LA SOCIETE CANADIENNE-FRANCAISE
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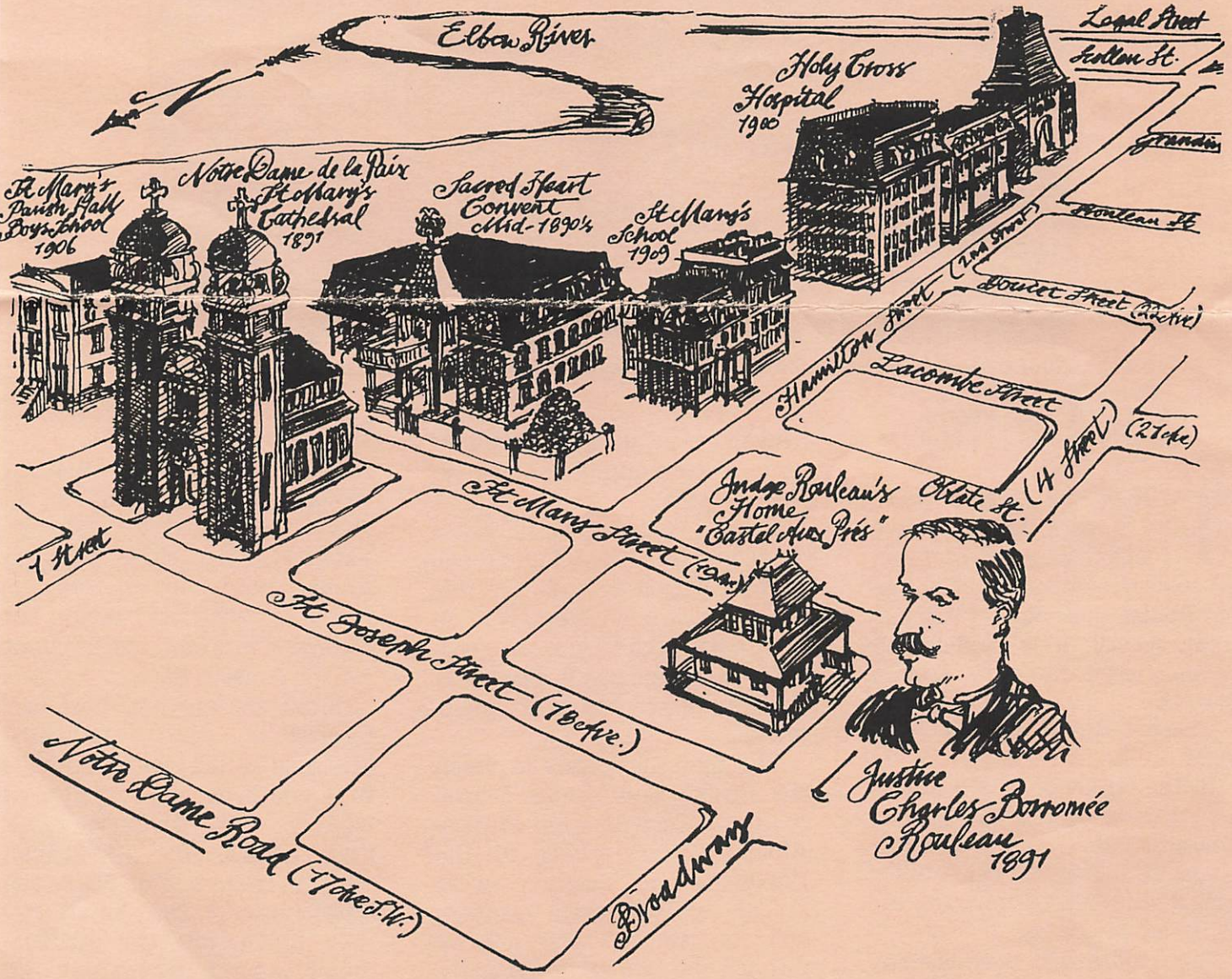
chez nous

NEWSLETTER OF Septembre-Octobre, 1995 VOL. 17 NO. 2

la société canadienne-française

Editor: Dick Bernard



Rouleauville, which flourished in the late 1800s, was home to 500 of Calgary's original French families, led by Justice Charles Rouleau. *(MICHAEL McPARLANE)*

Rouleauville, Alberta. See article on pages 2 and 3. From the Quebec edition of the Toronto Globe and Mail, July 28, 1995. Thanks to Kathy Garvey.

Why Calgary is a French settlement

ROULEAUVILLE, ALTA. / *Albertans who voice strong views about francophone culture should watch what they say: Quebeckers colonized the Calgary area and French speakers helped shape the city's growth.*

Notre Dame de la Paix, in the distance, was the church of Calgary's francophones. *(Glenbow Archives)*

BY LAURA FENNIAK
AND PATRICK RENGGER
Special to The Globe and Mail
Calgary

THE official start of work on a park in downtown Calgary may not seem an especially momentous occasion, but Rouleauville Square is something special: It is designed to commemorate the city's French heritage.

Calgary has a French heritage?

In the minds of most Canadians, this is the home of the Stampede, the Flames and the oil patch. When they think of its past, they think of cowboys, Indians and Mounties.

Few realize that southern Alberta was settled by people from Quebec in the 1860s. Even fewer realize that the Americans were responsible, at least indirectly, for the initial French presence, which eventually blossomed into a community known as Rouleauville.

Today's Calgary is hardly a francophone hotbed, but French culture played a formative role in the city's development. In fact, before the turn of the century, it wasn't at all clear that Alberta would become anglophone.

The first Europeans to reach the region, said Estelle Dansereau, a third-generation Franco-Albertan who teaches at the University of Calgary, were French and Scottish trappers and fur traders, who arrived through the late 18th and early 19th centuries. "It was they who originally opened up the Northwest," she said, "and began such communities as St. Albert, Morinville and Peace River."

TO the south, where the beaver gave way to the buffalo, the story was a little different, writes historian Hugh Dempsey in his book *Calgary: Spirit of the West*. The arrival of the French was prompted by some unruly Americans:

"Contrary to what most people think, the North-West Mounted Police were not the first white people to settle at what is now Calgary. First, there were the American whisky traders and then the missionaries." The Americans were drawn into the jurisdictional vacuum created by the transfer of the vast Hudson's Bay Company land holdings to the new Dominion of Canada. The absence of law enforcement produced the brief era of

the whisky trader — a breed dealing in what Mr. Dempsey describes as "death and havoc" from outposts with such apt names as Whoop-up, Stand Off and Slide Out.

This version of the U.S. Wild West prompted the formation of the Mounties in 1873, but the foot soldiers of God were the first to tackle the problem. According to early records, the bottle caused so much disruption among the native population that Crowfoot, chief of the Blackfoot, sought the help of the Catholic Church. He asked Bishop Vital Grandin in Edmonton, writes N. R. Anderson in his book *Oblate Fathers in Calgary*, that "the good fathers be sent to speak right things to his Indians."

Thus, a party led by Father Constantine Scollen arrived at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers in 1875. Father Scollen was Irish, but his order was French — it had been invited to Canada to spread the gospel in 1841, and did so throughout the West. With the help of Father Joseph Doucet and Alexis Cardinal, their Métis guide, Father Scollen pitched a tent and established the mission of Notre Dame de la Paix.

Later in the year, however, a young Mountie named Cecil Denny arrived with an advance party to pick a site for Fort Calgary and begin enforcing Canadian law.

The military presence assured the mission's safety, but as Father Doucet noted in his diary, it was also a source of temptation. "Our Métis [who had arrived to trade goods and help build the fort] are more interested in the dances and festivities of the troopers and the Americans than in coming to Mass."

So in the fall it was decided to move the mission farther from the fort. Two moves later, it landed in its final location: the place where Calgary's St. Mary's Cathedral now stands.

Real growth in Calgary began with the coming of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1883. While the CPR surveyors laid out the city's characteristic grid, the location of the train station began to draw settlement to the west — away from the fort and toward St. Mary's.

A year earlier, the extraordinary Father Albert Lacombe had taken charge of the parish. An Oblate from Montreal who had served in the West since 1852, he was well known both for the respect he accorded native people and his desire to see the region developed carefully.

The increasing encroachment of settlers prompted Father Lacombe to acquire two quarter-sections of land around the mission — bounded by what are now 2nd and 4th Streets and 7th and 34th Avenues SW. His immediate goal was to create a buffer zone, but he also saw the land as the home of a full-scale French community. Before long, the site began to attract francophones, both the *cheminots* who'd come West to work on the railway and immigrants who left Quebec, said Prof. Dansereau, because there was no land left.

"It was impossible for anyone but the eldest sons to inherit, and so they came West and took a homestead. At first, the Church encouraged this, sending *prêtres-colonisateurs* to parishes in Quebec to convince whole families to move West."

As a result, there was a thriving community of 500 French-speaking families next door to Calgary by the late 1880s. Prominent members of this society were the brothers Rouleau — Charles, a respected judge who arrived in 1886, and Édouard, a surgeon attached to the Mounties who followed a year later.

JUDGE Rouleau's considerable influence enabled him to champion the causes of Catholic education and French-language rights. Calgary's separate-school system is his lasting legacy, but his efforts on behalf of his language were not so successful. Just as the influx of anglophones was accelerating, the flow from Quebec had begun to wane. Alarmed at the shrinkage in their own congregations, the eastern bishops had begun to discourage migration.

