the damp, musty ferment smelling cellar. We did not have washers then so the potatoes usually were covered with back dirt which was not as beautiful on ones' hands as in the field. We had a contraption made from a saw horse which the operator would straddle and face a long razor sharp knife mounted on one



*The lobster pod
and the crab trap
...both tools of the
Acadian's trade:
fishing.*

end. The operator would hold a potato in his hand and cut it in half, then into quarters, then into eighths as long as one potato eye remained in each section from which the new plant would sprout. Gloves were unmanageable and when the fingers became cold from handling the cold potatoes, the skin on the palm of the hands below the thumbs got awful thin. I remember we were warned over and over again to be careful, but slip-ups were bound to happen.

Upon reflection, the actual planting of the seed with the two horse grain drill, the two row corn planter and the single row potato planter was the easy part of the spring chores. When all the seed was in, dad really had earned that twilight pipe that he enjoyed so much.

Of course the best part of spring for a school kid in the valley was that he could look forward to the day that we could sing that great anthem:

"No more school, no more books,
No more teachers cross-eyed looks."

But that's material for later memories.

The Bayou  Catholic

Lobster and crab traps still serve Acadians of today

By SHERWIN GUIDRY

The lobster trap and the crab trap -- what do these have in common? Sounds far-fetched perhaps, but the two do have something in common -- both are used by Acadians today to capture the water-breathing crustacea.

The lobster trap, or "lobster pot," as it is called, is used today as it has been for 200 years, to capture the over-sized crawfish (using the word loosely). Our forefathers molded the trap out of tender boughs and fished whenever and wherever the lobster thrived. Today the season lasts for about two months, May through the middle of June. One area allows 250 traps per fisherman, another 350 traps. One lobster per trap is a good catch, two is very good, and three in the pot is excellent. Pots are run every two days.

When the Acadians reached Louisiana, there were no lobsters, but there were crawfish and crabs. These were fished with baited lines and nets. The crab trap has been in use for a relatively short time.

Basically the two are the same -- the front entrance, the kitchen, and the living room, as the lobster pot was described to this writer. The pots are made of lumber and netting and the crab traps of wire dipped in a protective coating.

There is a legend about the lobster and the crawfish: "The Acadians had been fishing the lobster for many years and the two became very close friends. When the English expelled the Acadians from their old fishing grounds in Nova Scotia, the lobster became lonesome and followed the Acadians down the Atlantic coast, around Florida, to the Louisiana bayous. But the great distance traveled made the lobster weaker and every mile made him smaller and smaller.

"Before he left, his kind measured as much as 24 inches in length and weighed as much as 42 pounds, but when he reached Louisiana he was only about 5 inches long and weighed only a few ounces. He could no longer live in the cold, salty waters of the sea, so he took to the fresh water canals and marshes in order to survive. Yet he was happy and contented because he was with his friends."

In Colonial America, fish and seafood were so plentiful that colonists actually apologized for serving lowly lobster, and shrimp was considered fit only for bait. But, eventually progress took its toll; salmon which once flourished on the Connecticut River disappeared in 1795; the oyster beds off Cape Cod were totally depleted by 1820. The first fishing schooner was built in Gloucester, Mass. in the early 1700's and by 1770, food processing ships plied the high seas. Those days, ocean fish was enjoyed only by those fortunate enough to live on the coasts. But, as canning techniques, inexpensive ice making and eventually freezing were developed, people inland began to enjoy the fruits of the sea.

Most of today's fishing takes place 100-200 miles offshore on the historic Grand Banks of Georges Bank. These cold waters yield fish that can't be farmed via aquaculture, like many other species. White fleshed fish such as cod, haddock, hake and pollack are particularly mild-flavored and appealing. Shrimp from these northern waters are smaller than Gulf shrimp, but have a completely different flavor many people prefer. Other fish from New England waters include fillet of sole, North Atlantic flounder, grey sole, Boston sole, George Bank Cod (considered the best in the world), cusk, monkfish, Atlantic mackerel, Cape bluefish, salmon, Atlantic halibut and all varieties of shellfish.

