

QWLA

Chez Nous

The newsletter of

La Société

Canadienne Française du Minnesota

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JE ME SOUVIENS . . .

Note from the Editor: *This is the third and final chapter of the Lemire family history as told by daughter Eleanor Emily Lemire. The first chapter, from Hickory, Minnesota to Sentinel Butte, North Dakota in the early 1900s, appeared in the Juillet-Aout, 1999 Chez Nous; the second chapter, at Sentinel Butte from 1909 till they pulled up stakes to move to a hoped-for better life in Oregon in 1935, appeared in the Novembre-December 1999 issue. This chapter follows the Lemire family in Oregon during the Great Depression and World War II. We are grateful to Ellie for sharing her memories with us.*



Ellie Lemire in 1943, Medford, Oregon

OREGON

Part Three of a Family History

by Ellie Emily Corey

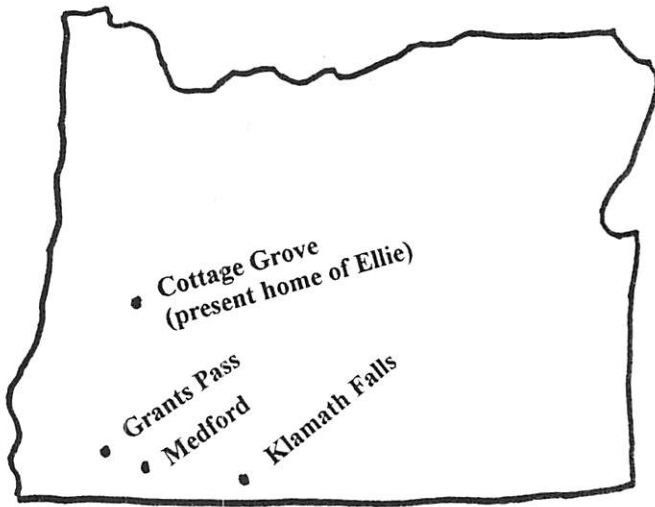
Once again, George and Evelina, the French couple from what was then known as Hickory, Minnesota, set out to make a dramatic change in their lives. Only this time, the change would involve their six youngest children, Lucille, Olivia, Ed, Louis, Louise, and Eleanor Emily. The older six family members were by now pursuing life styles of their own.

The "Great Depression" meant different things to individual people. Some were directly affected by total loss of their means of livelihood, and others, no matter where they lived, would feel the effects of worldwide economic recessions. George and Evelina found themselves unable to avoid the results of the Depression by moving away from their farm in North Dakota. Poverty followed them and their children.

The family packed camping gear in a small trailer that they hauled behind a 1932 Chevy sedan and headed west. Why did they choose to move to Oregon? The reasons were multiple: fliers circulated abundantly around Sentinel Butte advertised "good money for picking fruit." Also, George had a brother, John, who lived in Klamath Falls, in southern Oregon. John was the only brother besides George who had moved away from Hickory, their home place. John promised to help him find work.

The two brothers spent two weeks searching hopelessly for a job for George. Finally, realizing there would be none, the family decided to move even further west to Medford where pear picking was to begin.

Continued next page



Towns in Oregon familiar to the Lemire's

George had the notion that they would make the trip west, and if things didn't work out, they would return to North Dakota where he might at least be able to feed his family. After all, he was a farmer and a sharp-eyed hunter. Evelina clung to the desire of a better life and a Catholic education for their children, which she believed could not be found in Sentinel Butte. She did not share George's feelings of a possible return to the way things had been for them during the last years in North Dakota.

The family stayed in Medford, in what was then called an auto court, with the inviting name of "Camp With Us," and discovered to their dismay that no fruit pickers were being hired. They were directed to a town still further west, Grants Pass, where hop picking was in full swing. Again, they packed the trailer and moved on towards their goal of finding work in the west.

The hop farm located near Grants Pass promised not only work, but lodging for the family. The foreman took them to a sorry looking shack, then gave George two six foot long cloth bags, one for him, the other for the girls, who could share a bag for the picked hops. The pay was ten cents a pound and a bag could be filled in a day. What he failed to mention was that the bags when full weighed under five pounds. Hops are light as feathers, as they soon discovered. Nevertheless, George, with Louise, Olivia, and Lucille, left for the nearby hop field, while Eleanor stayed at the camp with Evelina.

While Eleanor tried to help, she noticed how listlessly Evelina moved from the trailer to the shack, bringing in but a few items to place on the one filthy shelf above the wood cook stove. Evelina's lips were moving and she seemed to be praying through tears.

After a while she rested on a torn canvas cot and Eleanor sat beside her, unable to alleviate nor understand the sadness her mother carried within.

In what seemed a short time, Louise returned followed by Lucille and Olivia. They were not only hot, tired, and hungry but shouting with anger. The older girls said they'd had enough of picking hops and wanted to return to Medford. They had seen ads for domestics in the Medford Tribune, and said they would take whatever work they could find in order to stay in Medford.

