Le FORUM

"AFIN D'ÊTRE EN PLEINE POSSESSION DE SES MOYENS"

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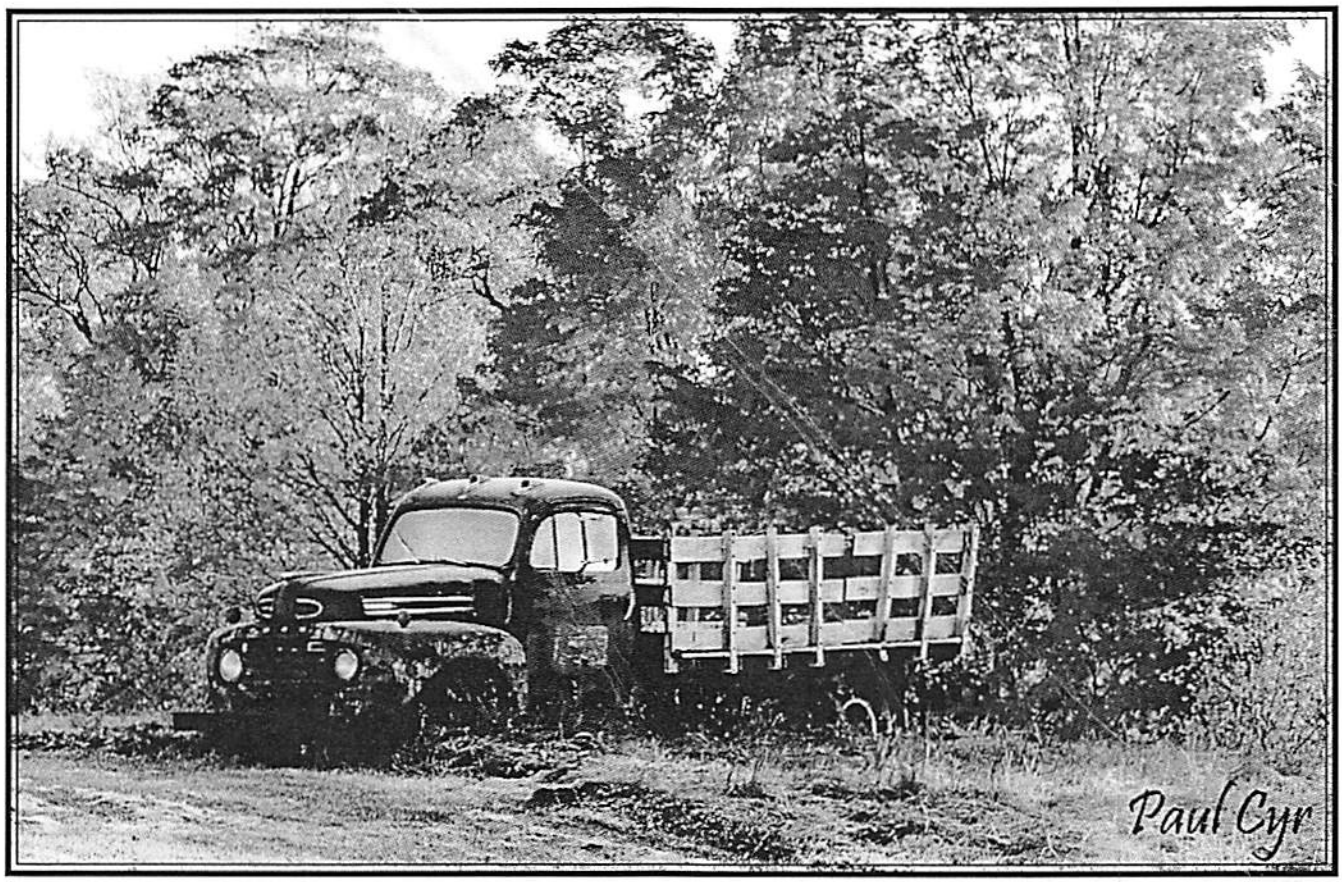

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Les Français d'Amérique / French In America
Calendar Photos and Texts from 1985 to 2002
http://www.johnfishersr.net/french_in_america_calendar.html

Franco-American Women's Institute:
http://www.fawi.net

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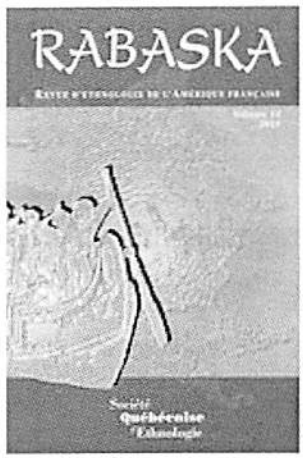

Portrait
Claire Quintal se raconte

préparé par Robert B. Perreault
Saint Anselm College
Manchester, New Hampshire

Professeure émérite, conférencière, auteure, traductrice, et fondatrice-directrice de l'Institut français d'Assumption College à Worcester dans le Massachusetts, Claire Quintal demeure au premier plan de la lutte pour préserver la langue française et la culture franco-américaine en Nouvelle-Angleterre. Sa vie et sa carrière, si longues et si riches, vaudraient une biographie d'au moins 500 pages afin que l'on puisse leur rendre justice. Et cela continue, car elle a toujours quelques projets en marche à la fois. Souvent, lorsque nous discutons d'un tel projet au téléphone, nous nous faisons interrompre par quelqu'un parmi ses nombreux collaborateurs qui l'appelle sur son autre appareil, fixe ou portable, signe de son activité inlassable. Par conséquent, faire son portrait en quelques pages seulement pose un énorme défi. Je lui laisse donc la parole, tout en la remerciant de son encouragement et de son appui au cours des quarante ans que nous nous connaissons.

Claire Quintal à 70 ans (2000)

Jeunesse à Central Falls dans le Rhode Island

Jeune, très jeune, puisque je me vois assise dans une chaise haute, donc je n'étais pas très vieille, je me souviens d'avoir demandé à ma mère de me donner une feuille de papier. L'ayant obtenue, je barbouillais ma feuille avec enthousiasme. mais je me souviens surtout d'avoir pensé, à ce moment-là: «Ah, si seulement je pouvais lire, je saurais ce que je viens d'écrire!» Preuve donc que la lecture et l'écriture m'ont toujours beaucoup intéressée dès ma prime jeunesse.

Depuis ma naissance en avril 1930, j'ai vécu entourée d'une ethnicité vivante, composée d'immigrants venant de l'Irlande, de la Pologne, du Portugal, surtout des îles Açores, de la Syrie et, bien sûr, du Canada français, surtout le Québec, mais aussi d'Acadiens des Maritimes.

Je suis venue au monde près de la rivière Blackstone, berceau de la Révolution industrielle américaine, grâce à Samuel Slater, qui y avait installé sa première usine textile. C'est donc dans le Rhode Island, sur le bord de la rivière Blackstone qu'il met en branle tout ce qui suivrait du côté industriel dans cette région qui allait attirer, quelques années plus tard, tant de Canadiens français qui quitteraient leur pays. Arrivés dans un monde multiethnique, les Canadiens français se sont mis à bâtir des barrières pour protéger surtout leur religion, mais aussi leur langue maternelle, des influences de l'extérieur. La paroisse, l'école bilingue, les sociétés – surtout les mutuelles – la nôtre était l'Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste dont le siège social se trouvait au nord de Central Falls, dans la ville de Woonsocket, R.I., et où mon grand-père servit comme membre de leur bureau général pendant plusieurs années. Ces détails avaient leur importance en ce qui concernait la survie culturelle d'un groupe ethnique comme le nôtre.

Ma ville natale de Central Falls, où s'était aussi installée la famille d'Edmond de Nevers (né en 1862), l'essayiste du Québec, et où il est mort en 1906 ayant passé les trois dernières années de sa vie dans cette ville. Petite ville presque anonyme, Central Falls se trouvait assez près du Québec pour profiter de la culture et des institutions de celui-ci. N'oublions pas qu'en Nouvelle-Angleterre, les Québécois émigrés vécurent en symbiose avec le Québec, calquant leurs propres institutions naissantes sur celles du Québec. Cette symbiose, concernant surtout la survivance à tout prix était, bien sûr, inspirée par l'exemple du Québec.

Née, ai-je dit, entre la rivière, essentielle au développement de la Révolution industrielle américaine et tout près du chemin de fer qui reliait notre ville au grand monde, je suis aussi le produit d'une époque dans laquelle la voiture nous ouvrait les grands espaces vers l'Ouest. Devrais-je ajouter ici que le titre du volume à succès de Jack Kerouac, Franco-Américain de Lowell, s'intitule *On the Road / Sur la route* ? Kerouac, francophone parlant/écrivant une langue française un peu estropiée, était néanmoins un de nous autres.

C'est donc à trois kilomètres environ d'où Samuel Slater établit son usine et à quelques mètres du chemin de fer que j'ai vu le jour. J'ai vécu ma jeunesse entourée d'usines, mais encadrée par l'église, l'école paroissiale et la société mutuelle qui assurait nos vies tout en ajoutant à notre vie culturelle. C'est ainsi que j'ai grandi.

Je pouvais acheter du lait de chèvre des Portugaises pour ma plus jeune sœur, allergique au lait de vache, tout en parlant français à la maison. C'était ça l'Amérique [États-Unis] de ma jeunesse, en tant qu'aînée des six enfants d'Hélène Messier et d'Armand Quintal, lui né à Ware dans le Massachusetts, puis ayant vécu à Berlin dans le New Hampshire et, elle, ayant passé toute sa vie dans le cadre plus petit de Central Falls, Rhode Island, ville située non loin de la capitale, Providence, à environ huit kilomètres de là.

Entourée aussi de grands-oncles et de grandes-tantes de la génération de mes

(Voir page 26)

The Novitiate* in Winthrop, Maine

By Gérard Coulombe
[Formerly of Biddeford, Maine]

*Novitiate: A house or residence to train boys preparing to join a religious order of brothers dedicated to a specific mission, such as teaching. The Brothers of the Sacred Heart had as their mission teaching boys in Catholic parochial schools, secondary schools and colleges.

Preface: As a Franco-American youth born to French-speaking parents, my mother was born to Franco-American parents and raised as one. She married a naturalized Canado-American, my father, "un Quebecois." My education and that of my two sisters was in French. As Catholic religious vocations were important to the Church, the religious sisters and brothers instructing us spent time teaching the 3R's, but they also stressed the importance of religious vocations. We were taught that in addition to marriage there were the religious vocations of the priesthood for boys or of other religious orders, which included either becoming a brother for boys or a nun for girls. Our mother had two sisters who joined the Grey Nuns of Montreal, and our dad had a brother who chose to become a Brother of the Sacred Heart, later assigned to the College de Victoriaville, P.Q.

Our indoctrination became a necessity at the intersection of choice. Given that our parents were Franco-Americans and we now lived in the Franco-American parish of "Saint Andre," as opposed to where I had attended first grade, which was in Saint Joseph's parish with the Church located on U S., Route 1, Biddeford. A third parish, the Irish parish, was located within the boundaries of the first Catholic Church, Saint Joseph. While I do not know that French speaking boys attended the English only public school, a few Irish boys attended my secondary school, as it was the only Catholic boys' high school in town, whereas there were two Catholic High Schools for French speaking girls.

Choice, of course, involved not only marriage but also the religious life. It involved prayerful reflection on the possibility that God could call girls to serve Him in ways opened to just girls, a life as a religious, in other words, a nun, such as those belonging to the order of nuns that taught the girls in our parishes; for boys the choices involved the clergy, becoming a member of an order of religious brothers serving the church. We were taught; it was impressed on us that we had choices to consider, seriously.

After some reflection and prayerful consideration, I chose to become a Brother of the Sacred Heart, an order of religious men whose mission was to teach. My uncle was a model, so, why not me? That was my choice, and so, with the completion of sixth grade, I left home to join the order.

The Novitiate in Winthrop, Maine, was new at the time that I joined, and I had not visited before entering. The property was owned by an order of religious men, known as the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, whose mission was to train young boys to become members of their teaching order. They were from the Province of Quebec, as far as I knew. The order was French speaking, as I was and, I believe, so were all of its novices or students. I was to become one of them, having decided that my "vocation" in life was to be a religious. I had particularly chosen to join this order for two reasons First, I had prayed to discern what my vocation was to be. The answer was that while some friends went to become priests, I went to become a member of this order of brothers because it had been the answer to my prayers, and it was also an order with which I was already familiar. They were my middle school teachers and my uncle; my dad's brother was a member of the order.

The Brothers in my hometown of Biddeford, Maine, in the Parish of Saint Andre, were Brothers of the Sacred Heart. I knew them, as I had had a Brother as a teacher in fifth grade. My teacher in fourth grade was a lay woman who was very influential in my life because she had taken the time to personally introduce me to the children's librarian, and, then, she had spent the next two years making sure that I was a well-trained reader. She had personally escorted me to and from the library and overseen the choices of books I made to take home, and return, for as long as necessary. She spent a lot of her time on me, and for this I was personally and forever grateful until she passed.

In addition to my studies, I learned several other things in the grammar school taught by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. The first is that we were a Franco-American Catholic School taught by the religious, The Brothers of the Sacred Heart. We arrived early at school. There was a diverse student body of boys because about two-thirds never intended to continue after finishing. They always had going to work in the mills in mind. School opened when the bell rang. The first order of business in class was the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag, the second was an opening prayer, followed by a singing of "Oh, Canada," and often a recitation of the "Credo" in French, all of which preceded the first lesson.

Soon the Second World War was to start with the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the speech given by President Roosevelt at the time, a declaration of war with the Empire of Japan for its sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. We boys were sitting outside on the school porch, awaiting the start of school with the unlocking of the doors, when over the loudspeaker, we heard the principal say something, and following his remarks was the declaration or War with Japan that our President Roosevelt spoke .

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(The Novitiate* in Winthrop, Maine
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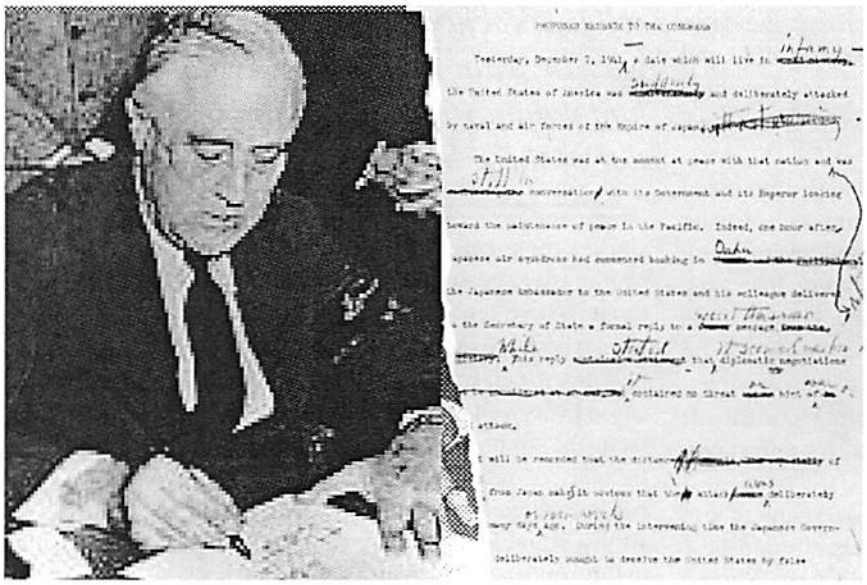
Of near equal importance in school was the protection of our immortal souls and the dangers of some films, motion pictures, that were on the Legion of Decency's list of "never to be viewed films." That particular concentration on this special occasion of sin, our going to the cinema to view an indexed film was tantamount to a visit with the devil incarnate. It was treated as such if we were to confess to our having gone to the cinema to see such a film, and the punishment was a strike of the razor strop across the opened hand of choice, administered by the headmaster with equanimity.

Then the rest of the school day began. I was in grade five and had the extra job of having been an altar boy, say server, ever since first grade in my other parish. I had been prepared for my duties by my mother, Clara, who had taught me the Latin response while I sat on her knees.

While these are old stories, I want to assure my readers that as I grew in age, my commitment to be Franco-American was growing swiftly. For one thing, religion was still at the core of my being. I always assumed it to be true for my classmates because we were, as the saying goes, "all in this together."



I might not have known the term "junior high" when I was that age because no one ever suggested that I attend any school other than a Catholic one. It was never suggested to me by anyone, nor was it proposed or suggested by an English-speaking friend, for I had none of those at the time. My neighborhood, unlike the old with its Irish citizenry all around, was altogether Franco American, French speaking for street after street with an orientation toward Quebec. The entire neighborhood, block after block was French speaking and I was reminded that I had already visited, alone with my father by train from Lewiston, Maine, on the Grand Trunk Railroad all the way to Montreal. But this was not Grand Mere or Victoriaville, P.Q.; it was Biddeford, and I felt, for the first time giddy with my own importance in the family of things. We were Americans speaking French.

I was entirely American, American-born of a Franco-American mother who was born to a Canadian-born father and an American born, Franco-American mother who happened to have married a Canadian-born, now naturalized man, my father, in 1931. As mom always said about her marriage to our father, "I took the late train."

When our mother said that when we were young, I did not altogether understand what she meant; and, now, I still do not fully understand except, maybe, that we never fully benefited as a family from what others were achieving or had achieved. For one thing her married sister, Eugenie Chabot, had her own home. My mother [I had two younger sisters.] did not; mother always paid the rent on demand and on time. Aunt Eva inherited her parents' home because she had stayed to care for them. I guess our uncle Antonio, her brother, had done the same; he held a job as a butcher at the A&P on Main Street, all of his working life in Biddeford. Although his wife died, and I do not know of what, he had a girlfriend after his wife passed, a situation that my mother did not approve of, and for which reason, she would not allow her brother into her house—I guess because it was a "Mortal sin," living in mortal sin as be was living with his girlfriend out of wedlock. I never knew, even, whether our uncle's girlfriend had been divorced or not, as we never spoke to her. I supposed all along that was the reason. I never knew why mother never allowed he brother into her [our] home. I know this because I saw it happen, several times. He stood in the shed but never into the kitchen. [The back entrance into the apartments was from the gallery into the shed and then into the home.]

I never asked mother why she refused to admit her brother into the apartment because I never asked her at any time that she was alive; It would have been too difficult to pose such a contrarian question. "Why aren't you letting your brother into the house, Mom?" I was curious enough to want to ask the question, but I was never brave enough to do so. In retrospect, this and other issues that "hung" out there in the open air of my mind, already swirling with all kinds of questions, was never something for which, I truly looked for answers. Maybe I did not dare question, her , my own mother, for obvious, to me, there were never, for any sensible reason, any plausible occasion for me to do so.

I spent a lot of time on a backwards study of my mother because I felt that, probably, her behavior was, her decisions were all sacrificial, that everything that she did, every choice that she made or had made, they were all for the good of everyone else in our family and, also in her life.

At some point, during sixth grade, I decided that God was telling me what my vocation ought to be. I would join the Brothers of the Sacred Heart at their new Novitiate in Winthrop, Maine, And, so it was that my dad "rented" a car and driver so that he could escort me, at the beginning of summer school "vacation" to the portals of the new novitiate on the road to Augusta, out of Winthrop, Maine, between two lakes, to the near top of the hill where, there, was located the farmhouse "L" sheds, land, orchards and, including, access to a pond, that was the new Novitiate of the Province of Quebec, Order of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

Upon our arrival in Winthrop, the small town that is squeezed in between two lakes, Annabessacook, the lesser known of the two lakes bracketing the town of Winthrop, and Maranacook, which I knew better because of later excursions from the Novitiate across it on winter ice, our driver drove his car up the road headed for Augusta, and, nearing the top of the hill, outside of town, he pulled into a drive to the right-hand-side of the road onto a driveway and hill that lead up to the front porch of the "L" shaped home and barn that was to be, "forever." my new home.

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(The Novitiate* in Winthrop, Maine

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And there, we disembarked with my luggage, which could not have been more than a medium sized suitcase. My dad and I stepped up the stairs and onto the patio, while the driver waited for my father to return for the drive back after we had said our goodbyes. Although an actor by avocation, my father was not a voluble man. I recall, taking in the view. My dad rang the doorbell, the Master of the novitiate answered the doorbell, as we were expected, and we were escorted into the headmaster's office. I do not recall his name. They chatted, briefly, he and my dad, and my father embraced me, and, then, he repeated his goodbyes to the headmaster and left. I did not see the car leave.

The headmaster and I had a brief chat, I was shown around, the chapel, the dorm room over the barn, the shower room and pissoir, and then the recreation room where novices had gathered to greet me. And, then, I was left to cope.

What I was immediately impressed by was the boy I saw coming out of what was the restroom. He carried an immense Webster dictionary under his arm. It became a lasting image held in mind all of this time, one to be remembered, the "novice" who nonchalantly exited a rest room carrying a tome, which was, the Webster dictionary. It became my '"forever word" for a man of a million words.

What follows is an overview of life as in a "movie" at this near brand-new Novitiate of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart; the order, as far as I knew, was from the Province of Quebec; I knew nothing of its history. I don't recall where, exactly in Quebec, but I had an uncle at the college in Victoriaville. When I visited with my dad, my uncle, Brother Theodore answered the door. He was the doorman. I also knew that these brothers were from Quebec or other Eastern Canadian Provinces, as I was to learn, later. I suspected, but did not know, the master was from the States. My primary language, and that of classmates back home, was French, English was my second. The chaplain was a French speaking American priest. To me, growing up, Canadian French, so-called, was French. When reading French in school or for an assignment, the authors were French from France.

I would not be going "home" for a visit until I had finished my training and had been formally inducted in the order of the Brothers to which I would promise fealty, forevermore. Even at this early age, my brothers and I fully understood what it was that we had undertaken, and we fully expected to finish our training and education for full admission to the Order we had pledged to become members of.

In numbers, we were no more than over a dozen boys, but no two dozen at various stages for the time that I was there because I believe that we had arrived at different times to begin our training, inculcating, and education. I recall being brought down to the meeting hall, or recreation room, following having been taken to our dorm above the barn where I was left to place my little suitcase under my bed, after which I was shown the restroom, and the shower room before I was escorted by the headmaster, personally, to the recreation room, where I was introduced to the few boys who were in there, and then left alone to cope, which was easy enough to do, because I was well enough accustomed to that from the "schoolyard" back home on the first day of school, all of the school years before, which amounted to six years, total. At this point, I may or may not have started to fully understand that I was not going back home until I had finished my novitiate and later, even, maybe, my scholasticate, or had taken my vows.

The school was a private, religious school whose mission was to train young boys who had volunteered to join the order of these brothers.

Soon, a bell sounded, and I was to learn, it was our call for dinner. I followed the boys into the cafeteria which was at the center of the building, to the right of the stairs that I was o learn were for the brothers to access their quarter up those stairs and to the left at the top, that is toward the front of the building, as I never entered that part of the building in the time that I was there, I never learned what those quarters were like, or how many of them there were. To the right was the infirmary.

As for the brothers themselves, I soon could count those who arrived for supper, and, for every day thereafter, who sat with us in the dining room, at the "head table," seated with the headmaster, or more properly, Brother Superior. I do not recall, the number of brothers who sat at the head table; there might not have been more than a half dozen. And, there was Brother Cook, in the kitchen, a religious jack-of-all-trade who prepared meals for us every day, and, whose name, I never learned. I confess that today I do not recall any of their names, not even that of the superior who had made such an impression on me for some very memorable reasons. In retrospect, he might have been one of those aspiring to sainthood or some heavenly purification, for he worked at it, in my young estimation, at the time. He, also, became my spiritual director—as he was for everyone in residence, including all the brothers.

He was my personal counselor; he was that for all of us boys –as he was for everyone in residence with the possible exception of the chaplain. We boys were all, assuming intentions were fulfilled, to become Brothers of the Sacred Heart. Spiritually, I thought it a great thing, a personal achievement. And, here I was at this brand-new novitiate, in a beautiful part of Maine, not one with which I was or would have ever become familiar in my whole life.

In many respects, I was as was as every one of the candidates to become Brothers, very lucky to be here. The school was a private, religious school whose mission was to train young boys who had volunteered to join the order of these brothers. We were a diverse group of religiously and intentionally minded young "men," boys, actually, who had asked to join the order of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, the premise being for the express purpose of submitting to and accepting the orders or one's formation or, if you will, training.

As for us boys ourselves, I never learned much about them individually, and it was primarily, I believe, planned that way. I never shared my personal life with any "classmates," nor, did any of them share theirs with me. We learned from each other, certainly, as that was unavoidable, but it was not as if we were here to make friends or to influence individuals to our way of thinking or, conversely, for them to exercise that right of acquaintanceship over us. I personally liked that relationship and did not require anything more than the guidance of my mentor, the Brother Superior, my teachers, the co-religious of the order present on campus.

Our membership was transitional, in that we did not all arrive at one time as a class. For example, when I arrived at the novitiate, I was alone. True, it was early

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summer, and I and others who had been there, I do not know how long, for they had arrived at different times , I assumed. I never pursued their personal histories. My fellow students were all new to me. I came to realize, their arrivals had not been similar to mine, that is at different times. If a number, small as it had been, had come from some other novitiate to start this one, I do not know. My fellow novices were all French-speaking Americans, for all that I knew, as French was our primary language nearly all of the time. And "dang" if I knew where the others had come from who might have been at different stages of their indoctrination, were "new" to me , and therefore unknown. As I recall, small as we were as a group, it was not as if I got to know any of them that well. There wasn't time.

At breakfast, we were to sit in silence, select what we would eat that was placed on the table, and drink from either a carafe or pitcher of water or milk. The standard breakfast was a porridge of sorts or a plate of scrambled eggs, from which we drew our own portion, either of which was refilled as needed by Brother Cook. As I recall he was also all things on the farm. As we ate, one of us in turn stood at a lectern to read from the book of spiritual formation that sat on a lectern. Frequently, these readings involved biblical stories. At the end of our meal, a time was set aside for our Superior, who might have had special information or instructions for the day .

Following the announcements, there was an intermission of sorts during which time we were active in the duties that were assigned to us. I was assigned to the kitchen, which involved table cleanup, dish washing, and garbage duty. All un-edibles were dumped into a swill can to be saved for later and then fed to the pigs there on our farm part of the property.

I also assisted in washing and drying dishes, all of which was routine, day after day. Recall that it was instructive for us all to offer our work to God in prayer, as we went about our duties and studies efficiently and prayerfully, form morning to night.

And so, following breakfast and attending duties as assigned, we were to join the brothers and students who were already outside for the morning "exercise," which was a prayerful and meditative walk, rank and file, in he drive which was to the side of the main building in front of the barn. We walked two by two round and round, praying and meditating, as guided by the Holy Spirit. I now recall it as a long exercise. It might have been good for the digestion, and on a winter's night it was often tramping through the snow. But as a group we managed to reduce the turn around to a cold, though sobering, insightful religious experiment involving meditation in the cold air and wind, often with our steaming breaths accompanying us while they lasted if these and all of us were any indication of a roundabout march of boys and some religious men in the cold, on some very cold nights , around our Novitiate's driveway in the hills above the lakes in Winthrop, Maine.

We did the same night after night, noon after noon, morning after morning. We had the meditation marches after every meal, breakfast, dinner, and supper, no matter the weather, as I recall, tramping in the snow, the first winter. We all aspired, with the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to be holy in the eyes of God, or "special" in that we were working either to be sustained in a mission, or to join in that mission and be comforted and directed by Him. The experience of seeing the lights jump about in the nigh sky, brilliantly, as they did, was truly special, and I never forgot seeing them in their showy splendor. Suddenly, the sky became magical, as if by a miracle. Here we were, a group of want-to-be "Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" walking, two by two and in-file, one after another, round and round praying, I suppose. Then, looking at the sky, as much as anything else in the dark, I was taken in by what happened and what we saw then and, on those nights, when we realized how special it was to see the phenomenon of the jumping lights in the nigh sky. Electrical and as wonderful as they were to see, I felt I had never, in my short life up to then, seen anything like the "spectacle" in the sky that I was seeing again. Sure, I had seen, as I'm sure everyone else has, firework displays of spectacular kinds, but nothing like this in our night sky, high above us and the lakes surrounding us, I supposed. As none of us read a newspaper or listened to a radio, we had no way of knowing who else might have seen what we saw on those nights. It was all very special.

I believed then that the dancing light show in the night sky had been like a sign from God signifying something more than what I and maybe others surmised it to have been, a natural phenomenon that had happened! Some sign? But, these many years later, I cannot say with any certainty that what I had seen along with my brothers, although special, was anything other than a natural phenomenon, however spectacular it was to see with our very own eyes. The sight of it, my first, was special and memorable. But years later I saw them again, and they were, as I had learned, not a miracle but a natural phenomenon, spectacular, but natural.

{ Note: To be continued. G.C.}

Camp Hard-knocks
Des voyages avec mon père

Par Gerard, Pierre, Guy Coulombe

We Franco-Americans in Maine spoke French at home, and we were lucky enough to have learned it in our Catholic elementary schools, and some were better than most for having been sent to public schools instead of parochial schools, but English learned in Franco- American Catholic schools was just as good for any who wanted to learn it « good, « our education no matter the language was not bad because we stayed in our schools while others went there way following grammar school to work in the textile mills rather than pursue a high school education. But there were those few of us boys from our parish grammar school who went on to Catholic high school across town, in another parish while the girls in our grammar school continued in the parish high school, there, in the same building that contained all three grade levels, elementary, junior high for boys and elementary, junior high and high school for girls, whereas boys who wanted to continue their education after eighth grade had to walk to the Catholic boys high school, Saint Louis, across town. Interestingly enough, although it wasn't something that I had thought about, I attended Saint Joseph's Elementary, grade one, Saint Andre, grades two through six, a novitiate for grade seven, home self-schooling for grade eight because of leggs-perthes, which is a deterioration of the hip bone, and, then, I attended Saint Louis High School which is
(Continued on page 8)

(Camp Hardknocks continued from page 7)
the name of the boys' Catholic High School for the parish of Saint Joseph's.

I recall being angry with my teachers, my senior year at Saint Louis. The reason is that I came upon one of them in particular, early one morning, who was discussing with a classmate, his entrance at the State Maritime college while not never having this or any other "guidance" opportunity for me to attend college. College, I had yet to learn was not only a matter of a sports advantage, such as being a star, an all-state, athlete, it was a matter of knowing which college might take you for your scholarship or interest in a particular vocation. Local shops offered free textile machinery maintenance school training; of course, there were academic scholarships available for all kinds of reasons, depending on one's parents' abilities to pay. But none of this, for some reason, was available to me or to my best friends, probably one of the best students in school, whose parents surely could not afford it, a good athlete, and one who should have, could have won a college scholarship somewhere, but who did not, and he ended up enlisting, as I had done, although I had done so just before the Korean War started, and I never did go to Korea as a radar mechanic in the Air Force, while some of my friends did go as repairman to offshore Korean War radar sites monitoring air traffic activity along with air- combat activity in their search zones. Although, our radar site in the North-East corner of Missouri had us identify what were later known to be unidentified flying objects, or UFO's, after which we had fighter planes from area fighter squadrons airborne for intercepts, which were impossible because these could vector, change direction, literally, on a dime, whereas our pursuit aircrafts could not. And, our radar operators, those men and women, sitting at the screens on their scopes following the plots, could see. My job was that of a radar mechanic—mechanical and electronic. All of us mechanics could attest to the fact that our radar sets operated properly.