The most recent National Marine Fisheries Service data indicates that the average American ate 15.4 pounds of fish and shellfish in 1987. Nationwide that amounts to more than 3.7 billion pounds of fish. As people look to lower fat and cholesterol in their diet, fish of all types continue to become popular.

Special thanks to Kathy Garvey....

WE HAVE LIMITED NUMBERS OF BACK ISSUES OF CHEZ NOUS SHOULD YOU WISH COPIES TO SEND TO PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS. This is your club. Members are the source of the money to pay for the newsletters. Make your request to: Dick Bernard
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Apple Valley MN 55124
(612) 891-5791

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

by Dick Bernard

HAPPY SPRING!! I hope the articles in this months edition bring a smile, or a memory, or a thought or two. Lowell Mercil (Mentor MN) has been a loyal contributor; John Cote (who from time to time has masqueraded as "VISUM") brings some wonderful energy. **MAY 6 MEETING OF TWIN CITIES CHAPTER** will feature **RICH WILLIAMS** speaking on his groups reenactment of voyageur living. This will be a very interesting program. Meeting at 7:30 in the church hall of St. Louis Catholic Church, St. Paul. **REQUESTS:** **Florence LaPlante Contos**, 2122 West 3rd Street, Duluth 55806, seeks information on LaPlantes, Carons, Benoits. Her father was born near Centerville; **Beth Dooley**, 2148 Summit Ave Minneapolis 55405 is "especially interested in researching ethnic food and cooking traditions." **Keep sending contributions for Chez Nous.** We are looking especially for recollections, things about France, old photos with a story, upcoming programs. . . . send to **Dick Bernard**, 7632 157th Street West #301, Apple Valley MN 55124. **SOME THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN COMING WEEKS:** St. Paul's Festival of Nations April 25-28 (La Societe is actively involved again this year); Rivertown International Film Festival at the UofM from April 19 to May 4 (call 612-627-4431 for more information - there will be several French and Canadian films; Cedar Cultural Center presents **Lo Jai, Renaissance Music of the French Countryside**, on April 25 at 7:30 p.m. 332-2674 for more information. The Center is near the West Bank of UofM. Take Cedar exit off I-94, head north, and you're only three blocks away. This Center frequently has Cajun, Canadian and French programming. Get on their mailing list. If you're interested in news from Canada as released by Canadian Consulate let us know. Bill Horn at FWolin Foundation, Foshay Tower, Minneapolis. **MARCH, 1991, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC** has a wonderful article on Montreal and a very informative wall map of Quebec. You can receive the issue and the map for \$2.65, to National Geographic Society, Washington D.C. 20036. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. **FRENCH DANCE TONIGHT**, a 90 minute video of Cajun dancing, is available for \$52.95 from Flower Films, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito CA 94530. It is excellent.

LETTER FROM CONNECTICUT: ALL ABOUT PEONIES

Good friend John Cote (311 Providence Rd Brooklyn CT 06234) writes 3/10/91: "We had a screwed up winter no snow little cold warm days rain/sleet icy roads but nothing lasting - in fact my peonies are sprouting new growth since 24 Feb. They normally don't pop up until late March and bloom by June."

A year ago, John wrote another letter about peonies, as follows: "I have been hybridizing and cross pollenating since 1978 and finally got one outstanding plant that is superior to any that I have seen. Every time you get a seedling from an X-pollinate on peonies it will be the only one of it's kind unlike it's parents although it carries some characteristics of them both. It takes 2 or 3 years for the seed to sprout, they are notorious for being infertile and one must wait 3 to 5 years for them to bloom and you might have just a plain run of the mill specimen, then you wait 3-4-5 years more to assure that it flowers true to form and color and is a superior plant in all respects. This one blossomed in 1984 and is truly outstanding. I have the privil-

ege of naming it as long as it is not the same as any other registered at present and that the name is agreeable to the society of which I am a member. This is the only one of over 1500 seeds that is worth registering. If you get a 30% germination and get results of 3-4% of plants surviving you are doing well. One famous peony man registered 1200 peonies over a period of 42 years, hybridizing from over 17,000 crosses being made and he is considered a giant among peony growers and fanciers and his creations can cost \$100.00 a plant today. The cheapest I know of is \$30.00. This game is not for the fainthearted, one must have patience and luck. I have about 150 plus maturing every year with about 134 blossoming this year from seeds planted in 1985-86. I usually plant between 300-700 seeds every year. I have 20 special seeds to plant in June from a friend, Bill Seidl, Michigan; I sent him 2837 seeds that I did not want from the 3184 I harvested in 1989. Peony nuts exchange seeds, ideas, etc., same as you and I exchange information about our families."