Last of all came George with his bag barely a quarter full of hops. He too was disenchanted with the work and announced that they would head north towards Portland and then east, back to North Dakota. His announcement was met with stony, silent and angry stares, not only from Evelina but from his daughters as well. Evelina silently picked up what items she had brought into the shack and put them into the trailer. Then she said to everyone, "Get in, we're going back to Medford." George, outnumbered, drove to "Camp With Us" in Medford where they stayed until they found jobs and a small house with enough acreage for one cow and one pig.



Evelina and George Lemire in "happier times"

Continued next page



John Lemire (George's brother) showing off his car, apparently in Klamath Falls, Oregon

Olivia and Lucille worked as domestics for three dollars a week, and true to their word, gave part of it to help the family. George took whatever job he could find. The Depression had hit Oregon too, and jobs were scarce even for seasonal work such as picking fruit. Good state jobs were subject to residency requirements, which George would not have for several years. The small amount of money from the summer crops in North Dakota went to pay for the bus trip, bringing Louis and Ed west so they could begin school. It also paid for the house, the pig and a cow. In fact, it was the truckload of apples given as food for the pig that kept the family from starving during that first year in Medford.

Besides the story of eating food meant for the pig, many tales exist concerning the poverty felt by people during the Depression, and sad to say, they are for the most part true. The stories tell of an assault to the sensitivities of the pre-teen and teenaged children of Evelina and George. They tell about wearing cardboard in the soles of shoes to cover holes in a futile attempt to keep feet dry in rainy weather; about going to school with empty lunch pails and growling stomachs; about eating nothing but baking powder biscuits day after day; of hours spent in the city library at noon because of the shame of being in a lunch room without food; and about embarrassment at kneeling in chapel because everyone behind could see the holes in shoes and stockings. It was also about

being glad for uniforms for most of the year, and when not in uniform wearing clothing frayed and washed many times over. Amazingly, a few friends were able to penetrate the pride that went with being poor, and offered an orange or half a sandwich. Always there were apples with the rotten parts cut off and the remainder made into applesauce, usually without sugar.

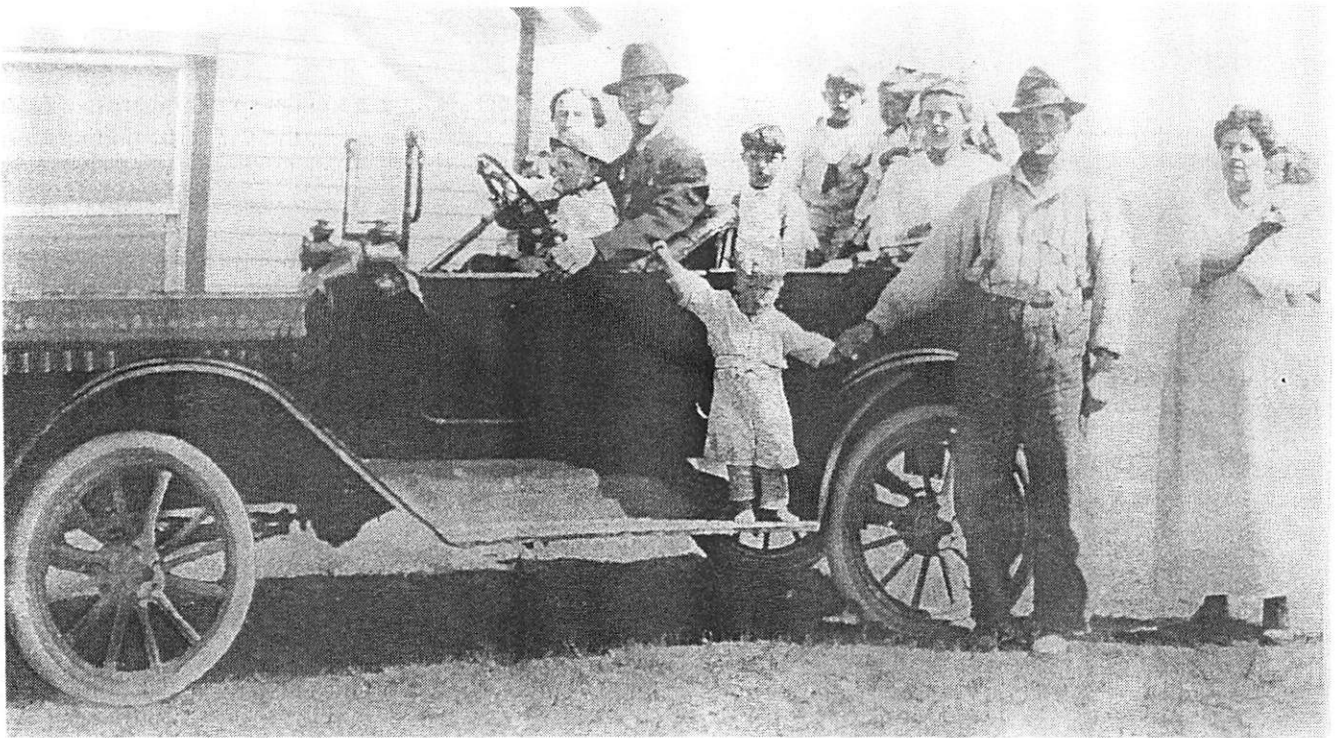
Poverty stories abound as does the marvelous resiliency shown by many who faced the Depression and became strengthened by overcoming its unwanted challenges.