"They also realized," says Prof. Dansereau, "that with the increase in East European and British settlement in the West, the population was going to be English-speaking."

Still, the western francophones persisted in trying to maintain their culture, and in 1899 attempted "to achieve official recognition for their community" by incorporating it as the Village of Rouleauville.

Their efforts were in vain. A mere eight years later, Rouleauville was absorbed by the City of Calgary and renamed the Mission district.

The district's religious heritage was kept, but the connection with the Rouleaus was severed and the aspirations of Father Lacombe cut short. By the time he died in 1916, the linguistic tide had turned for good.

Laura Fenniak and Patrick Rengger are freelance writers in Calgary.

NOUVELLS DU PAYS D'EN HAUT

Tidings from the northwest country. This begins a series of articles dealing with topics related to French Canadian heritage.

Since these writings are meant to cover topics concerned with French-Canadian heritage, I feel a good place to start with is common ground. What could be more common than the voyageur? To start with, the word "voyageur" is French for traveler. But for our use we need to get more specific. So we turn to Grace Lee Nute and she states "a voyageur is a French-Canadian canoemen. (Nute:1955:3). By further study we learn that he was generally short, average height, 5'6", very strong in the arms and chest but he narrows from the waist down. The voyageur was brightly dressed in his best clothes at rendezvous and when visiting home, very courteous especially when a young lady was present, and he lived for the moment. Most voyageurs could not read or write and they spoke French. For the most part they were born in hamlets off the St. Lawrence river around the areas of Quebec and Montreal. The voyageurs primarily task was the transportation of goods and furs from one point to another. This included working up to 16 hours a day and portaging at least two 90 pound pieces (packs) on their backs. A portage was necessary when there was no navigable body of water.

The term "voyageur" first appears in the French period in the early 1700s, and it continued though the British period. The number of voyageurs increased in the British period. There are differences in opinions when voyageur times ended. Some would state that 1821 was the end, when the Northwest Company and Hudson Bay Company merged, and Montreal was no longer the center of the fur trade. (Eccles 1983:190). Others would state that 1850 was the end when the American Fur Company failed (Nute 1955:204). So ends our brief look at the term voyageur. I do hope that it will be useful as we continue to look at and understand our heritage.

Your humble servant,
John Paul (John Edel)
History/Heritage Committee

References/Suggested Readings

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Lavender, David, 1977, Winner Take all A History of the Trans-Canada Canoe Trail. Moscow ID, University of Idaho Press.

Nute, Grace Lee, 1955, The Voyageur, reprint edition, St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society.

Wish to be a member of LaSociete and receive Chez Nous six times per year? Write John England at 2002 Palace, St. Paul MN 55105. Depending on age, dues range from $8 to $15 .

FRENCH-CANADIAN FOOD AT PRAIRIE DU CHIEN

from a publication obtained at Villa Louis Prairie du Chien WI and reprinted in the history of St. Mary's, Range WI

The French-Canadians who first settled at Prairie du Chien were men connected with the fur trade. Many were the canoemen who paddled the trade goods and pelts to their destinations. The yearly trips made from Montreal to Mackinaw to Prairie du Chien, then back again, were long and laborious. The engagees required huge amounts of nutritious foods to maintain their strength. Not only did the food have to be nutritious, it had to be some thing that did not spoil on the journey. Even after the men retired from the fur trade to farming or became small traders within a village, these hearty foods remained part of their diet. Their children and grandchildren prepared the same food, refining and adapting the engagees meal with produce they raised. A continuity was maintained that is evident today in dishes prepared by descendants of those first French-Canadians.

Through the writings of the English-speaking men who entered the fur trade as clerks or bourgeois, one learns of the dishes that were the basis of the French-Canadians' diet.

Thomas Anderson, on a trip to Prairie du Chien in 1800, found "The men's practice in the culinary art was simple but good." One dish was prepared every day on the trip from Montreal to Prairie du Chien and each night the same ritual was performed. A kettle "was hung over the fire, nearly full of water, then nine quarts of peas - one quart per man, the daily allowance - were put in; and when they were well bursted, two or three pounds of pork,

cut into strips, for seasoning, were added, and all allowed to boil and simmer until daybreak, when the cook added four biscuits, broken up, to the mess, and invited all to breakfast. The swelling of the peas and biscuit had now filled the kettle to the brim, so thick that a stick would stand upright in it."

YESTERDAY is KNOWN
TOMORROW is a MYSTERY
TODAY is a GIFT
That's why it is called a PRESENT.
MERCI to JOHN COTE, Brooklyn Ct

Once at Prairie du Chien, the men could obtain corn, maple sugar, and a variety of game and waterfowl from the Indians. This would be enjoyed until the return trip to Montreal. Then the men's meals returned to a filling sameness consisting of hulled corn and tallow. The corn had been boiled in lye to remove the husk, then it was washed and dried. Each day a man ate one quart of corn boiled with two ounces of tallow. According to Anderson, "though their work was severe, they fattened like pigs."

When James Lockwood came to Prairie du Chien in 1816 he found many former engagees settled, raising their families and farming. They still prepared their pea or corn soup, but had added to the meals other foods which they grew. All raised small grains, and every two or three farmers united and had a flouring mill. This flour they traded for goods or exchanged with the Indians for venison, ducks or geese. Lockwood said the flour they ground was coarse and sweet and made good bread. The flour was also used to make galettes, which to voyageurs were a luxury. While the men settled all problems over a glass of wine, the women and children drank a great deal of tea.

Through the years the pork, peas, corn, and bread have remained a part of French-Canadian meals. A hearty pea soup flavored with salt pork or ham is still prepared. The lard biscuits have been replaced by flat dumplings, cooked in a meat broth. As soon as the voyageurs settled into farming, they began to raise pigs.. Easy to raise, pork was used to make boulettes and tourtiere.

Today these dishes are made in home in Prairie du Chien. Each family has its own special way of preparing the food, for which there is no written recipe. Experience and many years of preparation are the guides.

THE CARIGNAN REGIMENT

by Mary Monty Manchester in Lifelines, Spring, 1993

This regiment was raised in 1644 by Thomas Francois de Savoie, Prince of Carignan. It consisted of ten companies of 100 men each. They were all said to be men of exceptional physique and boldness of spirit. They were a picked lot. They marched under the flag of Savoie when the regiment was offered to the French King - really the Queen Regent and Cardinal Richelieu.

This was at the time civil wars known as the Fronde were dividing France. The Carignan Regiment was important to the Cardinal. The Regiment marched under Turenne to Etampes and took part in fighting there, they then fought in the suburb of St. Antoine where it is said to have covered itself in glory. It created for itself a legend of invincibility. To belong to the outfit was deemed an honor.

After the Thirty Years War, the Savoie family could not afford to support the Regiment, and so gave it to Louis XIV. Savoie always took a proprietary interest in it, even after the regiment returned from Canada to France.

In 1657, the regiment was combined with one organized by a soldier of fortune, named Balthazar, who had joined the French army from Transylvania. The Carignan remained under the command of their own officers, but the regiment became known as the Carignan-Balthazar.

Following the Turkish campaign the troops were back in France and Louis decided to send the outfit, splendidly trained and a financial drain if allowed to rust in garrison, to Canada under Henri de Chapela, Sieur de Salieres. Veterans were given the opportunity of dropping out or re-enlisting under the Salieres command. Salieres had been first captain under Balthazar, he was now made a colonel. The name of the regiment changed to honor him.

Most of the soldiers remained in service, the ten companies were up to full strength when they were sent to Canada.

For further reading on the regiment and its exploits see Thomas J. Costains, The White and the Gold, a history of Canada.

Nouvelles Villes Jumelles

Newsletter of La Société Canadienne Française Du Minnesota

WE BID A FOND ADIEU....

With August came the announcement of the passing of four loyal supporters of the French-Canadian tradition.

Lorraine DeMillo, Hibbing, wrote August 2 to apprise me of two deaths in Hibbing. **Jerry Ciochetto** and **Sadie Gallagher. Jerry**, an Italian through and through, was the spouse of Pat, a proud Quebecer. He passed on in January, 1995. The Hibbing chapter had many gettogethers at the Ciochetto's home at Side Lake, north of Chisholm. He and Pat were always gracious hosts. A party at their home was always enjoyable.

Sadie Gallagher went to her final reward on July 27. She was 95. Sadie was a proud French-Canadian. She was born in 1900 in Hibbing. Her father had worked on the Panama Canal. Sadie was always young in attitude and outlook. She was an active volunteer and did her part always to keep visible the French-Canadian tradition of the north country. In her younger days, she and her husband ran a restaurant in Hibbing. It is said she baked great pies. Among her survivors is Lois Genise, who with Sadie has been part of LaSociete in Hibbing for the past ten years.

The August 21 Minneapolis Star-Tribune devoted a full third of a page to obituaries for two wonderful members of LaSociete C-F:

Will Cheeney, 88, of North Branch, was a true humanitarian...and character! He died August 18. The headline in the paper credited him with raising "$70,000 skiing to end hunger." He took up skiing late in life, and rather than just skiing, he used his hobby to raise money for those less fortunate. To many members of the Twin Cities chapter, he will always be remembered as the "honey man" - often bringing home-grown honey to the meetings. Cheeney was born in Hartford, CT, went to school in Quebec City, and farmed in North Dakota for many years, prior to moving to North Branch in 1948. LSCF members Ralph Germain and Leroy Dubois sang a French-Canadian song at his funeral. I am sure that Will was smiling....