COMMENTARY

by Dick Bernard, editor

February 4-8 was a rather remarkable week for me.

* on February 4, I had the privilege of hearing Vernon Bellecourt of the American Indian Movement (AIM) speak to the Twin Cities chapter of La Societe. He talked on the Indian perspective of last summers serious conflicts with the Quebec government. He had a powerful message. He was controversial, too. But no one left while he talked! There was very active listening going on, and some debate after he shared his message with 35 of us in attendance.

* on February 8, at the University of Minnesota, I heard another powerful message. Dr. Molefe Asante of Temple University talked about his mission - Afro-centricity. His message was in many ways almost identical to Bellecourts: 500 years of oppression by Europeans; a need for the black culture to come to grips with, appreciate and establish its own cultural identity in this country.

* also during this time period I again became reacquainted with our Cajun brothers and sisters of south Louisiana. ~~Their ancestors were exiled by the British from their~~ Acadian homeland in the 1750's. 150 years of a culture which had developed in what is now-Canada's maritime provinces was essentially eradicated when the Acadians were sent into exile in a foreign land and environment.

It occurred to me during this week that in at least a small way I had some common ground with the people's represented by Bellecourt, Asante and the Cajuns. About 350 years ago my ancestor Jean Bernard came to what is now Quebec. He was one of the 98% of the French people who were peasants in France. Most of our ancestors did not come to this country as landed gentry - or anything even close to that status. Most came as peasants.

We were, however, fortunate compared to the Blacks and the Indians. At some point our ancestors became part of the "establishment" (however that nebulous word is defined) and accrued certain advantages not available to our black and red brothers and sisters. But even here there is debate: a common term for French-speakers in Quebec around the Separatist days of the 60's was "white nigger" - a powerful epithet that suggests that racism could and probably did cross the "white line", and perhaps explains the extremely strong feelings held by many Quebecers today to emancipate themselves and become independent of Canada.

Human history is, unfortunately, filled with inhumanity towards others who are somehow "different". The recent events in the middle east are a most dramatic example: we

revel in "victory" and talk about low casualties - for our side; but we tend to dismiss the innocent victims in Iraq. This is the dark side of cultural awareness: to become aware of and appreciate our own culture we often tend to dismiss or denigrate or put in a separate category others, and that is very unfortunate.

(Speaking of the Middle East, I heard a wonderful talk by our founder, John Rivard, at the March 4 meeting. John traced the ethnic-religious-cultural conflict in that region of the world back for several thousand years. I left wondering if there will ever be any hope for true peace in that region since everyone seems to have a defensible "God-given right" to all or part of that territory.)

As I said in the Oct-Nov Chez Nous, "the best we can do . . . is to try to understand, appreciate and accept those of other cultures and backgrounds. And to understand as well the myths we have all been taught and attempt to modify our own understandings as we learn new information."

Dick Bernard

WE BID BON VOYAGE TO ARCHIE LEVASSEUR, a loyal member of the Range Chapter of LaSociete who put his oar into the water to the hereafter on March 22. Archie's funeral card, below, says all that needs to be said about his life and his interests. OUR CONDOLENCES to his wife, Anne, who is also a La Societe member, and to his children and grandchildren.