It took George and Evelina nearly four years to achieve the barest financial stability. When their finances improved, Lucille moved to Vancouver, Washington, and worked her way through nurse's training. Olivia finished high school at St. Mary's where the children were enrolled. She found a job in a ladies' ready-to-wear store and generously gifted her younger sibling with new clothes.

Ed and Louis were given ample opportunity to participate in sports because St. Mary's, although considered a small school, excelled in spirit and winning in sports. After graduation, they immediately joined the service.

World War II brought an end to poverty by making it possible for everyone to find a job in the

Continued next page



Jerry Lemire showing off *his* new car in 1913 – at far right is Evelina and the new baby, Rita

war effort. After graduating from high school, Louise worked in the Signal Corps at Camp White, an Army camp built near Medford.

Still in school, Eleanor was discovered by a young music-teaching nun, Sister Virginia Maria, to have singing talent, and was given voice lessons. She had a school job which paid for the lessons. Music was a saving factor as she sang for recitals, civic clubs, weddings, and prepared herself for scholarship aid towards college expenses. She and her accompanist were often taken in the early morning hours to a chapel at Camp White to sing for weddings. The usual songs were "Ave Maria" and "On This Day Oh Beautiful Mother". The special escort service was a heady experience for the teenagers.

Medford became the "home place" for the younger family members. George brought lug boxes of fruit home for Evelina to can and she continued to "put up" jars of produce from her garden even when most of their children had left home. They had a small, comfortable, house and more than apples to eat.

At the end of the day, after he had read the news, George rosined his bow and played the fiddle. Deep furrows filled his brow as the bow flew across the strings, making his music speak for him. Evelina sat listening and sometimes hummed along on the

songs she knew. Often though, she remained pensively silent. Who was to know her thoughts?



The "one with the memories," their youngest, left them after World War II to marry her own true love, Les Corey, and with him, begin her own family story. ♦

What are you waiting for?

We are always looking for new members. Dues are \$18 for family; \$15 for singles and senior families; and \$12 for seniors. Please make checks out to LSCF and send to John England, Treasurer, 2002 Palace Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105.

Send your memories in the form of articles or just short anecdotes to Dick Bernard at 7632 157th St. W. #301, Apple Valley, MN 55124. Or email him at dick@chez-nous.net.

An Iron Range French-Canadian Remembers Growing Up Catholic

by Dorothy Viger Fleming

Until the mid-1920s, I attended the McGolrick Institute Catholic school in Hibbing, Minnesota. The year I started seventh grade we were not allowed to ride on the public school buses anymore as the Ku Klux Klan was quite prominent in this area. They were burning crosses on the Kitzville Location dump that we could see from the small mining location, called Albany, where we lived, and which was separated by a huge mine dump between the two communities. After only two weeks of that seventh grade year, we enrolled in the public schools in Hibbing.

When I was in the ninth grade, my parents sent me to my paternal grandmother's home in Eveleth. I thought I was only going to stay for the summer. My Grandpa had died early that spring and the folks didn't want my Grandma to be alone. I stayed two years!

Eveleth at that time (1927) was a town of about 4,000 population and there were three Catholic churches. One we called "the Italian Church." Another was "the Irish Church." I know there were many French-Canadian families in Eveleth as my Grandma used to visit and talk of them.

I remember my Grandma on her knees every night at bedtime, and saying the rosary in French. She always talked French to my Aunt Mary who

came over often as she also lived in Eveleth, only a few blocks away.

While at my Grandma's, I remember we went to Fort Frances, Ontario to visit some of her friends, and when we went to church, the very first thing they did was take up a collection for "pew rent." It was the first I'd heard of this, and I was about 14 years old.

When the original Hibbing was moved, for mining reasons, the only Catholic church to be built in the new Hibbing, about one mile to the south of the original town site, was Immaculate Conception, and the priest was Italian. It's still called "the Italian Church" at times.

The Hibbing of my memories, including the original Blessed Sacrament church, was moved about one mile south when it was found to have been built over rich iron ore deposits. This old town is now called North Hibbing by residents, and some streets and foundations are still visible there. Blessed Sacrament Church was rebuilt in new Hibbing, and is a very large and impressive church today.

Today there are two Catholic schools and three Catholic churches in Hibbing. We are all combined as the "Hibbing Catholic Community" and Mass is said at all three churches. Blessed Sacrament is a consecrated church and the two pastors live there. One priest lives at St. Leo's, and the parish office is also at St. Leo's.