But, I'm here on the page to report, not what I did after finding out that I was not going to college, which was to enlist, one day, in the Air Force, when with a friend, I had ridden a bus to Portland at the invitation of a friend who was just going there to see what the recruiting stations in Portland were offering new recruits. As all branch offices were closed in Portland, Maine, we hitched a ride to South Portland where my friend had heard from someone there was a recruiting office at a base that was probably opened, as there was an operating multi- branch of the services site that we should visit. Consequently, the branch of the service open was Air Force, and following the test, we were told we were signed up if one of our parents signed the paper given us. They did. And we returned to Portland, each with an overnight, canvas bag, with a change of underwear and a towel, to be sworn in, whereupon we boarded a shuttle bus to the train station, boarded a car that filled up with similar recruits on its way as part of a regularly scheduled Boston and Maine train, which then got hitched to a train to Chicago via Albany and so forth until we all arrived in the State of Texas, one troupe train, and, then disembarked to learn as we were to form into a formation that we were at War with North Korea, whereupon we were quick-marched to have our heads shaved for uniformity and issued uniforms without fanfare, and all, called into formation, once more, and quick-marched to our barrack.

That's because I never fully understood their relationship to my father other than that the man's last name was Coulombe

That was then. There were travels with my father that took place when I was young. Although we did travel on occasion as a family, my two younger sisters, our mom , dad and I, but those were the days, when we were very young and the traveling was by walking as we did not have a car and we never had one during all the time our parents were married. We did not own our home as our aunts did, at least, the two that I knew. My father's sister and her husband living in Hartford, Connecticut, at the time, they also rented their apartment, as we always had, did. My older of the two sisters did own her home, right of the bat, after she married, I think, as did my younger sister. It took us a while out of college, my wife and I and the children to own our own home, although it felt as if we did because our landlord had a house for us after he had supplied with the rent we had in a house he owned in Port Washington. I don't know what might have happened had we stayed, but I took a job in CT. which allowed us to purchase our first home because in moving I had the money, cash, from my New York State retirement to invest, and it became a good investment because we enlarged three times and we have been in our home for near over forty years. But I've moved away from my topic.

To return: There were travels with my father which I recall, and it is those now curious travels that I wish to delve in and share because they were important to learning, although never the whole story, at least, these anecdotal recollections of mine are part and parcel of what was, too, my father's life, as Felix, his name, was never one to share much, and, to put it more bluntly, it is that I'm still angry with my father, after all the years I've dwelled on this "stuff," it still hurts me that my father was never given to completely share his life, his history, with me or with the rest of us, I think. I don't think that my older sister who is dead, now, knew, or that my younger sister, who alludes more to this and that, still, but only occasionally, knows any more than I do, today. I probably know more because I, on those occasions, when I was young, when he decided that he would travel here and there, even to Canada, he would take me with him, not to share, verbally, but to include me in these visits wherein I met people who, occasionally shared tidbits with me.

To begin with, there was one relative I believed was an uncle until I learned that he was not. I thought that this man's mother, ,married though he was, with children, one that I knew well enough, but, about whom I lost tract after I left home and who had a life of her own, I know, with a man who was a contemporary of mine, but with whom I had little contact and with whom I had absolutely no association and they had a family, and she had had siblings, who grew up in my home town, are grown, and about whom I know little except for one who is renowned in the city for his civic responsibility and his caring for the poor. Now I know this man, the one that I thought of as an uncle, was not all that responsible because I learned later that his wife, a woman I admired , maybe because, then, I thought her beautiful, for she was, but later learned from someone, maybe, my mother, that she had had a tough life with him, her husband, and had done what so many women did in those days, which is to "suffer it," subsuming her own life in her role in a house that was not hers, living with I suppose, but did not know then, was her mother-in-law whose first husband had passed, and whose second was an awfully

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(Camp Hardknocks continued from page 8)
nice man, but not the first husband as I had thought he was then because no one explained it to me, and I think, this lady, who raised her own children in her "in-laws" home, was and had been unhappy all of the years, until, I hope I'm not mistaken, she left him, her husband, the one I had thought was my uncle but who was not, or maybe, he died first.

This drama was, in my head, if you please, all in French, albeit, Canadian French, to please any cohort teacher friends, who might recall, as one was not clueless, and pointed out to me that Canadian French was not French, Theophile Gauthier, notwithstanding, the latter being a deliberate non sequitur—if there is no such thing, there is now.

Our Lewiston, Maine, relatives had to have been my father's favorites, although, I never understood why they might be. That's because I never fully understood their relationship to my father other than that the man's last name was Coulombe. And somewhere I learned that he was notorious for some reason having to do with something or other that was nefarious. I still do not know about it other than that. And, I can no longer recall who told me. Maybe, it was my mother, as I do not recall her ever visiting there. Maybe she did while they were dating, if that is what a courtship was in those days.

I know that other favorite relative of my father's lived in Westbrook, Maine, and the reason I knew is that my dad had me accompany him on visits to relatives, and one of the earliest visits, if not the first was to Westbrook, which was followed by a visit to Lewiston. Recall that my dad never owned a car in his life, and, so, whenever we went out of town on a visit, he would rent a car and its driver, usually, an acquaintance who agrees to do this for a fee.

As the eldest and only boy, I was the one invited to travel with our father. I was happy to accept and looked forward to these visits to "relatives," as they always proved to be both informative and instructive. One reason is that until the time of our visit, I had not known that these people we were to visit were relatives of his, ours, or, so father said. My father was not named after the famous cat, as he came before the cat, known as "Felix" in early, cartoon, films. No, he was of an earlier generation of Felix's, and this one is a French name with an accent to the right on the "e," "accent aiguë," By the by, While at University, my wife met a family, the wife recalling her husband thought we were related, having heard our name banted about in the married student complex we both lived in, and he was of the Westbrook relatives and had recalled the visit I mention. That was unusually coincidental but never led to anything more.

The Lewiston relatives I remember more because years after my visit with them when my father took me with him the first time during the Second World War it involved the two sons of the relative of my father was visiting, Napoleon Coulombe. I know now, there is also another Coulombe family in Lewiston, a name of some renown in the community of Franco- Americans there, of which there were many at one time.

Our relatives lived next door to a church on the way out of town, as I remember walking there from downtown

Felix Coulombe in costume for an unknown play, Biddeford, ca. 1925. Felix Coulombe was a regular in J. J. Salvas' amature troupe, and starred in various productions throughout the 1920s, including "Coeur de femme", "L'Inconnu", and "Tonkourou".

once because I was dating a girl who was a student nurse at Saint Mary's School of Nursing. That's when I was out of thew service, attending the University of Maine, my freshman year. I recalled them and presented myself at their front door, re-introduced myself and gained a room for the night while I visited with my girlfriend. I neither had a car, nor should I have had one, as I did not own a driver's license as of yet, in spite of my stay in the military, stationed in a Missouri Air Defense radar station as a trained technical " electronics mechanic." At least I could read the code on a resistor or transistor and knew how to use a conductivity meter and, more importantly, how to avoid electrocuting myself when working with high voltage.

Our relatives were decent enough folks to allow me to stay with them on these visits with my girlfriend. I don't know that had I been in their shoes I would have been as welcoming as they were. I ended up marrying the Franco-American girl I was wooing, which is a good thing and a lot of thanks goes to these folks who trusted me to stay with them. As I do not or never did know just how related Napoleon Coulombe was to my dad, Felix Coulombe, of Biddeford, Maine. My father was never loquacious or interested in educating his children in the matter of family history.

This couple, Napoleon and his wife, had two sons at the time, which I learned on a visit with my father. And because it was the Second World War, I was interested, as a kid, to learn that the two of them were at war. In other words, I had two cousins in the War that everyone knew about at the time. I was aware that girl cousins of course on my mother's side had boyfriends serving overseas. One was a paratrooper and another in the regular army, I guess. I also had a cousin who lived in Hartford, Connecticut, born to my dad's sister, who died, hit by a car while attempting to cross the street in Baghdad—no less heroic, having to go all the way there to die, hit by a car, while attempting to cross a street. The other, the boyfriend, went down in a glider in the invasion of Normandy and survived the war.

That was it, Several years later on a trip to California, I happened to see the name of my cousin emblazoned on a big board along with others who had died when the ferried aircrafts they were on or piloting went down in the Pacific on their way to the War. My cousin's was a B- 24. He was a radio operator, and their aircraft disappeared, as did so many others. Meanwhile, his brother survived the war aboard another kind of aircraft, but he was in the African and European theatres and survived with missions in excess of the number required to return home.

While I never met either soldier or "airmen," relatives, cousins both, in my book, and, as per my father, without explanation or further visits with him to visit

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Acknowledging and Confronting Racism in Franco Communities

By Timothy St. Pierre

A common critique of contemporary Franco-American research alleges that Francos spend too much time looking to the past and not enough time looking to the present, let alone the future. Beyond implying that we can neatly separate the past, present, and future into distinct spheres, unique one from the other, this comment also disregards the contemporary pressures that push us to delve into our past, searching for the persons, places, and politics which have led us to where we are and which will guide us (knowingly or not) to where we will go. In the spirit of exploring this critique, it seems a fitting moment to address an issue that remains acutely topical in our present yet conspicuously under-addressed in our past: the prevalence of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism within Franco communities.

This conversation is uncomfortable, underdeveloped, and long-overdue, but more than necessary if we are to build a Franco-American identity and culture that can address the modern reckonings of the twenty-first century. Growing up in a white, Franco-American family in Maine, an overwhelmingly white state, the histories and experiences of Black and Indigenous people seemed largely peripheral to my own life, something disconnected and relatively unimportant to my own daily experiences or my own family's history. The few moments when Black or Indigenous people came across my consciousness as a child were short-lived and often negative: Franco friends complaining about Black Mainers recently arrived from Africa in a way that echoed how our grandparents were discussed by Anglo-Protestants in the 1920s; Franco neighbors insisting that being called a "frog" was comparable to a Black person being called the n-word; my great-aunt describing marriage between French and Wabanaki ancestors as "interbreeding." Black and Indigenous people were groups perceived as distinct from "true" French-Canadians, often portrayed as threats to our cultural existence, yet groups to whom various Franco adults would compare our own history of ethnic persecution. Unfortunately, I am sure this is an upbringing common to many white Francos across New England and Canada.

The recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other Black Americans has sparked long-overdue backlash against white supremacy throughout the United States, Canada, and the rest of the world. As a majority-white ethnic group founded through colonialism, white supremacy is foundational to Franco America and remains an active presence in our communities. White supremacy goes beyond individual instances of racial prejudice or discrimination, it is more than just using a racial slur or turning away a customer. It is a systemic, guiding ideology that influences whose history is taught in schools, whose land is owned by whom, which ethnic communities have more wealth and why, whose last names are borne by whom, which victim of a crime is viewed with sympathy and which is viewed with blame. It is present in Québec, Acadie, Maine, New Hampshire, and Acadiana; it is present in Lewiston, Woonsocket, Lowell, Manchester, and Berlin; it is present in our families and homes; it is present in us.

Considering this, it was both heartening and surprising to see so many Franco friends and family speaking out against white supremacy throughout the past few months, donating time and resources to organizations fighting racial inequities, or protesting and marching, many for the first time in their lives. What was perhaps more surprising, though, was the number of (white) Franco-Americans, many of whom had never publicly commented on their heritage, suddenly taking an interest in their culture and history. However, rather than using our history to build empathy or solidarity with Black Americans, many of

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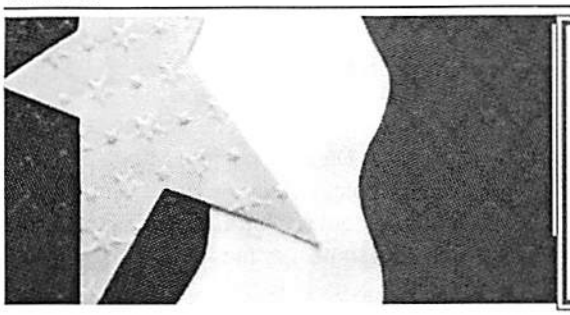
after the War, I never had any idea, say, comprehension as to our precise relationship. While I knew a bit more about him, the "cousin" and his troubles, I had really never any specifics on the relationship between my father and the gentleman and his wife who were so kind to me to give me shelter during a span of time that involved visits to Lewiston, by bus, to visit my girlfriend, the student nurse, there was no reason for them to be so accommodating, except that he seemed to remember me, would have had to remember me to have been so pleasantly accommodating to my needs. After, all, I was "just" visiting my girlfriend and needed a place to stay overnight.

While I never met either soldier, or the surviving one following the Second World War, I was, myself, now a veteran of the Korean War and a student at Maine in Orono, working that summer on a bridge construction job on U.S. Route 2, living in a tent with my roommate and co-blue clay slinger. I might even have been pathetic looking in my clothes that summer, ringing their doorbell and re-introducing myself, but really, in search of a room for that weekend's nights. In any event, our courtship stopped when she agrees to marry, and we moved into a single room in the University Married Student Housing, called, generally, The South Apartments.

I might add here that my dad was a laconic man. He hardly ever said a word. Well, let's correct this a bit. He might have said something had he been home, but he worked second shift, and we were in school when he got out of bed, ate his dinner, and left for work before we got home from school. He might have said something when he rose on a Saturday morning and then again perhaps on a Sunday afternoon, if and when I was home. When we children were young, we accompanied them, mom and dad, on our walking visits to my mother's sister, Eugenie Chabot, in the country.

Other than that, our dad worked the Second Shift all of his life. Go figure the kind of life he might have had otherwise. If you can imagine it. As for myself, I can only imagine the matter of evenings our mother, his wife, might have had with him, had he been around to learn about her and our activities.

As to our Westbrook relatives, my wife was refilling an empty can of oil for the stove in our apartment kitchen when she met a woman who introduced herself as being the wife of the Westbrook, Maine, cousin mentioned earlier. It was he who saw our name as living in the South Apartments, by that time, with two children. He graduated before we, or visa-versa and with him went the story we might have had to tell. His last name is "Senechal,' Laurent Senechal, class of '59".



Maine Acadian Heritage Council

Conseil d'héritage acadien du Maine

MAINE ACADIAN HERITAGE COUNCIL
NEWSLETTER, WINTER 2018

by Lise Pelletier
Director Acadian Archives Acadiennes/MAHC President

Part I

We stress the importance of celebrating and conserving our Acadian culture. Through annual funds provided by the National Park Service, the Maine Acadian Heritage Council is able to provide financial assistance to historical societies of the St. John Valley. Preservation projects may include restoring historic buildings; repairing structures used for preservation of artifacts; digitizing photographs and documents; creating books for children; documenting cultural traditions; and fostering teaching of the French language. The Greater Grand Isle Historical Society is educating the public about Acadian culture by preserving it in the form of a coloring book. Leah Cook, the book's creator, talks about their special project. Mrs. Gina Jandreau's 4th grade students at Madawaska Elementary School give an account of the book they produced: "Acadian Culture in Madawaska". Copies of this book will be gifted by the MAHC to every public library in the St. John Valley.

In order to conserve and transmit the elements of our culture, it is important to learn about the Acadian symbols recognized throughout the world:

National Acadian Day: August 15th

August 15th is the feast day of Our Lady of Assumption. The date was chosen as National Day of Acadians at the 1st National Convention in Memramcook, New Brunswick, in 1881. The reason is an historic one. At the time of the settlement of Acadie, France, under Louis XIII, had a special devotion to Mary. Louis attributed to Mary the pregnancy of his wife, Anne of Austria, after twenty-three years of a childless marriage. On February 10, 1638, Louis XIII decreed that the citizens of France would march in processions on August 15th during which they would pray to God and the Virgin. The Vatican ratified the choice of the Acadian convention many years later in a proclamation issued on January 19, 1938. The Parliament of Canada made National Acadian Day an official Canadian holiday on June 19, 2003.

Tintamarre on August 15th:

Tintamarre means "clangour or din". On August 15th, Acadians are encouraged to march through their communities and make a lot of noise, with noisemakers or improvised instruments like pots and pans. Tintamarre is a recent tradition re-established in Canada in the mid-20th Century. In 1955, during the commemorations of the 200th anniversary of the Grand Dérangement, and after the church bells started to ring, people made noise with whistles, automobile horns, bells. In 1979, the Société nationale des Acadiens wanted to revive the Tintamarre to emphasize the slogan of the celebrations: "On est venus c'est pour rester" (we have come and we're here to stay).

Acadian Flag and National anthem

The Acadian flag was adopted by the people assembled in Miscouche, Prince Edward Island in 1884, for the 2nd National Convention of Acadians. It was proposed by Msgr Marcel-François Richard.

The blue, white, and red tricolor pays homage to the homeland of the first Acadians, France. The yellow star in the blue panel is the star of Mary "Stella Maris", blue being the color associated with the Virgin Mary, and gold being a papal color. At the same convention, the Latin hymn "Ave Maris Stella" was selected as Acadians' national anthem. It is the only national anthem in Latin in the world.

Part II

Where does the name "Acadie" come from?

The history of Acadia starts in 1524, at a time when France, Portugal, and Spain were hoping to discover a western route to Asia. The Italian navigator Giovanni Verrazano (1485-1528) embarked on this quest in 1524 for the king of France. Verrazano traveled along the Atlantic coast, from Florida to Cape Breton, thereby proving the continuity of the littoral and the inclusion of Newfoundland to the North American continent. When he arrived in Washington in April, he found the area so lush that he named it "Arcadie", after the ancient Greek paradise. Later in the XVIIth Century, the name was written without the "r" and describes the lands situated in the continental Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. (Landry, Nicolas et Nicole Lang, Histoire de l'Acadie Septentrion 2001)

1604: Saint Croix Island: First Permanent Settlement in North America

By the middle 1500s, French fishermen, fishing for cod along the Atlantic coast of the New World, began trading with the Indians for furs. The furs, especially beaver pelts, found a ready market in France, and official interest in the New World picked up

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in direct relation to the value of the fur and fish trade. In 1588, realizing an opportunity for profit, the French monarchy began to grant fur-trading monopolies to groups of merchants.

In the Fall of 1603, King Henry IV gave Pierre du Gua, Sieur de Monts, a Protestant merchant, a 10-year monopoly on trade "on sea and land in La Cadie, Canada and other parts of New France between 40° and 46°." His domain ran roughly from Philadelphia to Newfoundland. His grant required that he establish a settlement of at least 60 men in North America.

On April 7, 1604, De Monts set off from France with Samuel Champlain and Jean de Biencourt, Sieur de Poutrincourt, a Catholic. One ship was commanded by Francois Gravé du Pont, the other by de Monts himself. After much traveling and researching, Champlain settled on the site of the first permanent colony: Saint Croix Island, in Passamaquoddy Bay, that today divides New Brunswick from Maine. De Monts left Champlain and 80 other men on the island, then sailed back to France. He promised to return in the spring with new supplies.

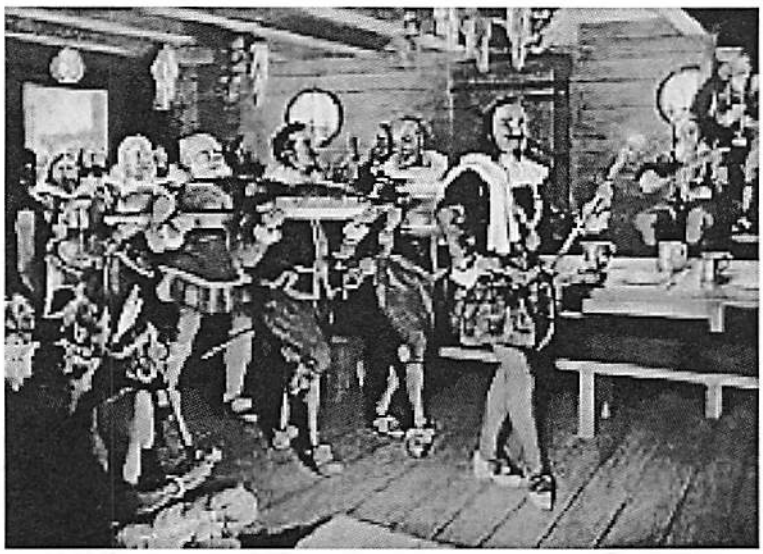
The first snow fell on October 6. By December 3, ice floes began to cut off the Frenchmen from the mainland garden, woodlots, and water. A bitter wind blew constantly from the northeast, making it impossible to keep warm. Food froze hard, then rotted. Scurvy began to take its toll. Thirty five of the 80 men who originally settled on the island were dead by the time De Monts finally returned the following July. He decided to move the colony across the Bay of Fundy to a place he named Port Royal.

Part III

The surviving members of the expedition to Ste Croix Island in 1604 crossed the Baye Française (Bay of Fundy) in 1605 and founded Port Royal (today Annapolis Royal). Along with Samuel de Champlain, there was Marc Lescarbot, who was trained as an attorney, but who became the first historian of North America with the publication of "Stories of New France" (1609), its first playwright "The Theater of Neptune" (1606) and its first poet "Muses of New France" (1606):

Prepare for France a flourishing Empire
In this New World, where ages will inspire
The immortal fame of de Monts and of thee,
Under the puissant reign of great Henri.

Lescarbot wrote about L'Ordre de Bon Temps (The Order of Good Cheer) instituted by Champlain. "For the next three months the leading men of the outpost – Hébert, Pontgravé, Champlain, and Poutrincourt, took their turn as maître d'hotel, assuming



responsibility for providing game and fish for the entire company." An ingenious and delicious opportunity to while away three months of winter. The illustration below depicts Membertou, a Mi'kmaq leader partaking in the meal. According to Yale history professor, Dr. John Mack Faragher, author of A Great And Noble Scheme – The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from Their American Homeland: "L'Ordre de Bon Temps" was a French variant on a Micmaw custom, yet another marker of the extensive intercultural exchange taking place at Port Royal.

On April 1st, 1636, the Saint-Jehan arrived at La Heve, Acadie, with 300 passengers. Although some returned to France after having worked for three or four years as craftsmen or farmers, these families became the founding generation of the Acadians: Pierre Lejeune and wife and three young children; Jean Thériot and Perrine Rau; Vincent Brun and Renée Breau with two infants; Jean Gaudet and his three children; Martin Aucoin, his wife Marie Sallé and their four children; Michel Boudrot; Robert Cormier and his wife Marie Péraud; François Gautrot; Abraham Dugas; Antoine and Etienne Hébert; François Savoie; François Girouard; Daniel Leblanc; Michel Dupuis; Pierre Comeau; Antoine Belliveau; Vincent Breau; Antoine Babin and Pierre Thibodeau. By 1650, some fifty families were living and farming at Port Royal. Charles D'Aulnay reported that there were 200 people under his care, without counting their wives and children, nor the Capucin Fathers nor the Indian children." (Faragher p44)

Civil war in Acadie

In 1632, Acadie had two legitimate governors recognized by Louis XIII: Isaac de Razilly and Charles de la Tour. After Razilly's death in December 1635, the King of France names Charles de Menou d'Aulnay as Razilly's successor while enjoining him to maintain good relations with La Tour. The problem lay in the geography the king had assigned to each man. Louis XIII gave d'Aulnay authority over much of the northern shore of the Gulf of Maine and the Baie Française (Bay of Fundy) but not its fort at the mouth of the St. John River. La Tour was given the present-day peninsula of Nova Scotia, but not Port Royal. Both men had claims in each other's territory. Thus, for the next twelve years, until d'Aulnay's death in 1650, the two men fought continuously. (Griffiths From Migrant to Acadian p57)This civil war would have significant ramifications upon the relationship between Acadia and the English colonies.

In February 1651, Louis XIV, King of France, reestablishes La Tour as governor and lieutenant-general of Acadia. The Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes of the University of Maine at Fort Kent has in its collections, the original commission (or a copy thereof) signed by Louis XIV (his regent). It not only appoints Charles de Saint-Étienne de la Tour governor and lieutenant-general of the French colony of Acadia, but more importantly it confirms an earlier appointment for those positions made by Louis XVI's father, Louis XIII, in 1631. It also exonerates La Tour for his actions during the civil strife in Acadia between 1635 and 1645, and it goes further

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(MAHC continued from page 12)

Dike building in Acadia.

to criticize La Tour's rival d'Aulnay for having prevented La Tour from exercising his lawful authority by favoring "enemies and accusations and suppositions that were not able to be verified and of which the said Saint-Étienne was absolved on the sixteenth of February last" (nine days prior to the issuance of the commission). As noted above, La Tour had been originally appointed governor and lieutenant-general of Acadia in 1631 by Louis XIV's father, Louis XIII, during the closing phases of a period of warfare between France and England and, of course, their respective North American possessions. (Acadian Archives MCC 00142 finding aid for more information): https://internal.umfk.edu/archives/findingaids/mcc142.pdf

Sources: Griffiths, Naomi: From migrant to Acadian: a North-American border people, 1604-1755. Montreal, 2005.

John Mack Faragher, A Great And Noble Scheme – The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland, New York

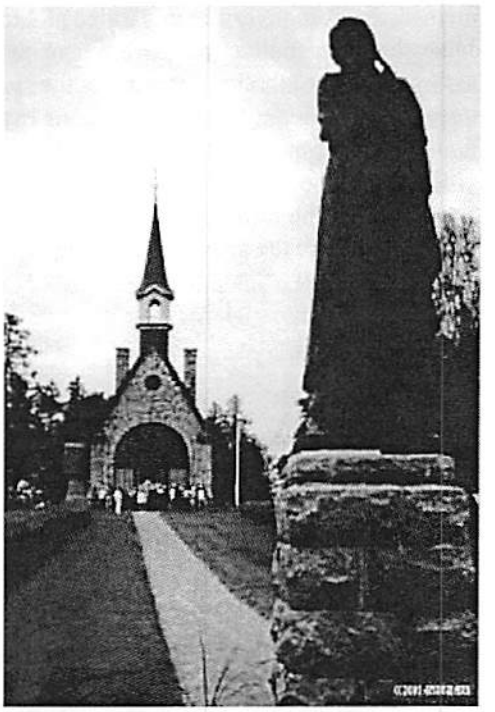
Part IV

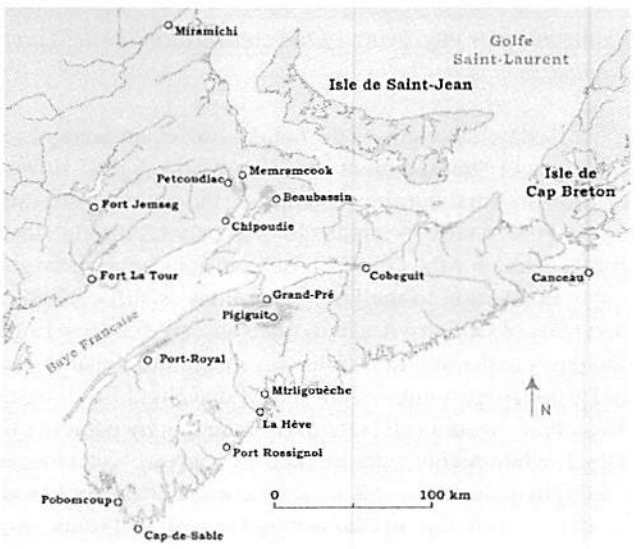
By the early 1730's, a distinct Acadian identity was emerging in Acadie. Intermarriages had united Catholic and Huguenot, French, Mi'kmaq, English, Irish, and Spanish. They had been distant from their motherland for nearly a century. They were essentially farmers and merchants who were quite independent and who saw themselves differently from their ancestors. They were self-sustaining. They called themselves Acadians.

One of the reasons that Mi'kmaq were on good terms with the Acadians was that instead of building their villages by cutting down the forests, therefore the hunting and trapping grounds of the Natives, the Acadians preferred the lands closest to the Bay of Fundy and its rivers. They created a unique system of diking that allowed for the salty water of the marshes to return to the sea. The resulting reclaimed thousands of acres became the most fertile agricultural land for the Acadians to farm. Some of these *aboiteaux* are still operational today, almost 400 years later. In 2012, UNESCO recognized the landscape and *aboiteau* system of Grand-Pré as a World Heritage Site: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1404

Between 1604 and 1713, the colony of Acadie changed hands between the French and the British seven times. Acadians had little interest in war, and especially in waring against their allies and their customers. Although the British authorities of the colony tried to force the Acadians to swear an oath of unconditional allegiance to the Crown, Acadians refused. Between 1713 and 1730, the Acadians signed a variety of oaths of conditional allegiance, which allowed for Acadians' neutrality in times of war, the right not to bear arms against the French nor the Mi'kmaq, and the right to practice Catholicism. They became known as the "Neutrals" or the "French Neutrals". 1

Thus Acadians entered into their "Golden Age", according to historian Naomi Griffiths, author of "The Contexts of Acadian History 1686 – 1784". The population growth was high, infant mortality rate was very low. The community spirit that enabled them to maintain and repair the dikes is also reflected in other aspects of their daily life. Building a home for newlyweds, braking linen, weaving and fulling cloth, and butchering furnish opportunities for festive gatherings with neighbors and relatives. Acadians raise livestock, grains, and vegetables. They sell the surplus of their harvests and the fruit of their orchards along with woven textiles. Although an exact number is not available for the population of Acadie on the eve of the Expulsion, historians agree that between 15,000 and 18,000 French Catholics live in Acadie After the battles of Québec and Montréal. After the battles of Québec (1759) and Montréal (1760), the Treaty of Paris 1763 awarded all the formerly French colonies in Canada (Acadie and Nouvelle-France) to England.





Pope Night – an Anti Catholic tradition in New England

November 16, 2017 Maine, Massachusetts, Portland, Religion

By James Myall

Remember, remember the Fifth of November

Gunpowder, treason and plot

I know no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot.

This children's rhyme is still commonly recited on and around November 5th in the United Kingdom, during the celebration officially known as Guy Fawkes Night. The night commemorates the anniversary of a foiled plot in 1605 to assassinate the new king of England, James I, and the bulk of his government, at the state opening of parliament. The plot was led by English Catholics, resentful at the succession of James, a Protestant, to the English throne. They hired a Spanish munitions expert, Guido "Guy" Fawkes, to pack the cellar under the parliament building with 36 barrels of gunpowder in an attempt to blow up and kill not only the king but his entire government in what would have been a spectacular explosion. The plot was foiled at the 11th hour and Fawkes was arrested beneath parliament just hours before the arrival of the king.

Contemporary engraving of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot. Image: Wikimedia Commons

Today, the origins of the holiday are less important, a fact reflected in its more common monikers of "bonfire night" and "fireworks night." However, in addition to the letting off of fireworks and burning of bonfires, the night's festivities used to include the burning of an effigy – "a Guy" – which children parades through the streets earlier in the day, asking for "a penny for the Guy." Those traditions are largely gone.