In Loving Memory

ARCHIE ARTHUR LEVASSEUR

born

June 10, 1905 - Little Falls, Minnesota

died

March 22, 1991 - Hibbing, Minnesota

Reflections of Archie

- Clearing the land, building the cabin and enjoying retirement years there with Anne
- Walking through the woods
- Trapping the north country for many years
- Cutting wood for the fireplace
- Picking blueberries around Sturgeon Lake
- Dance club with Anne and his friends
- Sitting in the big chair watching the Vikings
- Deep love for his family
- Hunting and fishing in Alaska
- Telling tall tales
- Love and respect for the outdoors





chez nous

NEWSLETTER OF JUIN - JUILLET, 1991 VOL. 12 NO. 6

La société canadienne-française

Editor: Dick Bernard

Co-Editor: Jerry Marie Forchette

Below and on
the following page is the
translation
of the
MARRIAGE CONTRACT
between two natives
of Quebec
who migrated to Minneapolis
in 1857 and in 1870.

At left is the original cover of
the marriage contract.
It translates as follows:

14 September 1870
Marriage
Between
M. Louis Fisiau called Laramée
and
Delle Alphonsine Davis

Paid First Expedition

This issue of Chez Nous is devoted in
large part to the Laramée's, of
St. Lin, Quebec, of Montreal, of Minneapolis.

We are very thankful to Bill Horn, editor
of Nouvelles Villes Jumelles, for sharing
these stories of his great-grandparents
with us.

Read on . . . and enjoy! And let us know
your own personal story(ies). Send to
Dick Bernard, 7632 157th Street West #301,
Apple Valley MN 55124

14 Septembre 1870

Marriage

*M. Louis Fisiau
appelé Laramée*

Et

*Delle Alphonsine
Davis*

*Paid
Première Expédition*

The Laramee - Davis Marriage Agreement
Quebec, 1870

The below is translated from a hand-written document by Bill Horn, a descendant of Louis Laramee and Alphonsine Davis. Mr. Horn says he also has an earlier contract of marriage of the Fisiau dit Laramee family dated, 1829. The arrangements for the distribution of simple property such as axes, carding machines, and beds reminds us of the humble conditions in which our ancestors lived. Also, many who were witnesses used an X (ne savoir signe).

Before Maitre P. Renaud, notary at St. Lin^{*} in and for the Province of Québec and in the actual presence of M. Gilbert Gauvreau, bailiff at St. Lin, witness for this requis, undersigned.

Appear M. Louis Fisiau called Laramée, of age, shoemaker, resident of Minneapolis in the State of Minnesota, one of the United States of America and presently in the parish of St. Lin, issue of the marriage between Joseph Fisiau called Laramée and Dame Aurelie Durand stipulating for him and in his name on one side.

And M. Theophile Davis, merchant and inn-keeper of the parish of St. Lin, stipulating for his minor damsel Alphonsine Davis issue of his marriage with Dame Hyrèle Ethier, said damsel Alphonsine Davis here present consenting on the other side.

Who in the presence of their parents and friends have completed the civil covenants of marriage as follows:

First Article:

Agreement of communal estate and half in that which the future spouses will make in the course of their future communal estate.

Second Article:

Debts which the future spouses will have created before their marriage will be paid

* St. Lin is north of Montreal. Sometime after 1870, it was renamed Laurentides in honor of Sir Wilfred Laurier who was born there.

CHEZ NOUS is your newsletter and
LA SOCIETE is your Club. Ask your
relative or friend who is interested in
their heritage to join with us.

by and from the estate of the future spouse who created them.

Third Article:

Agreement of dower, this to which the future bride has renounced as much for herself as for the children who may be born of the projected marriage.

The preciput (which means fixed inheritance) will be 100 piastres to the benefit of the survivor, hors part and without increase in money or in chattels following the valuation of the inventory, moreover the bed such as will be then, with it's clothes linen and good clothes. If it is the future of the husband who survives he will take moreover his arms, hatchet, mattock and steel pick-axe and the future bride her rings, jewels, carding machine and spinning wheel.

At the dessolution of the said joint estate be it by death or otherwise, it will be free to the future wife and to the children who will be born from the projected marriage to renounce it. In that case she recovers absolutely and debt free all she proves to have brought into it along with her preciput such as above stipulated, for surety of which she will have the lien from to enjoy possession in case of no children.