My husband and I were married in the rectory of the Blessed Sacrament 65 years ago last June. He was not Catholic then, but he became a Catholic after 20 years of marriage and was godfather to our first grandchild, which made our daughter and her husband very happy. ♦

Coming Soon . . .

Throughout history, regardless of ethnic group, men have always gotten most of the publicity, because of their virtually exclusive right to elected positions and property ownership, among other powerful privileges. But women had a tremendous and positive influence in the French Canadian story. We solicit your stories about the great ladies in your family, both past and present - their contributions, strengths, talents, trials, and tribulations. We will print these stories in future issues of *Chez Nous*. Look for a new regular feature, "Grandes Dames".

St. Jean-Baptiste Fete . . . The annual St. Jean-Baptiste fête will be held Friday evening, June 23, at the Henry Sibley house in Mendota. This will be the fourth year the State Historical Society has hosted this event, celebrating Québec's patron, and will be very enjoyable. Be there!

Cirque du Soleil . . . The world-famous circus which had its beginnings on the streets of Montreal will be coming to Minneapolis in August or September. Watch for an announcement later this spring either here or on the Cirque website at www.cirquedusoleil.com or by calling 800-678-2118.

Société Updates

- ♦ St. Paul's 68th annual **Festival of Nations** is May 4-7 at River Centre, downtown St. Paul. La Société has participated in this event for years, and will again this year. The theme this time is "Celebrate the Seasons." We always need more volunteers to staff the booth. Please volunteer by calling **Marie Nolin Nichols** at 651-578-2517 or **Seraphine Byrne** at 651-224-2636. *Thanks!*
- ♦ Member **Mike Durand** has been a key person in establishing a Durand family foundation and website for family history purposes. The family has a wonderful magazine and invites interest. Mike can be reached at 1501 Rushmore Drive, Burnsville, Minnesota 55306; 952-431-5610, email: MdurandMN@aol.com. The family has a website at <http://www.Durandfoundation.com>.
- ♦ Members wishing to **research church records** in the Twin Cities area might consider contacting the archivists at the Diocese headquarters in St. Paul. Steve Granger or Patrick Anzelc are the people to contact at 651-291-4400.
- ♦ From late March through mid-April 2000, there will be a photo display called "**People and Parishes**" at the Landmark Center in St. Paul.
- ♦ The **annual meeting** of La Société will be on Monday, June 5th at 7 p.m. at St. Louis Church in St. Paul. At this meeting we will be electing officers and Board members for the coming year. We invite you to become a nominee for a position. There are seven Board members. The Board elects the President, vice-president, secretary and treasurer from amongst its members. Current President is Dick Bernard. For more information you may contact Dick or any other Board member. Dick can be reached at 7632 157th St. W. #301, Apple Valley, MN 55124. His phone number is 952-891-5791; his email is dick@chez-nous.net.
- ♦ **Letters to the Editor** are now welcome in *Chez Nous*. Send us your thoughts, feelings, opinions, complaints, and praise!
- ♦ **Catherine Rivard** would love to hear from Société members via email! Her address is: addiepoq@earthlink.net.

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La Société Canadienne Française du Minnesota
Elway Station, P.O. Box 16583
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Chez Nous

The newsletter of

La Société

Canadienne Française du Minnesota

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The tiniest of thumbnail sketches of Oakwood, North Dakota, and it's parish, Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Information from the Centennial Book of
Sacred Heart Church, 1981, and
Volume I of Walsh Heritage,
the History of Walsh County ND, 1976.