In addition to the UK, the holiday is still celebrated in parts of Canada (Labrador and parts of Ontario) And was once observed in New England as well. In the 18th century, the day's anti-Catholic nature was much more visible. Accounts of the day as celebrated in Boston, in particular, show that "Pope Night," as it was called, stoked sectarian conflict. Bostonians would celebrate during the day by parading figures of the Pope alongside the Devil, while nights were marked by raucous celebrations. Revelers dressed in costume and went door to door asking for money, a precursor to today's Halloween traditions. Such festivities were rare in Massachusetts, with its Puritan origins (who eschewed holidays to

(Continued on page 15)

The Loup-Garou

October 30, 2017

By James Myall

"Loup Garou" from the "Dictionnaire infernal," Louis Le Breton, 1863. Image: Wikimedia Commons

Part werewolf, part vampire, he goes by many names. The most common is the Loup-Garou, but others call him rougarou; in the Caribbean, a cousin – the Loogaroo – is a blood-sucking, shape-shifting old woman. A recurring character in French and Francophone folklore, the Loup-Garou story has been passed through many French-Canadian generations in Maine and elsewhere in New England, as a warning to naughty children, or simply a fireside tale among elders.

(In fact, the antiquity of the story of the Loup-Garou is evident in its name. Garou comes from an old Frankish word, warou, which shares the same Germanic origin as the English "werewolf." At some point, the original meaning of garou was forgotten to the extent that the French loup, for "wolf" was added, despite being redundant).

The version below is taken from Rowland Evans Robinson's Danvis Folk, an 1894 compilation of folk tales. Robinson claimed to have collected the tales from various people across Vermont "fifty or sixty" years earlier, including a story of the Loup-Garou, which he places in the mouth of a man named Antoine. Robinson tells the story, like all his others, in dialect (at least as he imagines it). I've provided a "translation" here:

(Continued on page 15)

***(Pope Night – an Anti Catholic tradition in New England** continued from page 14)*

the point of working through Christmas Day), which might explain the outpouring of merriment and poor behavior. One historian also suggested that the anti-Catholic nature of the event was more appealing to the anti-Monarchist Puritans than the aspect that celebrated the foiled plot against the king.[1]

Depiction of a float carrying an effigy of the Pope and the Devil, preceded by children dressed as "little popes." From the Massachussetts Gazette, 1766. Image: Library of Congress.

We know that, although it became less common elsewhere, Pope Night was still celebrated in Boston in the 1770s. The diary of Reverend Samuel Dean in Portland, Maine recorded Pope Night visitors to the rectory in 1771. A poem printed in the Massachussets Gazette in 1766 gives a sense of the nature of the celebrations:

Old Boys, and young, be Sure observe The Fifth Day of November; What tho' it is a Day apast? You still can it remember.

The little Popes, they go out First, With little teney Boys: In Frolicks they are full of Gale And laughing make a Noise.

The Girls run out to fee the Sight, The Boys eke ev'ry one; Along they are a dragging them, With Granadier's Caps on.

The great Ones next go out, and meet With many a Smart Rebuf: They're hall'd along from Street to Street And call hard Names enough.

"A Pagan, Jew, Mahometan, Turk, Strumpet, Wizzard, Witch;" In short the Number of his Name's, Six Hundred Sixty six.

" How dreadful do his Features show? "How fearful is his Grin? "Made up of ev'ry Thing that's bad; He is the Man of Sin.

If that his deeden Self could see Himself so turn'd to Fun: In Rage He'd tear out His Pope's Eyes, And scratch his Rev'rend Bum.

He'd kick his tripple Crown about, And weary of his Life, He'd curse the Rabble, and away He'd run to tell his Wife.

Extraordinary Verses on Pope Night, Massachussetts Gazette Boston, May 22 1766

In 1775, the tradition caught the notice of George Washington, who was then encamped at Cambridge with the Continental Army and would have had the opportunity to

(Continued on page 16)

***(Loup-Garou** continued from page 14)*

"Now, wait till I tell you about the loup garou. Ah, that was a bad thing; it makes me scared to think of it, ever since I was a little boy and the old men and the old women told of it. Then would sit and squeeze around the fire and be scared to look behind us, to see the shadow creep, creep on the floor and jump on the wall, for fear it might be the loup garou."

"What species of predatory animal are these loose garooses, Antoine? Do they have anything like the human nature of an ordinary wolf, or a lucifer, or a woolynig [a kind of wild cat], or what?"

"Ah, Solon, they were devils more than anything," said the Canadian in an awestricken voice. "Devil, devil. Sometimes they were men just like anybody, and then they would be wolves, oh much worse than wolves. They catch dead men in graveyards and eat them; they catch live men and eat them. Oh, they were awful. I believe they haven't got them any more in Canada, now, but in the old times they had them.

"One time, my great-grandmother, got so old she made up her mind she would die, and my grandfather was to go for the priest in the night, a long, long way through the woods, and he was driving along the tail, couldn't hear any noise except the snow scrunch, scrunching under the running of the horse's feet. Well, sir, my grandpere was driving along, and not thinking about much, except for "hurry fast." He was going along a smooth road through the woods when his horse was begging him to slow down and he couldn't make it go fast, for all he whipped it. The horse just pulled hard like he was drawing more than a two-ton load, and sweated so much he smoked like a steamboat, and melted the snow on the road with each drop of his sweat.

"By-and-by, my grandpere looked behind him and saw a great big, big black dog, maybe a wolf, and he didn't whether it was or not, with its forefeet on the back end of the train, and he pulled back hard, harder than the devil.

"My grandpere was mad, even more scared than he was mad, and he stuck that thing with his whip, and that thing jumped right on the train and put his forefeet on my grandfather's shoulder. It was so heavy, it almost squashed him. My grandfather felt for his knife to cut it, because if you draw the blood of the loup graou, he'll turn back

(Continued on page 16)

***(Pope Night – an Anti Catholic tradition in New England** continued from page 15)*

witness practices first hand. He was not impressed, describing them as a "ridiculous and childish custom". The patrician Virginian may have disliked the nights activities merely for their lack of decorum (and effect on the discipline of his "officers and soldiers"), but there was even more reason for him to issue a proclamation against Pope Night in 1774. At the same time Washington issued his instructions, warning of the dangers of "insulting [the Catholic] religion," Continental forces were embarking on a two-pronged invasion of Quebec (one led by Richard Montgomery via New York and one by Benedict Arnold via Maine). Congress had issued an invitation to the French Canadians, who made up the majority of the population to take up arms in common cause against the British. News of anti-Catholic celebrations in New England would dangerously undermine this message. This was no idle fear. In 1755, the Annapolis Gazette reported that a French General, Dieskau, who was being held prisoner at Boston, had to be placed under guard to prevent "mischief by the mob" during Pope Night.[2]

In retrospect, Pope Night was not the largest problem in this regard. The following year, the Declaration of Independence would go on to cite the Quebec Act, and the freedom of religion it granted to Canada as a major grievance of the states:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies

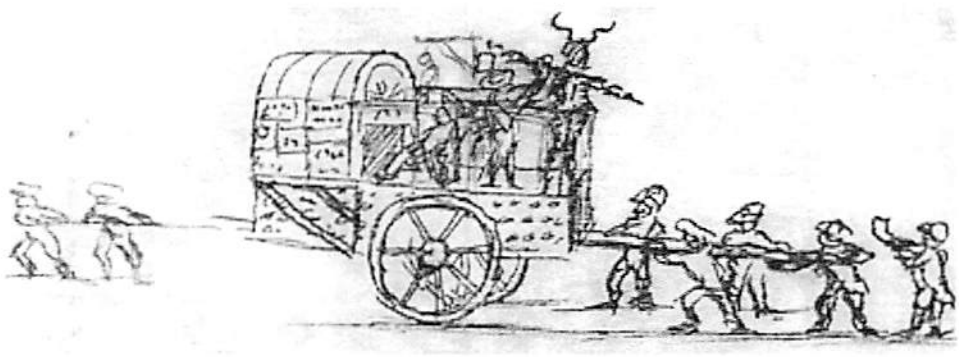
With such mixed messages coming from the Continental Congress, most French Canadians saw little reason to throw their lot in with one group of Protestant "English" against another.

As for Pope Night, Washington's proclamation appears to have finished it off in Boston and most places, probably aided by the new anti-Monarchist bent of the new republic. Yet it survivors in some locations. Portsmouth, NH, held some of the last recorded Pope Nights, as late as 1892. By then, the event had lost a lot of its original meaning:

The celebration of the anniversary of Guy Fawkes night on Saturday by the young people of this city was not so extensive as in former years no doubt owing to the condition of the streets but nevertheless small bands paraded the streets and made the early part of the evening hideous with music from the tin horns they carried for the occasion Some carried the usual pumpkin lanterns The ringing of door bells was also extensively indulged in. Very few of the paraders knew that the celebration was in keeping of the old English custom of observing the anniversary of the discovery of the famous gunpowder plot to blow up the House of Commons [sic – actually the House of Lords]

Portsmouth Republican News November 7 1892

The Pope Night tradition in New England reminds us that even as it eventually faded, New England historically had a strong anti-Catholic culture. When Franco-Americans started coming to the area in large numbers in the 1880s, this was part of the environment they were walking into.



***(Loup-Garou** continued from page 15)*

into a man right away, and run off.

"But he can't find his knife, and he doesn't know what he'll do. The horse was scared and ran like a holy hurricane, since the loup garou had gotten his forefeet off the ground and can't pull them back any more.

"My grandpere felt that hellish thing's hot breath freeze his neck, and his hairs brush his face like needles, and he shut his eyes, so he couldn't see that awful yellow eye close to his own, and he gave himself up for dead, just as his horse ran into the priest's gate, and he hollered and the priest ran out and said some words quick and loud, and the loup garou became a man right away, quick as a wink, and ran off into the woods.

"My grandfather was so scared it took as much as half a pint of the priest's whiskey to bring him to…

"And they say there was a man, a neighbor of my grandfather, who carried a whip mark on his face for a good many days after."

Happy Halloween, and keep a watch for strange creatures in the night! *A Know Nothing campaign poster. The right wing*

James Myall

While I currently work for an Augusta-based non-profit, I spent four years as the Coordinator of the Franco-American Collection at the University of Southern Maine. In 2015, I co-authored "The Franco-Americans of Lewiston-Auburn," a general history of that population from 1850 to the present. I was also a consultant for the State Legislative Task Force on Franco-Americans in 2012. I live in Topsham with my wife and two young daughters.

https://myall.bdnblogs.com/2020/01/

Racism and ethnic discrimination in two articles

June 12, 2020Franco-American News and CultureMayor Gilbert Boucher, Pool Beach Association

By Juliana L'Heureux

Franco-Americans have been the recipients of ethnic discrimination for decades. They were marginalized because they were immigrants, largely Roman Catholics and spoke the French language. Discrimination began in ernest during the middle 19th century, when the right wing Know Nothing Party was gaining political power, and rose again during the 1920's, when Ku Klux Klan rallies were evident in several Maine towns and cities where Franco-Americans lived.

A Know Nothing campaign poster. The right wing anti-immigrant group rose to political influence during the middle 19th century.

Today, in 2020, I found an interesting point of view about racism against French African-Americans in an on line publication titled "Frenchly.com". Given the current Black Lives Matter movement in response to the violence against African-Americans and the multiple videotaped tragedies, particularly the recent killing of George Floyd, I contacted the editor to request permission to quote from the article.

https://frenchly.us/what-its-like-to-be-black-french-in-america/

What is it like to be Black and French in America?

The editor Catherine Rickman gave permission to reference and publish quotes with credit to Alexis Buisson and Emmanuel Saint-Martin of the French Morning Staff.

When the unbearable video of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis surfaced on social networks on Tuesday, May 26, Alice Endamne, a Gabon-born children's book author married to an African-American, said, "It begins again." Alice Endamne has been living for 22 years in California. French is the native language of Gabon, a country located on the west coast of Central Africa. Her husband is a scientist, but she worries about his safety everytime he goes to the grocery story.

As a black Frenchwoman in the United States, Chrystelle Kimoto sometimes feels caught in the middle of dynamics that are difficult to reconcile. In the eyes of white people, who are numerous in the French community and in her neighbourhood, she is a Black. But that doesn't mean she identifies with the challenges of the African-American community. As an immigrant, she says she sees the United States as a land of opportunity, where African-Americans still suffer from many of the socioeconomic ills inherited from slavery, despite the progress of the 1960s. "Relationships with black Americans can sometimes be complex because, as descendants of slaves, some people feel that black Europeans or Africans do not experience the same things they do, and do not understand. I'm black, I'm French, and I've lived through racism, but it will never be the same as what they're

(Continued on page 18)

Huguenots in American colonial history

July 10, 2020 Franco-American News and CultureLe Canado-Americain, Pierre Dugas

By Juliana L'Heureux

During my pandemic cleaning, in other words, taking care of projects formerly on the back burner, I found several interesting publications amid the piles of accumulated data collected over the 35 years of proudly reporting about Franco-Americans. (Yes, I have to update my webpage biography!)

Two Hundred Years of Freedom by Le Canado-Americain

One particular publication, found in the pile I am sorting thru, was published for the American 1976, bicentennial. Madeleine Giguere, the founder of the Franco-American Collection at the University of Southern Maine, Lewiston Auburn College, gave me the publication, along with a group of books. She was always delighted to share Franco-American history.

Information about the Huguenots was among the articles published in the book "Two Hundred Years of Freedom", written by Le Canado-Americain, in Manchester, New Hampshire. It was the purpose of the commemorative book to be distributed to the public during the national bicentennial celebrations. In my experience, it is rare to read about the Huguenots in French-American history and I want to compliment those who composed the article. After all, it was

(Continued on page 18)

(Racism and ethnic discrimination in two articles *continued from page 17)*

experiencing," she says. "For my part, I have the privilege of arousing curiosity. Of course I am black, but when I open my mouth, people hear my French accent and ask me where I come from, whereas a black American might be subject to more prejudice."

Although Endamne says, "It has begun again", the unfortunate fact is that racism and ethnic discrimination, its ugly social sibling, reappear with cyclical frequency.

As a matter of fact, I went into my files to find an essay about the brave move against discrimination by a 1970's, mayor of Biddeford, Maine, published in "A Franco-American Overview: Volume 4", and reprinted from a classic article written by Calvin Trillin, published in the December, 10, 1973, edition of The New Yorker titled "Ou se trouve la plage?" (Where is the beach?").

Biddeford's La Kermesse Festival celebrates the city's Franco-American heritage and has adopted the adorable smiling frog for the organization's logo.

In the essay, Trillin described how Biddeford's Mayor Gilbert Boucher claimed land by imminent domain, in Biddeford Pool, for the purpose of providing Franco-American residents and mill workers with public access to the beach. Without access to the beach at Biddeford Pool, the Franco-Americans would walk to Old Orchard Beach, during the summer, on their rare days off. Boucher identified the discrimination voiced by a group called the Pool Beach Association that strongly opposed the imminent domain purchase of the land. Although the Association offered to make some accommodations to allow restricted access to the beach, Boucher said that it was essential for Biddeford to own the access land. "If we are the owners, we control it,", he is quoted as saying. "You people here use this bathroom. You can't use this one". If the city owned the property, everyone uses the same bathroom."

Driving Mayor Boucher's determination to buy the land for Biddeford was an incident he experienced when he was walking part of the beach one day and a man ran down to him. The man was very upset and told Mayor Boucher he was trespassing, pointing out that this beach was a private beach for members only. That particular road is now named Gilbert Place.

Franco-Americans have worked hard to overcome ethnic discrimination. In Biddeford, the community rallies to the La Kermesse Festival (cancelled in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic) to celebrate the city's Franco-American heritage. The festival's logo is a cute frog adopted to generate good will, thereby making a smiling icon out of what can be considered as an ethnic slur.

Unfortunately, the evidence reported in the Frenchly.com article appears to show how a new group of French speaking immigrants are now experiencing discrimination. It is our responsibility to welcome new Mainers and to be especially aware about how to help those who are native French speakers.

(Huguenots in American colonial history *continued from page 17)*

the Huguenot Pierre Dugas (1560-1628), who was among the first to help Samuel Champlain in 1604, to settle the French colony of St. Croix Island, off the coast of Calais. (Check the link here.)

While America's hard fought independence from Great Britain was certainly aided by reinforcements sent to help General George Washington to win the Revolutionary War, very little information is provided about how the Huguenots were among the colonial patriots, because many of them were already here.

Huguenots were the French Protestants of the 16th–17th centuries. Most of the Huguenots came to North America as refugees, because of anti-Protestant sentiment in France. When King Louis XIV of France made the consequential decision to revoke the protection of Protestants that they had achieved under the l'Edit de Nantes, the result caused 100,000 Huguenots to flee out of France. Those Huguenots who decideded to settle in New England were attracted by the Protestants who were settled in the English colonies and where they quickly assimilated into the population. "For the most part, the Huguenots in New England were wealthy and educated. Therefore, they were able to contribute economically and culturally to the development of the young colonies." (As reported in the article.)

James Bowdoin (1726-1790) was a descendant of Huguenots.

In Maine, perhaps the most famous of the Huguenots was James Bowdoin II,

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(Huguenots in American colonial history *continued from page 17)*

born August 7, 1726, in Boston to Hannah Portage Bowdoin and James Bowdoin, a wealthy Boston merchant. His grandfather was Pierre Baudouin, a Huguenot refugee from France. Young James attended the South Grammar School (now Boston Latin School), then graduated from Harvard College in 1745. He died in Boston, on November 6, 1790.. Bowdoin College, in Brunswick, Maine, is named after James Bowdoin. He is also famous for having been a politician and he founded the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, one of the oldest learned societies in the United States.

Moreover, as early as the 16th century, Huguenots came to America. In 1620, when the famous Mayflower arrived in Plymouth, there were French people on board, including Guillaume Molines and his family. (Check the *Huguenot Refuge in America* website: https://www.museeprotestant.org/en/notice/le-refuge-huguenot-en-amerique/)

Among other the notable Huguenots who settled in New England were:

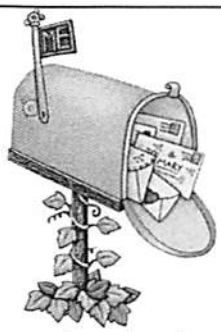
- Philippe de la Noye, who arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1621, who was an ancestor of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.
- Nicolas Martiau, who was a maternal ancestor of President George Washington.
- Paul Revere, who was the American Revolutionary patriot who descended from the French family of Rivoire de Romagneu.
- Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, the man who drew up the street plan for Washington DC, based upon the map of Paris, France.

Although the Huguenots were in the colonies with the early French colonists, they apparently abandoned their heritage because of their refugee status. Nevertheless, they are certainly among the Franco-Americans who participated in creating the United States of America.

Juliana L'Heureux is a free lance writer who publishes news, blogs and articles about Franco-Americans and the French culture. She has written about the culture in weekly and bi-weekly articles, for the past 27 years.

https://francoamerican.bangordailynews.com/author/jlheureux/

The Joy of Sending and Receiving A Letter



by Linda Gerard DerSimonian
Waterville, Maine

A fact on my life resume is that I am 70 years old, and have been sending hand written letters, type written letters, postcards, handmade cards, and notes of "Thinking of you" or "dropping by to say hi" to family, friends, relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances since grammar school, when my mother first taught me to write "Thank You Letters". I remember sitting at the bar in our kitchen in Van Buren, Maine, earnestly composing words of gratitude to my memeres (grandmothers) for their kind and patient hands, knitting me wool mittens, scarves, headbands, and cardigan sweaters with fluffy white angora kittens stitched on the front. Since then, I continue to be devoted to letter writing and, "Fill my paper with the breathings of my heart", as William Wordsworth once said.

Each piece of pen on paper that I write is time consuming. I labor over my words and sentences, and search through my files of literary quotes to help convey my thoughts and sentiments. I feel like the spider, Charlotte, in E.B. White's Charlotte's Web." She searches for, and ponders about using the right words in her web to help save Wilbur's life. It fulfills me to write to someone every day, and I romantically imagine that that person will receive my card or letter as a surprise gift, wrapped in a stamped envelope, left by a fairy!

"Letters Mingle Souls," said John Donne, an 18th century poet and essayist. I have kept the postal service busy throughout the years, since before the avalanche of E-mails, dings and dongs, and swooshes of texting in our twitter age. Snail mail pleasures me, even though I receive far less correspondence than I send.

A few weeks ago, my daughter and six year old granddaughter walked down their long driveway to fetch their mail. "It's nothing but junk and bills," she lamented. I hope that finding a "Real letter", an intimate form of communication from me in their mailbox, puts a smile on their faces, and brings them delight. Like the sun shining through the clouds above, receiving letters from those we hold dear, can bring us cheer.

I bought my grandchildren a cardboard mailbox decorated with penguins that sits on their buffet. If its flag is flipped up, it tells them, "You've got mail!"

When visiting, I write short notes and messages to them after they've gone to bed. How joyful it is to see their lit up faces in the morning, as they run on little reindeer legs to open that box!

Letters record history, and can be shared for decades to come, when somebody reads and cherishes that piece of correspondence. Memories will tumble out, transporting the reader back through the corridors of time, enabling them to remember and feel the presence of the person who wrote, whether they are still alive, or departed.

My father, Everett Gerard, worked for The Bangor & Aroostook Railroad as a telegrapher and station agent for 42 years. He was a dedicated and heartfelt letter writer who often expressed thankfulness. I had the foresight to save many of the letters he wrote to me during my adult life. I especially cherish, "MY Biography", a ten page hand written paper he sent me back in March 2008, featuring facts he deemed important that he wanted his progeny to know about his life.

In one letter he sent me after his retirement in 1988, dad wrote, "Last Friday, my last day at work, was very emotional for me...I relived my whole career, remem-

(Continued on page 20)

(The Joy of Sending and Receiving A Letter continued from page 19)

bering my first day at work, only 22 years old, and my last day at 62. I can truthfully say, that I cannot remember one day, where I hated to get up to go to work, and really, I always looked forward to it." Tucked inside his letter, he proudly included a copy of a letter that he received from the Superintendent of the Railroad that said, "Everett, I cannot imagine anybody who has left such an impression with his fellow workers as you have. I know from my experience that you have been one of the best station agents that this company had. You were a pro, and one of the most widely-liked and dedicated employees on the railroad; always willing to help solve a problem, and always ready with a smile. Your life, attitude, and love for your fellows reminds us of a small poem by Rasul Rza:..."While yet there is still time, live, labor, but live and labor so that when you are gone, everyone will see that where once you were, an emptiness yawns." These heirloom letters dad sent me might be inspirational to dad's descendants in years to come.

On my 64th birthday, dad wrote, "Linda, I want to thank you so much for all you did for both mom and I throughout the years, especially the recent masterpiece you wrote of my life on the railroad, and the extra jobs I had to better our family."

It was sweet of him to refer to my fledgling piece of writing as a masterpiece! My father's soul shined through the words he wrote to me.

Dad passed away at Lakewood Nursing Home here in Waterville where I live last December 2019. I mourn his loss, bur I feel his presence when I look at his photographs, and see his signature handwriting as I hold his letters in my hand, and read the thoughts and feelings he shared about slices of his life. "The word that is heard perishes, but the letter that is written is forever." -Proverbs

A Japanese proverb says, "One kind word can warm three winter months." When I feel like I need a kind word, and a boost of confidence, I read the last birthday card my mother, Vera Gerard, sent me when I turned 68, and she was 90.

She says, "Linda, you always had a wonderful big heart. All through your life you've had a caring, thoughtful way that just comes naturally to you. I love you, Mom." Her card is a treasured, tender souvenir that uplifts me.

Today, mom is 93, and no longer has dad by her side in the nursing home. July 2020 is here, and I have not been able to visit her since March, when they closed the doors to outsiders due to the Coronavirus. Prior to that, I had been helping her write letters. She'd choose someone to be in touch with, and I'd write verbatim what she said, and mail it to that person. Her thoughts aren't as clear as when she kept a diary throughout her marriage, but her murmurings are deep. "Now is my turn to be old, and I have to do the best I can," I wrote for her in a letter to her grandson, Raffi.

I will pass on to my grandchildren, and great grandchildren, in generations to come, selected letters I've photocopied and sent to others throughout the years, as well as letters I've received, so that they will see examples of the lost art of letter writing.

(N.D.L.R. Reprinted from Le Club Français Newsletter, Le Fanal. Publié par Marie-Anne Gauvin dans Le Fanal (Le Club Français), 10 septembre, 2002 (Vol. 1 No. 7). Soumis par Jacqueline Blesso)

LA PIE BAVARDE

Comme vous le savez le Club a fait imprimer quelques centaines de serments d'allégeance traduits de l'anglais. Imprimés sur papier épais ces cartes sont aussi laminées et disponibles gratuitement à qui en voudrait Nous faisons preuve que nous pouvons être patriotiques même en français. Nous avons reçu nos serments juste avant le branle-bas soulevé pare une personne qui ne veut pas que sa fille entende le mot DIEU dans le serment d'allégeance au drapeau américain. Ce serment doit être récité chaque jour à l'école. Espérons que nos cartes ne deviennent pas illégales.

Depuis quelques années le journal **Bangor Daily News** publie une partie du document de la **Déclaration de l'Indépendance**. Il y a dans cet extrait deux mentions du Souveraine...Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them..." et ...a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence...". Le Dieu du serment n'a pas de nom. Est-ce Jésus, Buddha, Allah, Yahweh ou Jehova? C'est à vous de shoisir ou de ne pas choisir. Il n'y a dans le serment aucun endocrinement. Comment se fait-il qu'une personne puisse abattre l'ancre de l'existence de l'Homme? C'est très facile si la majorité ne parle pas. Qui ne parle pas consent!

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J'en ai fait l'experience une année à l'école. Nous avions tous une classe qui s'appelait **Homeroom** le matin avant que les cours commencent. Ce **Homeroom** de 10 minutes commençait par le serment puis l'enseignant(e) faisait l'appelle (attendance). De temps en temps il y avait des annonces puis les étudiants pouvaient jaser ou repasser un leçon. Tous les enseignants savent que dans les classes il y a souvent des petits diable ou des grand(e)s déplaisant(e)s. Or un beau jour un grand bon-à rien annonce très fort que. "Hey, you don't have to recite the pledge!" Étonnement des élèves. Ils l'on récité mais pas très fort. Le volume dintinuait chaque jour. Nous étions en décembre quand mon ami a fait son annonce importante. Une semaine plus tard j'en ai parlé à mon directeur. Il est arrivé dans ma salle de classe le lendemain en se plantant

(Suite page 21)

D'OÙ JE VIENS

By Wilfred (Chip) Bergeron
Concord, NH

My mother, Marie Jeanne Rose Anna Plante was born on August 1, 1923, in Somersworth, NH. The following is a recollection of things I heard and saw, about my mother's parents and childhood. Like most oral histories, it will be full of holes. Foolish children don't often sit and listen when parents and grandparents talk about "the way it was." I was a very foolish child. These are my "Somersworth stories."

If anyone might be interested in the cultural history of this predominantly Franco-American town, a good place to start would be the Somersworth Historical Society, 157 Main St. Somersworth, NH, 03078. Before I came to where I live now, I gave them several photo albums of Plante family pictures from the 1930's to the 1950's, and some of my mother's high school essays. I knew that, where I am now, I would be unable to possess them, and I did not want them lost to history. Given that, let's begin...

In the early 1900's, Somersworth, NH, "The Hilltop City" had a population of maybe 5,000 souls, mostly Franco-American. It was separated from Berwick ME by the Salmon Falls river, along whose banks grew a thriving industrial base. When I was a young child there were several shoe manufacturers. Great Falls Bleach Works, and a General Electric plant that made transformers, electric metering devices, and suchlike. This latter plant was built in the 1920's, I was told, but due to the depression stayed shuttered until World War II sparked the need for industrial capacity. Parenthetically, "Grand Falls" was like the name of the settlement that become Somersworth into the mid 1800's. A young John Greenleaf Whittier lived on a farm in the area, the inspiration for his poem"Snowbound."

My mother was born to Arthur and Rose (Lefebvre) Plante. Of the Lefebvre's I know very little. I believe I saw photos of a small grocery store they owned at the corner of Main and Franklin Streets. By the time I came along it was a Sanel Auto Parts Store. However, that store could have been owned by the Plantes. I was never sure.

In my early childhood, my grandfather was a painting contractor. During World War II he worked at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. I remember seeing necklaces he had machined from coins and bits of plastic during "down" times. By the mid 1950's he had retired early due to kidney disease and heart trouble. He died just before I entered my freshman year of high school in 1962. I remember the wake being held in the parlor of the big house on Union Street. By that time it was very unusual to wake someone

(Continued on page 22)

Joseph Plante 1860-1951
SON EPOUSE
Belzemire Labrie 1859-1925

Arthur J. Plante 1903-1962
SON EPOUSE
Rose S. Lefebvre 1904-1988

(LA PIE BAVARDE suite de page 20)

devant les enfants les mains sure les hanches en disant absolument rien. "Hey, now you know why I'm here. Let's straighten that out." Puis pouf! Il a décampé. Les enfants? Tout ce que j'ai pu réussir était de les faire lever debout pendant que moi, je récitais le serment. Mais j'avais une idée.

En fermant les livres pour le congé de Noël j'ai apporté chez moi la liste de noms avec adresses de ce **Homeroom**. Le Soir du Jour de l'An j'ai téléphoné à tous les parents de ces étudiants. Je me suis introduite en demandant s'il ou elle avait une objection que leur enfant récite le serment. Ils m'ont tous assurée que non, pas d'objection. Je leur ai expliqué ce qu'un élève avait annouincee et que d'était vrai. Par contre, il y avait aussi une autre loi que éxigeait que les enseignants récitent le serment avec les élèves. Évidement, Monsieur X a reçu des télèphones puisque le lendemain matin il est venu chercher celui qui avait causé tout le mal pour l'inscrire dans le **Homeroom** d'un enseignant avec plus de laissez-faire que Mademoiselle Gauvin. Mais le plus beau de tout ça? Tous, avec la main sure le coeur, ont récité avec forte voix le serment d'allégeance au drapeau américain. Un étudiant à la tête rouse s'est arrêté me parlé en sortant de la salle. "Mademoiselle, vous avez dit à ma mère que je ne récitais pas le serment. Vous savez avec ma chevelure rouse je ne voulais pas me faire remarquer mais je le récitais pas fort. Je lui ai dit que je comprenais. C'est comme ça que ça se passe à l'école!

Votre pie bavarde,
Marie-Anne

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(D'OU JE VIENS *continued from page 21)*

in their home.

Something strange about my grandfathers: In the early 1990's a Mr. Binette, who was a genealogist for the Franco-American Genealogical Society, did my chart and noted that he had not been born at home or in a hospital, but had been picked up at the rectory of St. Martin's parish, the Franco-American Catholic church in Somersworth. What this could mean I do not know., but when I relayed this finding to my Aunt Gaby, she vigorously denied it.

What I do know is the family young Arthur was born, came into, was one of the pillars of St. Martin's. Their four daughters all became Holy Cross nuns. I only know the "real" name of the youngest, Ste Firmine (Ida). The others were Ste Joseph, Ste. Jeanne D'Arc and Ste. Hénédine. Jeanne D'Arc and Hénédine died before I was old enough to know them. St. Joseph died in 1965, my senior year in high school. Ste. Firmine lived into the 1990's and was in her nineties, alert and sharp as a tack to the end.

My grandmother Rose, was far as I know, a housewife and mother. I remember when I was a child she did do piecework for Somersworth Shoe, sitting on their glassed in porch sewing together the uppers for leather moccasins. I was fascinated by the big ball of brown wax she used to run the threads through to make them work easier, and the big curved steel needles.