The future spouses maintain their rights and property and wish and intend that the future joint estate be regulated according to the law of the country, Province of Québec.

Prepared and accepted in St. Lin residence of the future bride, Province of Québec, Canada, under number 3,311 in the year 1870, the 14th of September before the marriage be celebrated and declared, attested as signed by those who cannot sign their names, of this, requis, except the undersigned, after reading did sign: L. Laramee, A. Davis, Theophile Davis, G. Gauvreau, Renaud, N.P. just as it appears at the present moment to the undersigned.

P. Renaud N.P.

Great Grandfather's Wedding Journey

by Charles Horn, Minneapolis, MN

The event here recounted which occurred during great grandfather Louis Laramée's wedding journey is a bit of family history which is usually told to his descendents in their childhood.

To a child the story is both thrilling and perhaps a little frightening so it is only when the child reaches maturity that the humor and pathos of the situation becomes apparent. Surprisingly, my tale can be proved to be a true story. I have in my possession a yellowed clipping from an 1870 Minneapolis newspaper which stated it in capsule form. However, it is indispensable to the story to know something about great grandfather Laramée because the story is the man in miniature.

Great grandfather Louis Laramée was a rather remarkable man who made a deep impression on his children and their families even to the present day. At this writing, there are living in the Minneapolis area Louis David Laramée (grandson), David Louis Laramée (great-grandson), and Julia Laramée Horn, and Louise Alicia Horn (great, great granddaughter) all of whose names are in some way derived from that of this very positive French Canadian.

Louis Laramée was born near St. Lin, Quebec (now Laurentides) in 1837. It turned out to be an historic year for Canada as before it ended the abortive Mackenzie-Papineau rebellion took place from this evolved modern Canada. St. Lin is a modest but not a mean town. When I visited it several years ago, I found that it possessed a traffic light and an extremely large church built some years after Louis Laramée left but no doubt in part with some of his money.

Louis Laramée learned the trade of harness making and sometime during the 1850's left Quebec. He appears to have gone first to New England the traditional American entrepôt for French Canadians and from there in 1857, he went west. He chose Minnesota Territory as his destination, and debarked from a steamboat at Reed's Landing later that year with a knapsack, the tools of his trade, and his fair share of determination. The later carried him on foot to St. Anthony (not yet Minneapolis) where he found employment in his craft.

He seems to have been a good worker and in light of what I will recount, a very dutiful employee. When the Sioux War broke out in Minnesota in 1862, his boss equipped him with a horse, saddle and gun and "volunteered" him to fight the Indians. (Let any young executive whose boss has "volunteered" him to work in the United Fund or other worthy projects count his blessings.) Great grandfather's Indian fighting career was both brief and mysterious. It is absolutely certain that he never fought the Indians. There are two family versions of how he left the volunteer service. It is enough to say that one is reverent and the other is irreverent.

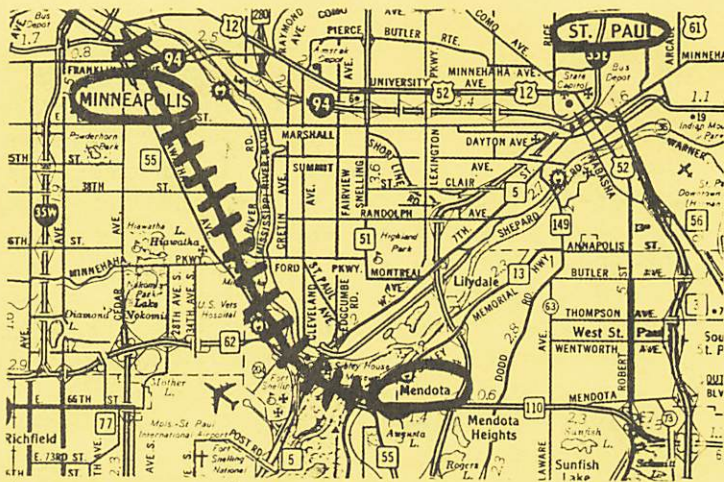
By 1870, he had prospered and like most single men of 33 had begun to think of marriage. However, be it remembered that he was Canadien and very practical. He bought a house. That done, all that remained was to find a bride. For that purpose he returned to Canada where he married Alphonsine Davis, who despite her surname, was throughly Canadienne.