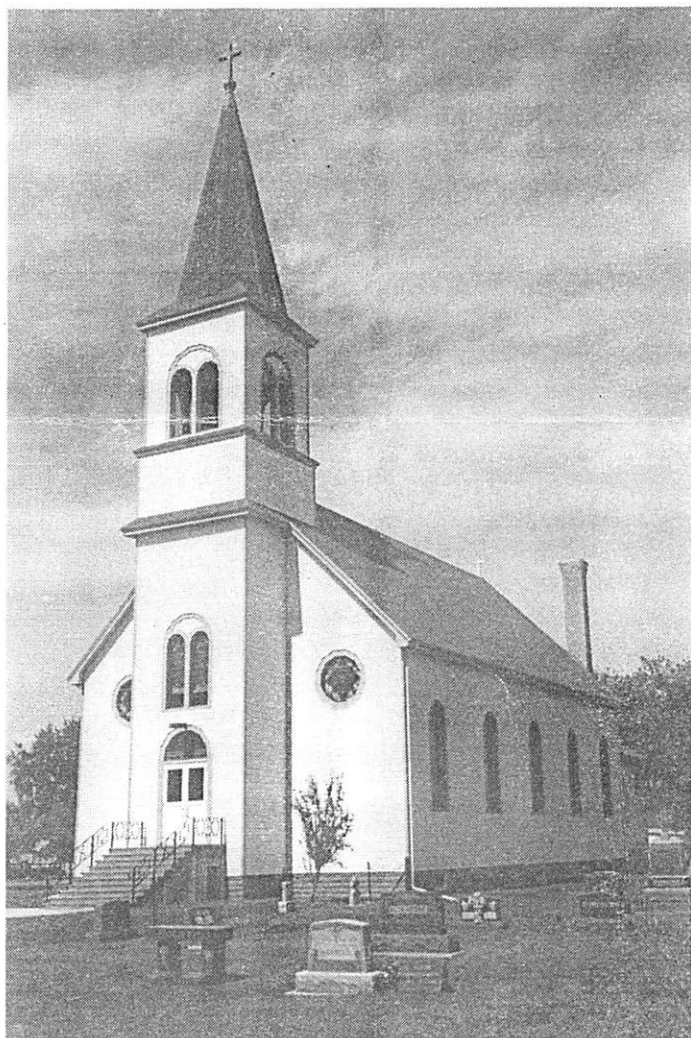
Oakwood ND is the tiniest of villages, no longer appearing on any maps, located perhaps four miles east of Grafton, in northeastern North Dakota. While it predated the founding of Grafton by several years, it was early "left in the dust", since the railroad came to Grafton... and not Oakwood.

Today's Oakwood is a pristine and beautiful little place with several houses, one or two businesses, all surrounding a beautiful prairie Catholic church. Long gone, but still an active memory, is a large Catholic school which educated thousands of local children until it closed in 1967.

This issue is a small tribute to this community and to one of its progeny, Bishop Raymond Lessard.

What was to become Oakwood was first settled by Mr. Joseph Charpentier. Charpentier and his wife Louise (Allard) and family left Cochrane (probably Corcoran), 23 miles west of Minneapolis, in 1872, settling first near Fort Abercrombie (near Wahpeton ND), and by 1874 arriving at the general area of Oakwood.

In 1878, and years following through the late 1890s, many French-Canadians homesteaded in the Oakwood area. There are innumerable stories. Many came from eastern or lower Canada (as Quebec was sometimes called). Many others came from Minneapolis-St. Paul and other areas. Some of the many French-Canadian surnames in the initial settlement were as follows (many of the below names are represented several times)¹:



Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Oakwood ND,
August, 2000

1878 -Barnabe, Brunelle, Charpentier, Collette, DesChenes, Girard, Huard, LaChapelle, LaRoche, Savard, Trudeau,

1879 (new surnames) Boivin, Bourcier, Boutin, Chaponneau, Desautels, Donelly, French, Goulet, LaBerge, LaBonte, Lessard, McLernan, Parent, Patenaude, Pellant, Poole, Sullivan, Suprenant, Vary.

1880 (new surnames) Bellegrade, Bolduc, Bradford, Campbell, Couture, Daley, Demers, Faille, Fortier, Lacoste, Lamarre, Garant, Sabourin, Seigny, Soucy,

And on, and on, through 1897, many more French-Canadians, mostly farmers, appear in Oakwood.... Even with a sprinkling of Irish², this was a French-Canadian parish in all ways.

On July 11, 1880, Father Louis Bonin made his first visit to the community, then called Park River settlement, and "celebrated the first high Mass in Oakwood, where on this same occasion he also baptized ten children. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated in a log cabin, located on the south side of the Park River about one and one-half mile west of the present church site. That building still [stood in 1981] serving as a granary." (Sacred Heart Centennial History)

In 1906, St Aloysius Academy was founded at Oakwood, and until 1965 (high school) and 1967 (grades) the school staffed by nuns served the children of Oakwood Parish. (Even earlier, an ambitious priest had endeavored to begin a college in Oakwood, but his dream, while it actually came to fruition, was short-lived.)

This was a parish in which vocations to the religious life were apparently taken seriously. Through 1981, one bishop, five priests, two brothers and twenty-two sisters claimed Oakwood, Sacred Heart and St. Aloysius Academy as home.

¹ - This partial list represents about a third of the names listed as settlers through 1897 (the last listing is LaFreniere). Often the names are repeats as entire families, as sets of brothers, migrated to the community together, some from Canada, some from Minneapolis area, some from other places. The initial settlement date of 1878 coincides with the completion of the railroad from Minneapolis to Winnipeg, and thus the settlement time may not be coincidental. Some non-French names appear in the list, but even this can be deceiving. The family name Campbell, for instance, is virtually 100% French-Canadian - the surname ancestor Campbell, from Scotland, was in Canada in the early 1700's, and all subsequent marriages were within the French-Canadian culture.

² - The interaction of ethnic groups was a dilemma even in these early days on the almost empty prairies. One pioneer French-Canadian woman was warned by her parents to be wary of the Indians and Norwegians.