Sister Mary Henry Nachtsheim, 79, passed away on August 17 in St. Paul. Mary Henry was not a Frenchman by nationality, but she was extremely interested in things French and French-Canadian. For a number of years she was very active in LSCF, serving on the Board and attending activities. She was a quiet yet very pleasant person. She was a native of St. Paul, and earned her Master's and Doctor's degrees at Laval Universite, Quebec City. She taught French at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul for 52 years. She often took student groups to France.

To each of our friends who paddled their last canoe into the great beyond, we say "adieu" and "bon voyage". Heaven is pleased to welcome them!

Dick Bernard

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Monday, October 2, 7:30 p.m. at St. Louis Catholic Church, downtown St. Paul. Regular monthly meeting of La Societe. Program to be announced. (La Societe's regular meetings are always on the first Monday of the month. The next meeting is November 6. Participate.)

Tuesday, October 17, 8:00 p.m. at Dakota Bar and Grill, St. Paul. Jean-Claude Meurisse, French Vocalist/Pianist performs an evening of musical entertainment. This fine program is organized by the Alliance Francaise and supported in part by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. You need reservations. Call Alliance Francaise at 644-5769.

October 16 is deadline for next issue of Chez Nous. Send contributions of articles, photos, etc., to Dick Bernard, 7632 157th St W #301 Apple Valley MN 55124. Merci

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LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE FRANÇAISE DU MINNESOTA

chez nous

NEWSLETTER OF Novembre-Decembre, 1995 VOL. 17 NO. 3

la société canadienne-française

Editor: Dick Bernard

Saint Catherine's Wood: Reflections On An Autumn Scene

We looked in wonder from southwestern slopes,
facing the wind, facing the guardian wood
where every shade and shape of leaf was moved
to catch our ears with murmurs, hold our gaze
with bronze, gold, crimson, russet leaves
the windswept boughs let fall
within our old and ravaged,
dear and criss-crossed wood. But then -
it's true -
Progress brings need to dig and dump and plough
now here, now there - where ecosystems grew
fresh revelations of the Love we knew:
the bottle gentians, lupine, ferns and moss,
the owl and thrush, the moth and butterfly -
a myriad of those shy and gentle lives that must
thrive upon trust - all there on common ground
like you and me. Their lives a providence
of earth and sky and love and mystery.

Some trees are bent with burdens not their own.
Some stand tall and open as a prayer
that hasn't yet received its sure response. Their
dignity, their strength will come to life
through temporal loss. Their life's austerity in ways
like Monks whose spirits thrive through Lenten days.

What if today from every compass point
the Angels of the Earth called out, 'Do not impair
the sole protection of the ozone layer. Do not unsheathe
the sun's life-fostering rays; do not pollute
the vital air you breathe; your temporal light
that gives you such delight. Love meant all these to be,
with sheltering trees, the mainstays of your life.'

What if an Angel called to all of us in time
a louder, more peremptory 'Wait! O, do not harm
the land, the sea, the trees! And then revealed
that God, our Love, will now make all things new:
our ravaged planet and polluted air, our ruined
ecosystems' ecospheres. The stones
that tell our old earth's history, the song-birds' bones.
All that we mourn for in our Guardian Wood.

All of creation that He looked upon
and found so good.

With Grateful Thanksgiving
to the poet
Sr. Ellen Murphy CSJ
College of St. Catherine, St. Paul MN
Revised October, 1994

(Sr. Ellen grew up in Bachelor's Grove ND and her mother, Helen Normand, grew up in Oakwood, ND.)

FRENCH CANADA

EDITORS NOTE: The below article is reprinted from the periodical "The Nation", August 13 and 20, 1868. Special thanks to LaSociete member Treffle Daniels, who discovered this work several months ago while doing other research at the University of Minnesota.

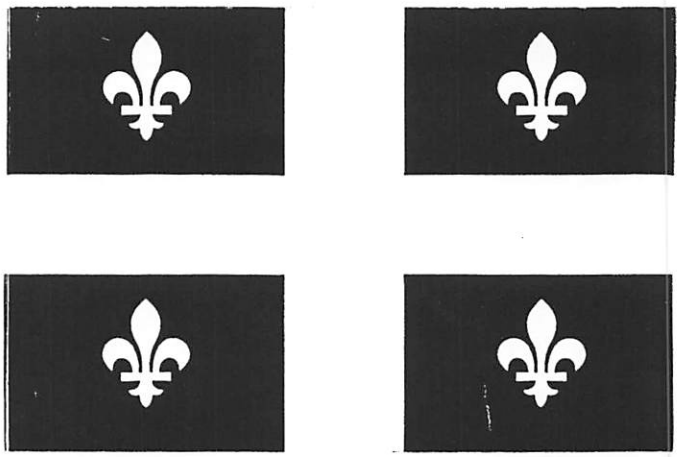
These articles, written 127 years ago by an unknown writer who seems to have come from New York City to visit Lower Canada (Quebec), seem particularly pertinent given the recent election in La Belle Province of Quebec.

In 1868, it had been barely 100 years since the decisive battle between the French and British on the Plains of Abraham left Quebec a part of the British Empire. The United States had not yet had its Centennial, but was already exerting great influence on our neighbor to the north.

Each reader will doubtless make his or her own inferences from the authors words. We would invite your commentary on the writers opinion, and his vision, as it applied to the October 30, 1995, election in Quebec. Send your comments to Dick Bernard, 7632 157th St W #301, Apple Valley MN 55124. And enjoy the opinion!

I.

The first question which presents itself to an observer on entering Canada is, Why do the Canadians look so fat and chubby compared to Americans? The climate differs but slightly, if at all, from that of Maine or Vermont, and the diet and mode of life, certainly of the town population, are essentially similar. Both people eat about the same quantities of meats and of farinaceous food, and take about the same amount of exercise. The American is certainly more harassed by politics, and is more seriously occupied with the consideration of man's origins and destiny, than the Canadian is, but that any considerable number of persons in any country can ever be so troubled by either of these things as to grow lean over them remains to be proved. It is true, the Canadians drink beer in much larger quantities than Americans. Two rows of bottles of pale ale, or even porter, are an ordinary phenomenon of a Canadian *table d'hote*; but to say that ale and porter make Canadians fat only removes the difficulty one degree further back.. Why do they drink ale and porter in their climate? Why does it not make them bilious and give them a headache? Why don't they take to whiskey and champagne, or confine themselves to coffee and ice



water? are questions which still remain to be answered.

If it were possible for men to grow fat and rosy in imitation of other people, we should say the Canadians were fat and rosy because the English were, so many other peculiarities in their life and manners are to be accounted for in this way. One has hardly set foot in the country when one is struck by the well-known colonial tendency to out-Herod Herod. They are considerably more English, in all things in which resemblance to the English is possible, than the English themselves. The old Tory of the year 1816 is now no longer found in the fauna of the United Kingdom. His habitat is in the colonies, and especially in Canada, though some stray individuals are to be found in Philadelphia and Baltimore. The animal has a very odd look on the banks of the St. Lawrence; but he thrives, and seems to be thoroughly acclimated, and is a very jolly, very hospitable, but somewhat illogical person, and, though sadly deficient in what the French call *lumieres*, is reasonably good company. The English influence on Canadian externals - perhaps it would be correct to say the influence of the British garrisons - is curiously shown in the great care with which the men of the towns, young and old, dress, and the rigidity with which they preserve the English type of appearance. The shopmen even are fair copies of the military officers in all but a fanatical attachment to canvas shoes in hot weather - a device to which the military men do not seem as yet to have lent themselves, and the value of which, we confess, seemed to us doubtful.

Our observations on Canadian manners being made during a very short visit, we offer them,

of course, with proper diffidence, and should not be at all surprised to hear that we had not penetrated the secret of Canadian society, but we came to the conclusion, among others, that in the well-to-do classes in Canada the English custom of later marriages has spread among the men. Anybody fresh from the United States is struck by the age of the Canadian beaux, as seen at watering-places and other places where what Beau Brummel called "well-dressed young people" congregate. The spectacle of men from thirty to forty dancing attendance on girls, flirting with them, ogling them, discussing them, and making the study of them one of the serious duties of life, is one with which we are familiar enough in England and France. In a new country like Canada it looks odd, particularly as, on this side of the border, men of that time of life have usually abandoned all care of their neckcloths and boots, are apt to have an interesting family of their own, to spend a portion of their nights in contention with babies, and to regard unmarried women in the light simply of actual or possible friends of their wives. Seeing an elderly Canadian gentleman too, of about fifty-five, and tolerably corpulent, dressed, as to his legs, in "knickerbockers," and parading the pier of a watering-place with great satisfaction, we could not help figuring to ourselves with some amusement the effect of the appearance of Moses Taylor or George Law or A.A. Low at a "summer resort" in the United States in a similar costume.