She was 16 years old and had been educated in a convent school. Alphonsine was not exactly unknown to Louis Laramée as her father kept the inn at Terrebonne, Quebec where the groom had once lived as a young man. On that occasion he had rocked his future bride in her cradle. Their courtship was apparently also very Canadien (which is another name for practical) as the terms of this tattered dowry agreement disclose.

So it was, great grandfather Laramée's wedding journey back to Minneapolis began. By now it could be by railroad and all went well until the train reached Mendota, perhaps ten miles from what is now downtown Minneapolis. Mendota was a regular stop in those days and great grandfather saw an acquaintance on the station platform.

Leaving his bride on the train, he descended to the platform to exchange greetings. (One suspects the friend was also French-Canadian). The inevitable happened, the train left. The bride was on the train and the groom was at the station. What his thoughts were I can only guess, but the determination (and legs) of 1857 were still there so he started on foot down the tracks for Minneapolis.

If Louis was outwardly calm and collected, his bride on the train was decidedly not as soon as her husband turned up missing. Consider the situation. She was only 16,



In very general terms, the area traversed in the story is highlighted above. The total distance was perhaps ten miles, mostly through, perhaps, wilderness and a few farms. How things have changed!

she spoke no English. She was in a strange land and headed for an unknown destination. Now she was separated from the one person she knew and that person was a much older husband who was still something of a stranger to her. There was too a danger more hideous than wild Indians, that was undoubtedly present in this strange land, the - MASONS. She had been warned of them in Quebec. What they might be expected to do to a defenseless young woman, Francaise et Catholique, was too awful to express. (What would she have thought if she had known that her great grandson would become the Master of a Masonic Lodge, I hesitate to imagine.) It is presumed that at this stage she started to have hysterics. Fortunately some one was found on the train who spoke French and who could tell her that everything would be alright.

Meanwhile back near Mendota great grandfather was stalking down the tracks toward Minneapolis. At that point deus ex machina appeared upon the scene in the guise of a solitary engine pulling only it's tender.

It was heading towards Minneapolis and it's engineer impatiently signaled Louis Laramée to clear the track. Louis, in turn, refused to budge and made a proposition. It's substance was that as long as the engine was heading for Minneapolis, why could he not ride in the cab as a passenger. The family is sure that money was also involved. Railroading was much less formal in those days and a bargain was struck. The engine had no load to pull and so made good time to Minneapolis. One suspects that the fireman got his cut too. So it was that the groom arrived at the station only a few minutes after the bride. We must presume that the railroad officials

were so thankful to get an hysterical Mme. Laramée off their hands that they overlooked a little matter of the unauthorized use of their engine.

The couple lived happily ever after many years. Louis Laramée bought land at 304 Nicollet Avenue and opened a successful harness shop. This property remained in his descendent's ownership until the 1950's when it was sold to the Minneapolis Library Board and is now part of the main Library. Louis did well. He was a fancier of horses and harness racing. (His unsuccessful attempt to collect a racing prize is recorded in the Minnesota Supreme Court's decision in Laramée V. Tanner, 69 Minn. 156, 71 N.W. 1028 (1897). He is believed to have contributed money to finance Louis Riel's second unsuccessful rebellion thus indirectly taking part in an event that was to influence Canadian politics to the present day and eventually make his fellow St. Linite, the great Wilfred Laurier Prime Minister of Canada.

Great grandfather Laramée was widowed in 1901 but he lived his remaining thirteen years of his life with zest. He traveled and always went to the French-Canadian picnic on St. John Baptist's Day where he kissed the pretty girls. His family was never quite sure of what to think of papa. Their doubts can be illustrated by the story about his funeral.

An attractive middle aged lady, clad in black, appeared at the funeral. She was totally unknown to any of the members of the family. Louis's son-in-law (my grandfather, Brace) told me that as the service progressed he began to have an uncomfortable feeling that at its conclusion the mysterious lady would announce that she was the widow of the deceased. She didn't. Her identity was never learned by the family nor was her relationship to the deceased ever known. Louis may have been Francaise but he was sage. His descendants still speculate.