Connections: some brief observations

By Dick Bernard, editor, *Chez Nous*

I probably first visited the tiny village of Oakwood, North Dakota long prior to my ability to remember such visits. My grandparents lived in nearby Grafton ND, and Oakwood was home to many relatives and friends of Grandpa Henry and Grandma Josephine (Collette) Bernard. Josephine grew up in Oakwood, and husband to be Henry surfaced there from Quebec ca early 1890s, following his brother Joseph, who had migrated there with his new wife and her family (Gourde) in 1888. Josephine and Henry (his baptismal name was Honore) married in June, 1901, at Sacred Heart church a half mile or so from her home.

In 1981, in my infancy of searching for family history, I returned to Oakwood, meeting people such as cousin Rene and spouse Lil Collette, long time residents of suburban San Diego CA. Rene grew up in the Oakwood area.

I toured, of course, the bulletin board of any community's history - the cemetery. The gravestones in the Sacred Heart churchyard were a potpourri of very French names. There was even a family name "French", which appeared frequently.

It was at Oakwood, at age 41, where I finally got in touch with my French-ness.

About the same time, in the very early 1980s - through some unrecalled serendipity, I met Alice Sell, a Collette cousin of my grandmother, who had grown up in Dayton MN, and now lived in north Minneapolis. (Her father, Alfred, had originally migrated with his siblings and parents from Minneapolis area to Oakwood, but a short time later had decided to return to the Minneapolis area. The family had earlier, in the 1860s, migrated from St. Lambert PQ to the forerunner of Minneapolis, St. Anthony.). In turn, Alice introduced me to Anna Plaisance, yet another Collette cousin, whose voice was an absolutely identical twin to my Grandma Bernard's. The resemblance was almost eerie. Her voice was Grandma, no mistake, even though I had no recordings of Grandma's voice. I had known Anna's son, Vernon Plaisance, when he was a Minnesota state legislator in the early 1970s. I had no idea, then, that he and I were relatives! (Alice, Anna and Vernon are all since deceased. May they rest in peace.)

Through them, I think, I learned of a Bishop Raymond Lessard of Savannah GA diocese, who had Collette roots on both sides of his family, and who had grown up in Oakwood, North Dakota. In late 1988, I first corresponded with Bishop Raymond, and it was nine years later, in October, 1997, when I first met him in person in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Bishop Raymond Lessard

Note: At the end of November, 2000, retired Bishop of Savannah, GA, Raymond Lessard, was in Savannah to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Savannah Diocese, and the completion of a major renovation of the beautiful Cathedral there. Raymond Lessard, a country kid from rural North Dakota. Here is his story, as told in the 1981 Centennial History of Sacred Heart Parish, Oakwood, North Dakota

Raymond William Lessard was born at Oakwood, ND, December 21, 1930....

After graduating from St. Aloysius Academy in Oakwood and attending business school for one year in Grand Forks, he began studies for the priesthood in 1949 as a college freshman at Nazareth Hall Preparatory Seminary in St. Paul MN. Two years later, he was

enrolled at the St. Paul Seminary, also in St. Paul, where he earned a B.A. Degree. In 1953, he was sent to Rome by Aloisius Cardinal Muench, then Bishop of Fargo, to study theology at the North American College. He was ordained a priest in Rome on Dec. 16, 1956, by Bishop Martin J. O'Connor. In June of 1957, he was graduated from the Pontifical Gregorian University with a license in Sacred Theology.

He returned to the United States in July of 1957, serving for three years as an assistant to the pastor of St. Mary's Cathedral in Fargo. In 1960, he returned to Rome as secretary to Cardinal Muench, who was then assigned to the Curia (administrative officers) at the Vatican. At the same time, Father Lessard continued graduate studies in theology and canon law at the Gregorian University. After Cardinal Muench's death in 1962, he was named assistant superior of the North

Prelate enroute to Georgia



Grand Forks (ND) Herald late April, 1973

BISHOP-ELECT RAYMOND Lessard chatted with his parents Mr. and Mrs. Victor Lessard, Oakwood, N.D., as they waited to board a plane

Thursday morning at Grand Forks International Airport. Msgr. Lessard will be installed as Bishop of the Savannah, Ga., Diocese on Friday afternoon. (Herald photo by Ken Kleven)

Msgr. Raymond W. Lessard, 42-year-old native of Oakwood, N.D., left Grand Forks International Airport Thursday morn-

ing for Savannah, Ga., a city he has never visited.

It will be in Savannah on Friday afternoon in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist that Msgr. Lessard will be consecrated Bishop of Savannah. Taking part in the consecration will be the Most Rev. Justin A. Driscoll, Bishop of the Fargo Diocese. The Savannah Diocese covers an area of 36,346 square miles and has a Catholic population of 35,280.

Joining the bishop-elect on the flight from Grand Forks were his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Victor Lessard of Oakwood and other friends and relatives. On the plane from Grand Forks was Rev. Robert Mullins of the University of North Dakota. Joining the group in Savannah will be Msgr. Lessard's sister, Mrs. Charles (Evelyn) Smith, Longview, Wash. and Rev. Kenneth Gallagher of Grand Forks, a cousin of the bishop-elect.