Unfortunately, Memère Plante suffered from depression. In the 1950's pepère had to take her regularly to Boston for electroshock treatments which I believe left her with a permanent lop-sided facial expression. After pepère died, she had problems and spent most of her later life in a nursing home. She died in late 1988.

My mother was the oldest of the three. Her sister Gavrielle, my Aunt Gaby, was born two or three years later. She married John Murphy, who went ashore on Omaha Beach on D-Day. By the time I came along they occupied the right side of the duplex my grandparents owned, and had a son Patrick, maybe five years older than I. Just after I came along the Murphy's had Sharon, then Maureen, Michael and Kathleen in fairly short order.

This necessitated a move to a house of their own on Main Street, heading toward Rollingsford. To my childish eyes that house looked ramshackle, but that could have been due to five young children and both parents working full time. Gaby worked at General Electric, and John eventually became repairs manager at a local Chevrolet dealership. Moving from job to job is a fairly modern phenomenon. In the fifties and sixties, you started work somewhere and stayed there as long as it was open.

An abiding memory of the Murphy house is that it abutted the B & M Railroad tracks. I remember on occasional sleepovers being awakened in the middle of the night by a slow freight train rumbling by. It didn't seem to bother my cousins.

A few years later, in the mid 1930's, I think my mother's brother Richard was

St. Martin's old church was on the corner of Franklin and Green Streets where there is presently a small park.

St. Martin's Rectory, Franklin Street, Somersworth, NH

born. I knew him as my Uncle Dickie. I have dim memories of meeting him once or twice. Unfortunately, "Dickie" seemed to always be in trouble with the law. He served a bid at the New Hampshire State Prison for aggravated burglary in the late 1940's/early 1950's. From there he move to Arizona and again ran afoul of the law. I remember one Christmas, when I was about 10 my mother putting together a "Care Package" to send to him in Arizona prison.

The house the Plante's lived in was on the corner of Union and Franklin Streets, halfway up a steep hill that ended at Green Street. St. Martin's Catholic Church was on the corner of Green and Franklin, a big, late 19th century Gothic-esque brick ark of a church, connected to a rectory , convent and elementary school.

By the late 1960's, St. Martin's had fallen into disrepair. A new church was built on the road going out of Somersworth toward Rochester. It was a church "in the round". Later, with declining mass attendance, it was "twinned" with the "Irish" church in Somersworth, (Holy Trinity, I believe), And now one church serves the needs of the entire Catholic population of Somersworth.

Across the street from my grandparent's house was a bakery. In my childhood I recollect two owners, both Franco. Across from the house was a fairly large park. For some reason I don't remember being allowed to play in it as a child. A narrow, sloping alley separated their house from the Dumais residence next door and a clutch of small stores that changed owners often during my childhood.

The alley was shaded by the buildings it stood between, and I remember enjoying it being dark and cool on a hot day. Once when I was about four, I took the wrong turn coming out of the alley. I got confused, lost, and wandered around for some time before being rescued by a bunch of local high school students. I got to ride all over Somersworth, standing in the middle of the front seat of a convertible with the top down, next to a cute co-ed and her boyfriend while they searched for my parents. I remember being anxious to find my mother, but the rides was so much fun!

The picture I've sent of the Plante house is pretty much as it was in the '50's, except the door to the right hand apartment is new, and a privet hedge surrounded the house at the edge of the lawn. Pepère took good care of the house and yard. It was always immaculately tended.

Behind was a 3 or 4 car garage, built in the old style, with sliding instead of over-

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(D'OU JE VIENS *continued from page 22*

head doors. There was also a wood plank platform with carousel type clothes hangers on either end. It was in one of those garages, when I was with my two cousins nearest my age, that I found out there was a difference between boys and girls "down there", I was maybe five. To say that my mother was livid and mortified when she found out would be an understatement!

Anyway, as I said before, the house was a duplex with pepère and memère living on the left side and the Murphys on the right. I remember it being very well built. The Plantes were proud of where they lived.

I assume the units were identical, but I remember my grandparent's side better. Entering the front door were the entry ways to both units and a very elegant staircase in mahogany and whit leading to the upstairs where a bust of Brother André looked down on whoever came in. An enormous crucifix was nailed to the right wall. The wood of the crucifix was painted black, and the corpus deathly pale, dots of red paint for blood coming from hands, feet and forehead under a crown of thorns. There was to be no doubt that the Plantes were Catholic to the core!

Entering the Plante side, you came to a parlor that my impressions is was seldom used. It was carpeted and uncomfortably clean. A Sofa and upholstered chair were of delicate construction, hard to sit on, and didn't look as if they would take much weight. An *étagère* in the corner had the full compliment of photos and kitchy knick-knacks common to a well tended house.

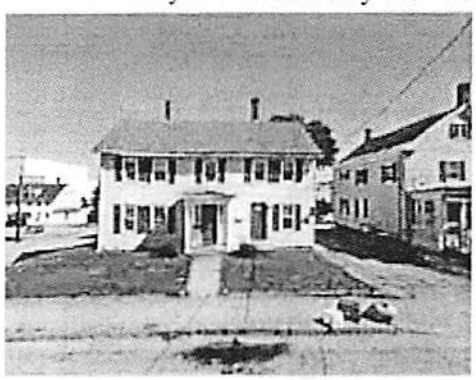
From there one entered the den/dining/common room. It had memère and pepère's easy chairs, a wood desk, black and white tv in the corner. On the other side of the window was a huge console radio with about a half dozen bands. By the time I came along, I'm not even sure it worked. But it was a prized possession and must have cost a godly sum when bought in the '30's or '40's.

In another corner was a built-in china closet, where memère kept the "good" dishes. Between the chairs a wooden occasional table/magazine rack always chock full of reading material. Behind that a hanging cage that held a succession of parakeets who had the run of the downstairs and were free to leave "presents" on top of the lace curtains and the shoulders of anyone they sat on.

Next to that was the kitchen. Small by today's standards, it also had a table for eating. Memère was a good cook (my mother was better!). And on New Years' day she, Mom and Aunt Gabby would pump a veritable feast out of that small place. The den had been cleared out and an enormous trestle table set up on sawhorses. Before the feast, pepère, Dad and Uncle Johnny would watch football, bowl game after bowl game beer or something stronger in hand, arguing sports the way I find myself doing with friends today.

All the while, five Murphy kids and me would be screaming around the house, playing noisy games and maybe going downstairs to play darts in the very small basement. Once, on a sunny day, they kicked all us kids out of the house to release our pent-up energy. We found our way up the street to St. Martin's, where we release our energy racing up and down the aisles and up into the detached pulpit. We were seen, identified, and a phone cal made. When we got home let's just say the adults weren't happy with us!

Just before the pies and jello were brought out, memère always celebrated by eating her favorite part of the turkey, the "end that went over the fence last." That was memère's, and no one else dared touch it. She munched it down with great gusto, a lopsided grin on her face. She always seemed happy to me, but I always thought pepère Plante was a bit of a crab. Now I realize that, between his kidney problems and his angina, he was in near constant, chronic pain. Sometimes it's useful to remember that you're not the only one who has a cross to bear.



House at 2 Union Street, Somersworth

The porch was on the right side of the kitchen, and with louvered windows, my grandparents enjoyed it three seasons of the year, usually rocking back and forth on a metal contraption called a "glider," that was death on the fingers of small boys and other unfortunates who were careless enough to put them where they didn't belong.

I don't remember much of the upstairs.

Gabrielle Eva Plante Murphy

BIRTH: 1925
DEATH: 4/1/2011 (aged 85–86)
BURIAL: Mount Calvaire Cemetery

After climbing the steps and greeting Brother André there was a large, very '20's/'30's style bathroom and two bedrooms that I recall. My favorite part of the house was up another flight of stairs to an attic, semi-finished into several rooms. I suspect on of those rooms was my Uncle Dickie's bailiwick, but by the time I got there he was long gone.

Those rooms were full of old boxes and steamer trunks, and I loved to explore! By my tenth birthday I was a budding stamp collector, and those trunks were a bonanza of old envelopes and old letters from the '30's and '40's. I kept the stamps they must have told! Hindsight is always 20/20, and young boys no sense of history.

There were stacks of old magazines bundled together, *Lifes* and *Saturday Evening Posts* from around the time of World War II. Another trunk had all kinds of information for civilians on the home front and several partial ration books. There was a trunk full of old photos and albums, and some of my mother's high school work. In the bottom were formal pictures of her first wedding, a short and unfortunate marriage she ever after refused to discuss; she in her white wedding gown, he in his Marine dress blues. In a corner were regimental photos of his unit, long and by this time curled in on themselves in circles. As I said earlier,

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(D'OÙ JE VIENS continued from page 23) these are now in possession of the Somersworth Historical Society, should anyone be interested.

I think from there came a lot of my love of history and the popular culture of my parent's and grandparent's times. I would have became a history major in college but my father discouraged it. "You'll end up teaching history and there's no money teaching history," he said. I've since figured out that following your dreams is priceless. You can't buy that kind of satisfaction.

Starting this, I intended to share my mothers girlhood memories and family legends. Unfortunately, wrack my brain though I might, I can recall her saying very little of her girlhood. One story she was fond of telling was how, when she was 8 or 9, she and her sister Gaby were shipped to a Catholic girl's boarding school in South Berwick, ME about ten miles away. She recalled being lonely and that the regime was very strict. On bath night the nuns made the girls bathe in their nightgowns, out of fear of the girls seeing themselves naked and becoming too curious. They were there for one school year.

Ive tried following the time line back to see if I could connect it with any other events in the Plante family. It was the hight of the depression, but things couldn't have been too bad if the Plantes could afford to send their daughters to boarding school. More than likely, that time coincided with my Uncle Dickie's arrival. I suspect with my grandmother's mental health problems, pepère wanted to minimize the stress of her dealing with two daughters and new baby at the same time.

That school went through several iterations over the years, and by the time I was an adult it had been bought by an Evangelical Christian group called "The Bible Speaks" who were using it as a Bible school and the gym as a headquarters church. At the time I was active in such circles and attended several services there, never recalling that the place had been part of my mother's childhood.

As I said, my mother was pretty tight lipped about her childhood, or perhaps I wasn't around when she shared her memories. I remember her talking about her senior high class trip to Washington DC, but not in any great detail. She graduated from Somersworth High School in 1940. After, I believe she started nurses' training at some Catholic hospital in Nashua, NH, but my impression is that for some reason she did not last long.

After that came her first marriage, ovarian cyst, and meeting my father, all of which have been previously covered. Were she alive today, my mother would be 97. In her lifetime I remember her being a very intelligent woman who liked to be in control of her circumstances, and if she thought she was right, that was it. Shortly after pepère Plante died, she and my Aunt Gaby became estranged. I think, but am not sure, over how things were to be handled to care for memère, who had reached the point of being unable to handle her own affairs.

There were brief reconciliations, notably when my father died in 1982, but those were the exceptions. For some reason both my parents kept their distance from their siblings. I hardly knew my cousins on my father's side. After pepère Plante died, I lost my Murphy cousins. The last time I saw some of them was at Sr. Ida (Firmine)'s funeral in the mid 1990's. We exchanged addresses, phone numbers and promised to keep in touch. It never happened.

Survivance and Its Discontents

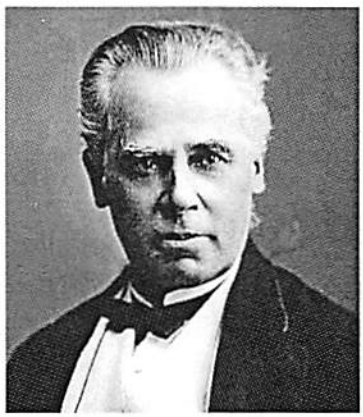
2020-09-24 PL Canadian Francophonies, Franco-Americans, French Language, Nativism, Quebec Emigration, Quebec History, Survivance

Query the Past

Patrick Lacroix, Historian

One cannot tell the story of the northeastern Franco-Americans without discussing survivance. This was an ideology of cultural survival in which the French language and the Roman Catholic faith were mutually supportive, with the loss of the first entailing earthly perdition and eternal damnation. These were the two pillars of French Canadians' identity, the primary markers of their distinctiveness once settled in the United States. They upheld their sense of community. And priests, editors, and middle-class professionals never tired of reminding their flock or working-class compatriots of their duty to their Church, their homeland, and their descendants.

The same ideology animated Quebec culture through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. With the Catholic faith and church institutions receding from Quebec's public and social life beginning in the 1960s, one major pillar of survivance disintegrated. The significance of language expanded to fill the void; that became the supreme good. The French tongue would be the new idol. As Quebeckers stood on Bill 101, which made French the official language of public life in the province, they looked around—and down—to find that there would be no saving the language, and therefore French-Canadian culture, beyond their borders. Hors de la patrie, point de salut.



George-Etienne Cartier was alleged to have claimed that Canada was well to be rid of the rabble (canaille) departing for the U.S. (Wikimedia Commons)

This attitude was about as old as emigration from Quebec. When Bishop Plessis headed west in 1816, he expressed no hope for French Canadians who had settled in Upper Canada [present-day Ontario]. They would lose their culture and faith; by emigrating, they had permanently alienated themselves from their heritage. That Quebec-as-fortress view was elaborated at the end of the nineteenth century through the work of elites like Fr. Antoine Labelle and Jules-Paul Tardivel. It was cemented in the era of neonationalism, following the Second World War, and it is still with us.[1] Granted, in the last forty years, Quebeckers' relationship to Franco-Americans has been marked by ignorance—and yes this is a rather slim silver lining—more than contempt.[2]

Franco-Americans' view of their cousins north of the boundary line has been far more ambivalent, and with good cause.[3] Persistently they have sought to erode the contempt and ignorance. Quebec is the ancestral homeland and the embodiment of

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(Survivance and Its Discontents continued from page 24)

French cultural aspirations in North America. It is an alternate universe that provides hope for the survival not of a shared faith, perhaps not even a shared language, but a common story and culture.

Just as some Quebeckers look down on other francophonies in North America, Franco-Americans look up to la belle province—even if the Quebec of today is very different from the Quebec that their ancestors left, a Quebec that is often romanticized beyond all reason.

This is not a uniformly positive development. Franco-Americans have a record of overlooking certain policies and social realities in Quebec that they vehemently reject in their own country. With no sense of inconsistency, some lament the corrosive effect of assimilatory policies and the American melting pot while defending the exact same forces in Quebec, where minority cultures are suspect if not threatening or entirely illegitimate. As the argument goes, French Canadians are an embattled minority in an English-speaking sea and bear a history of oppression. (Or, "this is us and we're different; in this case it's okay.")

The impregnable seat of Quebec power (P. Lacroix)

But French Quebeckers are quick to brush away criticism of what they deem to be their complete latitude to settle internal matters. If you're an outsider and you challenge any resolution of the Assemblée nationale, you're just engaging in "Quebec bashing," i.e. letting your prejudice color your understanding of the real situation in the province. If you're from Quebec, then you are a colonisé, i.e. someone who has internalized the language of the oppressor. Recent debates over the Charter of Values and Bill 21 on religious symbols witnessed much of this deflection over legitimate objections.

In this historian's view, the situation in Quebec is reminiscent of the early English settlement of New England. Pilgrims and Puritans were escaping oppression; they claimed the freedom to practice their faith and that narrative has entered American historical orthodoxy. As is typical, the story was more complicated: what they really wanted was the freedom to impose their own claims and to establish their own ideal society—in which error would have no rights.

Franco-Americans now have the opportunity to reevaluate Quebec historical orthodoxy—a narrative formulated by elites, as in days of yore, and crafted to appeal to French speakers everywhere. Often, Franco-Americans have had nowhere to look but north, satisfied that there lay the land of their ancestors, there lay occasional funds for Franco endeavors (a budgetary envelope that is meant to promote le rayonnement du Québec).

* * *

Franco-American history is a lot of things to a lot of people. Some explore it from a genealogical angle; to others, it informs their identity and community and helps them make sense of their heritage and culture. Many scholars have studied the larger significance of French-Canadian emigration—its impact on the making of the United States or various subregions. Another path is to approach Franco-American history as an opportunity to apply political lessons from the past to the present. For policymakers, that opportunity is far more self-interested.

I would add another possibility: Franco-American history as an opportunity to put majority-minority relations and immigration history under the microscope. Expatriated French Canadians make for a valuable case study as we seek to understand what is possible and what isn't for minority groups in North America—valuable not least because of their background in distinctive Quebec. What can cultural freedom and cultural opportunity look like? Franco-American history provides cautionary lessons and perhaps guide posts as well.

When put into conversation with the Quebec experience, Franco-American history invites us to contest oppressive and discriminatory measures, for instance the reviled Maine law of 1919 and similar language bills enacted elsewhere. It invites us to apply an even standard of openness, diversity, and inclusion. Most significantly of all, the transnational history of survivance shows that majority-minority relations are not a mere matter of lawmaking. Barriers also come in the form of monolithic categories handed down by elites—and those, as is patently obvious, are by no means a thing of the past.

[1] Quebec neonationalism is built around an apparent paradox: a new openness to the world and the pursuit of civic nationalism, but also the continued identification of the province as the exclusive homeland of (the) French-Canadian people.

[2] History education in Quebec public schools has done nothing to remedy this situation. But young Franco-American voices (e.g. the French-Canadian Legacy Podcast and My French-Canadian Family) are rising up to open minds and challenge misconceptions.

[3] Professor Susan Pinette (University of Maine) has recently expressed this ambivalence in a public lecture for the Lewiston Public Library.

http://querythepast.com/

***(Portrait Claire Quintal se raconte** suite de page 3)*

grands-parents – de ceux qui étaient les véritables immigrés, Américains donc de fraîche date. Ma génération à moi « était à cheval sur les deux cultures » comme deux de mes professeurs à l'Université de Montréal, lors de mes études au niveau de la maîtrise, m'avaient décrite.

Mon premier voyage au Québec eut lieu quand j'avais neuf ans. J'accompagnais mon père qui y faisait un voyage d'affaires et je me souviens que je m'y sentais à l'aise parce que je parlais français, et agréablement surprise d'entendre parler français par tout le monde autour de moi. La plupart ressemblaient d'ailleurs à mes *mononcles* et mes *matantes* de Central Falls.

Hélas, je n'avais plus de parenté proche au Québec. Tout ce monde des cousins et cousines semblaient avoir dégringolé d'un seul coup en Nouvelle-Angleterre en ce qui me concerne : « Laissez-les partir, c'est la canaille qui s'en va ». C'est du groupe qui avait quitté le Québec – les miens donc – qu'on parlait ainsi dans ce temps-là.

Donc, comme j'ai dit, ma famille vivait à mi-chemin entre la rivière Blackstone et le chemin de fer. Si aujourd'hui on longe cette rivière, elle est toujours bordée d'usines dont la plupart sont fermées ou transformées. Elle coule entre Worcester dans le Massachusetts, où j'habite maintenant, depuis mon retour de la France, pour mon travail comme enseignante au collège universitaire l'Assomption, et Providence, où la rivière se jette dans la baie Narragansett.

Histoire familiale

Pour ce qui est de mes grands-parents, je ne parlerai pour le moment que de ma grand-mère maternelle, Alexandrine Brûlé, originaire de Saint- Barthélemy. À l'âge de 20 ans, elle avait épousé J.-Henri Messier, jeune pharmacien diplômé de Sainte-Marie-de-Monnoir [depuis 2000, Marieville] pour son cours classique et de l'école de pharmacie de Providence, Rhode Island. Le couple eut cinq enfants – deux filles d'abord, suivies de trois garçons. Alexandrine allait mourir à l'âge de 32 ans laissant dans le deuil son mari et ses cinq enfants dont la plus vieille, ma mère, n'avait que onze ans et le benjamin, seulement quatre ans. Ironie tragique du sort, quatre de ces cinq enfants allaient atteindre 90 ans et plus. Ma mère est décédée à l'âge de 96 ans et sa sœur Adrienne, née en 1905, a atteint 105 ans !

Mes parents sont nés tous les deux en 1904, tous les deux aux États-Unis : ma mère à Central Falls et mon père à Ware dans le Massachusetts. Donc, je suis de la deuxième génération Américaine.

Ma mère avait fait ses études comme pensionnaire auprès des sœurs de la Sainte-Union à Pawtucket, R.I., avant d'obtenir son diplôme à l'école secondaire de la ville. Elle n'a jamais travaillé hors de la maison, sauf dans un poste qu'elle eut pendant quelques mois avant son mariage, dans un bureau local.

Mon père avait été entraîné par les frères du Sacré-Cœur dans ce qu'on appelait la tenue des livres. Après avoir travaillé quelque temps pour un commerce Franco-Américain prospère, dans la vente et la réparation de camions, il a décidé de se mettre à son propre compte dans un commerce de vente de grain et de foin et comme concessionnaire de la cie John Deere. Il a pu tenir bon pendant la crise, mais sa carrière comme commerçant s'étant déroulée pendant les années 1930, comme pour tant d'autres, ces années-là n'ont pas été prospères pour lui. Il allait par la suite passer de longues années à travailler comme commis voyageur dans la vente du grain. Il s'est porté candidat à la mairie après la guerre sous la nouvelle bannière du « Good Government Party » dont il n'est pas sorti victorieux. Quelques années plus tard, il fut choisi par ses compatriotes comme directeur des bâtiments gouvernementaux de la ville pour les personnes de l'âge d'or. Il est mort jeune n'ayant que soixante-trois ans, ayant tout de même agi de façon généreuse et affectueuse envers tous les vieillards sous sa garde.

Je suis l'aînée de six enfants, dont deux sont morts. Pour ce qui est des quatre vivants, nous sommes très proches les uns des autres. Henri, le benjamin de la famille, est retraité des compagnies IBM et AOL. Nous avons une sœur à sa retraite comme directrice-adjointe et bibliothécaire médicale à l'Université du Nouveau-Mexique à Albuquerque. Ma sœur Rollande est religieuse de la communauté des sœurs de Sainte-anne, que tous les membres de la famille, même les garçons, ont eu comme enseignantes à l'école paroissiale, pour leur cours élémentaire en ce qui concerne les filles et, [avant leur] transfert chez les frères du Sacré-Cœur dès la sixième année scolaire, pour les garçons. Sœur Rollande est doyenne au collège Anna-Maria, fondé par sa communauté. Quatre d'entre nous,

Mariage d'Hélène Messier et d'Armand-Lucien Quintal, juin 1929

toutes les filles, sommes diplômées de cette institution au niveau du baccalauréat.

Mon grand-père maternel, le pharmacien Henri Messier, né à Marieville, avait vécu jeune dans le Montana. Son père était une sorte de voyageur. Il bougeait beaucoup, allant d'un endroit à l'autre, semble-t-il, toujours à la recherche d'une vie meilleure. Il devait ressembler à un des trois archétypes qu'on trouve dans le roman *Maria Chapdelaine*, non point l'habitant sédentaire qui « faisait de la terre », mais plutôt un homme qui change de place souvent – dans son cas se rendre dans le Montana avant de revenir au Québec, puis partir pour la Nouvelle-Angleterre. Lorenzo Surprenant, le dernier de ces protagonistes, viendra lui aussi aux États-Unis, s'établissant à Lowell, Massachusetts, après avoir vendu la terre héritée de son père. C'est lui qui représente les Franco- Américains, tous ces émigrants qui ont quitté le Québec à une certaine époque pour aller travailler dans les usines de la Nouvelle-Angleterre.

Mon gand-père paternel, Joseph Quintal, est mort dans un accident de chasse à Berlin, New Hampshire, à l'âge de trente-sept ans. Mon père n'avait que huit ans. Son père à lui avait travaillé dans une usine textile, l'entreprise Otis à Ware, Mass., mais le travail à l'usine ne lui plaisait pas. Il se souvenait d'avoir travaillé dans l'épicerie d'un oncle et d'avoir aimé ce genre de travail. Son beau-frère, qui avait épousé sa sœur aînée, lui dit un jour : « Tu sais, on devrait s'organiser pour monter à Berlin, New Hampshire, où les Canadiens français arrivent en grand nombre. Je crois qu'on pourrait y ouvrir une épicerie qui peut

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(Portrait Claire Quintal se raconte suite de page 26)

réussir. » Et c'est ce qu'ils ont fait.

Mon grand-père avait acquis une connaissance de ce genre de travail quand, à l'âge de quinze ans, il était arrivé à Winchendon, Massachusetts, où sa mère, Exilia Bourgault, avait une sœur déjà installée dans cette ville du centre-nord du Massachusetts. Le travail au magasin lui avait plu : le va-et-vient, les livraisons à faire, les contacts avec la clientèle.

Donc, quand son beau-frère lui fit part de son idée de devenir partenaires dans un commerce d'épicerie, il n'hésita pas à déménager vers une petite ville en plein essor à cause du grand nombre de Canadiens français qui s'y installaient. S'il n'était pas mort, il aurait été en mesure d'avoir du succès dans la vie. J'ai acheté un jour un livre sur Berlin qui était composé de bribes d'articles ayant paru dans le journal local. Joseph Quintal y était cité comme ayant été un « *prominent businessman* » (un homme d'affaires important).

Ma grand-mère paternelle, Philoména Bertrand, ayant perdu son mari, était donc restée avec trois enfants à élever seule. Elle pensait que le côté Quintal de la famille ambitionnait de tout avoir dans ce commerce de l'épicerie. Elle travaillait là, à la caisse, pour protéger son avoir en quelque sorte, mais elle ne voulait pas rester parmi eux. Elle disait : « J'aimerais avoir un magasin à moi ». Elle était bonne couturière et rêvait d'avoir son propre magasin où elle aurait pu vendre les accessoires nécessaires aux femmes qui cousaient beaucoup à l'époque. C'était le genre de magasin-boutique qu'elle aurait aimé avoir. Lectrice assidue de *La Presse* de Montréal, elle avait d'abord pensé rentrer au Québec, mais elle se rendit vite compte que Montréal, où elle ne connaissait personne, était trop vaste pour elle. C'est donc à Central Falls qu'elle trouva son rêve d'avoir un magasin à elle !

Il faut dire que pour une jeune femme sachant peu d'anglais, de monter dans le train et de traverser la Nouvelle-Angleterre de haut en bas avec trois enfants – deux filles âgées de 12 ans et de 6 ans et un fils de 8 ans –, cela tenait de la folie. C'est ainsi donc que je suis née, non pas à Berlin, New Hampshire, mais à Central Falls, Rhode Island. Elle s'est remariée plus tard à Central Falls à un monsieur Stébenne qui avait prospéré dans la vente du grain et du foin. Mon père y avait fait son apprentissage dans le même commerce auprès de son beau-père.

Prise de conscience ethnique

Je n'ai jamais habité un Petit-Canada tel quel, comme nous l'entendions à l'époque, c'est-à-dire un quartier où habitaient les Canadiens français en groupe compact, mais on peut dire, que tout ou presque de ma ville natale constituait un Petit-Canada, quoique nous n'étions pas le seul groupe ethnique dans la ville, mais le plus nombreux.

Tous les habitants de Central Falls vivaient dans leur propre petit quartier où on pouvait entendre parler polonais, ou portugais, ou même l'arabe des Syriens, nos voisins. Nous vivions très proches des uns et des autres dans nos enclaves sans vraiment se connaître ; nous passions à côté de leurs épiceries sans s'y arrêter. Personne ne faisait l'effort d'apprendre la langue de l'autre, car nous étions tous occupés à apprendre l'anglais. J'étais consciente d'être Franco-Américaine et donc d'être différente des anglophones qui nous entouraient. Tous les groupes ethniques étaient jugés d'après le moment de leur arrivée aux États-Unis, les Irlandais d'abord, puis nous, les Canadiens français, puis les Polonais, etc. Venus plus tard, les Polonais se trouvaient au bas de l'échelle. Mais on savait très bien, selon notre barème social, que les Américains de longue date venaient en premier.

Jeune, donc, je baignais dans un milieu francophone. Les gens d'un certain âge, parlaient mieux français qu'anglais. C'est quand on commençait d'aller à l'école ou qu'on jouait avec des camarades de ces autres groupes ethniques qui nous entouraient, que nous avons commencé à parler plus souvent anglais. Les deux langues sont donc restées très naturelles pour moi. Tout le monde de ma génération passait du français à l'anglais et vice versa. Je savais bien que, si on parlait à une personne d'un certain âge de souche canadienne-française, qu'il fallait lui adresser la parole en français. Mais parmi nous, les jeunes, on s'était mis assez tôt à parler en anglais.

Éducation primaire et secondaire

Nous, les Franco-Américains, avions deux paroisses à Central Falls. J'appartenais à la paroisse-mère, Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur, fondée par Charles Dauray dont la mère était une Messier. M^gr^ Dauray, qui avait été professeur à Sainte-Marie-de-Monnoir, connaissait bien mon grand-père, étant de la même lignée. L'autre paroisse se nommait Saint-Mathieu, fondée en 1912, alors que la nôtre datait de 1873. J'ai fréquenté l'école paroissiale de Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur à partir de l'année 1935. J'ai donc fait mes études primaires et secondaires auprès des sœurs de Sainte-Anne dans cette école, parce que, quand je suis arrivée au niveau de l'école secondaire, il existait enfin une école secondaire pour les filles seulement. Les garçons allaient à l'Académie des frères du Sacré-Cœur, fondée en 1908.

À l'école, j'aimais toutes mes matières, j'aimais même les maths. J'ai beaucoup aimé la géométrie surtout. Et j'aimais, bien sûr, la littérature au fur et à mesure que je grandissais. Du moment que j'ai enfin pu lire, je me suis plongée dans la lecture. Et puis je me sentais vouée à l'enseignement et n'ayant pas de vocation religieuse, quoique les religieuses ont tout fait pour m'avoir ; mais moi, je voulais avoir une carrière. Les temps ayant changé aussi, je savais bien qu'il fallait donc faire des études plus poussées. Il fallait

Claire Quintal à l'âge de 16 ans, portant l'uniforme de son école

à tout prix avoir un diplôme, au moins un baccalauréat et, mieux encore, une maîtrise afin d'enseigner à des niveaux plus avancés. J'ai fini par obtenir un doctorat, tant qu'à faire !

Lutte pour poursuivre des études avancées

Je me souviens aussi que le meilleur ami de mon père, qui était le vicaire de notre paroisse, s'est approché de moi quand j'étais finissante au *high school* pour savoir si vraiment j'étais sérieuse de vouloir faire des études plus approfondies. ayant répondu « Oui », il me dit : « Pense à ton frère ». Mon frère était le troisième de la famille, né en 1935. C'était de rigueur dans ce temps-là que les filles devaient se sacrifier en faveur des garçons. Et le prêtre n'était pas seul à

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(Portrait Claire Quintal se raconte suite de page 27)

penser ainsi. La sœur de mon père, devenue religieuse de la Présentation de Marie – il y avait beaucoup de vocations tout autour de moi, c'était la norme –, m'a approchée aussi un jour pour me demander si j'étais sérieuse de vouloir obtenir mon bac, et, si oui, il fallait que je me résigne en faveur de mon frère ou bien aller à Rivier, puisqu'elle était sœur de la Présentation, la communauté qui avait fondé ce collège pour jeunes filles en 1937. Je me souviens trop bien de ces conversations dans lesquelles les filles se sentaient vraiment appartenir au « deuxième sexe ».

Ce qui m'a sauvée, c'est que le collège Anna-Maria, qui venait d'être fondé en 1946 par les sœurs de Sainte-Anne, m'a offert une bourse scolaire parce que j'étais sortie gagnante d'un examen donné à travers toutes leurs écoles secondaires. Étant donné que je suis l'aînée de ma famille et qu'on sortait à peine de la crise financière des années 1930, c'est cette bourse qui m'a accordé la chance de continuer mes études. Et je savais que ma mère allait me seconder. C'est grâce à elle que j'ai pu accomplir tout ce dont elle avait rêvé pour elle-même. Mais, son père, qui avait lui-même fait des études, n'était pas prêt à encourager sa propre fille à en faire autant.

Études pour le baccalauréat

J'avais d'abord voulu être journaliste. Pour cette raison, j'avais décidé de me concentrer en anglais. Mais je me suis vite rendu compte que le département de français au collège Anna-Maria était plus développé que ne l'était le département d'anglais. C'est à ce moment-là que je me suis dit, littérature pour littérature – puisque j'aimais beaucoup les deux, étant bilingue, et d'une génération où on pouvait encore être aussi bonne en français qu'en anglais – et que j'ai choisi le français. Je savais que je pouvais écrire dans les deux langues. Dans le département de français, sœur Raymond-Marie (née Madeleine Carmel) de Montréal m'a beaucoup encouragée. Je n'ai pas su d'avance que j'allais me lancer dans ce que j'ai fait par la suite. Je ne l'ai su que quand c'est arrivé. Je faisais ce qu'on fait dans la vie, c'est-à-dire suivre une trajectoire sans vraiment savoir d'avance où cela allait mener. En attendant, je suivais des cours avec beaucoup de zèle et je m'y plaisais. Ayant reçu la bourse qui couvrait mes frais de scolarité, j'ai pu obtenir mon baccalauréat *summa cum laude* en 1952.

Enseignement à l'école secondaire

Laissant de côté mon rêve de faire du journalisme, je me suis retrouvée comme enseignante à mon *alma mater* de Central Falls. Cela allait durer six ans. Quand j'ai pris le poste, je me suis retrouvée comme enseignante d'anglais et de latin. Et pourquoi pas le français ? C'est parce que nos écoles paroissiales, à l'époque, avaient toujours des Canadiennes, parmi les religieuses. Celles-ci, qui ne parlaient pas anglais, n'enseignaient que la religion et la langue française. L'école avait donc besoin d'institutrices plutôt pour l'anglais et le latin. J'avais fait assez de latin au niveau du baccalauréat pour l'enseigner et j'y avais aussi suivi des cours d'anglais.

J'étais la première laïque à enseigner dans cette école où j'ai eu beaucoup de succès, je l'avoue. Le fait d'être la seule laïque était quelque chose pour ces jeunes filles-là. Elles me demandaient mon avis sur toutes sortes de choses et me posaient des questions qu'elles ne pouvaient pas poser aux religieuses. Ne gagnant que la somme minime de 2 400 $ par an, ce n'était donc pas là un endroit pour s'enrichir. Une année, j'avais quarante-huit élèves en neuvième année en classe d'anglais. Quand on enseigne une langue, on est bien obligée de faire écrire les élèves. Je suis donc restée pendant six ans (1952-1958) devant une montagne de copies à corriger. Ça n'en finissait pas.

Il y a deux ans, une grande réunion d'anciennes de cette école, fermée depuis, comme tant d'autres, eut lieu. Cela m'a fait chaud au cœur de voir mes anciennes adolescentes, devenues grands-mères qui venaient gentiment vers moi en me demandant: «Vous souvenez-vous de moi ? » / « Do you remember me ? » J'étais profondément émue de les revoir. C'était comme si tout le monde redevenait jeune en se souvenant du passé.

Réflexions sur l'attitude des Franco-Américains envers l'instruction

Je pense que ce qui manquait aux Franco-Américains, c'est qu'ils ne croyaient pas à l'instruction universitaire. C'était encore le cas dans les années 1950, époque où on pouvait quitter l'école à l'âge de seize ans pour aller travailler. J'ai enseigné à des filles dont les familles trouvaient, comme elles le disaient elles-mêmes, que « pour laver des couches de bébé, on n'a pas besoin de diplôme ». C'était ce qu'on entendait autour de nous et cela me faisait mal au cœur d'entendre dire cela, surtout lorsqu'il s'agissait des plus intelligentes, de voir qu'on coupait court à leur avenir. Et je pense que cette attitude-là a fait énormément de tort pour l'avancement économique et social du groupe. Les immigrants du Québec avaient tout de même vite bâti des écoles paroissiales pour que survivent la langue française et surtout la religion, mais plusieurs de ces mêmes bonnes gens trouvaient que cela suffisait, surtout pour les filles.

Je trouve que, si le groupe Franco-Américain avait fait comme les Juifs, et même comme les Irlandais, s'ils avaient cru à une formation intellectuelle plus poussée pour les femmes, nous aurions eu plus de réussite en politique qu'on a eu, et plus de prospérité peut-être aussi. Les Irlandais, eux, avaient deux générations d'avance sur nous comme immigrés, étant venus les premiers aux États Unis et parlant déjà anglais. Ils ont su se placer en politique, en devenant policiers ou pompiers. Cela leur donnait du pouvoir qui finissait par leur accorder des postes importants du côté politique. Mon grand-père pharmacien a tout de même servi comme membre du parti Républicain à la commission scolaire et mon père s'est présenté comme candidat pour le poste de maire de la ville en 1947. Les militaires qui revenaient après avoir fait la guerre en Europe, mais aussi dans les îles de l'océan Pacifique, aux Philippines, puis au Japon ont formé un nouveau parti politique pour contrecarrer la corruption politique locale qui durait depuis des décennies. La plupart des Franco-Américains étaient alors des Républicains afin de combattre l'influence des Irlandais qui se sentaient supérieurs à nous. C'est sous la présidence de Franklin D. Roosevelt, que la plupart des Franco-Américains, s'étant enfin rendu compte que comme ouvriers ils appartenaient plutôt du côté des Démocrates, que les nôtres se sont tournés vers le parti Démocrate.

L'instruction chez les Quintal

Quand j'ai commencé à enseigner, je vivais chez mes parents. Comment faire autrement avec 2 400 $ par an ! Quand on est l'aînée de six, on a des petits frères et des petites sœurs derrière soi, et puisque l'on gagne un maigre salaire, on ne vit pas large. Mais tous mes frères et sœurs qui me suivaient ont tous fait des études avancées. Je suis la seule à avoir reçu un

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(Portrait Claire Quintal se raconte
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doctorat, mais tous les autres ont reçu leur baccalauréat et cinq de nous six ont aussi obtenu une maîtrise. Un de mes frères, qui est devenu père Oblat et qui est maintenant décédé, a reçu une maîtrise de l'Université d'Ottawa avant de poursuivre ses études à Boston University. Le plus jeune, Henri, a fréquenté Providence College sous la direction des pères dominicains comme la plupart des jeunes hommes qui sortaient de l'Académie du Sacré-Cœur. Il a par la suite obtenu une maîtrise en mathématiques du réseau de l'Université du Michigan. Et, comme je viens de dire, moi-même et mes sœurs avons étudié à Anna-Maria. Rollande a fait sa maîtrise en counseling à Boston College et une autre a obtenu sa maîtrise en bibliothéconomie médicale. Elle a aussi gagné une bourse pour étudier à l'Université de l'Illinois.

Études à Montréal pour la maîtrise

J'ai passé les étés de 1953 à 1958, pour obtenir ma maîtrise, à l'Université de Montréal. J'y ai étudié entourée de religieux et de religieuses qui, comme moi, enseignaient l'hiver et qui n'étaient donc libres qu'en été pour avancer leurs études. J'étais bien préparée pour obtenir ma maîtrise en français avec mention.

Pourquoi l'Université de Montréal et non Laval ? Dans mon cas, c'était toujours une question de bourse. Sœur Raymond-Marie, sous laquelle j'avais étudié, était une Montréalaise qui y avait elle-même étudié et elle avait pu m'obtenir une bourse. Jean Houpert, directeur de l'école d'été, a dirigé aussi mon mémoire de maîtrise.

Pour mon mémoire, j'aurais aimé écrire sur Corinne Rocheleau-Rouleau, écrivaine Franco-Américaine. Je connaissais Élise, sa sœur, qui enseignait le français à l'école secondaire publique de Worcester. Corinne Rocheleau-Rouleau se trouvait à Montréal. Elle avait un appartement chez les Sourdes-Muettes, et, je me trouvais à Montréal pour mes études. Puis elle était prête à me voir. Élise, sa sœur, lui avait annoncé que c'est ce que je voulais faire. Mais l'université n'en voulait pas. Elle vivait toujours et nos sujets de mémoire devaient porter de rigueur sur des personnes décédées, ce qui n'était évidemment pas le cas de M^me^ Rouleau.

Puis, j'ai passé un été à mijoter d'écrire sur Camus, comme tout le monde alors. J'aimais beaucoup ses livres. Il était le grand héros de l'époque littéraire de son temps. Mais cela n'avançait pas très vite et j'ai fini par me tourner vers Émile Zola. Et quand j'y pense maintenant, je me demande pourquoi. C'est parce que je me tournais évidemment vers la littérature américaine et anglaise, et je savais que le naturalisme que Zola avait mis en place n'avait pas été très bien accueilli comme mode d'écriture en France, alors que, aux États-Unis, avec Théodore Dreiser surtout, cela avait eu beaucoup de succès comme approche littéraire. Je me suis décidée de travailler sur le naturalisme comme méthode d'écriture, et le contraste entre ce que le naturaliste français Zola avait fait et comment les Américains, eux, avaient eu beaucoup de succès dans ce genre. Je pensais à Dreiser toujours, puis aussi à Faulkner et à Dos Passos.

« Du palmier à l'érable »

J'ouvre ici une parenthèse afin de raconter mon voyage au Québec en 1957. Un monsieur du nom d'Edmond Goulet, un Québécois de naissance, vivait à l'époque en Floride où il avait acheté un journal de langue française – *La Floride française* – destiné au nombre toujours grandissant de Québécois qui passaient l'hiver en Floride. Il avait conçu l'idée de faire venir au Québec un groupe de deux ou trois jeunes Franco-Américains et, à cette fin, il avait fait peindre sur sa grosse voiture, « Du palmier à l'érable » tout en demandant à l'Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste de lui suggérer une ou deux jeunes personnes pour le voyage au Québec. Je connaissais l'USJB à cause de mon grand-père qui avait servi comme membre du bureau général de l'organisation. Goulet avait une de ses filles au collège Anna-Maria; donc il connaissait très bien l'institution. C'est comme cela que mon nom lui avait été suggéré. Le voyage allait avoir lieu au mois d'août ; j'étais libre de faire le voyage jusqu'à la rentrée. Edmond Goulet comptait sur moi pour écrire – en français, bien sûr pour La Floride française – des articles sur ce qu'on voyait en route pour alimenter son journal. En Nouvelle-Angleterre, on s'est arrêtés dans des villes ayant un grand nombre de Francos comme Lewiston, Maine. Pour épargner de l'argent, on logeait souvent dans des familles connues de lui.

Nous avons donc fait un long périple qui m'a accordé la chance de voir une grande partie du Québec. J'ai appris bien des choses sur le pays de mes ancêtres, grâce à ce voyage. Edmond Goulet avait même organisé une courte rencontre avec Maurice Duplessis, entre autres. Un Canadien français à l'ancienne, « pure laine » comme on aimait dire. « Tiens », avait-il dit en me voyant, "c'est la *Rhode Island Red* [la fameuse poule sortant du Rhode Island]" qui m'arrive ! » Il nous avait accueillis comme si nous appartenions à la même grande famille, nous consacrant un bon quart d'heure. Arrivée au Québec, j'étais la seule qui restait du groupe. Une jeune femme de Syracuse dans l'État de New York n'avait pas pu tenir le rythme à toute vitesse de M. Goulet et les autres s'étaient éclipsés. Donc, je suis restée seule pour parler des Franco-Américains partout où Goulet nous emmenait, même jusqu'à Rimouski où j'ai été interviewée par M. le maire, Elzéar Côté, à son émission quotidienne à la radio locale. Là encore, un vrai Canadien français sympathique, qui aimait rire, qui aimait manger, qui par surcroît était très intelligent. Le voyage s'est terminé par un saut à Chibougamau, une ville minière où j'ai eu l'impression d'avoir fait marche arrière pour aboutir au xix^e^, avec ses trottoirs de bois comme on en voyait dans les films, et une épaisse couche de poussière partout. Chibougamau m'avait introduite d'un seul coup à un Québec en pleine effervescence.

J'ai beaucoup profité de toutes ces aventures. J'ai mieux connu le Québec, grâce à M. Edmond Goulet, et j'ai beaucoup apprécié ce qu'il avait fait pour moi. N'ayant plus de famille au Québec, j'avais connu jusque-là mon pays ancestral à travers les yeux et les souvenirs de ceux de la famille qui y avaient été élevés. Grâce à ce voyage, j'avais l'impression de venir en contact direct avec un autre monde qui était, à vrai dire, le mien aussi. J'ai vu de près comment les gens vivaient et ce qu'ils pensaient, et j'ai même été étonnée de voir sortir tous les hommes au moment du prône pour aller fumer sur le perron de l'église. Scandalisée? Non. Surprise tout de même. On n'aurait jamais osé en faire autant dans nos églises franco-américaines. Nos curés et les sœurs de Sainte-Anne nous avaient formés pour être des croisés du Seigneur. On peut aller jusqu'à dire que nous étions des ouailles apprivoisées.

C'est ainsi donc que j'ai appris à connaître mon pays ancestral. J'avais fait ma maîtrise à l'Université de Montréal, mais je n'avais pas pu voyager faute de voiture et ne connaissant personne, quoique j'avais fait du pouce avec des jeunes qui en faisaient. Je n'y croyais pas. Je n'aurais jamais fait

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(Portrait Claire Quintal se raconte suite de page 29)

ça seule. J'étais une jeune Américaine plus prudente que les filles que j'ai connues à Montréal. Elles étaient plus délurées que moi. Une d'elles, qui habitait la ville de Québec, m'avait invitée chez elle. J'étais allée à Saint-Benoît-du-Lac avec elle en faisant du pouce. Donc, j'avais vu un peu du Canada français de l'époque comme étudiante au niveau de la maîtrise. Et même à Anna-Maria, j'avais fait un cours entier avec sœur Raymond-Marie sur la littérature du Québec. Une sœur de Sainte-Anne avait d'ailleurs écrit un manuel de classe sur cette littérature dont on se servait en classe. Alors je n'étais pas sans savoir un certain nombre de choses, mais ce voyage de 1957 m'a donné la chance de vivre pendant un certain temps avec de vrais Québécois de ce temps-là.

Études à Paris pour le doctorat

En 1958, j'étais arrivée au niveau du doctorat. Je voulais, bien sûr, me rendre à Paris. Encore une fois, c'est à Élise Rochleau que je dois beaucoup. C'est elle qui a insisté pour que je fasse une demande auprès du gouvernement français afin d'obtenir une bourse. Si elle ne m'avait pas poussée dans le dos, qui sait comment la suite se serait déroulée ? J'aurais continué tout probablement comme avant sans son assistance et surtout sa persistance. Ayant obtenu une bourse, en arrivant à Paris, j'ai vécu à la Cité universitaire dans la Maison des États-Unis. Par la suite, j'ai pu me trouver une chambre dans le cinquième arrondissement, Place du Panthéon.

À Paris, je passais de longues heures à la Bibliothèque nationale à lire les journaux de l'époque de l'entre-deux-guerres et de l'Occupation. Ma thèse allait encore porter sur le thème que j'avais sondé au niveau de la maîtrise, c'est-à-dire la littérature comparée, plus précisément, l'influence qu'avaient eu certains auteurs américains comme Dreiser, Faulkner, Dos Passos et Hemingway sur les écrivains français qui les admiraient. C'est Régine Pernoud, la grande spécialiste de Jeanne d'Arc, qui m'a appris à quel point la littérature américaine d'avant-guerre avait été lue et relue pendant les années de l'Occupation. Les gens étaient friands de tout ce qui était sorti d'un pays qui, bien que marqué par la guerre, n'avait pas vécu sous l'Occupation allemande.

Côté argent, je vivais au jour le jour ou d'année en année, parce que je ne savais pas si la bourse du gouvernement français allait être renouvelée. À mon grand soulagement, le gouvernement français m'a offert une deuxième bourse. Et pour une troisième année – parce que je n'avais pas tout à fait terminé ma thèse pour le doctorat, j'ai reçu une bourse de l'Alliance française de New York. J'ai eu cette chance donc de recevoir des bourses, parce que, autrement, je me demande ce qui serait advenu de moi.

Enseignement au Collège américain de Paris

Ayant obtenu mon doctorat de l'Université de Paris en 1961, j'ai trouvé un poste au Collège américain, grâce à Régine Pernoud, que j'ai beaucoup admirée et respectée.

Mon enseignement de l'histoire de France depuis le Moyen Âge s'étant bien passé, on m'a demandé de faire aussi une série de conférences sur divers aspects de la civilisation française. Les membres du *American Women's Club of Paris* qui comptaient jusqu'à 500 membres, s'étaient tournées vers la direction du collège pour leur fournir un conférencier anglophone puisque ces femmes étaient des unilingues anglophones. La plupart de ces femmes se trouvaient à Paris à cause des postes occupés par leurs maris dans des compagnies américaines. Elles voulaient en savoir plus long sur la France puisqu'elles y vivaient. En fin de compte, la direction m'avait demandé de [diriger ces séries de conférences sur l'histoire de France chaque année - la] première, bien sûr, portait sur les femmes du Moyen Âge. Comme de raison, Jeanne d'Arc y tenait la place d'honneur ! Quelle ironie ! Moi, qui travaillais d'arrache-pied pour perfectionner mon français parlé et écrit, je me retrouvais donnant toutes ces conférences en anglais ! Cela a duré trois ans, de 1965 à 1968.

Recherche et première publication de livre

De plus, à l'époque, et même avant, je collaborais avec le père Daniel Rankin, Ph.D., ancien père mariste, né en Louisiane, sur une étude en profondeur d'un manuscrit français du XVI[e] siècle concernant la vie et la mort de Jeanne d'Arc. Ayant connu Régine Pernoud, à cause de ses livres sur Jeanne d'Arc, elle m'avait invitée à une soirée chez elle, où j'avais fait la connaissance du père Rankin. Ayant perdu un œil pendant la guerre, celui-ci trouvait très difficile de travailler sur un manuscrit en passant des heures de temps à la Bibliothèque nationale. Ce qui est devenu mon travail à moi était de déchiffrer ce manuscrit ancien pour avancer le travail. Le résultat de cet effort devint finalement un livre, publié par l'Université de Pittsburgh grâce à l'influence de l'évêque John Wright qui, de Worcester, était devenu l'évêque de Pittsburgh, avant d'être nommé cardinal et aboutir finalement à Rome. Le livre ayant été publié en 1964, le père Rankin a conçu l'idée de faire ensemble une tournée de conférences à travers les États-Unis sur Jeanne d'Arc. Il fit donc appel à ses amis, prêtres pour la plupart, dispersés un peu partout à travers les États-Unis, pour nous inviter. J'ai donc ainsi pu visiter la Nouvelle-Orléans, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco et Saint Louis dans le Missouri tout en parlant de sainte Jeanne d'Arc. Cela m'a ouvert les yeux quant à l'étendue ainsi qu'à la diversité des États-Unis.

Premiers pas de retour aux États-Unis

Dès 1966, le collège de l'Assomption pensait devenir une institution mixte. Il fallait donc que l'Assomption commence à embaucher des femmes professeures. C'est en conséquence de tout cela que j'ai été interviewée à Paris par le père Ernest Fortin, assomptionniste, qui était une des vedettes du collège, intellectuellement parlant, et du père Denys Gonthier, chef du département des langues. Ayant passé avec succès le cap de ces interviews, j'ai été embauchée d'abord pour donner deux cours d'été en 1966 au niveau de la maîtrise. On m'avait donné pleine liberté pour choisir les cours. J'ai donc choisi d'abord « La littérature française dans son contexte historique » et puis « Le théâtre français du xx[e] siècle». Le premier cours tenait compte de mon enseignement récent et le deuxième de mon grand intérêt pour le théâtre en France au courant des années soixante : Sartre, bien sûr, Jean Genêt, Eugène Ionesco, etc. Le couple Jean-Louis Barrault – Madeleine Renaud était alors au sommet de leur gloire bien méritée. Ayant été invitée par le chef du département de français, Philippe Poisson, à songer à m'intégrer à ce département dès la fin des cours d'été de 1966, j'ai dû lui demander de me garder sur sa liste pendant que je rentrais en France pour y régler mes affaires après tant d'années de résidence. Donc, ce n'est qu'en 1968 que je suis rentrée de façon définitive. J'ai quitté Paris en 1968 y ayant vécu le drame politique

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(Portrait Claire Quintal se raconte suite de page 30)

qui s'y déroulait au courant de cette année dramatique : grèves partout, sauf dans les restaurants – ce qui en dit long sur la France – et au Collège américain où je continuais à enseigner pendant les semaines que durèrent tout ce remue-ménage ! J'ai enseigné ainsi deux étés de suite, offrant différents cours chaque fois.

Pourquoi ai-je quitté Paris ? Je savais trop bien qu'une carrière professorale en tant que spécialiste du français, même en littérature comparée, n'aurait pas suffi. Je savais que, si je voulais avoir une carrière dans l'enseignement aux niveaux du baccalauréat et de la maîtrise, qu'il fallait rentrer aux États- Unis. Je pense que c'était une décision très pratique de ma part pour mon avenir.

Professeure de français au collège de l'Assomption

J'ai eu un peu plus de mal à m'intégrer au niveau sous-gradué des étudiants parce qu'ils n'étaient pas contents d'avoir à accepter les femmes comme partenaires suivant les mêmes cours. Pendant ma première année à temps plein, je n'avais eu que des hommes en classe, sauf au niveau de la maîtrise. Il y avait aussi dans mon cas le fait que Clark University, située dans la même ville, avait fait appel à moi dès janvier 1969 pour enseigner la civilisation française à leurs étudiants, hommes et femmes !

Militantisme dans la Fédération féminine franco-américaine

Quant au milieu franco-américain, j'étais déjà intégrée dans la Fédération féminine que je n'avais jamais quittée depuis sa fondation en 1951. J'avais aussi fait partie du premier groupe de son bureau de direction dès sa fondation et jusqu'à mon départ pour la France. J'avais à peine 22 ans à l'époque et je m'y retrouvais avec des femmes de 50 et 60 ans. Elles avaient toujours été énormément gentilles envers moi, ces femmes-là. Mais, quand on est jeune, on veut fréquenter d'autres jeunes. J'ai quand même eu le bon sens de rester fidèle aux buts de la Fédé avant mon départ pour la France en 1958. Donc, entre mon enseignement au niveau secondaire à des classes nombreuses et mes études pour la maîtrise à l'Université de Montréal, j'étais extrêmement occupée. mais, tout compte fait, cela me préparait aussi à faire ce que j'ai pu entreprendre plus tard en fondant l'Institut français.

Après mon retour de Paris, j'ai entendu dire qu'un groupe de personnes que j'avais connues avant mon départ pour la France était en train d'essayer de fonder un organisme comme le CODOFIL en Louisiane afin d'assurer une immersion en langue française pour les enfants franco-américains, comme faisait la Louisiane grâce au CODOFIL (Comité pour le développement du français en Louisiane). Mes anciens collègues avaient déjà choisi d'appeler leur organisme CODOFINE, le NE de la fin pour *New England* afin de remplacer le mot Louisiane. Le groupe venait d'annoncer qu'ils allaient tenir une réunion à Manchester, N.H., au collège Notre-Dame. Je m'y suis rendue, curieuse d'apprendre ce qui se passait en Franco-Américanie après ma longue absence du pays. Mes anciennes amies de la Fédé qui étaient présentes m'ont accueillie avec joie en disant : « Tiens, c'est Claire qui nous arrive. » Donc, loin de me trouver parmi des étrangères après ma longue absence de dix ans en France, je me suis retrouvée entourée d'amies et de collègues. C'est de là que date mon retour aux sources de la Francophonie en Nouvelle-Angleterre.

La Fédé était en train de préparer son congrès cette année-là, à Québec même, au Château Frontenac et mes amies m'ont invitée à y participer en y faisant le discours de circonstance. Ayant accepté tout innocemment leur invitation, je ne me suis rendu compte qu'après coup que la Fédé avait surtout besoin d'une nouvelle présidente. Dès le lendemain de mon discours aux déléguées réunies, le téléphone avait commencé à sonner dans ma chambre d'hôtel, m'offrant la présidence de la Fédé. J'ai dû répondre non, puisque je venais de rentrer au pays et que j'avais des cours au niveau de la maîtrise à donner, ainsi qu'un séminaire pour les finissants. En fin de compte, j'ai dû dire aux femmes : « Écoutez, dommage, mais je suis trop occupée par mon enseignement à l'Assomption et à Clark University.» La séance plénière de clôture se tenait le lendemain matin. Avant de m'y rendre, j'avais déjà reçu un coup de fil m'offrant la présidence à nouveau. Lors de la plénière et la lecture des candidates aux divers postes, j'ai constaté qu'il n'y avait pas de nom pour la présidente, étant donné que je n'avais pas accepté la présidence. Les femmes ont alors commencé à applaudir sans que je puisse les arrêter. J'essayais en vain de crier: « Non, non, je ne peux pas accepter. » Mais, en fin de compte, j'ai dû me soumettre à leur verdict à mon sujet et j'ai fini par servir comme présidente de 1973 à 1981. C'est comme cela que j'ai vite appris comment travailler sans relâche, allant constamment d'une responsabilité à l'autre.

Ayant été invitée par la suite à assister au congrès des Femmes canadiennes-françaises, tenu en Ontario, j'ai été frappée en chantant le « O Canada » par les mots « et nos droits ». C'est à ce moment-là que m'est venue l'idée d'ajouter « et nos droits » à la devise « Protégera nos foyers» de la Fédération féminine franco-américaine. Je ne peux pas passer sous silence mon appartenance au Conseil de la vie française (CVFA), ainsi que mon service, dans ces années-là, comme membre du bureau général de l'Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste (USJB).

Directrice-fondatrice de l'Institut français

L'ancien supérieur général des assomptionnistes, le père Wilfrid Dufault, devenu président du collège, rêvait de fonder un Institut français, à l'intérieur même du collège, afin d'honorer le passé de l'Assomption, fondé par des pères français, chassés d'une France socialiste qui voulait abolir l'enseignement catholique. Le père Wilfrid trouvait que ça allait de soi que l'Assomption ait un Institut français, mais il lui manquait une personne pour le diriger. M'ayant approchée à ce sujet, il m'apprit qu'il était prêt à se charger d'en parler à son bureau de direction si j'acceptais de devenir la directrice-fondatrice. J'ai donc d'abord dit non. Ce que je craignais d'assumer, si je disais oui, me posait un dilemme majeur. Mais le père n'ayant par démordu, j'ai fini par me rendre à son avis. Je me posais plusieurs questions en attendant la décision du bureau. Ce que je craignais, arriva, bien sûr, car le bon père revint vers moi pour me dire que son bureau trouvait l'idée de créer un Institut français excellente, mais que le collège n'avait guère d'argent pour défrayer une telle entreprise. Et moi de répondre : « Père, c'est très difficile de commencer à zéro ». Je serais obligée d'enseigner à mi-temps et je serais responsable de créer un fonds pour assurer la durée d'un tel Institut. D'où viendraient les fonds pour assurer la bonne marche de l'Institut ? Non pas du collège ! Ou bien des bienfaiteurs éventuels? Ce qui ne ferait qu'ajouter à un fardeau qui s'annonçait devenir très lourd. Je serais donc obligée de quémander auprès de bienfaiteurs éventuels, allant à droite et à gauche pour que l'Institut puisse fonctionner. J'ai fini

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*(**Portrait Claire Quintal se raconte** suite de page 31)*

par accepter, mais à reculons, sachant que je me mettais beaucoup sur le dos et que je serais à peu près seule pour tout faire, étant donné qu'on commençait sans budget, et pire encore sans un sou.

Les buts de l'Institut français, tel que je l'ai créé, contiennent deux aspects. C'est d'abord un centre de recherche sur la Franco-Américanie, mais aussi un lieu de ressourcement culturel pour les Francos eux-mêmes. Il fallait donc donner à cet Institut non seulement une raison d'être, mais aussi des buts précis à atteindre. Cela m'obligeait donc de desservir à la fois la recherche universitaire sur notre groupe ethnique tout en ralliant les Francos eux-mêmes à s'y intéresser. L'idée d'organiser des colloques m'est venue assez rapidement. Ce serait un moyen de réunir des chercheurs autour d'un thème précis concernant les Franco-Américains, ce qui pourrait aussi intéresser un grand nombre de Franco-Américains à y assister. Notre premier colloque sur l'état de la recherche sur notre groupe ethnique a bel et bien eut lieu en mars 1980, à peine sept mois après notre ouverture officielle en septembre 1979.

Le père Wilfrid Dufault pour sa part ayant de l'influence auprès de monseigneur Adrien Verrette, président de la Société historique franco-américaine et ancien du collège, prit charge d'organiser un grand banquet de clôture à ce premier colloque pour couronner l'ouverture de notre nouvel Institut. On y accorda des doctorats *honoris causa* à nos trois évêques franco-américains, l'un d'entre eux, Michel Côté, évêque auxiliaire du Maine était même un ancien du collège, ainsi qu'aux évêques de Manchester, N.H. et de Providence, R.I.M. l'Ambassadeur de la France à Washington, François de la Boulaye, qui ajoutait de l'éclat par sa présence, reçut aussi un doctorat honorifique. Tous ceux qui comptaient alors en Franco-Américanie répondirent à notre invitation, au nombre de 375 personnes. Neuf autres colloques, suivis d'un banquet de gala allaient suivre. Puis, consciente de l'importance de publier les textes présentés à ces colloques afin que tout ce travail puisse durer, j'en ai parlé avec André Vachon, du Conseil de la vie française en Amérique (CVFA) et membre de la Société royale du Canada, un de nos invités, présent à notre colloque et voulant me prêter main-forte. C'est lui aussi qui s'est chargé d'en parler à ses collègues au CVFA pour publier les actes de ce colloque dans un numéro spécial de leur propre publication, *Vie française*. C'est ainsi que parut le premier volume des actes de nos divers colloques. De façon extrêmement généreuse le CVFA allait en faire autant pour cinq de nos premiers colloques. C'est donc grâce au CVFA que l'Institut français a pu commencer à constituer un corpus destiné aux chercheurs sur la Franco-Américanie.

Médaille d'honneur Ellis Island

C'est au professeur Gérard Brault de l'Université Pennsylvania State et ancien du collège de l'Assomption que revient d'avoir eu l'idée de placer mon nom en candidature

Claire Quintal avec Alain Briottet, consul général de la France à Boston, lors de la remise de son doctorat honorifique par le collège de l'Assomption

pour cette médaille prestigieuse qui fut remise en 1986 à 80 personnes très connues aux États-Unis pour la plupart. Quel honneur de se trouver parmi de si grands noms – acteurs, chanteurs, écrivains, chercheurs – et même le journaliste Tom Brokaw, qui servait de maître de cérémonie à la remise. En soirée, nous étions réunis à l'hôtel Waldorf Astoria, alignés pour le grand banquet, par ordre alphabétique. À ma gauche se trouvaient donc Rosa Parks et Gregory Peck. Quelle joie que d'être assise parmi toutes ces célébrités !