The English respect for aristocracy, and English belief in it, not as the result of convention but as a natural product of human society, not only flourishes in Canada, but is shown in ways singularly English. One of the reasons which was offered us for staying at a hotel - a very good one on the whole, let us add - was that the Prince of Wales had lodged there and that the Governor-General and his suite were in the habit of doing the same thing. Now, we would willingly have exchanged our knowledge of this circumstance for a slop-tub in the bed-room - an article in which we found all the hotels we visited deficient, and the want of which occasioned us considerable embarrassment, whereas the selection of another house by the Prince of Wales and the Governor-General would at most have only caused us a momentary pang. So also, asking a young swell, one day whose acquaintance we made on board a boat, what kind of hotel there was in a certain village, he said a relative of his had stayed there and liked it, and mentioned parenthetically that the relative in question was - to be discreet, we only say, occupied a high military position. The tone in which the information was given, and its perfect gratuitousness, for a moment called up a vision of Pall Mall.

Another illustration of the same thing, and we confess it seemed to us a sad one, is offered by the monument to Wolfe and Montcalm, at Quebec. The structure is, in the first place, inexpressibly shabby, though it stands on one of the noblest sites for such a purpose in the world, and is intended to commemorate one of the most moving episodes in the history of war. An obelisk which not only is not a monolith, but is built of rather small stones, is something which gods and men abhor, or ought to abhor, and this one is rendered doubly odious by the fact that the frosts of forty Canadian winters have made away with the mortar, and the pile looks as if it would tumble down the first windy night. One might overlook these things, however, if the inscriptions breathed real taste and sentiment, but they do not. The first one is fine, and touching for its simplicity:

MORTEM VIRTUS COMMUNEM,
FAMAM HISTORIA,
MONUMENTUM POSTERITAS
DEDIT[1]

.A word more than this anywhere, except the names of the two heroes, spoils all. Not only is there a word more, however, but a long inscription covering the whole of one face of the monument, and throwing the tribute to Wolfe and Montcalm

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[1] - The inscription reads "Virtue gave them a common death; history gave them fame; posterity gave them this monument." As to the comments in the following paragraph, the remaining Latin portion says "George, Count of . . Dalhousie, administrator of the highest things during the reign of George IV King of the British Isles."

covering the whole of one face of the monument, and throwing the tribute to Wolfe and Montcalm completely into the shade, telling us how the poor piece of dilapidated masonry was the work of "Georgius Comes de Dalhousie, summarum rerum administrans," undertaken after it had been for many years neglected, and finished during the reign of "Georgius Quartus Britanniarum Rex." The impression left on the mind of the spectator by the monument is, in fact, that it was a far finer thing to build it than to die sword in hand on the Plains of Abraham, and that the "Comes de Dalhousie" had, on the whole, the advantage of Wolfe and Montcalm.

One cannot remain very long in Canada without having the idea very strongly presented to one that even a slight political connection between a colony and "the mother country" is a curse to the colony. As long as they are bound together, even by the light silken tie of allegiance, really healthy political and social life seems to be impossible for the latter. A people whose manners are not the natural result of its own character and culture, but a laborious copy of those of another people, differently situated and in a different stage of development, of course suffers much both morally and mentally, no matter what amount of political freedom it may enjoy. The loyalty of colonies seems almost always to have something morbid about it, as was well illustrated in the recent outburst of folly in Australia touching the attempt to assassinate the Duke of Edinburgh. It does not consist, as it does in England, of devotion to the country through the monarch. In most of the colonies there is in it a strong infusion of disgust with the colony, and eagerness to leave it and get back to the "old country," and this feeling is probably strongest in the most able and energetic of the inhabitants. A more unhappy state of things, as regards sound and healthy progress, can hardly be imagined. To have expatriation constantly present to the flower of the population as the final reward of success in life must, of course, partially paralyze any state. We saw in Canada, in the course of a single week, four reports in the newspapers of the lower Province of dinners given to successful traders on the occasion of their retirement from business and going to England to live. We were told, on enquiry, that it was now very general for men who had made fortunes in Canada to go to England to spend them. There are probably very few who are not haunted, as they find their means increasing, with dreams of a landed estate, a seat in Parliament, and a fair run for wife and daughters during the London season. We were a good deal entertained, too, by observing that at two of the dinners to which we have referred a display of prudent regard for the success of the business he had built up was made by the guest of the evening, in a strong compliment to the extraordinary business ability of the remaining members of the firm.

Lower Canada is not thriving. We suspect the same thing may be said of Upper Canada, but, perhaps, with less certainty. New countries do not thrive much without a steady and rapid increase in their supply of labor, and consequently a steady and rapid addition to the area of their cultivated soil. But Canada now receives no additions to her supply of labor. Immigration there is none and such immigrants as are cheated into shipping for Quebec, go straight through to the United States, unmindful of the advantages of the British Constitution and of the awful future which awaits democracy. Not only this, but a stream of native Canadians begins to flow over the border. The movement has even reached the French, to whom the United States has been hitherto a land as far off as when the Indians came down from the St. Lawrence to harry the New England heretics. We were assured everywhere that there was a pretty general outward drift of young men from the villages of the lower St. Lawrence. When at Saguenay we heard that the fame of the prairies had reached the north bank too, and the day of our arrival two families had started from that remote and isolated community weary of a long struggle with the Canadian winter, and anxious for a better chance for their children than the parents had had. Facts of this sort suggest strongly the enquiry what the effect of increasing facility of locomotion and increased diffusion of information is likely to be on all inhabited northern regions? How long will habit and local attachment resist the influence of stories of bright skies, short winters, and teeming soil elsewhere? What, in other words, will be the condition of Canada, Norway, and northern New England one hundred years hence?

But Lower Canada has for the tourist from the United States what is of far more importance to him, *qua* tourist, than progress or prosperity - the

charm of complete difference of life, manners, ideas, history, and traditions, and of complete indifference to the subjects which most occupy and perplex him at home. The tumult of the campaign not only does not pass the "Province line," but all its sounds die out almost as soon as you have crossed over. A French Canadian watches the whole process of a Presidential election as one watches the movements of cawing crows on a warm summer day, and understands it just as little, and is as little troubled about stocks, bonds, railroads, mines and the other "big things" of American progress as if he lived in Paraguay, instead of within a few hours of Maine and Vermont. You have, in fact, hardly reached Montreal when Grant's cotton thefts, Seymour's insanity, Blair's bar bills, Colfax's brutal treatment of the one-armed soldier, and "H.G.'s" negotiations with the Niagara Falls rebels fade into remoteness and insignificance. Consequently, an American who is tired out, as Americans are apt to be in summer, and who wants real rest and real refreshment - change not simply of scene, for, in a country in which society is so homogeneous as in this, change of scene merely does little for jaded nerves, but change of people, of currents of thought, and of manners and of social problems - nay, even a clergyman with a sore throat, can hardly do better than spend a month or two on the lower St. Lawrence, provided always he is armed with a respectable knowledge of French. This is necessary to enable him to see more than the outside of things, and to save him from some foolish inferences. The want of it makes Thoreau's account of his Canadian trip as nearly worthless as anything emanating from so close an observer could well be. Going to Europe is, of course, better; but then a month of a short vacation has, in going to Europe, to be spent on the ocean in the company of mariners, and of members of the shoddy circles on their way to astonish the bloated aristocracy, and of dry-goods men going out to prepare for the fall trade - and this is not soothing. It must be remembered that Lower Canada contains the only relic of the state of society which prevailed in France before the Revolution, which in France has completely passed away, and left as few traces of itself as if it had perished five centuries ago, and puzzles the historian almost as much as the Gallo-Roman civilization - yet for a thousand years this *ancien regime* played the foremost part in moulding Europe into the shape in which we see it. It made a vigorous effort in the seventeenth century to reproduce itself in the New World, and it in a measure succeeded. The Canadian colony came out fully organized. The cadets of good families selected the choice tenantry of the family estate, and brought them over with them, and planted them on an estate of their own in Canada, becoming their "seigneurs," reserving all the feudal rights of the landlord in the old country, endeavoring in company with the priest, to make society in the new France as exact a reproduction of society in the old France as the wilderness would permit. The success of the experiment, so far as it was an attempt to transplant and preserve a certain social type, was very great. It survived the conquest of the colony by England; the storm of the French Revolution did not reach it; and though seigneurial rights have disappeared very recently under the reformer's axe, and of the seigneur's former social and political influence there is consequently very little left, still society in French Canada even now rests largely on feudal ideas, and is held together by medieval laws. Hearing one day from a lawyer, himself a seigneur, and bearing a name that most Frenchmen would be proud to follow into a salon, that he practised under the "coutume de Paris," and used Pothier as a text-book, we told him he must excuse us if we looked at him well, for he was, for those who knew the *ancien regime* only through books, a real and very interesting curiosity, and would certainly "draw" in Paris, if put into the hands of an enterprising showman. Having never been in France, and evidently regarding French society with a slight touch of horror, he seemed scarcely aware of the depth of the changes which it had undergone. The impiety and immorality of the Revolution were what evidently most impressed him, one of the many evidences one meets with in Lower Canada of the large share the clergy have had in modelling the new society. This gentleman told us, with a slight glow of enthusiasm, that to this day he did not believe there was a single French family in the whole of the thickly settled parish in which he lived in which man or woman omitted to "faire ses Paques" every year, or to attend mass with tolerable regularity. He said he hardly ever met with a French peasant who had "lost the faith," unless he had been in the United States. Those who went there even for a short period, he said, came

back irreligious men; not Protestants, but indifferent.

II.