Msgr. Lessard has spent the last 13 years in Rome, Italy, serving in various positions in the Vatican. He has spent the past 10 days visiting with friends and relatives in Oakwood. Many friends and relatives attended a special parish service on Easter Sunday honoring the bishop-elect.

American College Graduate House in Rome.

During the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), Father Lessard served as a "peritus" or theological advisor to the Bishops.

In January of 1964, he was assigned to the staff of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for Bishops, a position he held until his appointment in 1973 as Bishop of Savannah.

Also from 1969-73, he was director of Villa Stritch, a residence erected in Rome for American priests and bishops working at the Vatican.

He was named a papal chaplain, with the title of monsignor, in March of 1971, by Pope Paul VI.

His appointment by Pope Paul VI as Bishop of Savannah was made during a Consistory held on March 5, 1973, at the Vatican. He received Episcopal ordination in St. John the Baptist Cathedral of Savannah on April 27, 1973.



Bishop Lessard with Pope John Paul II (1993)



St. John the Baptist Cathedral, Savannah GA,
January 1999

Catholicism with a French accent: French Refugees in Savannah and Augusta

By Rita H. DeLorme

From The Southern Cross publication of the Diocese of Savannah GA, April 1, 1999.

They were into music and the arts and they spoke a different language. Yet, foreign tongue and all, they were central to development of the Church in Georgia. Who were they? They were the French who immigrated to the cities of Savannah and Augusta in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. At first mistrusted because of their differences and because of the slaves some of them brought with them, they found sympathizers among those who realized that they had survived not one, but two revolutions.

They had left behind them a France scarred by bloody revolt. Members of nobility or friends of the nobility or even, as the little seamstress in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, employees of the nobility,

soon became fugitives in their own country. In jeopardy, too, were the lives of those who practiced Catholicism in an age when questioning of Christianity and everything else became both popular and accepted. Priests and nuns were among those hunted by the new, "enlightened" French state.

These people, then, had fled France and gone to St. Domingue, a part of Haiti where the French had been operating prosperous coffee and spice plantations by using African slave labor. The refugees were not long in St. Domingue before, as often happens where there is the evil of slavery, another revolution took place, causing Frenchmen living there to seek asylum in this country. They emigrated to the United States all along the eastern seaboard, with the city of Charleston as their chief gateway to a new life in South Carolina and Georgia.

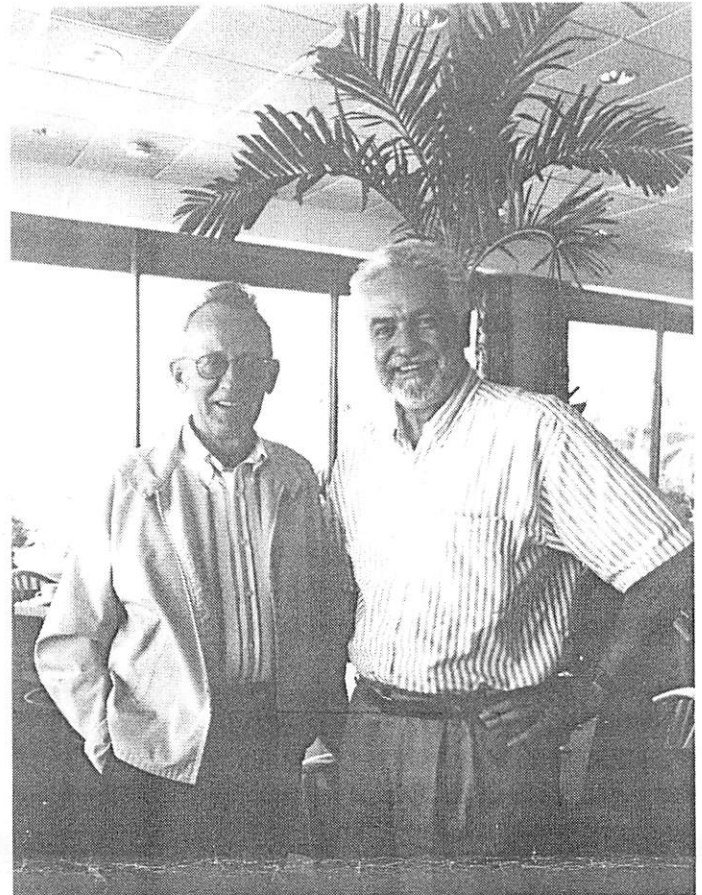
With these transplanted Frenchmen came Catholic clergy, notably the priests LeMoine, LeMercier and Carles. Father Jean (John) LeMoine evidently administered sacraments in Savannah in the early 1790's, as his death was noted in the *Georgia Gazette* of November 20, 1794.