Now, let me give the coda to my tale. Several years ago as I waited for a plane in Chicago, a call came over the airport loudspeaker for someone who could speak French to a lost traveler. Although I knew I could not speak French very well, I felt I could read and write it and these skills might serve as substitutes. I volunteered my services but unfortunately a francophone Canadian stewardess was ahead of me. Anyhow I am sure great grandfather Laramée would have approved. Un beau sentiment - n'est pas?

NECROLOGIE 17142

(Jan 2, 1914)

M. Louis Laramée, un ancien Canadien bien connu de notre colonie et des hommes d'affaires de notre ville, est décédé la semaine dernière, à l'âge de 77. C'était une figure bien connue étant depuis de longues années dans le commerce de harnais et ayant employé dans le temps nombre de Canadiens. M. Laramée vint à Minneapolis en 1857 et se mit en commerce. Il vint de Montréal, où il se maria en 1870 avec Mlle Alphonsine Davis, qui l'a devancé dans la tombe de près de 14 ans.

M. Laramée était un des membres de la Compagnie du Capitaine Anson qui marcha à la défense du Fort Ridgley en 1862 et assista aux travaux d'urgence pour la protection des Chutes de St Antoine, menacées de destruction.

Il a aussi pris une part active à la fondation de l'église Ste Clotilde de Minneapolis, — aujourd'hui de Ste Anne — où eurent lieu ses funérailles, samedi matin, le 24 écoulé, à 9 heures. Le service funèbre a été célébré par le Rév. P. Richard, curé de la paroisse.

Trois enfants lui survivent, un fils, L. A. Laramée, et deux filles, Mme H. C. Brace, de Minneapolis, et Mme D. E. Haynes, de Pasadena, Cal.

Nos condoléances à la famille.

M. Louis Laramée, a former Canadian well-known by our colony and by the businessmen of our city, died last week, at the age of 77. He was a well known figure, being for many years in the harness business and having employed many Canadians during that time.

M. Laramée came to Minneapolis in 1857 and entered business. He came from Montreal, where in 1870 he married Mademoiselle Alphonsine Davis, who preceded him to her grave by 14 years.

M. Laramée was a member of the company of Captain Anson¹ which rode to the defense of Fort Ridgley in 1862, and he assisted at the emergency work for the protection of St. Anthony Falls (Minneapolis), in danger of destruction.²

He also took an active part in the founding of the Church of St. Clotilde in Minneapolis — today known as St. Anne — where his funeral took place Saturday morning, the past 24th at 9:00 a.m. The funeral Mass was celebrated by the Reverend P. Richard, parish curate.

Three children survive him, a son L.A. Laramée, and two daughters, Mrs. H.C. Brace, of Minneapolis, and Mrs. D.E. Haynes of Pasadena, California.

Our condolences to the family.

¹Capt. Anson Northrup, a steamboat captain who commanded a volunteer horse company. A tour boat named for him was the site of the July, 1990 outing of La Societe's Twin Cities Chapter.

²An incident in the 1870's in which the falls were being undermined by water which was diverted to operate mills.

in the middle 1600's.

"I also remember her telling me that her son, I believe his name was Louis, who was a correspondent for two New York newspapers working out of Paris, wanted her to find him a young man who could read and write French as an assistant. She said if I would continue with my lessons she would recommend me. It sounded interesting but at that young age I had other interests, and did not follow up on it."

Mr. Huot and Madam Huot worked together in the early 1930's. Isn't it interesting how memories can come back. . . when they're "jogged" just a little!

ABOUT FATHER GOIFFON'S TRANSLATOR:

In two previous issues we have recounted the exploits of Father Goiffon on the oxcarts and in the Pembina-St. Joseph-Red River area in about 1857. In a later issue we will reprint the priest's description of a buffalo hunt in those early days.

The manuscript we are using had a notation that it had been translated from French to English by Mrs. Henry Huot of St. Paul. So, when Henry Huot elected to join our club in April, we sent him a copy of the Goiffon history.

On June 1, we received a letter from Mr. Huot, in part as follows:

"I first met Madam Huot when I was a boy of 14 years. . . She was tutoring students in French and I was one of her students. I remember when I went into her home, she showed me a picture of her husband, and I thought that it could have been a photo of my grandfather, it looked so much like him. However, she and her husband had come directly from France, and my descendants were in Quebec

We bid adieu to CHARLEY BOULEY, who passed away at his home on May 31. Charley, the man who always came to our meetings wearing his beret, loved his heritage and was devoted to genealogy. (An article on his roots appeared in *Chez Nous* a few months ago).

Born in Worcester MA in 1918, Charley attended schools where French was the primary language. As he grew up he migrated west with his family. When he died he lived in Coon Rapids. His wife preceded him in her journey to the hereafter.

Charley was a man of many interests. For a time he edited *Nouvelles Villes Jumelles*. He loved weaving, and he owned many looms. A favorite activity was to listen in on radio broadcasts from France and Quebec on his short-wave. Justa Cardinal says she enjoyed her occasional chances to visit with Charley. "We listened to jokes in French on his radio, and they were hilarious" she said "but when we translated them to English they weren't quite as funny." Ah, the travails of jokes!

Adieu, Charley. You will be missed on earth. Your neighbors in heaven will be richer to have you with them. Dial us in, once in awhile.

This year is the Centennial of Itasca State Park (the Mississippi headwaters). On June 8, a wagon-train left Minnesota's State Capitol for the park, and will arrive at the park on June 23. Festivities are scheduled for the entire day (see below). Itasca is located about 20 miles north of Park Rapids MN.

10:00 a.m. Wagon train enters South Entrance Road and proceeds to the East Contact Station.

3:30 p.m. Finale program and presentations at the Itasca Sawmill Site (on the north edge of the park; entrance off Highway 200; proceed out North Park Entrance and follow signs or park in the Picnic Area Parking and walk north on the trail to the Itasca Sawmill).

5:00 p.m. Chuck Wagon dinner at Lake Itasca Pioneer Farmers Building on the north edge of the park.

The dandelion's name (dent de lion, or "lion's tooth," in French) comes from the notched shape of the leaves. When they are young, the leaves can be used in salads or cooked as greens.

EVENTS TO NOTE:

- June 23 St. Jean Baptiste Day. La Societe picnic will be held at Stillwater Pioneer Park (on the hill overlooking downtown Stillwater). Noon on. Come in costume if possible. Potluck as usual. For those interested there will be a one-hour trolley ride (cost \$6) to tour historic Stillwater.
- June 28 FRANCINE ROCHE sings at the Loring Cafe in downtown Minneapolis.
- July 4 VIRGIL BENOIT will tell stories about the early days of Minneapolis at St. Anthony Days on Nicollet Island in Minneapolis. Virgil, our colleague from Red Lake Falls, is a superb storyteller.
- July 14 BASTILLE DAY events sponsored by Alliance Francaise. Info: 644-5769
- July 16 FRENCH DAY at Ironworld, Chisholm MN. Francine Roche & Company perform.
- August 6 REGULAR MEETING at St. Louis Church Hall in St. Paul. Slide images of Quebec is the program. 7:30 p.m.
- August 9-11 RENDEZVOUS at Ironworld, Chisholm MN. Demonstrations. Aug 10&11 the Bone Tones, an excellent Cajun-style band, will perform.
- August 23-25 CHAUTAUQUA at Old Crossing Park near Red Lake Falls. Guests at this annual event will be James J. Hill, talking about the railroad, a bonanza farmer from the Red River Valley, and other characters of antiquity. This is a wonderful program which begins at 7 p.m. on Friday evening and goes all weekend. Folk arts, songs, dancing, great food, are all a part of the weekend. Contact Virgil Benoit, Red Lake Falls MN for more info.
- October 22 TARTUFFE by Moliere performed by La Compagnie Claude Beauclair at College of St. Catherine. Tickets and information: call Helene Peters 377-4028 or 644-5769.