Although there has been until now no system of popular education amongst the French Canadians, and though the priests have done little or nothing to make up for the want of it, and although the feudal tenures and feudal organization of society may be said to have held their own down to 1837, colonial life, with its usual concomitants of good food, good clothing, security, and the absence of class feeling, and exemption in a great degree from the blighting influence of feudal traditions have raised the bulk of the people, both physically and morally, far above the peasantry of France. The French race in the New World certainly weighs more and stands higher in its stockings than the French race in the Old World, though of course the question might be raised whether this was not due rather to the fact that the original settlers were picked men than to the influence of the new soil and climate on their descendants, or whether Frenchmen, as has been often asserted, have not dwindled greatly in size under the influence of the wars of Louis XIV, and of the first Napoleon. The families of the earlier years of the eighteenth century, and the relegation, during the earlier years of this one, of the task of perpetuating the population to the halt, the lame, and the blind, owing to the insatiate demands of the army on the able-bodied, no doubt have done much to lower the French stature, and something, no doubt, also to mar the regularity of French features. At all events, their Canadian cousins are now vastly better looking men and women. One who is at all familiar with the appearance of the French peasantry at home, or even with the appearance of the French army, which contains the flower of the peasantry, cannot go very far along the lower St. Lawrence without asking himself whether the good sized people with the well-cut faces whom he meets are really Frenchmen and French women.

If what we were told be true, they are, however, not only bigger and handsomer than their cousins but better, more intelligent, and more moral. In spite of their piety, they do not keep up the supply of priests needed even for their own education - a circumstance for which one gentleman accounted to us by the startling assertion that celibacy was more repugnant to them than to Frenchmen. Consequently, drafts have from time to time to be made on the French clergy, but the French priests are rarely put in charge of country parishes. They are kept for service in the larger towns, and in schools and colleges, nearly every case in which the experiment has been made of sending them out amongst the peasantry having proved a total failure. In the first place, their manners are found by the country folk intolerable. Priest-ridden and seigneur-ridden though he has been, the free air of the wilderness has given the Canadian a dignity and self-respect in which the French peasant, in spite of the Revolution, is still wanting. The former will not, in short, allow the priest to treat him as a clodhopper and ignoramus. Moreover, the preaching of the French priests has proved as offensive as their pastoral demeanor. In country parishes in France, they communicate moral instruction from the pulpit, and descend into the particulars of immorality with startling plainness and simplicity. In the few cases in which they have been permitted to try this style of instruction on the Canadians, it created such an uproar that they had to be recalled, and the country cures are now almost invariably natives. They are generally well-educated, and often polished men; they still levy tithes by law, the rights and privileges of the Catholic Church having been reserved by the treaty of cession; are consequently well paid, keep a good table, are well housed, and if they suffer from want of society, have *per contra*, the satisfaction which results from being the chief men of a comfortable and very religious community.

Some idea of the sums they extract from their flocks for religious purposes may be formed from the size and costliness of the churches, which are generally, judged by the American standard, amazingly out of proportion to the means and numbers of the worshippers. In New England, one rarely finds, out of the large towns, churches of half the size, or costing half as much, as one is almost sure to meet with in the smallest Canadian village. We found in perhaps the poorest parish in the province, which for eight months of the year has no means of communication with the civilized world without a four days' journey through the wilderness, a lofty stone church, 130 feet long by 75 broad, with a large vestry in the rear. The number of families which can reach it in winter, in fine weather, does not, we were assured, exceed 300. The only country

church in New England, in fact, which we have happened to see, which can compare in size, cost, and material to great numbers of country churches in Canada, is that at Greenwich, Connecticut.

One can, of course, readily give a dozen reasons why Americans and Englishmen continue to speak the same language in much the same way, though it is over two centuries since they separated. Their literary and religious and commercial intercourse would alone have prevented any very serious divergence from the common standard, even if the intellectual activity of the colonists and their attention to literature and oratory, at least in the Northern States, had not been as great as it has been. But the Canadians and Frenchmen should speak the same language in much the same way, after two centuries of separation, one can hardly help regarding with surprise, considering how small the amount of intercourse which was at any time carried on between then, how completely it has ceased since the fall of Quebec, and how small and how sluggish the educated class in Lower Canada has always been. And yet the Canadian peasantry - for peasantry they are - speak not only very good French; but they all speak the same French. The French priests, when they come out, are astonished to find that, wherever they go, they never come upon a trace of *patois*. The original settlers were mainly Normans and Bretons; but no trace of mixed origin is to be discovered in the language of their descendants. The accent of the country people is, of course, rude, and they use plenty of words unknown to Frenchmen, called into existence by the wants of colonial life; but there is probably no part of France in which a foreigner will find so little difficulty in understanding and in making himself understood by the farmers as in Canada. Of intonation it hardly becomes a foreigner to judge; but we received abundance of good testimony to the effect that though Canadian speaking was much more monotonous than that of Frenchmen, the cadences were the same in character though generally less marked. Some ways of using the voice with which one becomes very familiar in France, but which are impossible to describe on paper, produce a strange and almost startling effect when heard in a Canadian village or wood-path. We were told by a young man who had studied in Paris that he surprised and delighted some of the lovers of the older French poesy in that city by producing and singing as common village, with which he had been familiar from childhood, songs which for the last century have been only known in France to literary antiquaries.

Oaths are always a delicate subject, but that they are not an utterly despicable subject a social philosopher may readily satisfy himself. There are very few well-established oaths that do not tell something worth knowing of the people who use them. They may be divided into two great classes. Oaths belonging to the first connote a belief in a future state and in a system of rewards and punishments after death; oaths belonging to the second class connote looseness of manners and disbelief in female virtue. The oaths of nearly all northern nations are of the first class; the oaths of Oriental nations mostly belong to the second while, curiously enough, the great oath of the Hungarians, with which everybody who has heard much Magyar spoken is doubtless familiar, may be said to be a horrible mixture of both, the Hungarians being an Oriental race Christianized. The disguises in which old oaths are frequently found are often amongst the most curious of the many ways in which people show the effect of early religious training and of a social atmosphere strongly pervaded by religious feeling, or even of sensitiveness about the *convenances*. The most brutal and unblushing swearers in the world are the English and Americans. In many parts of the North, however, oaths are a good deal disguised, as in the former's "swan" and "swow," and "dun," and "gosh," and in Ireland some of the earlier English oaths, which have been long extinct in England, are preserved in such phrases as "blood an' 'ouns" or "blood an' oundhers." In France variety in oaths is almost gone, though in such phrases as "ventre-bleu" the remains of some primitive Norman swearing may be detected. But there is one French oath in disguise which everybody who has passed a night in a French camp will remember as almost invariably the first sound which fell on his waking ear, coming through the canvas from the lusty throats of grooms and cooks, "Sacre nom d'un chien." We have always supposed it to be a device of comparatively recent origin, dating probably from the First Empire or at all events from the latter days of the Revolution. There is nothing of the grace or wit of the *ancien regime* about it, and it is very difficult to say from internal evidence whether it is the

composition of a worshipper of the goddess reason or of a Christian who retained traces of an earlier respect for the proprieties of the tongue. But our doubts were set at rest by hearing it in a remote Canadian village from the lips of a very old man who was in a great rage with one of his neighbors about some eggs. There it was with the same emphasis on "nom," the same dropping of the voice at "chien," with which one is familiar in France, and yet the old man was of the old Canadian stock, and had probably never seen a Frenchman in his life.

The French Canadians, instead of declining before the Anglo-Saxons, gain on them rapidly, and bid fair before many years to have the lower province almost entirely to themselves. There is a Scotch colony on the Lower St. Lawrence, of not very ancient date, from which every trace of Scotch origin has disappeared, and in which French only is spoken. Wherever Canadians intermarry with the English or Scotch, the Canadians, owing to their greater religious tenacity, almost invariably succeed in bringing up the children as Catholics; and the children being Catholics, they naturally consort with the French, and are soon absorbed by them. Moreover, commerce is deserting Lower Canada. Quebec is a declining city; and there are few things more melancholy to the eye of "enterprise" than the almost complete absence of ships from the magnificent expanse of water which connects the port with the sea. Even the lumber trade has moved up to Ottawa. The English and Scots, of course, will not stay in a place which commerce is deserting, and the Canadians, who are still content with their small farms and retail stores, move in and fill their places - and we suspect are not sorry to be rid of the others and their restlessness and heresy.

The number of Irish who have got a foothold in the province is small, and the inhabitants, in spite of their Catholicism, detest them for their turbulence and love of politics. The French lawyer whom we have already mentioned spoke of them with great bitterness as a kind of scourge. He said they were "lances sur l'humanite commes des loups." In his own town of five thousand inhabitants, he said there were only twelve Irishmen. "Figurez vous, monsieur," he said with great earnestness, taking us by the button-hole - "seulement douze," and yet one of them had got to be mayor, in the way with which we are so familiar in New York. He kept a grocery, and bought up "the people" - that is the poor Canadians - partly in money and partly in groceries. The Anglo-Saxon race has rendered incalculable service to the cause of civil and religious liberty; but it has committed the two greatest crimes of history - worse crimes by far than Caesar's slaughter of the Gauls - in the elaborate legal degradation of the Irish and the negroes; and there is something comic as well as striking in the way in which retributive justice is being dealt out upon it in both the New and Old World, by the conversion of the descendants of the victims into a political and social thorn of the first magnitude from which there appears to be no escape. The rage of the Irish for political offices is one of the most curious phenomena in history, and is a really unprecedented result of extraordinary and long-continued oppression; but it is certainly rather hard that the French Canadians should suffer from it.