Pourquoi moi ? C'est une question que je me suis longtemps posée. J'ai fini par comprendre qu'à travers ma personne, les organisateurs avaient voulu rendre justice à la Francophonie nord-américaine, à tout ce que la France et ses descendants ont accompli sur ce continent. Bien sûr, il y avait d'abord le lien avec la statue de la Liberté, don de la France, mais il y avait plus et mieux, c'est-à-dire tout ce que la France et ses descendants, humains, ceux-là et non pas des statues, avaient réalisé de grandiose sur ce continent. Je n'étais que le rejeton de la souche-mère, mais en moi battait toujours un vrai cœur de la France et du Canada français.

Visite à l'Institut français du ministre de la Francophonie en 1988

J'ai devant les yeux une copie du livre *Le Tapis rouge* signé Alain Decaux, nommé ministre de la Francophonie par le président de la République française d'alors, François Mitterand. Premier à occuper ce poste nouvellement créé, Alain Decaux écrit la dédicace suivante à mon égard : «Pour Claire Quintal, qui livre avec tant de passion le combat francophone et qui mérite bien *Le Tapis rouge* en très amicale pensée, Alain Decaux. »

Cela suscite en moi un souvenir émouvant, car M. Decaux a bel et bien visité l'Institut français. J'avais organisé en son honneur un déjeuner - rencontre avec discussion sur la francophonie pour les chefs des associations franco-américaines de la région. « On me conduit dans une salle, écrit Alain Decaux, où, autour d'une table ronde, sont assis les animateurs. Tous portent des noms français. Je m'assieds avec eux. Ces Américains délibèrent en français. Je dis bien : Américains. Tous et toutes sont solidement implantés dans l'*American way of life*. [...] La seule différence – elle est de taille – est qu'ils disposent de deux langues maternelles : l'anglais et le français [...]. On me fait docteur *honoris causa*. Pour la première fois de ma vie ».

L'année suivante, lors d'un voyage en France organisé par l'Association Canado-Américaine, M. Decaux nous invita à une élégante réception à l'hôtel Ritz en guise de remerciement.

Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur de France

En 1990, j'ai été nommée Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, grâce à Alain Briottet, ancien consul général de France à Boston, qui admirait beaucoup le travail que nous faisions en faveur des Franco-Américains. Il a été ému, aussi, par les efforts que nous étions en train de faire en faveur de la francophonie mondiale. Il s'agissait surtout de nos séminaires d'une durée d'une semaine sur la société américaine que nous avons pu offrir en français aux Africains francophones grâce au gouvernement américain

(Suite sur page 33)

*(**Portrait Claire Quintal se raconte** suite de page 32)*

qui les subventionnait. Je cite ici un texte de lui à notre égard avant son départ pour le Myanmar comme ambassadeur : « Je reste convaincu que l'Institut joue un rôle nécessaire dans la conservation de la mémoire des Franco-Américains. L'histoire des Franco-Américains mérite d'être préservée, mais aussi mieux connue. L'Institut a une vocation spéciale pour mener à bien cette double tâche. »

Don d'un monument à la Ville de Québec par les Franco-Américains

En 2008, lors du 400e anniversaire de fondation de la Ville de Québec, quelques Franco-Américains, dont les noms paraissent sur le monument, votèrent de l'offrir à leur « Ville Mère » afin d'honorer cet anniversaire. Placé au Parc de la Jetée, le long du fleuve Saint-Laurent par le Québec, j'ai eu l'honneur de dévoiler ce monument avec le premier ministre du Québec d'alors, Jean Charest. Je cite ici quelques lignes de mon discours de circonstance, prononcé lors de l'inauguration du monument : « Nos ancêtres à nous, tout comme ceux des Québécois d'aujourd'hui, ont contribué la force de leurs bras et leurs rêves d'avenir pour bâtir ce pays, avant de partir outre-frontière, laissant derrière eux leurs terres et leurs compatriotes pour s'en aller vers un autre pays où ils se sont implantés à force d'un dur labeur. Et nous, leurs descendants, avons voulu démontrer que même si nous vous avons quittés, nous ne vous avons pas oubliés, que nous nous souvenons de qui nous sommes et d'où nous venons. [...] Que ce monument soit donc un témoignage, souvenir de notre fidélité à nos racines, attestation aussi que de loin nous chérissons toujours ce pays dont le sol a été foulé pendant des générations par nos ancêtres à nous, tout comme les vôtres. »

Et le travail continue...

Aujourd'hui, je travaille à terminer un *Dictionnaire des auteurs franco-américains*, au nombre de plus d'une centaine, ayant écrit en français. La nouvelle directrice de l'Institut français, Leslie Choquette, est en train de mettre en ligne ce travail de plusieurs collaborateurs parmi lesquels on trouve Robert B. Perreault. Notre but en faisant ce travail, qui nous semble important, est de mettre à la disposition des chercheurs un fonds de base sur ces auteurs afin d'aider à la recherche.

J'ai passé la majeure partie de ma vie à ne faire que cela, c'est-à-dire de rendre service à une grande cause, celle de faire connaître ces exilés du Québec et de l'Acadie. Et cela continue !

Monument offert par les Franco-Américains à la Ville de Québec en 2008, l'année du 400e anniversaire de sa fondation

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THE SUN

(N.D.L.R. The Lowell Sun daily newspaper of Lowell, MA published the accompanying short article on September 6, 2020, text submitted to them by Suzanne Beebe, a frequent contributor to this publication in recent years. The article highlights the decision by the Archdiocese of Boston to close St. Louis de France School in Lowell.)

Can Another Lowell Landmark Be Saved?

The week before Memorial Day of this year, the Archdiocese of Boston announced its decision to close St. Louis de France School in Lowell's Centralville neighborhood.

Opened in 1907, the school is an important Lowell landmark for two reasons. First, it is part of a parish complex that marks the spread of Lowell's then- burgeoning French-Canadian population from the densely packed tenements of downtown Little Canada to the small cottages being built across the river on land annexed from Dracut in 1851. Second, it's the school attended by Gerard Kerouac, the older brother of world-famous Lowell author Jack Kerouac, who also attended the school for a few years.

Gerard died in 1926, when he was nine and Jack was four. Haunted by the stories of Gerard told him by his parents and other family members, Kerouac wrote *Visions of Gerard*, a short, thinly veiled account of Gerard's last year on earth. The names of most people in the book are fictional, but the names of the church, school, and streets of 1926 Lowell and its Centralville neighborhood are recognizable to any reader familiar with the city. Events and interactions that did or might have occurred in the Kerouac family and St. Louis' classrooms, halls, and playground are lovingly and lyrically described. Accounts of worship and confession in the church are presented with tenderness and insight. The slow agony of a young child's death and its impact on his family is intensely and movingly chronicled. French-Canadian phrases and customs abound. It's a book of which Lowell and its Franco-American community can and should be proud.

How many cities can claim a still-standing school and church as the vividly detailed site of an internationally renowned novel? How many cities can claim a native son whose readers come from around the world to visit the places associated with his life, death, and city-related writings? Jack Kerouac loved Lowell. He loved the French-Canadian language and heritage that shaped him. And he loved Gerard, the older brother whose childhood death loomed so large in his mind and heart.

Yet, in the absence of any public communication from the Archdiocese about its plans for the St. Louis de France complex,

Events and interactions that did or might have occurred in the Kerouac family and St. Louis' classrooms, halls, and playground are lovingly and lyrically described.

it seems entirely possible that the school, church, and other buildings on that very large parcel of land could be demolished to make way for a large-scale project that might be less bothersome for a developer in their absence. But is that necessary or right?

In 2005, following the closings of so many Catholic churches and schools of the Archdiocese, a study of the St. Louis complex's eligibility for placement on the National Register of Historic Places was completed for the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Exhaustive in describing the site and its cultural and literary significance, the study recommended that the site be declared eligible for placement. But for reasons not entirely clear, the official declaration of eligibility and actual placement on the Register were never made. If they had been, the owner of the site — then and currently the Archdiocese, but conceivably a future buyer as well — would be able to seek tax credits in converting the existing structures to other uses, as opposed to demolishing them.

That process has been key to many of the preservation efforts Lowell has made its calling card. Is the process being conducted in this case? Will Lowell's Historical Board submit its declaration of eligibility for placement on the National Register? Are Lowell and the Archdiocese content to have a cultural and literary treasure disappear like the city's Little Canada of the 1960's, only to be memorialized later, when what actually exists now can be saved? Should the Archdiocese not communicate to descendants of the French-Canadian workers who financed the site, worshipped there, and sent their children to school there whether and how it plans to honor their faith and years of commitment to both church and school? And does the Archdiocese recognize the site's importance to Kerouac readers the world over?

We all realize that times are hard and COVID-19 has drastically impacted church finances for the worse, but hard times should not obliterate important cultural and literary considerations nor relieve the Archdiocese of transparency in dealing with its laity and the communities in which they live. As Lowell's Franco community continues to experience the inevitable effects of aging and assimilation into the larger society, visible reminders of its onetime role as the second-largest ethnic group in 19th-century and 20th-century Lowell will become ever more valuable. And as we approach the 100th centennial of Jack Kerouac's 1922 birth, it would be good for both his city and his readers to be able to see the buildings where he and his brother were baptized, schooled (however briefly), and shaped by the French-Canadian language, culture, and spirituality of their forebears.

Suzanne Molleur Beebe
Lowell-born-and-raised
Franco-American

A Life in Song

By Suzanne Beebe

How many older Franco-Americans grew up hearing French and Latin hymns in the Catholic churches they attended with their families? How many were inspired by the choirs of family members and friends who gave their hearts in song to God, the saints, et *la plus belle Vierge*? How many devoted their lives to song — sacred and secular — as a result? How many developed their vocal talent as fully as possible, within the limitations of family, finances, and time? And how many used their musical talent and skills to help others make beautiful music for church and community?

In Lowell, there is one Franco-American who can legitimately respond to all of these questions by raising his hand and saying "I did!" Admired by many, he embodies much of what was best in the Franco-American communities of the 20th century.

Like Father, Like Son

For Le Forum's Winter 2019-2020 Issue, I submitted a history of Lowell's Franco-American Male Chorus adapted from the group's 50th anniversary booklet. Pictured in the front row of a 1950 group photo printed with the article (and reprinted here) was a young Normand Ayotte, son of Mr. George Ayotte, the group's founder and longtime director. Blessed with a fine tenor voice and a family steeped in music and the life of Lowell's Franco community, young Normand was just beginning a life devoted to song, his Franco culture, the America his Canadian forebears had moved to, and a city that has always embraced its immigrants as they build a new life.

Born in Lowell in December of 1932, Normand grew up on the north side of the Merrimack River in Lowell's Pawtucketville and Centralville neighborhoods, where Franco-Americans escaping the tenements and crowded streets of Little Canada settled in large numbers in the late 19th and early-to-mid 20th centuries. With proximity to Lowell's downtown mills, stores, schools, and theaters so important to families without cars, a walk or bus trip across neighborhood bridges and down Lowell's main thoroughfares ensured accessibility to work, shopping, education, and recreation. One has only to read Jack Kerouac's Lowell novels to learn the geography and social reality of life in those two heavily French neighborhoods where Kerouac's family spent all of his early years.

In his novel *Visions of Gerard*, Kerouac writes a thinly veiled account of his older brother Gerard's death in 1926 at the age of nine, when the Kerouacs were living at 34 Beaulieu Street in Centralville, a street over from St. Louis de France church and elementary school, which Gerard attended (followed briefly a few years later by Jack). In 1934, after several moves in Centralville following Gerard's death, the Kerouac family moved to Pawtucketville, where Jack would spend his middle school and teen years. But Normand's family, which also lived on Beaulieu Street, stayed there through Normand's youth and adolescence, with Normand — only ten years younger than Jack — completing grades 1-7 at St. Louis de France school and worshipping at St. Louis church, where his father was choir director and his mother was organist.

Music filled the Ayotte home. All five children (three boys, two girls) sang or played instruments. Normand himself began singing at age six in the parish boys and men's choir directed by his father, where he learned the French and Latin hymns Franco churchgoers of the day were familiar with. Constant use of his voice, the training of his father, and the value placed on musical performance in his church, family, and cultural community spurred both his vocal development and his love of beautifully sung and beautifully written music — especially sacred music.

As with so many boys shaped by the Catholic world of the day and the key role of priests in that world, Normand contemplated the possibility of becoming a priest himself, and went to junior seminary in Québec for his junior high schooling. He didn't develop a priestly vocation there, but his love of church music and song was strengthened there. And when he returned to Lowell and decided to pursue training in the trades at Lowell's Vocational High School, he continued to sing in his father's choir and the Franco-American Male Chorus, while also singing funerals and weddings in the six Franco parishes of Lowell and Franco parishes in Dracut and Methuen.

In 1956, at age 23, he married Lucille, and they began their family of five children, whose support and upbringing became Normand's primary goal. With his grounding in the construction trades, he began a 40-year career with the Lowell Housing Authority, moving through various positions and ultimately becoming executive director for three years before retiring.

But his musical development continued. He pursued vocal training with highly regarded and widely known voice teacher, Dr. Ruth Morton of Dartmouth University. In 1962, after his father, who had become choir director at Pawtucketville's Ste. Jeanne d'Arc Parish, left that position to become choir director at St. Antoine de Padoue in Manchester, NH, Normand was asked to succeed him at Ste. Jeanne d'Arc. With no formal training in choral conducting, but with a lifetime spent under his father's tutelage, Normand began to exercise his

The members of the Franco-American Male Chorus seen in this 1950 photo are: (1st row, left to right) Joe Harvey, Marcel Therriault, Leo Cloutier, Director George A. Ayotte, Raymond Jussaume, Henri Lagasse, Armand "Sparky" Desmarais and Normand L. Ayotte. (2nd row, left to right) Albert Gaudette, Bob Gaudette, René Ayotte, Henry Pellerin, Richard Lagasse, Leon Bedard, Henry Morrissette and Napoleon Milot. (3rd row, left to right) Robert Daigle, Donald Richards, André St. Gelais, Adolphe Brassard, Normand Richards, Raymond Brassard, René Vigneault, Leon Payette and Arthur Germain. ***[Photo from the Hank Frechette Collection, courtesy of Gert Frechette.]***

(Continued on page 36)

(A Life in Song continued from page 35)

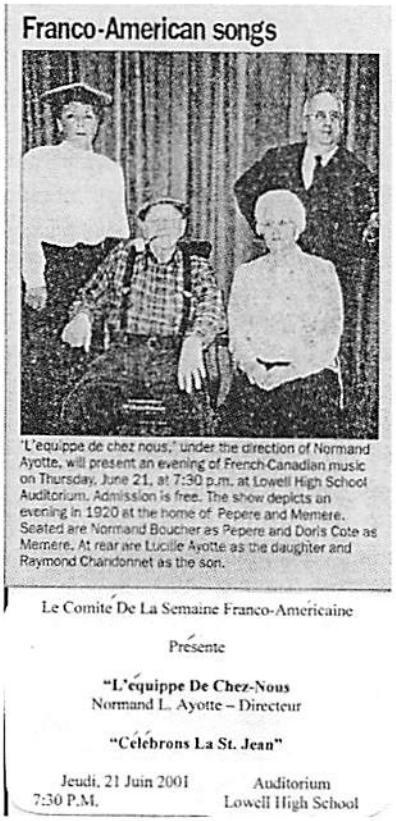
exceptional ability to bring out the best in volunteer singers of varied talents and backgrounds. And he would remain as choir director until the church and parish were closed in 2004, building on his father's 16 years there with his own 42 to give the parish 58 successive years of Ayotte family musical leadership.

A Labor of Love

As choir director, Normand gathered a devoted group of choir members (many without musical training beyond what they learned in church) who loved to sing and loved how he inspired them, believed in their ability to produce beautiful music, appreciated their gift of time and talent, and thanked them regularly and sincerely for their commitment. They experienced camaraderie, the satisfaction of shared purpose and accomplishment, and bonds of friendship that continue to the present day. They also established a reputation for choral excellence throughout Lowell and the Merrimack Valley.

Through the 1960's and 70's Normand participated as a singer in productions staged by Boston's New England Opera Company, the Concord Symphony Orchestra, and the Lowell Opera Company, always observing their directors closely and expanding his vision for what might be possible with groups of his own. In 1978, Fr. Richard Santerre of Lowell proposed that Normand present a concert of early-20th century popular French songs composed and published in the early 1900's by Lowell's Champagne Brothers. Many of Normand's choir members eagerly participated, helping launch La Chorale Orion, which, with singers from other Franco parishes and choral groups, including Lowell's Franco-American Male Chorus and the Bel Canto Singers of Manchester, NH, would sing a French-language repertoire at area venues and events from 1978 until 1997.

La Chorale was a fixture at Lowell's annual Franco-American Festival, singing French Masses and occasionally performing French musical revues for which the members would often create their own scenery and costumes to enhance the proceedings. In 1978, the group's best singers, including Normand himself, recorded ten Champagne Bros. songs including the well-known title song "L'Amour C'est Comme La Salade," a song later recorded by popular Franco-American singer Josée Vachon. The group also sang with the Merrimack Lyric Opera Company in productions of French operas and cantatas like *Faust*, *Carmen*, *La Damoiselle élue*, and *L'enfant prodigue*. And in 1983, in recognition of his work with La Chorale and the Ste. Jeanne d'Arc choir, Normand was named Lowell's Franco-American of the Year.



Franco-American songs

'L'equippe de chez nous,' under the direction of Normand Ayotte, will present an evening of French-Canadian music on Thursday, June 21, at 7:30 p.m. at Lowell High School Auditorium. Admission is free. The show depicts an evening in 1920 at the home of Pepere and Memere. Seated are Normand Boucher as Pepere and Doris Cote as Memere. At rear are Lucille Ayotte as the daughter and Raymond Chandonnet as the son.

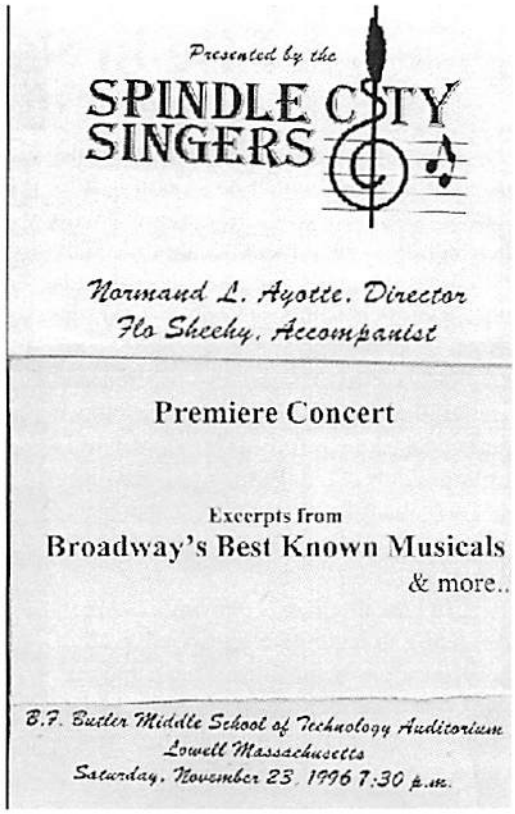
Le Comité De La Semaine Franco-Américaine

Présente

"L'équippe De Chez-Nous
Normand L. Ayotte – Directeur

"Célébrons La St. Jean"

Jeudi, 21 Juin 2001 — 7:30 P.M.
Auditorium — Lowell High School



Presented by the
SPINDLE CITY SINGERS

Normand L. Ayotte, Director
Flo Sheehy, Accompanist

Premiere Concert

Excerpts from
Broadway's Best Known Musicals
& more..

B.F. Butler Middle School of Technology Auditorium
Lowell Massachusetts
Saturday, November 23, 1996 7:30 p.m.

But Lowell's Franco world was evolving. The descendants of those who had come from Canada had grown up speaking English in school, at work, and at home, as their elders increasingly spoke English as well. English-language radio, film, and television made cultural isolation impossible. A succession of wars thrust Franco servicemen and women into military efforts that immersed them in English and bound them to military colleagues and the nation with ties of shared duty and sacrifice. The French neighborhoods and churches were no longer worlds unto themselves. More Franco children were attending public school than Franco parish schools. And fewer and fewer Franco-Americans were speaking French at all.

In 1996, in order to recruit singers who no longer spoke (or had never spoken) French, and to draw audiences who might have little to no understanding of a French-only repertoire, Normand changed his group's name from La Chorale Orion to The Spindle City Singers and began to plan mostly English-language concerts. It was not an easy decision, nor was it popular with everyone in Lowell's Franco community. But he felt it was necessary to keep the group alive and continue to share its gift of song

(Continued on page 37)

For the Spring 2014 issue of Le Forum, Albert Marceau of Connecticut wrote three articles related to La Chorale Orion's 1978 recording of "L'Amour C'est Comme La Salade," a vinyl LP containing 10 songs composed and published in the early 1920's by the Champagne Brothers of Lowell, MA. The articles examined the songs, their lyrics, and the lives of the brothers as pieced together from their obituaries. Informative and comprehensive, they can be accessed at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu

Copies of the original La Chorale Orion vinyl LP can be purchased for $15 by contacting the Franco-American Day Committee at: cmprovencher@gmail.com

*(**A Life in Song** continued from page 36)*

(while still including some French repertory in each concert) with the broader community of Lowell.

The group's efforts were a labor of love. They performed two major concerts each year: one around Christmas, the other in late spring. The focus was always on music that ordinary folks were familiar with and could walk out humming or singing: show songs, folk songs, pop hits, American standards, patriotic songs, Christmas carols in the winter, and well-known hymns and cantatas in the spring. Tickets were rarely sold, though baskets were always out for anyone who wished to contribute. In later years, the concerts took place at Lowell's St. Joseph the Worker Shrine, a large venue seating hundreds and often filled to capacity for Spindle City concerts attended by people of all ages and economic levels — some of whom might never have attended a concert otherwise. Rehearsals for the Christmas show began in September and ran once a week until the December performance, rehearsals for the May or June concert began soon after Christmas, and attendance at all rehearsals was exemplary.

The group continued to participate in multicultural events throughout the city. Over the years, Normand himself served on numerous Lowell committees promoting the arts. Members who could still sing French, many of them the old stalwarts from Ste. Jeanne d'Arc and La Chorale Orion, continued to participate in Franco-American Week activities. But as decades went by, the group and its audience were growing older in a world where younger people's tastes, work schedules, and free-time interests and availability were changing markedly. And more and more of these older folks — both singers and audience — were getting sick, growing frail, or passing away.

All Good Things Must End

In 2015, acknowledging in a letter to remaining members of the chorus "that our best years are behind us," Normand disbanded his much-loved Spindle City Singers. But he spent several more years leading a small group of his Ste. Jeanne d'Arc singers at an 8:00 Sunday morning Mass at St. Joseph the Worker Shrine, which had welcomed him and the group in 2004 when Ste. Jeanne d'Arc Parish was closed. But even that became difficult as longtime singers dropped out to be replaced by only a few newer members. So, in 2018, Normand stepped away from that commitment as well.

In the past few years, Normand's sole musical commitment has been to select music, recruit singers, and conduct the choir at Lowell's annual Franco-American Festival French Mass in June. A dwindling core of his Ste. Jeanne d'Arc and La Chorale singers participates each year, joined by friends and acquaintances still able to sing in French. But COVID-19 canceled the effort this year, and, at age 87, with his 88th birthday due in December, Normand is philosophical about what future years may bring.

A Franco in Service to His City

As with his father, who had served as Lowell's mayor in 1948-1949, Normand displayed a sense of service and pride in his city, putting his talents and skills to work in various roles on committees promoting music throughout the city:

- *Chairperson, Lowell Arts Council, four years*
- *Chairperson, Lowell Choral Festival, three years*
- *Member, Boarding House Park Performing Arts Sub-Committee, several years*
- *Member, Lowell Auditorium Committee (sponsored by the Cultural Center of Lowell), several years*
- *Member, Lowell Bell Committee, several years*

He was also nominated by the Lowell Office of Cultural Affairs for an Academy Reward in the Arts but lost to well-known Lowell-area sculptor Mico Kauffman, whose sculpture, "Homage to Women" honors the mill girls of Lowell and can be seen there on Market St.

Normand and Lucille Ayotte photographed following a March 1999 Spindle City Singers concert conducted by Normand and participated in by Lucille, who sang alto in all his choirs and choruses throughout the years.

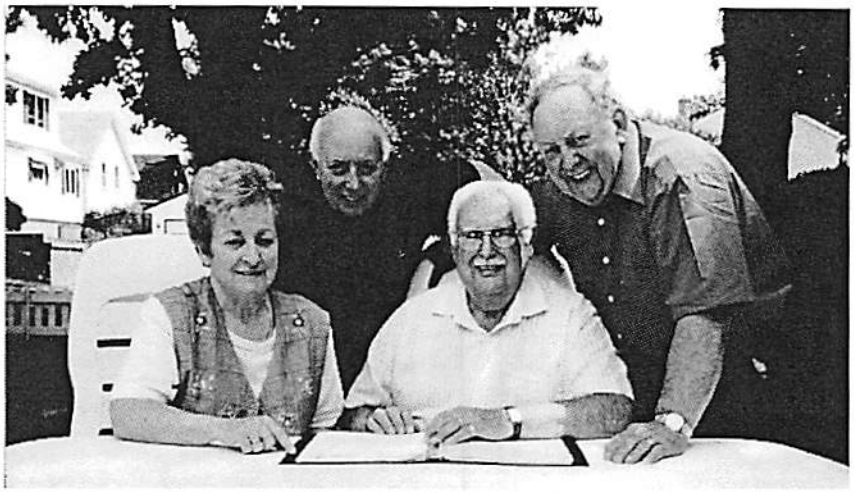
Still, he treasures his life in song and gives thanks for the joy, performances, and enduring relationships that have filled it. At his home in Pawtucketville, he keeps many mementos of that life: concert programs and photos, articles clipped from the Lowell Sun and other local newspapers, and perhaps most touching, the increasingly frequent obituaries of singers with whom he has shared his musical gifts over the years and from whom he's received so much effort and dedication. Most importantly, he continues to enjoy life with Lucille, his wife of 64 years, and their five children, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Ça a été une vie pleine et belle, bien sur!

A Life in Song - photo spread #1

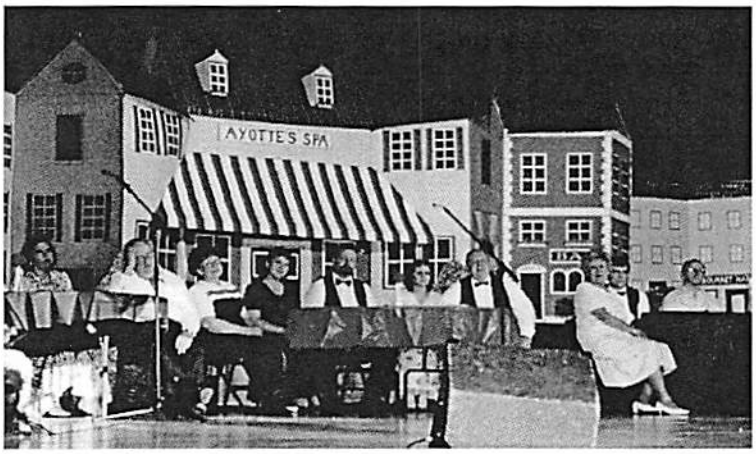
All photos courtesy of the Ayotte photo collection

Celebrating a Family's Musical Heritage



Above left to right: Fleurette (Ayotte) Sheehy, longtime accompanist for Normand's and their father's choirs and choruses: Normand Ayotte; brother George, and brother René.

In 2000, Normand Ayotte and his siblings planned a grand celebration of the musical life passed on to them by their parents and grandparents. Not surprisingly, the planning resulted in a French musical revue involving the family's former Ayotte's Spa of Lowell — populated that night by longtime members of Normand and his father's choirs and choruses, including a number of Ayotte family members.



Longtime Ayotte choir and chorus member Gloria Grimard danced a lively oldtime jig, accompanied on harmonica by her uncle Wilmer Maille, as the evening captured all the musical 'joie de vivre' of traditional French-Canadian music.

The Ayotte brothers (from left to right, Normand, George, and René) formed a trio for another of the evening's varied numbers. Rene has since passed away, while youngest sibling Simone had predeceased him.

A Life in Song - photo spread #2

All photos courtesy of the Ayotte photo collection

Lowell's Own Spindle City Singers

On November 23, 1996, Normand Ayotte's newly formed Spindle City Singers gave their first of what would prove to be an 18-year series of much-anticipated and well attended concerts featuring choral music from every genre: show tunes, pop hits, American standards, and sacred music.

To the right, Normand wields his baton in typically animated fashion as he conducts with all the verve his singers know and love. Diagonally right, a packed house awaits the performance. Below, Normand stands at the podium as sister Flo Sheehy (née Fleurette Ayotte) accompanies the chorus at that first performance.

Above, Normand stands with a color guard as they wait to lead off a May 1997 concert featuring patriotic and armed services music.

Above, the Spindle City Singers perform "The Seven Last Words of Christ" by Theodore Dubois at Lowell's St. Joseph the Worker Shrine in 1999.

A Legacy As Plain as the Nose on My Face

Steven Riel, Natick, MA

I.

Perhaps I've been looking for Franco-American legacy in the wrong places.

Perhaps the most obvious place I should have looked was invisible. Or maybe it was as visible as the nose on my face.

When searching for some sort of legacy, the first path I took in my twenties was towards my paternal grandmother, but that proved problematic because she disapproved of my gayness.

Then there was my gay great uncle, Joseph Jolly (Joly). Back in 1982, my husband and I visited him and his lover Fran in their retirement home in a trailer park in Florida. That visit felt like coming full circle. When I was a boy, my family had visited Uncle Joe and Fran in their plush home in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where Joe was a hairdresser. Once I was an adult, what an amazing experience to have the opportunity to acknowledge with him, even if briefly, our mutual connection as two gay men in our family, to tell him about the impact his pioneering life of relative openness had had on mine, and to share our very different experiences as gay men—experiences that leapfrogged over my parents' generation. For example, in the course of our conversation, Uncle Joe, Fran, my husband, and I discovered that we even each had visited (albeit decades apart from one another) the same gay piano-bar in Boston: the Napoleon Club.

The four of us partook in that most Floridian of social events: choosing between early-bird specials at a local diner. When Uncle Joe and I stood at the salad bar, he asked me if I liked beets. His face lit up with pleasure and his eyes sparkled when I confirmed I did. Apparently all Jollys liked beets, and this seemed to cement in his view our family bond.

I couldn't consider the "legacy" that I received from Uncle Joe without also considering a different example set by his younger brother, my Uncle Harry.

Uncle Harry was a thoroughly responsible and caring straight man, and I loved him for the values he put into practice. Since I had no grandfather present in my life, Uncle Harry was almost like a stand-in for a kindly grandfather. After Uncle Harry's other older brother, my grandfather Leo Jolly, abandoned his wife and 4 children and disappeared, Uncle Harry tried to help my mother's family as best as he could. He brought them practical gifts like groceries, for instance. Uncle Harry owned a gas station, and I vaguely remember I'd notice in my childhood that he'd have a little motor oil under his fingernails, or that when he came home from work, he'd have to change his clothes and wash his hands thoroughly. His line of work and the smell of the oil seemed manly to me. At the same time, his brown eyes conveyed warmth and love. I don't remember him shaming me for playing with a large collection of beautiful buttons my great aunt had among a collection of playthings for visiting children. Perhaps I reminded him of his brother Joe. Uncle Harry was a romantic: after my great aunt passed away, he eventually had a girlfriend, and the two of them used to sit side by side, rocking on a swinging bench in her yard. Before he died, when I discovered that he faithfully left pots of geraniums at the grave of his parents, I wrote a poem about the tender emotions that men of past generations often hid. I enthusiastically adopt Uncle Harry's example as a legacy.

Many years ago, I wrote in a poem the line, "there are only backroads to my past."[1] However, recently I perceived that the past was in fact much more directly present in my life than I had previously understood.

More recently, in thinking about the theme of Franco-American legacy, I considered whether I might explore some sort of gay lineage via the Québeçois poet Émile Nelligan, whom some literary historians have postulated was gay. Without knowing about those theories, while I was looking for a French Canadian poem to memorize to fulfill an assignment in my MFA in Poetry program, I selected one of Nelligan's poems (its title in English is "Touch-Me-Nots"). I found its delicate, Fabergé-egg-like construction to be intriguing. I assumed he had other poems that would likewise appeal to me. However, upon reading his collected poems, I decided that in fact this one poem was unlike his others. Most of his poems seemed like pale imitations of Edgar Allan Poe's, or involved mawkish High Victorian melodrama. I turned away from his poetry as a possible pathway towards a legacy.

II.

Many years ago, I wrote in a poem the line, "there are only backroads to my past."[1] However, recently I perceived that the past was in fact much more directly present in my life than I had previously understood.

A year ago, I returned to St. Georges' Cemetery in Southbridge, Massachusetts, to stand a second time beside the unmarked grave of my great grandparents: Existe Lescault and Honora Gauthier Lescault Robidoux. Afterwards, I did a lot of follow-up research on Ancestry.com to fill in some blanks.

I learned that my grandmother, Nora Lescault Jolly, was born 8 months after her father died in 1908. I believe that later in that year, with five children including a newborn, her mother Honora married a janitor at the American Optical factory named Narcisse Robidoux, who was 21 years older than she, and who already had at least one child by a previous marriage. By 1920, the census reveals that my grandmother Nora was living in a large household headed by her stepfather and mother, with 4 other Lescault siblings and 4 Robidoux step-siblings.

My grandmother's stepfather, Narcisse, died in 1922, when Nora was about 12. Two years later, her mother died, when my grandmother was about 14.

When I shared this information with my aunts and cousins a year ago, an aunt told me that when my grandmother had been orphaned, she was sent to Charlton, Massachusetts to work on a farm. I assumed that it must have been the Charlton Poor Farm, a relatively large establishment supported by a group of neighboring towns through the Charlton Almshouse Association. The farmhouse still stands, on Town Farm Road. It has been since turned into a nursing home. I briefly drove around its circular driveway on two separate occasions to get a close- up view. I also began reading a book titled The Poorhouses of Massachusetts.[2] What I learned there about the history of these

(Continued on page 41)

(A Legacy As Plain as the Nose on My Face continued from page 40)

institutions, from the Puritan era up to the middle of the twentieth century, when most of them closed, and the conditions of their "inmates," disturbed me. I tried to imagine what my grandmother experienced in the Charlton Poor Farm, how it affected the rest of her life, and how she was able to get back to Southbridge as a young woman and begin working in a factory there.

However, more recently my aunt straightened me out on the facts. She told me she knew which farm had taken her mother in. It was Dresser Hill Farm. My aunt knew the pronunciation of the name of the family who owned the farm, but she did not know how to spell it. It sounded like a French name. After a little online research, I knew that the owners were Joseph H. Maynard and Anna (Ravenelle) Maynard. They had nine children. They were married in Southbridge in 1909; their marriage record says they were both born in Canada. There were many other Ravenelles back in Southbridge.

So, this information provides me with a happier set of circumstances to imagine than the poor farm evoked. Perhaps the Ravenelles knew through social or church networks of the dire situation my newly orphaned grandmother faced. Now that I've visited the site of the dairy farm, I appreciate how large an operation it was. Perhaps the family needed help taking care of its younger children, or with housework. Perhaps a similar social or church network also helped my grandmother find a place to live years later when she began working in Southbridge.

In 1932, when my grandmother was not yet 21 years old, she married. Immediately, she became pregnant. Within a year and 9 months, she had two sons.

III.

While researching my grandmother's family, I noticed that both her brother Eugene and her sister Delia died in 1930. I wondered why they died so young, and whether it might have been due to an undiagnosed hereditary heart condition (the diagnosed one I have). What I discovered shocked me. According to a somewhat lurid article in The Bakersfield Californian, my great uncle was shot in his jugular vein in the middle of the night by his spouse Blanche. According to her, Eugene was a wife-batterer, and after suffering abuse for years, Blanche (who had married Eugene when she was 15 years old) had finally left him, taking their son. She shot Eugene when he broke through the door of her rented cabin to take their son away from her. In spite of losing a great deal of blood, my great uncle survived a few days, and during that time, he stated what had occurred "was all my fault," which led to the exoneration of Blanche.

My mother and aunts had never heard about these events, which leads me to think my grandmother never knew about the demise of her brother. That is not surprising, since he was killed in a tiny mining settlement at the edge of Death Valley during the Great Depression. It is unlikely that Blanche would have informed her former husband's family back in Southbridge of his death. Two years later, my grandmother married and moved to Worcester, where she very soon had her hands full with raising a family.

IV.

So, these are the essential facts. My maternal grandmother was from a family that worked for the firm that dominated a mill town in Massachusetts that had a large Franco-American population. My grandmother's parents had so little money, they could not afford a tombstone. The family was economically vulnerable; the death of a husband could be catastrophic for his wife and children; the death of a widow could leave her under-age children without support. (At least in 1883, even with both adults in a nuclear family living, a working man's salary was inadequate for him to support an average family, which is why "the average working man had to call on his wife and children to assist in earning their support."[3]) At some point, my orphaned grandmother was able to leave the dairy farm that took her in and get a factory job back in Southbridge.

In addition to these facts, there are things I wonder about. What was it like to work in a factory in what was practically a one-factory town? How much agency did the employees feel they had?

The facts of my great-grandmother's and grandmother's lives demonstrate the plight of working class Franco-American women during the first half of the 20th century. These facts also cause me to wonder. My great-grandmother lost her husband in 1908; she was left with five children, including a newborn. Within a year, she married a man 21 years her senior. Was she in love with him, or was this a marriage of desperate convenience? What was it like to be a female stepchild in such a situation? What was it like to be an orphaned 14-year-old girl who is taken in by a farm in a neighboring town? What is it like to get a job as a parentless young woman in a factory in what was almost a one-company town? How does one behave at work in such a situation? How did these experiences influence how my grandmother behaved in her marriage with my grandfather? How did they influence what she passed on to her daughter, my mother?

I wonder about the sources of Eugene's wife-beating behavior. Was his father a wife-beater? Was his stepfather? Did working-class Franco-American men feel they had so little economic and social power (we must remind ourselves that the KKK were actively rallying against Catholics in Massachusetts as late as the 1920s), that some of them turned around and exerted violent power over their wives as a way of propping up their trampled egos? Again, if either the Lescault or Robidoux household were violent, how did that influence how my grandmother behaved in her marriage with my grandfather? How did it influence what she passed on to my mother?

If we are too ashamed to tell the truth about poverty and violence in our families because we believe that the past somehow reflects badly on us, not only will we never be able to discern the social and economic patterns—that the experiences of our families were not singular, but instances caused by wider social and economic forces—we will also not be able to perceive how their experiences influence our present lives. We have a chance of realizing these things only if we tell the truth about the past and pay attention to the present. As Rhea Côte Robbins writes, "...we are our historical self while we are in the present."[4] And I argue—no, I insist—that the measure of our lives does not have to be simply a disturbing legacy we have received, but the positive things we fashion from it. When I contemplate how hard my mother strove to rise above the circumstances of her broken home, I see a life marked by nobility, not social stigma. Through her, I have witnessed what Côte Robbins describes: "The legacy of women in our family. To take brokenness and make things whole again."[5] And through my Great Uncle Harry, I have seen men in my family do this, too.

V.

Increasingly I perceive that although my maternal grandmother died the year before I was born, I received a palpable

(Continued on page 42)

***(A Legacy As Plain as the Nose on My Face** continued from page 41)*

(even if difficult to locate with any certainty) legacy from her. I can't point to an object I inherited. The legacy is much more holistic while paradoxically being ineffable.

After a death in a family, survivors often attempt to pass on the memory of the departed to the next generation. In my case, my female cousin, who was born one day before I was, was named after our grandmother. I don't have any such visible link—one so intimately linked to my identity as my name—but I've always had an intuitive sense that in some way my arrival helped to assuage my mother's grief. It may have been that my mother was too busy feeding me and changing diapers while dealing with my two-year-old sister to reflect very much on her state of mind when I was born, and yet, I've always felt that the timing of my birth, almost exactly one year after my grandmother's death, connected me with her in a significant if unspoken way because it affected how my mother treated me. I'm not the type of person who generally operates on intuition, but over the years I've come to understand that in certain circumstances, intuition might provide the only avenue for getting at an unprovable but palpable truth—sometimes the presence of an absence. The poet David Groff has come up with the perfect metaphor for expressing this in a poem about his dead mother: "Her fingerprints are / everywhere invisible / but if you cast the right dust / they will ghost."[6] More recently, I've come upon Côté Robbins' brilliant metaphor that also expresses how the invisible past affects the visible present, likening it to the shadow cast by a cloud (and ending with a variation of the same fingerprint metaphor as Groff's):

"The world of the upside down, the prides of clouds casting their shadows onto us creating shade. Dreams cast similar shadows as clouds creating shade... The original blueprint or intent lost through the years. How old is that habit of mine when I stand there in a stance that screams out my maman and her habits. Familial postures. Expressions of origins like a map telling us where we came from and where we are going. Each one an accomplice of our fingerprints."[7]

In a related arena, I struggled mightily in my poem "Deux Langues" to find language to describe the profound yet murky relationship I feel with the language I wasn't taught in an assimilated home—to speak about the auditory "shadow" of what was silent, or voiced in snatches, and its impact on what was heard. Often such information can be discerned through what's been imprinted in one's body—through non-verbal experience noticed and named.

Naturally, much of my sense of connection with my grandmother Nora comes through my mother. My mother's values have overall seemed more focused on goodness, spirituality, family, and cleanliness, than on material things. I have often felt aligned with these values. Like her mother, my mother is deeply religious. She describes how her Christian faith helped her deal with the challenges of her life. Was the same true for my grandmother? Following my grandmother's example, my mother labored to keep a good home and to give us good food. On top of that, to help our family financially (including helping to pay the college educations of her children), she went back to work part-time and then full-time once my younger brother entered grammar school.

My mother's efforts always aimed at creating order and security. She told me it was important to her to provide her children with the stability and opportunities she did not have as a girl because of her father's desertion of their family.

On the day that I recently drove to Charlton to see Dresser Hill Farm, I first stopped at my grandmother's grave and placed a cut rose there. The thought occurred to me that, unlike my grandfather, I was being faithful, at least to her memory, whether or not that has any meaning outside of my own mind. Of course, it is far too late (and I never actually had the chance) to console my grandmother while she was alive for all that she experienced, or to help her feel cherished. I'm reminded, however, of my Uncle Harry, faithfully leaving geraniums at the graves of his parents.

And it finally dawned on me: based on the photographs I've seen of my grandmother, I probably inherited some version of the Lescault or Gauthier nose (it is not surprising that I have never seen photographs of my economically struggling maternal great-grandparents to determine from which side of her family my grandmother's nose came—they may not have owned a camera nor have been able to afford hiring a photographer). Every morning when I look in the mirror, I am looking at something that came from Nora Lescault Jolly. What else about her and her life continues inside of me in less visible ways: in my muscles, in my values, in my behaviors? Important aspects of myself, I am certain.

1 See my poem "Field Trip Home" in How to Dream (Amherst, MA: Amherst Writers & Artists Press, 1992), p. 11.

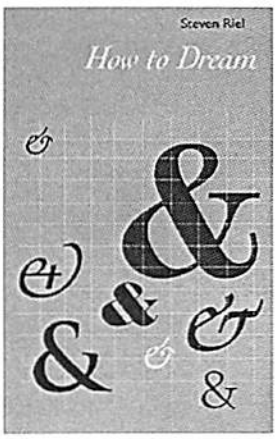
2 Meltsner, Hedi, The Poorhouses of Massachusetts: A Cultural and Architectural History (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2012.

3 Josiah Strong, Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis (New York: American Home Missionary Society, Baker and Taylor, 1885), as quoted in Meltsner, op. cit., p. 74.

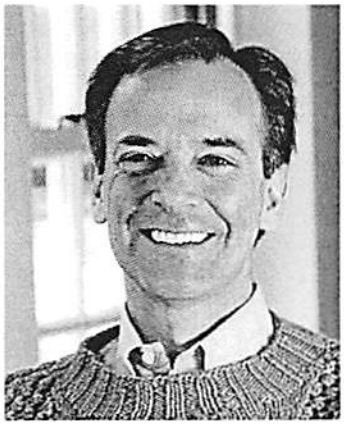
4 Rhea Côte Robbins, Wednesday's Child. 2nd ed. (Brewer, ME: Rheta Press, 1999), p. [9]. 5 Ibid, p. 20.

6 David Groff, Clay (Fernandina Beach, FL: Trio House Press, 2013), p. 57.

7 Côte Robbins, op.cit., p. 76.



https://www.amazon.com/Steven-Riel/e/B001KCGLC8/ref=dp_byline_cont_pop_book_1



Steven Riel

(N.D.L.R. This is the second part of a series on St. Andre's Home for unwed mothers in Biddeford. The author has found four women who had their babies there or in the case of Rose had her baby under St. Andre's auspices. This is their story.")

Saint Andre's Home of Biddeford, Maine: A History

by Michael Guignard
Alexandria, VA

LYNNE, PAULINE, MARY, ROSE

I have written briefly above of my contact Lynne. I first read about her in The Girls Who Went Away. Her story follows in more detail.

Lynne is quoted in Ann Fessler's book saying that the nuns were "harsh." Through the author generous help, I was able to contact Lynne and we had a regular correspondence and met in Biddeford three times. Here is what she wrote to me about that comment:

St. Andre's is a beautiful story. I ask you to help me find the way to write about it, especially the kindness of so many beautiful souls -- I cringe when I think that in my immaturity I thought of the nuns as harsh.

That was there way -- I wish I could go back even to a grave and say thanks. Writing a testimonial about it may be my payback??

Write right awayyyyyyyyyyyyyy.

Irony is such a part of life, n'est pas?

To think that girl, the first girl to come to the Home kept her child and Mike, how touching it is to think of that beautiful person who had to go to the courthouse 3 times before signing. I can remember and relate. My Dad took me to Catholic Charities the day I was to sign the papers. I would not go inside. he was getting angry. Scared I think. He finally said "It is over." I said "No it has just begun for me"

It was true.

Do you want to know that day? It was the 7th game of the World Series between Red Sox and St Louis? They lost. I always blamed myself like I do about Schilling's no hitter -- I should have said the rosary. I was too bitter -- I can hardly remember that day. My father brought me to a friend's house, his friend and he drank beer (e-mail, June 7, 2007)

Lynne had her baby on August 6, 1967. She named her little girl Margaret after Sister Margaret who cared for her at the Home and with whom she felt closest. She did not relinquish her baby until October 14, 1967. Lynne's baby had been placed in foster care in New Hampshire but her whereabouts were unknown to Lynne and her family. My birth mother placed me in a foster home in Caribou, Maine and for 6 months agonized about how she could keep me and still remain a part of the family. She finally consented to my transfer to Biddeford, Maine, 300 miles away, to live with her sister. I was not adopted until 1953.

Lynne wrote the above message to me after we visited the former St. Andre's Home on Pool Street in April 2007. Officials at St. Andre's Health Care Facility arranged a tour of the building as Lynne tried to remember where her room had been. She thinks she found it and reminisced with the staff about how the girls used to play cards with the sisters using pretzels as chips for betting. We also went next door where the now-abandoned building that was Notre Dame hospital, where Lynne had her baby. A wave of sadness came over her as she stared at some broken windows and litter around the abandoned building. After being an eyesore for over a decade, the hospital was finally torn down several years ago.

Lynne and I began corresponding in October 2006. I was interested in speaking with her to get a better idea of what life might have been like in a Home for Unwed Mothers after World War II. Being interested in local Franco American history, I was also eager to learn about the history of the home. In Lynne's first e-mail to me, she wrote:

Michael, I am the Lynne who had a place in Ann Fessler's book -She e-mailed me concerning St. Andre's and I cannot express my gratitude to you, as well as Ann, for unveiling this issue.

St. Andre's is a part of my heart and soul at this point in my life.

About three years ago I happened to drive by the old building in Biddeford which was St. Andre's ..... so many emotions to sort through --Again I would be delighted to share with you all of my impressions, thoughts, and facts concerning a time long gone by. Yet the experience is still there -- it was 1967 the year of the Red Sox "impossible dream year" and I have a memory of listening to the Red Sox on a static filled radio -- trying to hear -- technology being a small transistor radio. (October 2, 2006)

Lynne, it turns out is still a big Red Sox fan. Although the home had a TV and a radio in the large lounge of the recently-constructed new Helen Cashman Hamel-wing of the building, Lynne does not remember why she chose to listen to the games on the radio. Perhaps the television was not always available or because Lynne preferred to listen alone so that she could express her emotions in private.

In Lynne's next e-mail, she shared much more information about herself:

Hello again,

This is Lynne, called Kay Scott back in 1967 while vacationing in Biddeford, staying at St. Andre's and please excuse my misplaced humor. I am so glad to have the chance to write to you because it is healing - yes it is in spite of the pain. I am one of these people that believe that pain is necessary for growth in its way that it forces you to confront truths. I cannot change my past and perhaps I would not if given the opportunity (part of the master plan, the journey) so when you kindly apologized for any pain this dialogue may cause I wanted to hug you for that -- This is so good for me in ways that are so hard to express. Yes there is a pain of sorts but I ironically feel blessed in many ways and don't ask me why.....

I do NOT care about privacy, secrets, and I do want my name shouted out to the rooftops as I truly am sick of secrets. I remember attending Radcliffe when Ann presented her visual project, which the book is based on. There were so many of us there. I remember laughing with my husband of 37 years, Jack, about ironies like thinking of the money my family had spent to preserve the family name, secrets, lies I guess, and here we were at Harvard as if we were honored but we were honored weren't we? It is such a strange thing -- my birth daughter Julie and I do not see each other-- it was a bad situation and yet for 35 years I had dreamed if this encounter -- so what do you do? I realized how many years have been wasted on unreality --

So when you say, Michael, that you wish me no uncomfortable or sad emotions I do cry and I am not dramatic but that touches me and I think you can understand .. call it catharsis but just talking about it and you as well helps us to see things like when we dust off a picture.

What can I do for you? Please feel free to call anytime or ask for more information. St. Andre's is part of me. I remember the rules -- no one could leave the "back yard" or walk around the front in case we were seen big rule though there were a few of us who dared to in defiance.

(Continued on page 44)

(Saint Andre's Home of Biddeford, Maine: A History *continued from page 43)*
(I was anti-Vietnam as well).

I was supposed to be in Old Orchard Beach as you know -- big thing with my mother was my lack of a tan -- can you imagine. I struggled with my mother for years though I tried which brings me to another topic -- siblings.

I wish you would write, or maybe I will, about this whole thing and how you fit in afterwards with siblings -- not too different than siblings in a family with a sick child and my interest is also because Jennifer, my daughter, died of an illness, juvenile diabetes

After the adoption, Lynne's baby's name was changed to Julie. Lynne's pseudonym at St. Andre's Home was Kay Scott. The Sisters had originally wanted to call her Blanche but Lynne vociferously objected and prevailed. The issue of siblings is the subject of another story. Suffice it to say though that Lynne was always considered the black sheep in her family after her return from "Old Orchard Beach."

In Lynne's next e-mail to me, she shared more information about herself and her family:

I can remember Ted Williams, Jimmy Piersall, Jackie Jensen and when I graduated from the eighth grade, received an award and presented a speech, my father asked me what I wanted as a present. I said "tickets to the All Star game+ at Fenway in 1961. ted Williams threw out the first pitch. I remember Willie Mays, Mantle, Maris and Roberto Clemente -- it was the best present I have ever had. Julie was born 6 years later and it is so sad to recall that my relationship with my father was never the same. Sad.....I can so understand why I have no relationship with my siblings -- My mother has Alzheimer's and is in a home, and my father is dead. There is no glue to hold the family together. I think about it so often -- my sisters and brother feeling cheated and yet I was the one who felt like a pariah -- it goes so deep the human condition -- people felt guilt when they push someone away .....I do not think this story is over. Meeting Julie and participating in Ann Fessler's project and book were the beginnings of a search to find peace for me. I met my illegitimate daughter (how I love saying that phrase "illegitimate daughter" as a shock thing) and I was released from feeling that I was a bad mother because that was always there when you are told that the baby would be better off without you..... When Julie told me that she would not have a relationship with me, nor even speak to me ever again, I knew that my own children were so much kinder, gentler, respectful, and deeper. I loved my children with such passion at that moment. I said to her that the only thing I regretted in my life was not keeping her..... but it is still my fault for not fighting back..... it is catharsis that I am feeling. (October 29, 2006)

It is important to note that the Good Shepherd Sisters were founded as an order in 1850 with their primary mission being to care for women in distress and unwed mothers. When I first read that, I wondered how many illegitimate births there were in Quebec in the 19th century. I visited the Sister's museum in Quebec City and learned that because Quebec was a busy riverport with lots of sailors on shore leave, a number of very poor, uneducated young girls had turned to prostitution. The foundress of the order, Mary Fitzbach, had been married and borne three children, before her husband died. She was ministering to unwed mothers when she was approached by a wealthy benefactor who encouraged her to start a religious order to carry on the ministry. The home that the sisters ran in Quebec City was called La Crèche de St. Vincent de Paul (the Cradle of St. Vincent de Paul). It closed in 1970 it had cared for over 36,000 unwed mothers. I have not been able to determine how many of the staff at St. Andre's in the 1940's and 1950's actually worked at La Crèche before coming to Biddeford but there was regular contact between St. Andre's and La Crèche. When Gil Domingue took over at St. Andre's in 1971, one of his first trips was to visit homes for unwed mothers run by the Good Shepherd Sister in Canada. (September 25, 1972) When the American province of Good Shepherd Sisters voted to adopt English as their language of daily use, several Canadian Sisters at St. Andre's Home, went back to Canada, (July 11, 1967) By 1967, their numbers were small enough to not have caused too much of a disruption at the home.

Assignments at St. Andre's were made by the provincial administration and were made on July 26 (the Feast Day of Saint Anne) of each year. (e-mail from Sister Joanne Roy, April 28, 2008) The sisters operated on the same principle as the U.S. Foreign Service where the needs of the service took precedence over individual preference. But probably like the Foreign Service, one got to express a preference and often received the assignment one wanted. I found only one entry in the archives where the lay staff at St. Andre's Home expressed reservations about how clerical personnel were assigned to the Home and was told by a lay administrator that complaints were based on the fact that assignments were made on rather short notice which sometimes caused some awkward moments at the Home. (Archives, January 8, 1970). The fact that some Canadian nuns returned to Canada in 1967 probably complicated staffing patterns. But because of relaxing standards of anonymity, St. Andre's was able to hire more lay professionals as long as they were considered discrete.

Lynne's feelings about having been an inadequate mother for having given up her baby is a typical internalized sentiment held by mothers who surrendered babies for adoption and who have gone public about it. Those who have met their adult children and learned that some of them grew up in less than ideal homes are bitter and say that society told them that their child would be better off as an adoptee. Another common maxim of social workers, parents, clergy, medical personnel and society in general that the girls heard was that they would forget about this sad experience, get married, have children and live happily ever after. Many of the women who have gone public did get married and have children, but some never forgot about the child they surrendered and it haunted them for decades until they could find some cloture with a reunion. (Thirty percent of Ann Fessler's 100 interviewees never bore another child after surrendering their first-born) My own birth mother never told her children about me until in 1982 when her only daughter had arranged "an intervention" after she had found mom on the floor sobbing. It was under these circumstances that she told her daughter, my half- sister, about me and she swore her to secrecy a pledge my sister kept for over 20 years until my birth mother had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. My three half-brothers found out about me after our mother died. And this was the mental state of a woman who had seen me grow up, had been to my First Communion, my high school and college graduation, my wedding and to my eldest child's (her first grandchild's) christening and another of my children's wedding. I saw "my aunt" rather often when I was young and at least two or three times a year as an adult. One can imagine the feelings of a woman who had never seen and had never met the child she had surrendered.

This is not to say that in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's many out-of- wedlock children were not better off with adopted parents. The stigma attached to illegitimacy was real and many of these young girls had been abandoned by their families and had no visible means of supporting themselves or their child. Sister Theresa Therrien summed up the reaction of many parents when she said that the girls were told not to come back home with a baby. My grandfather put it in a less delicate way: "You can't bring that little bastard home," he told my birthmother who was almost 26 years old when I was born. The cruelty of parents when one reads the literature of unwed motherhood in this era is mind-boggling. Sister Viola told me the story of a young girl from a very well-to-do family who had been instructed by her parents to never call home. After her baby was born, she did call to give them the news. Their reaction "We told you never to call here" And they hung up on their crying young daughter.

Not all parents who sent their daughters to homes for unwed mothers were so cruel, however. While doing research in the archives I found an extract of a letter from a father who had recently brought his daughter to St. Andre's in February 1967:

"I hope you had a pleasant 1st night for your vacation. On the way up you were very quiet. I understand why. You were worried. You entertained thoughts that the place would be dirty, dingy, and remote. You wondered what kind of people you would be with. And the nuns.....I know you wondered about them. The only sisters you know where the teachers around town. Many of them would not be able to cope with your situation. I am willing to bet that you feel much

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better now that you have met the people.

No doubt you noticed, as I did, that you were welcomed with open arms. No one stuck their noses up at you. You will find out that they won't either. The girls can't afford to either, as they are paddling the same canoe.

The Sisters, you'll find very understanding, compassionate, and full of affection. You'll find that they are interested in you and will help you no end. They know that by the grace of God, they might well be in your shoes.

I can just picture you beaming and all enthused with your quarters, clean, neat, fresh, better than you ever dreamed. Isn't it marvelous. So you see my dear, you have no reason to be bashful and afraid. No one is perfect. We all have our faults and we all make mistakes. Walk straight. Head high, never down. You have fallen off your horse before. You always got up again and mastered the beast. Do the same now. You'll be a better woman. Live and learn as the saying goes.

P.S.: When we got home Linda (her four-year old sister) said "When Judy comes home, will we still call her Judy and not that funny name they gave her. As you can see, Linda was all ears on Sunday."

Love, Dad"

Given the parental concern shown in this letter, one wonders why the parents sent their daughter away. "No one stuck their noses up at you" writes the Dad. If Judy had remained at home, she would probably have been shunned and ridiculed by friends, schoolmates, neighbors, and relatives, among others. Ann Fessler explains very well how girls in trouble were scorned even by their friends who were sexually active. "The scorn and blame heaped on these women seem to be partly a mechanism of denial: by focusing attention on women whose sexual behavior was evident, others could continue to deny their own." (Fessler, page 36).

Given how difficult it has been for me to find other girls who surrendered babies at St. Andre's in the post WWII decades, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that those who have kept their secret have been better able to put their experience behind them and move on with their lives. At least they can be assured that their secret is safe with the Sisters. But my birthmother always kept her secret, even for 15 years after my adoptive parents died and even though her husband always knew her secret. So keeping the secret does not necessarily mean that unwed mothers who surrendered children have forgotten their experience or do not have great regret and sorrow over having surrendered their child. Fessler mentions that every one of the 100 women she interviewed "has been haunted by the loss of her child for the rest of her life" (jacket to the hard cover edition of The Girls Who Went Away.)

Lynne finally visited Biddeford-Saco in April 13, 2007. The day after the visit, she wrote me saying:

Mike, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for a remarkable day on Friday, 4/13/07. Jack enjoyed the day as much as I did and I am grateful to both of you for your kindness and understanding. Driving up to Saco, to stop at the convent, I felt ill I will admit. I realized I was clenching my hands together almost as in prayer.....

You know it took me years to understand if not realize that people did judge unwed mothers -- I never felt shame over that, I told myself, but I really did especially because I did not fight to keep Julie my daughter. if only I had said to my parents "screw you" when given the ultimate choices -- if only if only blah blah blah! I am trying to find words that could express the feelings of walking into St. Andre's and seeing the abandoned building Notre Dame Hospital -- I hope I can for I think there should be a voice that expresses this. I have forgiven. I really have. But the ultimate would be to meet someone who maybe was at St Andre's when I was and that means a trip to the new St. Andre's office. I want to do that. is that morbid? Is that healthy? .....I love history and I love the French community as it reminds me of my Memere and her sisters and the beautiful sound of French -- I remembered more French than I thought in reading the French prose on the home. Thank you again and again. I plan to go back if not many times as I would love to retire right up there in a place that brings me such peace -- I was happy at St Andre's.....

Your friend,

Kay Scott

We first met in 2007 at the Bay View Convent in Saco where the archives were located and looked at photos of St. Andre's Home taken in the 1960s to prepare Lynne for her visit to the health care facility building on Pool Street that had housed St. Andre's Home until 1973. On April 23, 2007, she wrote again:

Mike,

Whenever you are ready to go back to Maine I would love to meet Srs. I need to meet with these sisters, just to say thank you and to further find closure -- I love being in Biddeford. I felt a peace and calm that I remembered feeling forty years ago.

Since we first met, Lynne has moved much closer to Biddeford, in Rochester N.H., and has a grandchild who was born in Biddeford.

I had sent Lynne a copy of my book on the Franco-Americans of Biddeford, Maine. In this e-mail, written on May 12, 2007, she comments on it and talks a bit about her family background again.

On Mother's Day she wrote: *Mother's Day has always been tough since Jennifer died and I know now that Julie is a dream, not mine just a dream. But I gave her life and God knows that, yes he does and nothing is for naught. (May 13, 2007)*

I wrote a short article about St. Andre's Home as a supplement to the article that had appeared in April 2007 in the Sun Chronicle focusing on St. Andre's as a refuge. I sent Lynne a copy:

So completely beautiful. I am more than grateful to you. You captured my story and you tell it with such compassion. I love you for that. I would love to write and dedicate the book to you –

Soon Lynne was asking when I was returning to Biddeford. *"I feel peace even saying Biddeford"*

A day after turning 60, she wrote:

I am doing fine. Yesterday, July 4th, was my 60 year old birthday. I was 20 when I had Julie and I remember my little birthday party at the Home. I felt sad, I have to admit that -- almost like I wanted to be in Biddeford on my 60 day. I had a wonderful day with Jack in Portsmouth. I was given a party at work the day before and I am lucky -- there are many people around me that truly care. I never told you but I have no contact with my family since my father's death -- not my choice. I have a sister who is my mother's guardian who insists that I can not see my mother in the nursing home. Long and sordid story. (July 5, 2007)

Lynne also had a cousin who bore a child out of wedlock in 1967. She kept the baby, never married and raised her child as a single mother. Lynne never understood why her parents did not allow her to do that.