One week later, the *Georgia Gazette* contained an announcement by one Francois Courvoisie, agent for the French consulate, of the sale of "...all the personal estate of John Lemoyne (sic), deceased." Father LeMoine was buried in Colonial Cemetery in Savannah. A marker in his memory stands in the cemetery just across the street from the second location of the Church of Saint John the Baptist, on Abercorn Street, between Liberty Lane and Hull Street.

When Father Olivier (Oliver) LeMercier came to Savannah in 1796, one of his first duties was to perform the Christian rite of burial at Father LeMoine's grave because no priest had been available to provide these rites for the man who had been called "the first parish priest" of Savannah.

Father LeMercier, who was called the "Missionary of Georgia," had also been authorized in 1796 by Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore to take care of Savannah's Catholics. It was LeMercier who tended the Catholic flock, largely French at this time, when the first Catholic Church was located at 123 Montgomery Street.

Another French clergyman and refugee, the Abbe Anthony Carles, also was on the scene. Abbe Carles' relative, Madame Cottineau, began the operation of what may have been the first school in Savannah. In late 1803, Father Carles signed church records as "priest rector *per interim* of the church", Father LeMercier having been named pastor at the troubled Saint Mary's Church in Charleston. Later Father LeMercier was lost at sea on what was probably a voyage to the West Indies. Abbe Carles first identified himself as "pastor of the



Bishop Lessard and Dick Bernard, October, 1997

Church" in 1804 and, except for brief intervals of travel, continued as pastor of the Church of Saint John the Baptist until 1819.

Given the provenance of so many of the diocese's early priests, it is no wonder that archival records of the first churches in Savannah and Augusta are dotted with the names of Frenchmen, many of whom brought their entire families and remaining slaves to receive the sacraments. The names of these people echo from that distant time to our own: Boulineau, Gaudry, Rossignol, Roma, du Bignon, to cite just a few.

Some of the French in Savannah moved on to Augusta, site of another French refugee enclave, while others remained in Savannah or sailed back to their homeland once the situation there settled. Remarkably, in an emotional climate which still was not altogether favorable to Catholics, these "foreigners" had charmed their way into acceptance.

The French brought, it was said, a certain "lightheartedness" to the communities in which they lived. Early parish registers in both Augusta and Savannah, written in their language, confirm the fact there was a time in Georgia when the Catholic Church, indeed, had a French accent.

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP IN LA SOCIETE C-F: Membership renewals are due as of December 31, 2000. Please use the enclosed card and envelope to renew your membership in LSCF. Regular dues are \$15 for single (\$12 senior citizen); \$18 for family (\$15 senior citizen). La Societe cannot exist without your membership support.

The annual **MARDI GRAS** potluck is scheduled for **Friday evening, February 23, 6:30 p.m. at St. Louis Church in downtown St. Paul.** Please mark your calendars and spread the word. We have been noticing a slight scarcity of hot items at recent events, s'il vous plait (but the meals have been delicious nonetheless, and the joie de vivre ample.

Speaking of parties, **Merci beaucoup to Seraphine Byrne and family, and Rene Juaire,** for planning an enjoyable Christmas party December 2. Over 40 of us enjoyed food, fun and family. Les Errants sang Christmas carols; Ralph Germain was Pere Noel. Special thanks, and condolences, to Sera Byrne and family, who lost their mother, grandmother and great-grandmother Rosemary earlier in the week. Rosemary lived most of her 90 years as a part of St. Luke's parish in St. Paul.

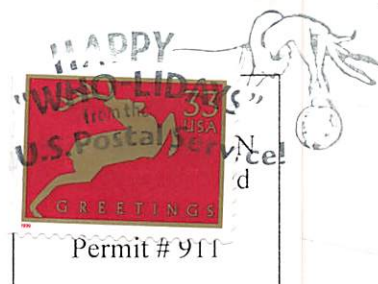
For the last several years, **St. Louis Church in St. Paul has had the 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass in French.** Please check with St. Louis for details. The church is beautifully decorated for the holidays.

Kudos to Alliance Francaise for a very interesting French Legacies program on Saturday, November 11. 120 people listened to speakers and musicians, and observed traditional French-Canadian finger weaving. And there was wonderful food. The afternoon was extraordinarily informative. Merci.

Finally, we can never tire of repeating that **"this is your organization, and your newsletter, and without your active support we will cease to exist."** Contributions of material for possible use in this newsletter is solicited from each and every member. Send to **Dick Bernard, editor, 6905 Romeo Road, Woodbury MN 55125** or by e-mail to **dick@chez-nous.net**. Note that Dick Bernard's address, etc. has changed. We are seeking volunteers for the **annual St. Paul Festival of Nations April 26-29, 2000.** Mark these dates on your calendar. More information later.



BERNARD'S
6905 ROMEO RD
WOODBURY MN 55125



La Société Canadienne Française du Minnesota

P.O. Box 581413
Minneapolis, MN 55458-1413

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED