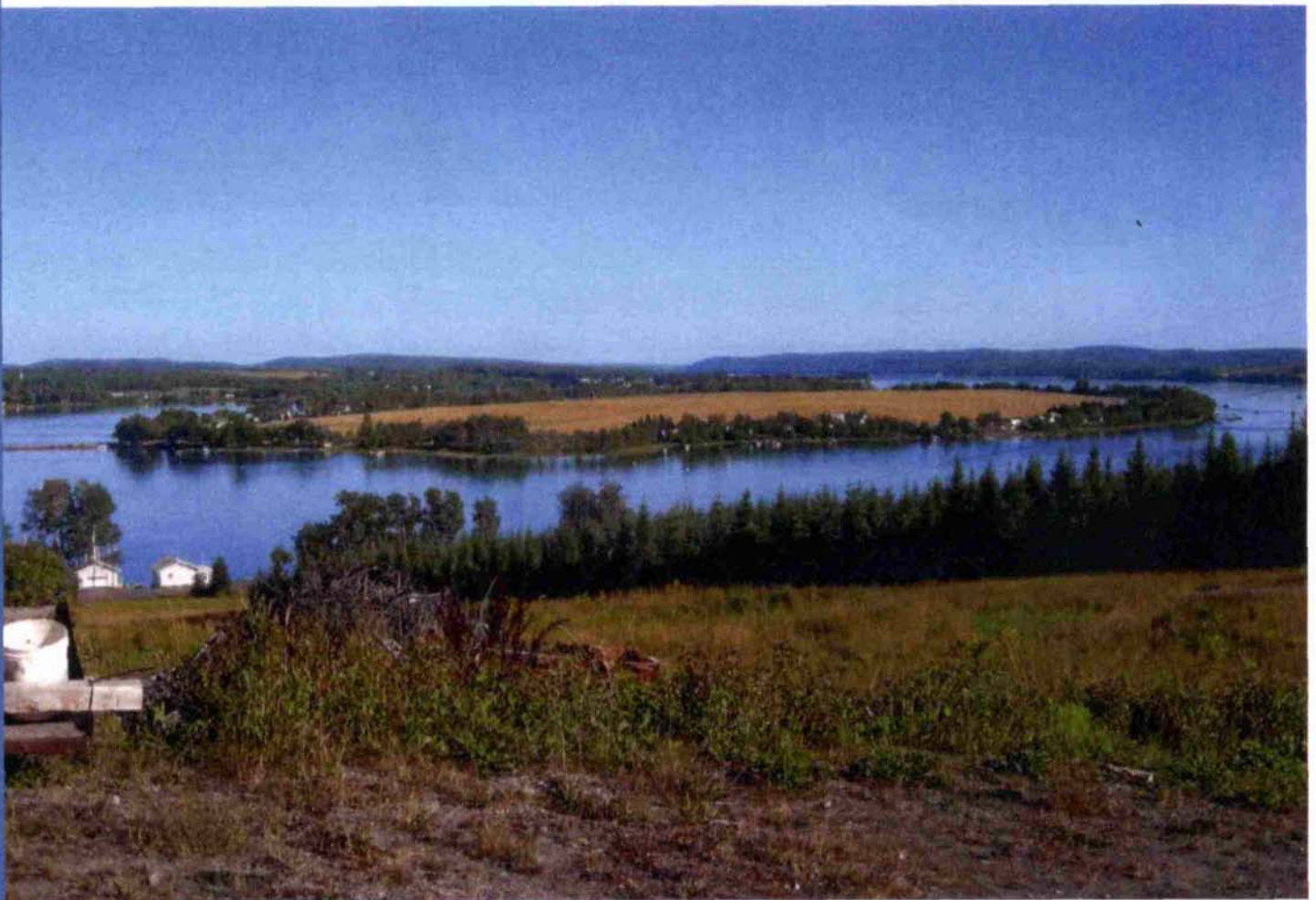


Ste-Agathe Historical Society Annual Newsletter 2010



View of Pelletier Island - Summer 2010



PELLETIER ISLAND

by Paul Marin

There is an indefinable singularity to setting foot on an island. It could be the spirit of Leif Erikson who's behind it. After all, it is wildly believed that the footloose Viking touched land on countless islands after leaving his footprints on the shores of Iceland. "*Ya, too cold,*" he may have said.

Or, picture this. Menon Ouellette told his family he was going for a trek in the woods southeast of the river, along Bourgoin Brook and up the hills... just to see, and he'd be back for supper. *J'vas revenir, woyons wair. Theotiste, ma belle femme, chre' pas longtemps. J'vas ainque faire un p'tit tour.* Menon's itch to explore may have been augmented by the woolen 'johns' clinging stubbornly to his frame during his hot summer trek.

Alexandre "Menon" Ouellette was born around 1806 in St. Andre de Kamouraska, Quebec. He had settled along the St. John river in the 1830's in what is now Frenchville. Not many years later he took his "walk", *yank pour wair*, and settled along the western edge of the lake. "*Just right,*" he probably said to himself.

When you walk through the woods and there is no path to follow, you quickly realize you can only see a little beyond the next tree's branches. When there are no open spaces, like Pousse-Ble today, fields and pastures, and clearings like the **LABRIE FARMS** or even slight elevations like the **R.F.CHAMBERLAND** trucking complex on the road from Frenchville, and **GERARD & SONS** on Brook Road, and sites like *La P'Tit Montange* or *La Montange Platte*, and what is today Mountain Road still heavily covered with forests, you have nothing from which to see what lies beyond. Other than the trees multiplying by the thousands in his path, Menon was still confident to sooner or later catch the clear, clean scent of a field of water, a lake, that he did not doubt existed. He had heard of the Maliseets talking about a large expanse of water where the fish were so plentiful and frisky they were apt to make frantic swimming dashes to shore at the sound of a crackling campfire.

There was no cause for Menon to bring the palm of his hand to his brow so as to reduce the glare of the sun in order to see what lay ahead. But surely, Menon wiped the sweat off his forehead several times as he labored miles into the woods feeling confident he'd be discovering some of nature's bounty.

Menon had reassured Theotiste he was very comfortable in the woods and knew better than to get lost.

"Ch'ta coutumez dans le grand bois. J'vas revenire avec une coupelle de belle padrie pour met dans un gros pot de bins." He was confident he'd return shortly with a couple of fat partridges to add to the bean pot.



“Dans ca la, amuse tois pa tros. Tu sait que ch’tans famille encore.” And then she added with a grin and giggle, *“P’tete que tu pass pas assey d’temp dans l’bois.* She sighed reaching for the hem of her long white apron hanging tellingly over her pregnant belly bringing it up to cover her coy smile on her pretty face and dry her runny nose.

He did go up the hill and we know he came back for his family and went on to settle at the head of the lake that for years was called ‘lac a Menon’. There is even evidence that at one time Menon held a deed to a small part of the island. Curiously, state records then referred to the lake as Cleveland Lake and yet deferred to Mr. Ouellette by acknowledging that the island was known as Menon’s Island.

He was probably the first white man to paddle across the water and set foot on the lake’s only large island now called **PELLETIER ISLAND**. He no doubt saw and probably ignored the three small islands located on either side of the causeway (which wasn’t there then) leading from Beaulieu Road. And the smallest of the lake’s five islands, the one that barely breaks above the water line and seems just about adequate enough for sea gulls web-footing across the sharp stones trying to catch a few of the sun’s rays, is located across ‘*la maison a matante Manda*’ and the **Long Lake Motor Inn** downhill from the center of St. Agatha.

To continue our efforts to see into the past, is it, rather, the moccasin-footed Maliseets who add weight and meaning to coming ashore? I’m certain I am not the only person to have found an arrowhead along Long Lake’s shores. I submit this as not proof positive the Maliseets were here but it is still solid positive evidence that they were. Surely, the Maliseets, generations of them, traipsed these woods and paddled these waters long before the area was claimed by the CROWN and the STARS and STRIPES. Whatever it is, stepping on an island for the first time defines the moment and etches it in your memory.

HOW DO YOU GET TO THE ISLAND FROM HERE? / **FIRST IT IS GOOD TO KNOW WHERE HERE IS.**

Four people from away, tourists from maybe Vinegar Bend, Iowa, or even Wytopotlock, if you can believe there is such a place, make their way down the hill from the **LAKEVIEW RESTAURANT** after a good meal and a great hour or so of gazing and “oo-ah-ing” at the splendid panoramic wonders of nature. The hills stretch all the way into New Brunswick and the corrugated fields and pastures reach clusters of neat houses ringing beautiful LONG LAKE. From that perch, our ‘touristy’ friends had marveled at the entire one-mile long island now called PELLETIER ISLAND.

“Shucks,” a lady in the back seat exclaims, “ we forgot to ask those nice people at the



LAKEVIEW the way to the island.”

“No sweat,” the gentleman at the wheel chimed in as he made a right turn heading into the village. “I remember a great little store here. Ah, there it is. **BABIN’S GROCERY OUTLET**. Let’s stop and ask.”

Gary, the owner, was in the store. And affable Gary is always front and center when it comes to selling a great cut of meat, fresh seafood, a submarine sandwich, a slice of pizza, or just plain small-town friendly greetings.

“Hey, sure can,” Gary started in with his animated quick set of directions about getting to the island. The island, as the crow flies, is close to here...less than a mile. But in order to drive onto the island you have to turn around a head to Madawaska.”

“No way,” said another lady passenger who had also walked into BABIN’S. We were in Madawaska at MARDEN’S yesterday and that’s almost half an hour’s ride from here.”

“Ya, ya. But you didn’t let me finish,” Gary continued. From here you want to turn your car around, go past the post office across the street and after the next building at the corner turn right. That’s called Cleveland Road.”

“Is that why they call it Cleveland Island?” The other lady asked.

“No. It’s called Pelletier Island and Cleveland road is what leads you to the island. It’s about five miles to the causeway that connects with the island.”

“Oh, and one more thing. Are there any stores, gift shops, and whatever on the...?”

“Oh, no.” Gary was quick to cut in as he witnessed a slight look of disappointment shrouding the lady’s face clutching her hefty handbag and her fistful of greenbacks.

Curiously enough, though the island sits entirely within the township of St. Agatha, the municipality to which the island residents pay their taxes, you must first drive to Madawaska. Well, not actually downtown Madawaska. But, yet, after you’ve driven five miles from the junction of 162 and Cleveland Road around the corner from **Babin’s** you will have crossed the *Madawaska/St.Agatha* town line in Cyr Cove. At that point, Cleveland road assumes a different name...Beaulieu Road.

After a few more sweeping bends in the road it is wise to drive alertly because in the *armpit* of the third curve, you need to take a sharp right onto the dusty causeway that links PELLETIER ISLAND to the rest of the *continent*.

EARLY SETTLERS

Among early settlers who worked the soil on the island, with pick and shovel, horse drawn plows and the ever aching backs, were people like the Sam Pelletier, Fred Ringuette, and



Pea Chasse families. True pioneers and hardy folks, they for years worked what amounted to probably less than a couple dozen acres altogether. Mostly potatoes and grains, they had to wait till the lake froze over to bring their produce to market. It must have meant lots of *griades et d'la sosse* but these people were accustomed to poverty, scarcity, and hard honest work.

LOOKING FOR LAND AWAY FROM IT ALL

Back in the forties Sylvio Roy was a local farmer-businessman growing seed potatoes. Sylvio saw an opportunity...and acted on it. Growing seed potatoes begs isolation. The acreage has to remain accessible, but accessible necessarily to the grower only. Otherwise, various contaminants can easily be introduced to the crop. And the crop has to be free of diseases. It is the foundation to the following growing season's production. So, Sylvio figured the island on Long Lake was the ideal answer. *Alone and in the middle of it all.*

Peter Roy, his son, remembers seeing a hundred acres of seed potatoes planted by hand. There were forty 'hands' doing it. And sometime in early summer, his workers did potato row after potato row checking for diseased plants. If one plant was infected, it was, along with the four healthy ones next to it, pulled out and bagged for disposal. *Until I looked it up as to meaning and spelling, I wasn't sure that was what was referred to as 'roguing'.*

After harvest, a sampling of seed potatoes was sent to Florida where they were grown, and if they met high standards of quality, the crop would then be ready for selling as seed for the following year.

The few families that had lived on the island and had survived meagerly had moved on. Sylvio paid off the heirs who had lost interest in the small holdings, and in 1943, became the sole owner of a mile-long, but unique, parcel of land surrounded by water. Getting to his acquisition, spreading over three-hundred acres, was the first hurdle he faced. The second had to do with clearing more woodland and turning it into arable acreage. One hundred of those acres were cleared quickly. The hardwoods were sold for firewood, the evergreens were floated to saw



**Sylvio Roy - 33 years old
Owner of the Island
April 21, 1943-April 7, 1952**



mills for lumber, and the softwoods were bulldozed and trashed along with stumps and set on fire. The southern edge of the island spewed smoke for weeks.

The other hurdle had to do with how to get to and from the island. In years past the inhabitants had moved their limited produce in sleds during winter months. A small ferryboat was built but it was not equal to the task. It was too small and could only carry one truck at a time. Besides, it was basically unsafe. Muskrats had developed an appetite for the wooden hull and so when a larger ferry was built in 1945, it was riveted with steel plate. The ferry was built on a vacant lot next door to the Naborhood Store at the western end of the lake. Emile Daigle, a Sinclair boat-builder, was in charge of constructing the ferryboat as well as the cabin cruiser. Sylvio named the cruiser "Ti-Pat" after Mrs. Roy.



This ferry was used by Sylvio Roy to bring potatoes from his 200-acre island at St. Agatha, Maine. 1945

The ferryboat was large enough to carry three potato trucks and was powered by a Chrysler Marine inboard engine. Sometimes, PATTY would ease her bow into a V-shaped wedge in the back of the ferry and push it across the waters. One of the ferry's early pilots was Paul Pelletier who was born on the island.

Though the craft plied the waters

between the ferry, landing on Cleveland Road and the island almost daily from May till October, it was never honored and christened with a name. It was simply and unceremoniously referred to as 'the butt'. More than likely, 'the butt' was really 'le butt' for 'the boat'.

This was simply a de-Anglicized convenience for oral comfort. Back in the 40's most people living alongside the lake spoke English in a haphazard fashion. Largely, English was spoken sparingly. Some did not at all. And very few could keep up 'les tetes carre'. Other than the Berce family and traveling salesmen rushing on through to Fort Kent and back to Presque Isle before supper, the French language was '*parle ici.*'



Peter Roy, retired and living with his wife Georgette, and clinging to his charming little cottage on Cleveland Road not far from the original boat landing, remembers attending the boarding school run by the Daughters of Wisdom in St. Agatha. And during harvest time he, more than once, ran away from school and raced to the front steps of Dufour's General Store on the corner of Main and Cleveland Road. There, he would keep an ear for the whining sound of one of his dad's trucks loaded with potatoes, chugging up the hill, before heading to Frenchville. As soon as he would spot one, Peter would hail it down, climb in the truck and make his escape home. The driver would smile, let little Peter in, and remind him not to mention who had given him a lift. Sylvio would bring him right back to the boarding school the next day but after a few more days, Peter would run off to Dufour's and wait for yet another ride home.

Sylvio had maintained a potato shed on the island. One of his employees, Gerard Pelletier, who lived near Emile Chasse's hardware store in St. Agatha, would leave his home early on winter mornings, well-dressed but gloveless as well as mitten-less and walk across the slick ice and snow drifts to light a fire in the shed.

For every substantial farm operation it is a given that hard-working and trusted farm hands are absolutely indispensable to the owner. When Sylvio Roy took over farming operations from his father, Peter Paul Roy (familiarily known as PPRoy who lived and breathed under his great big safari hat), had several farm hands who went to work every morning without having to be reminded what was on the agenda. One particular farm laborer who got to work before everyone else, who knew instinctively what needed to be done, and did it all with humor, purpose, and unstinting devotion was Lawrence Ayotte. He spent most of his adult life making the Roy family farm run like a well-oiled machine (pun intended). And that was precisely what he would do before anyone else set foot on the farm in the morning. Up early, Lawrence got to work **before he had to get to work**. He was there inspecting all manner of machinery, oiling them, filling the gas tanks, tightening this, tweaking that, fixing this, and simply making certain that when other farm workers showed up everything would be ready for heading out to the fields. Lawrence's work ethic no doubt went a long way in preventing and minimizing the usual and typical snafus that complicate a farmer's workday. He was never one to measure his workday in hours...but rather in giving quality time and getting things done.

By 1952, Sylvio, ever the entrepreneur, decided to go into another venture and offered his island up for sale.



THOSE SONS NEEDED MORE ACREAGE



***Étienne & Edwin Pelletier
Purchased the Island in 1952***

Ed Pelletier, a Frenchville farmer with several sons to put to work, was interested. He bought the island in 1952. He was soon convinced that going to and coming from the island was his biggest problem. The 'butt' was still adequate but somewhat cumbersome and limiting in its capacity for high traffic. There must be another way, he thought. "Why not a road," he asked?

Rock-bound property lines and mid-field rock piles dotted the landscape. Just as soon as early settlers cleared stretches of forest to engage in agriculture, they wrenched their backs picking rocks every time they plowed the fields. Fresh 'crops' of rocks came to the surface. There was no denying

their day in the sun. So, Edwin decided the time had come to construct a road to the island. There obviously was no shortage of *causeway building material*.