A few months later came this note:

Mike,

So nice to hear from you and I am totally interested in the informal life the girls at The Home led while there -- I need to know what Helen has said in trying to make sense of the information you have gathered -- I need to hear that --

I'll tell you why -- my mother passed away November 26th -- she went down hill after breaking her pelvis in late September -- I was able to spend time with her, in spite of the family dynamics, and it was heartwarming -- My mother tried to convey as best she could on good days for example that she was sorry about Julie -- she tried to talk about it but couldn't, partly because of her Alzheimer's and physical deterioration -- some days my mother was quite with it -- others not. The point I am making is that the issue of unwed mothers, the guilt on both daughter and parents stayed with us all for ever -- my father said the same thing to me when he was dying -- "forgive me"..... daughter needs to say "I forgive you" as mother is struggling to say "Forgive me" and in enduring that scene so much healing took place -- For the first time ever I felt whole -

I thought of you at my mother's funeral when the part of the Mass was said in French as my mother came from a French speaking home.....Yes I thought of you as well as St Andre's --

Guess what - my mother's funeral was on the feast day of St. Andre and my mother was buried on the anniversary of my daughter's (Jen-

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nifer) death -- do you believe now that nothing is coincidental? Please email me right back or soon in comment on my thoughts. Again I want to go back to St Andre's (December 5, 2007)

When Lynne was interviewed for Ann Fessler's book, both her Mom and Dad were still alive. I think that having made peace with her parents has softened Lynne's memories of St. Andre's Home and for those who cared for her there. On the day before Christmas 2007 Lynne had this to say:

Mike,

I want you to comment on both of my parents having the need to say "sorry" as they lay dying -- sorry about St. Andre's and all. I think this is another chapter in the story of St Andre's and its girls.....The story is St Andre's, the memories, the playing SCAT at night (cards) and learning how to play solitaire, and sitting around with the girls, just being there for each other. That is St. Andre's..... St. Andre's is not a building. St Andre's is a part of me and that is why I have to go back with a fresh mind and eye this time. I have returned to church again and again. I have accepted being Catholic with all of its faults. And I feel wonderful. Just to let you know. Please email me back." (Dec. 24, 2007)

As we were preparing to visit the sisters in early June 2008, Lynne expressed her emotions.

In Ann Fessler's book my anger was misplaced as most anger is. And that is key in understanding the dynamics concerning the relationships between the nuns, the family, and the unwed mother.....Anyway the nuns did all they could given damaged goods. What would have happened without them? My anger always was towards my family -- especially my mother .....The nuns and the Catholic church have been blamed shamelessly {and believe me the Catholic Church which I am a devout member has much to explain}. But in this world everyone forgets that human frailty is a part of the human experience. And that includes the Church as the leaders are human. It is human to not hear the Holy Spirit. We need to focus on INTENT .

In thinking of St. Andre's I have to stand back -- I have to see an empty and abandoned hospital to remember --And what I remember after stripping away the confusion, the pain, the blame and all that junk we carry around with us for years is the memory of nuns.....THEY REPLACED MY MOTHER. Where was my mother? That is the source of all my anger for forty years and know what Michael?? I have let it go in FORGIVENESS.

We need to sort out who we should be angry at. NOT THE NUNS. THEY TAUGHT me how to knit how to play solitaire which I did for hours. That is the memories that are as faded as a photo left exposed for too long. The truth is the shadow that exists behind what is fading. I think of the gardens the vegetables. If my life is to have any meaning besides the birth of my children, all of them,I have to give you this testimony --I remember a warm so warm nun coming into my room and comforting me during a hard time --

Why did I not remember this when Ann Fessler interviewed me? .....The nuns.....gave a home and a sense of safety to girls WHO HAD NOWHERE TO GO. (May 3, 2008 – capitalization in its original)

Our second meeting with the sisters took place on June 5, 2008 in Biddeford. Lynne, her husband Jack and I met at the administrative office of St. Andre's Home with Sister Viola Lausier. Sister did not remember Lynne since she arrived 2 months after Lynne left the Home. Sister explained the work of the home and the services the home offered. We talked about different incidents like the fellow who rode his motorcycle all the way from California and entered the home in typical Wild One Marlon Brando garb asking: I am looking for my mother. Can you help me find her. We also discussed the story that Sister Viola had told me of the young girl who had gone to the County Courthouse Alfred 3 times before finally signing the adoption papers. Lynne recounted her own story of surrender on the day that Bob Gibson beat Jim Lonborg in their pitching duel. After spending about 90 minutes chit-chatting, Sister Viola and Lynne hugged and Lynne thanked Sister "for being my mother back in 1967" when she needed a shoulder to cry on. We grabbed a quick lunch and headed for St. Joseph's Convent on Pool Street which is right behind the old St. Andre's Home to meet with Sister Gertrude.

The hugs came before we sat and talked and again Lynne thanked Sister Gertrude saying "you were my mother." We had tea and cookies in the cafeteria along with Jack and Sister Claire Pelletier, whom Lynne had met back in April, 2007 in Saco when looking at the St. Andre Archives. Lynne was more outgoing during this conversation as if the ice had been broken an hour earlier with Sister Viola. Sister Gertrude was a nurse but because she lived at the home could tell us what the daily routine was when she lived and worked there. This brought back pleasant memories for Lynne. There were some awkward moments as when Lynne mentioned that she was not on good terms with her birth daughter Julie and her strained relations with her parents. We took a short walk by the river where Lynne had walked more than 40 years earlier. It was a great visit for Lynne and she remembers it fondly. (phone conversation with Lynne, April 23, 2020)

After making contact with Lynne, I subsequently found 3 more patients who bore children at St. Andre's as single mothers. One was a Franco-American from Biddeford. Let's call her Pauline. She had her baby in February 1968 at the home so she almost overlapped with Lynne. She was educated in Biddeford parochial schools and was taught by the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary. Like Lynne, Pauline was outspoken and wasn't particularly happy about being at St. Andre's but her experience was much less traumatic. Her Mom had died in 1966 and her father insisted she make herself scare during her pregnancy. She received regular Friday night visits from the father of her child, whom she eventually married, and they raised 3 children together. I asked why she had not married before the birth. "The timing just wasn't right," she answered. Her husband-to-be always brought pizza on his Friday night visits, enough to feed several of Pauline closest friends. He also made sure that the beer cans he snuck into the Home were well hidden under the pizza boxes. It was party time on Fridays for Pauline and some of the other residents. Pauline would dispose of the empty beer cans the next morning by simply walking along the banks of the river with the cans in her coat pockets, throwing the cans in the river and letting them float out to sea.

When I embarked on this project, I contacted a graduate school friend of mine who taught women's studies. She told me to stay away because the subject of homes for unwed mothers was a minefield. But my friend told me to remember as I did my research that many of these homes probably had an informal network of patient communication and ways to skirt the rules. St. Andre's was no different, I imagine.

Pauline had special kind words for the Chaplain at St. Andre's home, Franciscan Father Matthew Audibert, who also served as a chaplain at St. Francis College. Although she had left the Home by 1970, Pauline heard about the prayers being said at St. Andre's for Father Audibert to remain in the priesthood and joined in from home.

Pauline was reunited with her birth son who found her when he turned 24. Pauline started a closed internet group of people with some connection to St. Andre's Home. Here is what she wrote:

"First post in the new group. I'll start this off. I gave birth here, in 1968 to a wonderful son. I surrendered him to adoption. I am so blessed that he found me many years later. It's a long story and I won't burden you with it (yet!) but we have a wonderful relationship. I'm grateful for my life but more grateful to his parents who gave him a wonderful life that I could not have done. I'm not ashamed and neither should you be if you had this experience." Whenever, Pauline wrote to me about her children, she always included her eldest and expressed great love for him. She hoped to write about her experiences in much more detail but unfortunately passed away before she could put pen to paper. Lynne and Pauline met in 2013 on a visit to St. Andre's group home on Prospect Street. In subsequent e-mails from Lynne, Lynne told me how happy she was to hear of the wonderful reunion and relationship between Pauline and her son.

Dr. Fortier delivered Pauline's baby on February 14, 1968. Biddeford is a small city and when Pauline returned to Biddeford to live in 2010, she rented an apartment from Dr. Fortier's son, very close to St. Andre's group home on Prospect St. When Lynne and Pauline visited

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Frenchtown: The Forgotten History of Los Angeles' French Community

March 5th, 2020

by Clément Thiery

#California, #History, #Los Angeles

Vineyards, sheep, dirt roads, and French restaurants. Welcome to Los Angeles in 1870. At the time, the future megalopolis was little more than a town of 10,000 inhabitants where French was the most spoken language after Spanish! A forgotten chapter revived by an amateur historian who has recently begun offering walking tours in the footsteps of L.A.'s French community.

The visit through French Los Angeles starts in Little Tokyo, on the corner of Commercial Street and Alameda Street. You can see the eight-lane Santa Ana Freeway and the austere façade of the Metropolitan Detention Center from the intersection. This is where Marius Taix, originally from the Hautes-Alpes département, opened a bakery in 1882, followed by a hotel and restaurant, Le Champ d'Or, in 1912. The hotel has long since closed and the restaurant has changed location. The building itself was demolished in the 1960s and replaced with a parking lot.

Marius Taix' French restaurant ca. 1956. © Los Angeles Public Library/Security Pacific National Bank Collection

The house owned by Marseille native Joseph Mascarel, one of the three French mayors of Los Angeles, suffered the same fate. As did the Viole-Lopizich family's pharmacy, the offices of the newspaper L'Union Nouvelle (published from 1879 through 1962), and the Amestoy Building, erected by a Basque man who arrived in 1851, and regarded as the city's first skyscraper. "This is Los Angeles," says tour guide Charlotte Claire Martell de Vere, or C.C. for short. "Everything ends up being a parking lot."

Frenchtown, the French Enclave of Los Angeles

Visitors need to use their imagination to follow the historian through the streets of Frenchtown. The neighborhood in Los Angeles, home to 4,000 people in the late 19th century, has been swallowed up by the constantly expanding city. It only really survives through its place names. Bauchet Street, for example, was named after Louis Bauchet, a former soldier under Napoleon originally from the Marne département, who was the first French settler in Los Angeles. In 1827, the future city was just a small Spanish village with 700 residents, known as El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de la Reina de los Angeles. The Frenchman planted a vineyard there 1831, the first in California.

The same year, another French settler planted vines on the banks of the Los Angeles River. Bordeaux-born Jean-Louis Vignes later gave his name to Vignes Street. He had vine stock of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Sauvignon Blanc sent over from France to improve the quality of his wine. He then sold his products as far as San Francisco and became one of the region's biggest landowners. In reference to the giant tree growing in the midst of his vineyard, he named his estate El Aliso (The Sycamore). Today, the name lives on in Aliso Street and the Aliso Village neighborhood.

Encouraged by Jean-Louis Vignes' success, his three children and their families, his brother, four nephews, and several friends joined him in California. The Sainsevain brothers bought the vineyard from their uncle in 1855 and produced the very first Californian sparkling wine, helped by a former Veuve Clicquot cellar master. The newly arrived French immigrants settled near the estate, and locals soon began calling it "French Town."

Portrait of a French Basque immigrant ca. 1888. © Los Angeles Public Library/Shades of L.A. Photo Collection

Portraits of Forgotten Figures

"There were around a dozen boarding houses run by French people on the corner of Aliso and Alameda," says C.C. de Vere. This American woman, a descendant of French king Henri I, has become a self-styled historian of Frenchtown. Alongside her job at a car dealership, she pores over censor records, old directories, and street maps, and scours genealogy websites and the Los Angeles Public Library archives.

C.C. de Vere also writes a blog, Frenchtown Confidential, named in reference to James Ellroy's novel L.A. Confidential. In it she paints the portraits of forgotten figures from the French community. Lyon native Henri Penelon took the first photo of Los Angeles, and Burgundy-born Firmin Toulet opened Hollywood's first restaurant, Frank & Musso Grill, which celebrated its 100th anniversary last year. Entrepreneur Edouard Naud helped found the French Benevolent Society and the French Hospital, while Michel Lachenais was lynched on December 17, 1870, for three counts of murder!

The earliest photograph of Los Angeles, taken by Lyon native Henri Penelon in the 1860s. © Los Angeles Public Library/Shades of L.A. Photo Collection

"The arrival of the railway in Los Angeles during the 1870s sounded the death knell of Frenchtown," says the tour guide. The city's population boomed and families from the Midwest soon outnumbered French people, who were forced to sell their fields to make way for new neighborhoods. This decline was hastened

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the group home in 2013, we were accompanied by Doris Lambert, who had worked at Dr. Fortier's office after serving as a nurse at Notre Dame hospital. Of her service to unwed mothers at Notre Dame Hospital, Doris remembered "we gave them extra TLC knowing after all the pain of childbirth they would be leaving us empty handed." (e-mail, October 31, 2013)

My third interviewee came from Portland and was also a product of a girls' Catholic school. Let's call her Mary. She had the unfortunate experience of having arrived at the Home in 1964, amid the construction of the new wing. She still remembers the hammers and the noise. But at least she had her baby at Notre Dame Hospital not in the Home itself. (e-mail, April 27, 2014) Like Pauline, Mary married the father of her child but not before the child whom she called Lisa had been surrendered for adoption. She has not been reunited with her daughter despite having sought such a reunion for many years.

Mary came from an Irish-American Catholic family, very strict. After Lisa was born, Mary married Lisa's father and had 4 more children. (e-mail, April 14, 2016) I met again with Mary in June, 2019 and we spoke to the sisters about making another attempt to seek a reunion. She has written a letter to the child she surrendered and hopes some day to be able to deliver it in person. (e-mail, January 16, 2016). But Lisa does not seek a reunion.

In our second, most extensive communication, Mary wrote:

"Hi Michael: The Helen Chapman wing was being constructed when I was there. I had forgotten but now remember the noise and the construction people looking at us girls when we went outside and wondered how my "secret" would remain private when in fact one of the workers schooled in Portland with my child's father. So much I have buried yet is still there to be brought to surface I suppose. Father Matthew Audibert must have been the man I went to confession. I attended daily mass but really cannot bring forth a name and a face. My friend and confidant who directed me to do the best thing for my child by going away and giving her up for adoption was Father Patrick Hayes at St. Joseph's Church in Portland. He based that on the fact that my parents did not want me to have the child, his parents did not want us to get married, and Sam was immature. Father Hayes later expressed to me when I visited him at St. Joseph's Academy in Portland that he wished he had never put me through giving my daughter up for adoption.....When I went away to St. Andre's I had made my decision based upon the facts that Father Hayes was right. He had interviewed everyone mentioned and there were facts that I never mentioned to him that backed up his belief.....I got married to Sam.....we were married for nine years..... Recent views and lifestyle are very different from when I was there. A kinder and realistic acceptance of pregnancy outside of marriage. Girls need the help the good sisters offer in going through a very confusing and heartfelt time in their lives" (e-mail, April 21, 2014)

Before I started this research, I simply assumed that priests automatically sided with the parents when an unplanned pregnancy occurred. But sometimes the priest served as a go-between or a mediator between the young girl and her parents, as was the case with Mary.

My first three interviewees had had their babies between 1964 and 1968. I corresponded with several adoptees who were born out of wedlock at St. Andre's in the 1940s and 1950s and who had been reunited with their birth mothers. I was hoping to make contact with some of these mothers to get a more representative sample of patients at St. Andre's but to no avail. Luckily though a friend told me about one of her students who had had her baby in 1982 under the auspices of St. Andre's Home. Let's call her Rose.

I was thrilled because the reference represented a different era. Rose, a Franco-America from a very large family, grew up in Aroostook County so I asked her what she thought of my hometown – Biddeford, the Mill City. Her response surprised me. She never visited Biddeford during her pregnancy or delivery. She had contacted the home saying that she wished to surrender her baby for adoption and the home sent a representative to her to make all the arrangements. She too has been reunited with her daughter in 2005 through the state of Maine, after first contacting St. Andre's Home. In a nutshell, Rose writes "our reunion thus far has been a success – more than I could hope." Rose had just matriculated to college when she found out she was pregnant. Her parents never found out about the child whom she named Angie until 23 years later when mother and child were reunited. (e-mail, Oct. 27, 2010). Ten years later Rose is still on contact with Angie and wrote of a proposed trip postponed by the pandemic: "I am in touch with my daughter, we were supposed to go see her and other family members in Florida in April so are really disappointed that isn't happening. But as soon as travel is safe I will try to get down and see her.....and her two girls" (e-mail, March 30, 2020)

Another interesting reunion of a St. Andre birth mother and adopted child is described in a Nov. 26, 2009 Portland Press Herald article entitled "Maine Law Leads to Reunion with Mom." The title of the article refers to a Maine law which gave adopted children born in Maine the right to obtain their "real" birth certificates with their birth parent(s) name listed. That is how Alison Scott, who was born at St. Andre's in 1971, was reunited with Debra, her birth mother.

On the day of their initial meeting, Alison and her adoptive Mom, Sharon Corriveau, pulled into Debra's driveway, she "came out and grabbed ahold of Allison and cried and (Debra) said 'you're beautiful'" Scott told Debra that she began searching because she wanted to tell her birth parents "not to punish themselves for giving me up. It was the right thing to do. I've had a wonderful life"

Debra remembered how she had knitted baby clothes for Allison and that "every baby she saw for the next year and a half, she wondered if it was her" - a phenomenon described in Fessler's book. Like many of the girls in Fessler's book, "Debra and her parents never talked about the child through the years.....those kinds of issues just weren't talked about" This Press Herald article was a very short one and did not mention the Good Shepherd Sisters at all, which is usually the case about historical articles in the media today about St. Andre's Home.

(The mission of Saint Andre Home is to: Serve women & children in need; Strengthen & restore child and family life; Promote the individual dignity of each person approaching the Agency with a need.)

(Frenchtown: The Forgotten History of Los Angeles' French Community *continued from page 47)*

by Prohibition, as winegrowers, brewers, and restaurant owners deprived of their source of income returned to France or moved to the suburbs.

Thirty Sites Still Standing

The historian has used her discoveries to create a map of more than 500 sites linked to the French history of Los Angeles and its surrounding region. Some 30 of these sites are still visible today. A few acres of the Garnier family's estate have been preserved in the Los Encinos State Historic Park, and Michel Leonis' ranch is now home to the Adobe Museum in Calabasas, nestled between a highway and a residential neighborhood.

"Los Angeles doesn't do enough to preserve its past," says C.C. de Vere. "The Italian, Chinese, Mexican, and Japanese immigrants have museums, but the French, who once represented up to 20% of the city's population, have nothing but a few plaques scattered here and there." Today, who remembers that Koreatown used to be the site of Germain Pellissier's sheep pen? Or that her grandson built the Pellissier Building, one of the city's most beautiful Art Déco structures?

The Garnier family's former ranch in Los Ancinos, 1949. © Los Angeles Public Library/ Los Angeles Herald Examiner Photo Collection

(Acknowledging and Confronting Racism in Franco Communities continued from page 10)

these fellow Francos used distorted snippets of our past in an attempt to discredit or minimize the oppression of Black Lives Matter and the fight for dignity, civil rights, and basic safety. Common remarks followed the general sentiment of "the KKK in New England cared about French-Canadians and Catholics, not Black people," or "you don't see French-Canadians complaining like this," or "my ancestors struggled and I ended up fine, so why can't you?" Each of these statements effectively minimized the current struggle for Black rights by placing a false equivalence between the historical oppression of French-Canadians and the contemporary oppression of Black Americans - as if French-Canadians have ever been oppressed to the extent that Black Americans are; as if French-Canadians have ever had their oppression and disenfranchisement codified into legal, socioeconomic, and political norms to the same magnitude that Black Americans have; as if French-Canadians have ever feared daily for their lives in the same way that Black Americans do.

These lines of thought are not accidental and they are not coincidental. They stem from a series of tropes, historical glosses, and exaggerated self-perceptions that are constantly reproduced within our community, our history, and our sense of identity. They stem from the foundational racism of French colonialism throughout North America and have been reimagined and manipulated to serve our collective ambitions and politics ever since. Throughout our history, French-Canadian intellectuals have alternately described us as glorious conquerors on a civilizing mission; a rustic and peace-loving people who freely coexisted with the Wabanaki; the last true bastion of good Catholic Christendom sent to convert the faithless natives; or oppressed, exploited, innocent people led about like unthinking sheep by the Church. None of these labels are fully true and none are fully false, but all are examples of history blurred, obscured, and exaggerated to suit contemporary political preferences. Our current politics and understanding of self are not immune to this practice, and our inability or lack of willingness to correct it continues to perpetuate racism within our communities.

If we honor Jacques Cartier as our national father, deserving of statues, parks, bridges, and clubs, but ignore that he kidnapped and killed members of the St. Lawrence Iroquois when he arrived in what is now Canada, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities. If we discuss the English colonization of Québec, Acadie, and Lower Canada, but gloss over the French colonization of the Wabanaki, Wendat, Haudenosaunee, or Inuit homelands, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities. If we acknowledge the French colonization of these same lands, but qualify French colonization as less bloody than the English or Spanish without acknowledging the inherent violence of colonialism, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities.

If we pretend or imply that Francos are a collection of homogeneously white ethnic groups, erasing Indigenous, Métis, and Black Franco-Americans, French-Canadians, Québécois, Acadians, Cajuns, Louisianais, etc., all of whom have existed within these groups for as long as these groups themselves have existed, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities. If we discuss the influence of decolonial movements on la Révolution tranquille, le Front de libération du Québec, or the founding of le Parti québécois, but do not discuss how little these movements have done to aid the decolonization of First Nation and Inuit communities, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities.

If we hold onto the myth of "les nègres blancs" or refuse to challenge the racial and elitist connotations of the term "pure laine,"...

If we hold onto the myth of "les nègres blancs" or refuse to challenge the racial and elitist connotations of the term "pure laine," we perpetuate racism in Franco communities. If we discuss Anglo store clerks in Montréal telling Francos to "speak white," seven-year-olds getting their knuckles bruised for speaking French in their New England schoolhouses, or illiterate nine-year-olds losing their fingers in the mills, but we remain mute on the far more damaging topics of Black and Indigenous slavery in Québec or the genocidal "boarding schools" operating through the early twentieth century, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities. If we imply that the awful working conditions in the mills or shoe factories were comparable to the daily horrors of chattel slavery, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities.

If we look to our persecution by the KKK as a painful reminder of our historical status in the United States, but refuse to acknowledge that white supremacy and anti-Black racism were and remain the core of the Klan's ideology, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities. If we talk about the bombs or cross burnings or armed mobs used to intimidate French-Canadian immigrants in the United States, but neglect to mention that these same bombs and crosses and mobs targeted Black Americans both more frequently and more violently, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities. If leading Franco academics insist on referring to Franco-Americans as "honorary Blacks" in a way that grossly minimizes the oppression and persecution of Black people throughout the Americas and world at large, we perpetuate racism in Franco communities. There is no such thing as "honorary Blacks." There is no acceptable variable you can insert into the equation of x = honorary y. There is no ethnic group whose history or social status can be grafted onto Black identity without minimizing the oppression of Black people, least of all a majority-white, colonial ethnic group.

When we exclusively focus on moments where we ourselves were the victims of oppression and bigotry but ignore the moments where we ourselves have perpetrated oppression and bigotry against others, this is racism. Without spending more time looking to the past and acknowledging the ugly and uncomfortable moments that occurred there, we cannot start to address their consequences in the present, let alone overcome them for the future. As a community, we have spent much time looking to the past, but we have failed to address the racism we found there in our histories, our identities, and our families. We have failed repeatedly and we have failed for a very long time. This does not mean that these failures have necessarily been intentional, it does not mean that we are incorrigibly "bad" people, it does not mean that our own oppression by the English, Protestant, or wealthy has been any less legitimate or painful. It does, however, mean that we can no longer look away from our past when we do not like what we see; it does mean that we cannot build a sturdy future on a foundation we refuse to fully inspect. There is work to do, work that is hard and tiring and unsettling, but work that is necessary, not only for our friends, neighbors, loved ones, and compatriots, but for our own community and its continued growth and development.

Coin des jeunes...

Les Lunettes de l'Automne

Par Virginie L. Sand

Un petit ours rendait visite à son Pépé Ours pendant le weekend. Là, son Pépé cherchait encore ses lunettes:

«Voyons Pépé Ours,» a dit le petit-fils ours, «Vous cherchez vos lunettes chaque fois que je suis ici avec vous.»

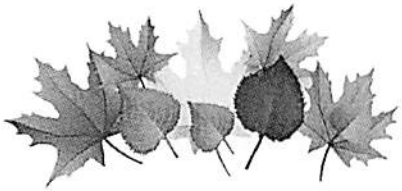
Pépé Ours, en souriant, a répondu, «Eh bien, mon cher petit-fils, je dois te garder occupé pendant ton séjour avec moi. Un petit ours ne peut pas être ennuyeux, n'est-ce pas?»

«Moi ennuyeux, Pépé? Jamais! Cherchons vos lunettes si bien que nous pouvons ratisser ensemble les belles feuilles de l'automne partout; les feuilles rouges, les feuilles jaunes et les feuilles oranges. Moi, j'adore les couleurs de l'automne, Pépé Ours.»

«Moi aussi, mon petit-fils.»

Enfin, tous les deux ont trouvé les lunettes de Pépé Ours dans le garage par le râteau. Un coïncidence?

La Fin



Eyeglasses of Autumn

By Virginia L. Sand

A little bear was visiting his Grandfather Bear for the weekend. There, his grandfather was again searching for his eyeglasses:

"Let's see Grandfather Bear," said Grandson Bear, "You search for your eyeglasses each time that I am here with you."

Grandfather Bear, while smiling, replied, "Well, my dear grandson, I must keep you busy during your stay with me. A little bear cannot be bored, right?"

"Me bored, Grandfather? Never! Lets find your eyeglasses so that we can rake the beautiful leaves of autumn everywhere together; red leaves, yellow leaves and orange leaves. Me, I adore the colors of autumn, Grandfather Bear."

"Me too, my grandson."

Finally, both of them found Grandfather Bear's eyeglasses in the garage by the rake. A coincidence?

THE END

(Continued on page 51)

(Continued from page 50)

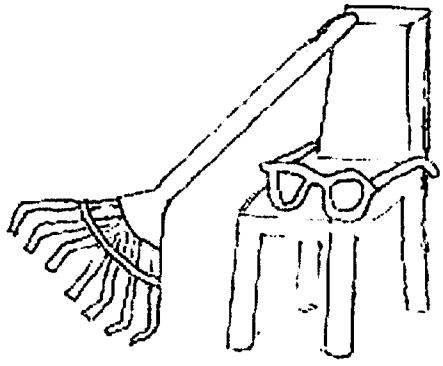
Aidez les deux ours en cherchant les lunettes de Pépé Ours.

Help the two bears search for Grandfather Bear's eyeglasses.

Pépé Ours (Grandfather Bear)

Le petit-fils ours
Grandson Bear

(Begin) Commencez



La fin (Finished)

Par Virginie Sand
By Virginia Sand

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THE FRANCO AMERICAN CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

The University of Maine Office of Franco American Affairs was founded in 1972 by Franco American students and community volunteers. It subsequently became the Franco American Centre.

From the onset, its purpose has been to introduce and integrate the Maine and Regional Franco American Fact in post-secondary academe and in particular the University of Maine.

Given the quasi total absence of a base of knowledge within the University about this nearly one-half of the population of the State of Maine, this effort has sought to develop ways and means of making this population, its identity, its contributions and its history visible on and off campus through seminars, workshops, conferences and media efforts — print and electronic.

The results sought have been the redressing of historical neglect and ignorance by returning to Franco Americans their history, their language and access to full and healthy self realizations. Further, changes within the University's working, in its structure and curriculum are sought in order that those who follow may experience cultural equity, have access to a culturally authentic base of knowledge dealing with French American identity and the contribution of this ethnic group to this society.

MISSION

- To be an advocate of the Franco-American Fact at the University of Maine, in the State of Maine and in the region, and
- To provide vehicles for the effective and cognitive expression of a collective, authentic, diversified and effective voice for Franco-Americans, and
- To stimulate the development of academic and non-academic program offerings at the University of Maine and in the state relevant to the history and life experience of this ethnic group and
- To assist and support Franco-Americans in the actualization of their language and culture in the advancement of careers, personal growth and their creative contribution to society, and
- To assist and provide support in the creation and implementation of a concept of pluralism which values, validates and reflects affectively and cognitively the Multicultural Fact in Maine and elsewhere in North America, and
- To assist in the generation and dissemination of knowledge about a major Maine resource — the rich cultural and language diversity of its people.

LE CENTRE FRANCO AMÉRICAIN DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DU MAINE

Le Bureau des Affaires franco-américains de l'Uni Maine fut fondé en 1972 par des étudiants et des bénév communauté franco-américaine. Cela devint par conséquent Franco-Américain.

Dès le départ, son but fut d'introduire et d'intégrer le F co-Américain du Maine et de la Région dans la formation aca post-secondaire et en particulier à l'Université du Maine.

Étant donné l'absence presque totale d'une base de conn à l'intérieur même de l'Université, le Centre Franco-Américain s d'essayer de développer des moyens pour rendre cette populati identité, ses contributions et son histoire visible sur et en-dehors du campus à travers des séminaires, des ateliers, des conférences et des efforts médiatiques — imprimé et électronique.

Le résultat espéré est le redressement de la négligence et de l'ignorance historique en retournant aux Franco-Américains leur histoire, leur langue et l'accès à un accomplissement personnel sain et complet. De plus, des changements à l'intérieur de l'académie, dans sa structure et son curriculum sont nécessaires afin que ceux qui nous suivent puisse vivre l'expérience d'une justice culturelle, avoir accès à une base de connaissances culturellement authentique qui miroite l'identité et la contribution de ce groupe ethnique à la société.

OBJECTIFS:

1 – D'être l'avocat du Fait Franco-Américain à l'Université du Maine, dans l'État du Maine et dans la région.

2 – D'offrir des véhicules d'expression affective et cognitive d'une voix franco-américaine effective, collective, authentique et diversifiée.

3 – De stimuler le développement des offres de programmes académiques et non-académiques à l'Université du Maine et dans l'État du Maine, relatant l'histoire et l'expérience de la vie de ce groupe ethnique.

4 – D'assister et de supporter les Franco-Américains dans l'actualisation de leur langue et de leur culture dans l'avancement de leurs carrières, de l'accomplissement de leur personne et de leur contribution créative à la société.

5 – D'assister et d'offrir du support dans la création et l'implémentation d'un concept de pluralisme qui value, valide et reflète effectivement et cognitivement le fait dans le Maine et ailleurs en Amérique du Nord.

6 – D'assister dans la création et la publication de la connaissance à propos d'une ressource importante du Maine — la riche diversité