The latter will probably preserve their language and manners intact till the whole country is annexed to the United States. Both will probably then disappear rapidly before the terrible solvent of American ideas and institutions. With them will disappear the last relic of Old France, and probably, outside the Tyrol, the purest and simple, most prosperous and most pious Catholic community on the globe.

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Editor: Dick Bernard

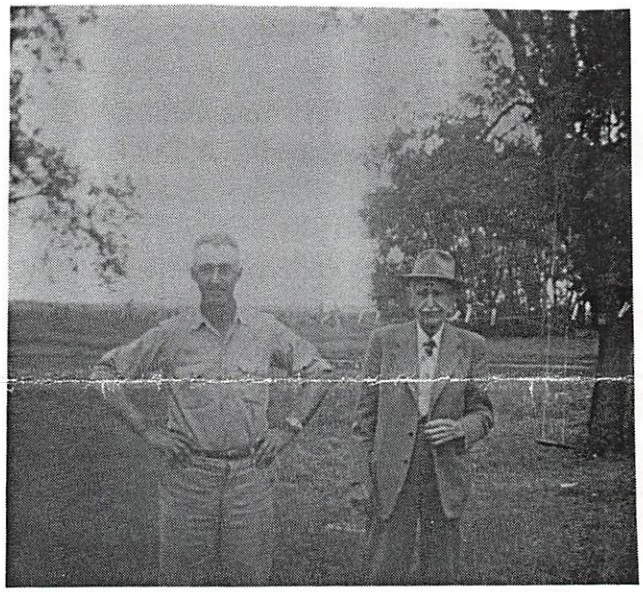
SIXTY YEARS AGO - THE TERRIBLE WINTER OF 1935-36

by Ernest Ebert, Grand Forks ND

Editors Note: In our country, we seem to celebrate bad winters by celebrating other winters which may even have been worse! So does Ernest Ebert in the following article remembering the winter of 1935-36. Mr. Ebert has previously submitted interesting articles for readers of Chez Nous, and the following is no exception. He writes about farm days near Auburn, North Dakota, a hamlet which was located a few miles north of Grafton. In the next issue, we will have a wonderful "...Visit to the Old Farm Home" by Mr. Ebert.

A foot of snow fell on Armistice Day in 1935. Even that too-generous amount was scarcely a harbinger of what was to come - a total of 69.3 inches of fallen snow in the Grafton area during the winter of 1935-36. The heavy snowfall and the intense sustained cold combined to make that winter the worst in my memory.

At that time, our farmhouse was not insulated so a considerable amount of coal was needed to keep it comfortably warm. Early in January, our supply of coal was running low and I was waiting for a decent day to make a five-mile trip to Auburn ND to replenish our supply. In the meantime, Dad was busy buck-sawing oak fence posts that had rotted off at ground level and were now useful in supplementing our waning fuel supply. By 1936 standards, January 20th was a relatively nice day. It was only 20 below and the constantly moving snow was reduced to a ground storm. So the team, bob sleigh and I headed for Auburn. Surprisingly, except for the team having to struggle through some deep snow at times, the trip was uneventful.



The author, Ernest Ebert, with his father Janvier Ebert, at the home farm near Auburn ND in the early 1950s.

In 1936, the country was still in the throes of the Depression; funds to remove snow were very inadequate. Equipment was deficient in quality and quantity. Highway 81 [a major highway] near our place was frequently blocked. Townships had no money to open roads either. Sometimes, we would use a team and wagon to "break" a trail through the fields, say Saturday morning, for a car equipped with chains to follow in the afternoon. If it didn't blow again before Sunday morning, the same trail could be used for a couple hardy ones in the family to attend church services on Sunday. We always traveled in pairs - so one could push if it was needed.

Early in January, we had to give up on using the car because of the snow depth. This meant that

we had to rely entirely on our horses. Highway 81 was blocked for five weeks. Having lived in the automobile age since World War I, we no longer had fancy cutters and high-stepping driving horses. In face, we were thankful we still had reliable draft horses. We found out all over again that a bob sleigh equipped with a wagon box, straw on the floor and blankets to wrap up in, was not such a bad way to travel - especially when it's the only way available.

I had two brothers, they along with their families, were members of two households under one roof. My parents, my bride of the previous summer, Georgia, and myself had a similar arrangement. They asked us over for a noon meal one day and the only way we could go was by team and bob sleigh. We had been in touch by telephone but hadn't seen each other for weeks. We were as happy as the pioneers must have been when they were reunited with old friends! There is something wonderful about getting back to basics once in a while.

Early one Sunday morning, we were awakened by the most wonderful sound of the winter - the authoritative voice of what we surmised to be a huge caterpillar tractor cleaning off Highway 81, our lifeline. How thrilling it was to see this mechanical monster belching black smoke with each Herculean effort to dislodge snow well-compacted from many weeks of below-zero temperatures! We felt like we were being "liberated." It was nice to be back in the right spot of the twentieth century - to be able to drive the car again and be able to do such basic things as to go to town for groceries, go to church, visit friends and relatives.

Our sojourn in the past was ended. Our faithful horses, as they often had in the past, had pulled us through once more.

THE LONG, LONG, LONG WINTERS

by Lowell Mercil, Mentor MN

Editors Note: Mr. Mercil has been and continues to be a loyal contributor to Chez Nous. In a note accompanying this article Lowell "wishes to dedicate this article to his sister, Nora Mercil Brusseau, who died November 26, 1995 in Vancouver, Washington, after a prolonged confinement with Alzheimer's disease. Her contribution to Chez Nous, "Nora Remembers", was published in the Aout-Septembre, 1990, isssue. The author also wishes to thank his sister Lorraine, and brother Jerry, for jogging his memory and keeping him on the straight and honest factual road!"

"But where are the snows of yester-years?" Francois Villon asked over 400 years ago. They may be back based on the recent weekend blizzard of 1996. I wonder if, with our great advances in weather predicting technology, the use of satellites, the doppler, etc., - are we any better today at predicting weather than the great ability developed for many generations by our native Indians?

I hear that many years ago Yvette and Joe Mafroe were driving down Highway Two, through the Chippewa Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota, when they saw an old, wrinkled, stately, gentleman sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch of his teepee (some teepees had rain shields over the entrance). It was late fall and Joe wanted to know if it would be a good year for his fuel supply business so he decided to stop and find out if he could take advantage of Indian lore to predict the season. He could gage the purchase of stock accordingly. Joe introduced himself and after they exchanged a few pleasantries, he asked: what kind of a winter do you think we will have this year?" The response came quickly: "heap, long, cold winter!" Joe was curious: "what makes you think it will be a long, cold winter?" The answer came without hesitation: "Indian see white man bank house with straw - heap long cold winter!"

Well, I can't answer Francois Villon's snow question or make predictions as accurate as our native Americans but I will try to respond to a request that I describe how some of us farm children in northern Minnesota amused ourselves during the long Minnesota winter months.

Kids today have all those wonderful, safety designed, mind developing toys, games, television programs but still are bored. How come? Is it that today kids are hyperactive and we were just plain slow? Is it, as I have seen in some cases, that kids have so many things to choose from that they get mixed up and the child just doesn't know where to start - the child must make a decision and pick one of a hundred toys to concentrate on - decisions, decisions! When he selects a toy, he must go through a thousand pieces to the ones that belong to

that selected. We did not have those problems because it is much easier to pick one out of two toys than one of a hundred.

Our clouded memories can do strange things to us. It seems to me that I remember much snow and endless days of frigid weather in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This in spite of the fact that our secluded farm near Crookston MN was north of the "snow belt" that runs through central Minnesota to the Great Lakes area. Also, these were the drought years when there was little humidity so little snow. I doubt if there could have been as much snow as I remember. But I do think these were also the winters of the black snow. Not the blue snow that Paul Bunyan survived but the black snow which was the same shade as the North Dakota topsoil. That snow seemed to last forever and it was only the warm spring winds that could dispel the dark moods that accompanied those snows.

Our living conditions exceeded most others with respect to the important qualities of meaningful family values. However, we dragged behind most of our neighbors with respect to the amenities of the "easy life". Our grandfathers had left Canada to settle in the Red River Valley of the North. They were a prolific people those Frenchmen - one with eleven children, one with fourteen and another with fifteen. it was great for farming but the individual portions of the inheritance pie are not very big when you cut it into that many pieces. We lived about a third of a mile from the "new dam" but never hooked up the electricity. Not only had television not been invented, but we could not take advantage of such basic other wonders as" indoor plumbing, electric lights, radios or any of the dozens of appliances and entertainment devices that we now require to live even at the lowest standards.

As a result of our lack of "luxuries", we were required to help perform many chores that kept us occupied. Most of the time the chores were accomplished under the guise of doing the job - which was actually done by Mama, Papa or one of the older brothers or sisters. We spent a lot of time "helping". The girls helped Mama with the cooking, mending, cleaning, etc., etc. The boys helped Papa feed the horses and cattle their fodder and grain, the pigs their slop, the chickens their chicken feed, helped clean and bed the stalls, etc. When I think about it a lot of children's time was consumed learning how to do things in the company of parents - the children of two employed parents today miss much of this contact. Thus, when the cows were milked it was necessary that one of the young ones be present to haul the full milk pails from the stalls where the cows were being milked to the milk separator room. Of course, it was the helper who received credit for milking the cows when he was really just "hanging around" in today's idiom. But I suppose "hanging around" with the kerosene lantern in ones hand was really helpful during those pitch dark, long winter evenings. I till think the sense of smell remains with us longer than any of the other sense memories for I can still recall the different, pungent winter odors of the barn, the pigpen, the chicken coop, etc. Whenever I attend county fairs I find that the odor memories don't go away.

Another example of a chore that consumed some of our time was "helping" with the winter laundry. Man! That laundry was a back-breaker. The memory of Mama bending over a boiler or tub and old fashioned copper washboard was engraved in my memory. I always thought that the laundry may have been the principal cause of her many backaches and those horrible migraine headaches. The ones that at times required that we walk on tiptoe and not make a sound in the house and be quiet outside. One summer a traveling salesman came to our out-of-the way farm and demonstrated one of those beautiful, gasoline put-put powered washing machines. Wow! I was only about five years old but I dreamed of the day I could get a job and buy the washer so Mama would not have to bend over that washboard on those hot summer days.

But in winter the washing was done in the kitchen. The water was heated in the copper boiler on the kitchen range - some also in a pail on top of the pot-bellied space heater. There usually was clothes hanging to dry or to warm-up around these heaters. However, because of the resulting high humidity and quantity. It was necessary to hang most of the laundry on the outside clotheslines. We were too short to reach the lines but we did have to help carry the frozen clothes into the house. The pliable cloth became as stiff as a board but the fresh, pungent, airy smell was very pleasant. As I recall, we got a lot of laughs out of this chore. Especially, when we brought in the long-handled underwear (how did that name originate?) Man, those were practical. Especially, the drop seat model. They were very handy when you were in trouble in below-zero weather and you shunned the under-bed pot in favor of the outside two-holer.

Of course the first thing we children did when we woke in the morning was to shiver in bed for a while - I guess there was a contradictory sensation. We could feel the cold air on our faces and the outside of the blankets and knew there was a shock waiting to hit us as soon as our feet would hit the ice cold wood floor. But we were real comfortable under the wool blankets and quilts that Mama had made - except for our feet. Our arms and hands would be warm if we kept them under the blankets but our feet were usually cold - the hot water bottle was fine when we went to bed but had cooled during the night.

Eventually, we would build up enough courage to make a dash out of the bedroom, down the stairway and next to pot-bellied stove or the kitchen wood-range. We would rotate for if the stove had not been poked-up for very long, the stove side of your body would get hot while the opposite side would cool. We would be dressed in our pajamas (long-handled under-wear) and robe (wrap around blanket). These were also our breakfast clothes.

After returning to our room I often spent time at the window. There was usually a layer of ice on the window caused by the extreme cold on the outside freezing the humidity on the inside - especially after wash-days. The ice would be thick on the bottom decreasing to thin on the top. There were beautiful patterns that resembled a miniature winter-wonderland. We would spend a lot of time leaving our melted finger prints on the glass, breaking off large pieces of thin ice, moving the pieces around the non-iced surface, trying to pry pieces off the surface without breaking them, and day dreaming about far distant places. Were we bored? Would the kids today while away their time by doing such things? Is it good or bad? H-m-m-m!

I must admit that we did, also, while-away many hours with the "dream books" - the Sears-Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalogues. Wow! Those high laced boots looked beautiful - or you could look at the washing machines, houses, or cars that you were going to buy for Mama and Papa some day after you had grown up and made your fortune. When the temperature got below zero one did not spend much time reading last years catalog that was utilized in the little square house in the back yard. We did spend some time with the Farm Journal and similar magazines that had those beautiful idealized pictures of farms with rolling hills and beautiful homes and people. Our life just was not like the living depicted in those magazines.

As small children we did spend considerable time playing outside in the snow. We must have because I remember how raw our wrists would get. I think now that we lacked common sense. The snow would cake-up between the tops of our mitts and the cuff of our coats, melt, freeze, etc. The result would be chapping like I have not seen for many years. The wrist would be red on the bottom and sides and just about blue on the top where the horizontal cracks formed. It would usually take prompting from Mom: "*y'an isit ton-fou*!" (come here you fool!) before we would finally have enough sense to come inside and dry off our mitts, socks and under-wear by standing next to the wood stoves. Pass the jar of petroleum jelly! We used a lot of it. Also, a lot of Vicks Vapo-rub on the chest and under the nose which usually was raw - how come we never had dry handkerchiefs? As I recall, w had "hot" Vicks with a red devil on it that would make one scream when it got in the raw cracks.

When one tries to account for how children amused themselves on those long winter days in the twenties or thirties, it is necessary to reflect on the sick days. There were plenty of them! Mumps first on one side and then the other - even as kids we were afraid of the possible future effects. Was it true? Impotence? Sterility? We were very young but it still scared us. Red measles, German measles, chicken pox, flu (they did not have the fancy names for the different kinds of flu then.) diphtheria, bronchitis, sinus, adenoid and tonsillitis and always headaches, sore throats, coughs, etc. On the high temperature days there was no problem of what to do. We just laid there. It was the low temperature days that were rough! Mama just about had to tie us to the bed. Our bedrooms were upstairs so there was a lot of yelling going on: bring me some crayons and a color book! I'm hungry - when do I eat! And what did one get when it came? Hot milk soup with home churned butter accompanied by buttered toast. Sometimes, home canned tomatoes in the milk soup. Or maybe chicken broth - we did not know its medicinal effect! When we started fighting with each other epidemic was over and we were released from confinement.

Sunday was still a day to look forward to. Mama and Papa took the day off too - that is except for necessary chores such as milking, cooking, etc., etc. If possible we would go to Mass at St. Anne's Catholic Church in Crookston - four miles by sleigh or buggy. We would sit in our usual pew - third seat from the rear

right aisle. There were some of the sets without name markers where those who could not afford to pay the seat rental could sit. The altar was raised a few steps so the taller people could see what was going on - but all we little people could see was a lot of backs that were standing-up, kneeling-down and sitting-down. (Non-Catholic friends were always amazed at the amount of exercise we had in church). We could hear some Latin but I am afraid it sounded like mumbo-jumbo to us. Or, we might hear the French sermon, which some could understand, or the repetition of the Sermon in French-accented English which few could understand - all done at a decibel range guaranteed to "scare the hell out of you". I am sure that all parishioners who survived a number of those celebrations could make claim to a high place in the after-world. But we could look at those bas relief's of the stations of the cross. We could really get saddened by looking at the station over our pew: "Christ falls for the second time." Oh well! We could always look at the strange people: the guy with the full beard, the women with big noses, the tall ones, the tiny people (we had a bunch of them), etc.

Winter Sundays at home were fun days. No question" "Mama was the best cook in the world!" (I suppose a few others have made that claim!) I think, in those early years on the farm, we had our Sunday banquet in the evening. We were poor farmers but we ate better than any of the prosperous farmers. The house would be full of the beautiful odors of baked chicken, pork or beef roast - all cooked and served with the trimmings. Every one in the family had dinner at the same time. None of that leaving the table early with permission, or being too busy to eat at the same time as the others. One would go hungry like that!

Oh! We spent considerable time teasing and fighting amongst ourselves. We were like two families - Nora, Elphage and Lorraine at the top, and Jerry, Lowell and Ray at the bottom. I, Lowell, complained that there was no justice! Jerry could beat me up and not get caught, but if I tried to get even by beating up Ray, I usually got what I had coming. There were plenty of Sundays that we got kicked out into the cold outside to cool off a little - and I still remember how difficult it was on some occasions to apologize because I was in the wrong. Sometimes it would take a half hour in the corner of the room staring at the blank wall (it seemed like ten hours) before I would decide that humility was better than imprisonment. Man! Those walls were boring! It was not too bad when Mama took pity on me and permitted me to sit on a chair but it was pretty rough when I had to kneel without slumping or to stand still in one spot. I suppose today's family psychologist's would say that all that was good - that we learned how to get rid of our aggression. Well, maybe so. But it did cost me a few black eyes.

Winter Sunday afternoons were usually fun times. Mama might make divinity, fudge, burnt sugar candy or, a real treat, toffee. We kids got to scrape the pans - we would try to induce Mama not to do too good of a job when she poured from the cooking pot to the hardening sheet - the more left in the pot the better for us. Those toffee days were special. Everyone got a chance to "pull" first. I still remember the toffee skeins drying, wound in the butter coated platters - then the great moment when the skeins would be broken into one or two inch pieces and sampled.

Some Sundays we had rich home-made ice cream - no problem freezing - just put the makings outside and stir once in a while. Due to the fact that we produced the cream the resulting delicacy was about as rich as possible - that, accompanied by home made cookies or dark chocolate cake. Other Sundays, Mama might make a bread pan of popcorn (home grown of course) and pour on that rich butter and sprinkle with Morton's salt and voila - who gets to the pan first?

The "goodies" were just the accompaniment to the games we people played. Different kinds of card games. Let's see - how did "pig" go? Was it that three cards were dealt to each of the players, each drew from the deck in turn, when someone got the "pig" (the jack of spades?), he would try to conceal putting his finger to his nose, and the last one playing to do the same was eliminated. Sounds rather simple now but we did spend many happy, laughing hours together playing that game. We, also, played Battle, Hearts, Old Maid "even with our old maid aunt - the game might be shunned today as being politically incorrect.), etc. Some games we played were the store bought kind that we had received as birthday or Christmas gifts: Authors (one had to guess the name n the back based on the portrait on the front.), Chinese Checkers, Pick-up Sticks, etc. Many, many great family hours that I just don't see happening today.

Some Sunday evenings we might be given a special treat and we would have some "floating islands", I guess the whipped white of eggs over the yolks mixed with cream and sugar with a dash of nutmeg. I had not

had any for many years until I ordered a custard dessert several years ago while traveling in France. Several their foods that must have been handed-down from generation to generation that I could identify closely with my Mothers cooking were: leftover pieces of dark chocolate cake and bread pudding covered with hard sauce, head-cheese (tete-de-Fromage) and various ways of preparing pork, it seemed to me that I could identify some of those tastes that would have had to have been handed down from mother to daughter from France to Canada to the United States over a period of three hundred years, it was a sort of homelike feeling - like a fiber of my heritage.

Many of those long winter days and evenings were spent helping Mama with her rugs and quilts. Before she was married in 1909, she had been a seamstress of the highest quality. We did have store-bought overall and coveralls but about everything else was homemade.

Quilting and rugs remind me of an aside: A program was established during the depression years that was belittled and brunt of many jokes - especially if you were well enough off that you did not have to participate. It was known as the WPA - Works Progress Administration (in derision: "We Poke Along"). The program was established under the Roosevelt Administration to provide jobs and incentives to some of the millions of unemployed. One phase of the program was a project to index articles in early newspapers - I recently utilized those indexes while doing historical research at the Minnesota Historical Society. I understand that more than sixty thousand bridges were built under the program. The region "sports arena" in Crookston where I ice and roller skated and danced to big bands was built under the program - the arena is still used by young people. Maybe those who criticized the program as a waste had seen Papa when he was employed on the arena project -this was after he had to abandon farming. The story goes that his supervisor saw him throwing up behind a shed and he told Papa that he had no business there, that he was too sick to work. It turned out that Dad was riddled with stomach cancer and the supervisor was right. He did not last through the summer. It was with greeat courage that the family managed to survive those dark, trying days.

A phase of this program was designed to encourage and employ artists, writers, craft persons, etc., to keep them off the bread lines. Some recent art exhibits have promoted the works accomplished during this period. Prizes were offered in competitions of craft people that took place at the local level. Our family, under Mama's direction, won many of the prizes by taking the competition in crafts through rug making.

We usually had a number of frames leaning against the wall with the basics of a rug. We made hooked rugs with strips of leftover cloth (maybe one rug wool and the other cotton), leftover yarn or silk stockings - no wonder I collect so much junk and can't throw things away.

Some were "braided rugs". They were made by braiding short strips of cloth or stockings into a long tubular shaped component which was wound in a circle or ellipse and sewed together in that pattern. Maybe a light strip next to a dark strip or three colors braided together. it was sometimes necessary to dye the cloth and us kids often had the job of cutting the strips. The scissors were not always very sharp and blisters often resulted.

Some were "hooked rugs". First, a piece of burlap, maybe six by eight feet, would be tacked to a wood frame, then Mama would draw a pattern on the burlap with charcoal or crayons and each portion of a design would be labeled as to color - the procedure to that point was similar to that utilized in the production of "painting by numbers" ("you too can be a painter!") that was a popular pastime a few years ago. The next step usually was to define the pattern with an outline hooked onto the burlap - probably a black, narrow strip of cloth or yarn - depending on which was the basic fabric. Then came the fill in of the pattern blocks. Early-on we used standard hooks - a pointed notched shaft of steel set in a wood handle to make about one half inch loops on the top side - very closely woven. We later obtained a contraption that was held on the upper side that worked on somewhat the same principle as a sewing machine. It was necessary to slide the shuttles up and down with the hands. No matter which method was used ones fingers became numb after a while But the worst chore was when we had to cut the top of the loop - we thought we would grow up with our fingers molded in the scissor cutting position.

We were very young when we were first able to "help" Mama with her knitting - she made warm wool socks, mitts, sweaters, etc. We would hold the skeins of yarn while she sat on her rocker rolling the thread into a ball. I wonder, how did we survive such peace and quiet?

We did obtain one luxury - a beautiful floor cabinet model, seventy eight RPM, phonograph. Our bachelor uncle Clem (everyone should have a bachelor uncle Clem!) had sent Mama $10 or $15 to buy us something for Christmas and Papa used it for a luxury. That was a fabulous experience when he brought it home, cranked it up, and we heard sound out of it for the first time - I doubt if Thomas Edison was as happy as we were to hear that sound. Many hours were enjoyed listening to that prized possession. We had a few records: The Meditation from Thais, something from Xerxes, a German band, an old fashioned talking comedian - storyteller, etc. The oldest children in our family, Nora and Al, purchased some of the records from a few pennies saved from the little money they earned from odd jobs. I think that phonograph was responsible for the birth of a love of great music that we developed and from which we received many hours of enjoyment over many years.

Every night a portion of the evening was devoted to a practice that is fading into the past - the family Rosary. We thought it took hours but it actually was from thirteen to fifteen minutes. I know - I frequently timed it. It usually took place in Mama and Papa's room but on sick nights. It was in the sick one's bedroom. We said it in French "*Je vous Sainte Marie, plene de grace, le Siegneur est avec vous.*" etc. etc., Like the Latin prayers, we did not know too well what we were saying and if we lost our beads we could fake it with our ten fingers. The problem without the rosary was that one would get mixed up on the number of decades completed and not know how close to the end one was. Man! It got sleepy sometimes but if we slumped over the bed too much we heard about it. I must have been influenced by the other side for I got in plenty of trouble needling others and spent considerable prayer time in the corner. That would have been a good time to go because after doing that penance I am sure St. Peter would have welcomed us directly.

I recently visited the house we had live in. It was an experience in perception! Wow! In my "minds eye" I had remembered the home as huge - with plenty of room, many steps to the second floor, etc. Now, I can't understand how a family of six could live comfortably in that place. I learned, once again, the difference between the child's mind's eye and the adult minds eye. I suppose the same applies to those "Snows of Yesteryear". Maybe they were not as deep as I remembered and maybe those those winters were no worse than the one we are now experiencing.

LA SOCIETE IS YOUR ORGANIZATION - HELP PROMOTE MEMBERSHIP IN YOUR ORGANIZATION.

LaSociete Canadienne-Francaise du Minnesota came into existence in the late winter of 1979, and has been a constant representative of the French-Canadian heritage since that time.

We are noting, each year, a decline in members. The decline is slow, but consistent. We are nearing a point of major concern as to whether or not this organization will continue to be able to exist and serve its most important functions. Without members, there is no La Societe. Without La Societe, there is a "hole in the soul" of our heritage.

Each member should assume a responsibility for keeping this organization alive. A major way you can help is by identifying in your own family one or two or more persons one generation younger than you who have at least some interest in preserving their heritage. Urge them to join, or purchase a membership for them. We all need to do our part.

DUES AMOUNTS: Family $15.00; Senior over 62 $8.00; Senior Couple $10.00; Single $10.00
MAKE CHECK TO LA SOCIETE C-F AND SEND TO:
John England, 2002 Palace Avenue, St. Paul MN 55105. MERCI BEAUCOUP

Nouvelles Villes Jumelles

Newsletter of La Société Canadienne Française Du Minnesota

NEWS FROM LA SOCIETE C-F

MEETINGS: The next regular meetings of La Societe will be held on Monday evenings at 7:30 p.m. on March 4, April 1, May 6 and June 3. All meetings are held at the International Institute, 1694 Como Avenue, St. Paul. This facility is easy to find, on Como., just west of Snelling, and directly across from the State Fair Grounds.

The April 1 meeting program will be Dick Bernard, reporting on a January, 1996, trip to the Holy Land.

FESTIVAL OF NATIONS: This years Festival is at the **St. Paul Civic Center May 2-5**. The theme is Ethnic Markets. Persons with ideas for our booth should contact Leo Gouette at 489-8306. We especially need people to help staff the booth on the following dates/times:

Friday, May 3, from 5-11 p.m.
Saturday, May 4, from 11 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Sunday, May 5, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

We would like people to work four hour shifts if possible. You will be teamed with at least one other person. **Call Leo Gouette at 489-8306.**

LA SOCIETE will be electing three members of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS this spring. Your interest is solicited. Call Leo Gouette (489-8306) if interested.

MISCELLANEOUS:

* **We are seeking genealogy type articles for Chez Nous. How about from you?** Send to editor Dick Bernard, at 7632 157th Street W #301, Apple Valley MN 55124.

* **The Board is looking for someone to head up our Sales Committee. Contact Louis Ritchot at 323-8729 if interested.**

* **We are accepting advertisements for Chez Nous. Costs is $100 per year (6 issues) for personal card size space, prorated if less than a year. Send requests attention of Leroy Dubois, secretary, 54 Suzanne Drive., St. Paul MN 55127-4116.**

CONGRATULATIONS to LES ERRANTS for a fine performance at Landmark Center during Winter Carnival January 27. The group sang for a very appreciative audience.