The prospect of building a road stretching nearly half a mile into the water reaching a depth of twenty feet in places didn't seem to be an impossible task. "God gave us a lot of rocks," Edwin smirked. And there were hills stacked with shale just off Cleveland Road as well as halfway up La P'Tit Montagne. Yet there was a particularly trying day that suggested the possibility of utter failure. Reno Pelletier [one of Edwin's sons] remembers seeing his dad shaking his head in disbelief and looking around for *a towel to throw in the lake*, or so it seemed. That day came after two solid days of easing dozens of truckloads of boulders into the deep without any headway. The rocks just gurgled and sent schools of bubbles to the surface. Obviously they were settling in the muddy bottom, but when would they pile up and reach and break the surface? "Where the heck are they going to?" That was the million ton question Fort Kent contractor Pat Daigle was wrestling with. Suddenly, and none too soon, someone let out a whoop and a holler and addressed his jubilation to the ISLAND itself as some boulders finally broke above the surface to stay. "Viendre de chien, Island. La parsambre, we have a road," someone in the work crew shouted.

Laying a causeway in the shallows is less daunting than dropping boulder after boulder in dark and deep waters. In order to achieve a twenty foot wide roadway, the roadbed necessarily had to be much wider at the bottom. Not unlike a pyramid. At first the causeway's surface was barely wider than a truck's axle. Yet, the base sitting on the lake's floor eventually reached a width of sixty and more feet.

Today, after years of use and improvements, the causeway's surface is well over twenty-five feet in



width. And if you pause to look closely at either side you will see many large boulders that when eased into the water years ago simply tumbled and settled a car-length away. There are stretches where one could, **but shouldn't**, dive into Cyr Cove from a car's running board...*if your auto is of that vintage.*

Over the years the causeway has not only been widened but also raised and graded. Its an ongoing effort and the annual PIG ROAST on PELLETIER ISLAND helps to supplement the funds needed for road maintenance.

Reno remembers a time when the lake's water level was so high the roadway was under water. Yet, he had to drive a loaded truck back to the mainland. And that was when the causeway was as narrow as one false turn of the wheel and...*swish, swallow, or swim.* It had taken Pat Daigle's crew only thirty days to complete the causeway and now Reno felt it might be taking him close to that to inch his way in bumper-high water to reach the other shore.

Reno also tells of another watery drive through the roadbed of rocks. Most of the work had been completed, but there was still a short span on the causeway's island approach that was under water. Reno, and two of his chums from Frenchville, were determined to be the first to drive the causeway to the island. The last few yards were spanned with the help of a tractor pulling the pickup across the last few yards of 'unimproved roadbed'.

Until a roadway spanned waters across to the island, the acreage Ed Pelletier had purchased was only profitable as farmland. But with the construction of the causeway, lakeshore lots became a viable option increasing the value of the holding. Handsomely? No. Not at first. Reno recalls his dad selling a few lots for only \$500. And the buyers were given the option of making five payments over the following five years. Today, several fistfuls of five-hundred dollar bills are needed to clinch a deal, a deed, and a handshake.

Today, there are at least a dozen year-round residents on Pelletier Island. And there are many times that many seasonal dwellings. The residents have formed an association and with the help and guidance of former St. Agatha town manager, Ryan Pelletier, and Community Development Director



Causeway to the Island



Paul Bernier, a new 2,200-foot sewer pipe has been installed crossing the bottom of the lake to Cleveland road.

Many years ago, before 'ecology' became a buzz word, before the awesome power of the Environmental Protection Agency was felt, and long before we pondered the cause and effect of outcomes, locals had an 'out-of-sight-out-of-mind attitude toward things that ultimately hurt everyone. Not that it is meant as an excuse, but the whole world was using its resources flagrantly. Locally, 'ICE OUT' in May was not yet a bona fide contest and rite of spring. 'Ice out' meant that by late March an accumulation of waste and garbage, canned goods, rotten potatoes, bare snow thread tires, abandoned machinery, and whatever else was no longer needed or wanted, was hauled out on the lake's ice and 'bid farewell'. There was a grist mill casting grain shells on shore. There were sawmills almost every mile from the head of the lake to Sinclair creating sawdust beaches a feather could sink into. Worse of all, there were two starch factories oozing their unusable potato pulp, called 'mush', and smelling as putridly as your imagination can muster, into Long Lake. **Young people may be shocked to hear and older generations may be embarrassed to remember**, but the water quality of the lake was patently violated and compromised.

Things have changed. People have changed. There is no question that residents in St. Agatha and everyone else living along the shores of Long Lake all the way to Birch Point, Bay Creuse, Van Buren Cove and Sinclair village have come to respect nature.

Tom Lacrosse, a man from away, maybe even further than Wytopitlock, or was it Baltimore?, and president of the Long Lake Property Owners Association, is, along with many local interested residents, serious about monitoring and contributing to lake water quality.

So, if a man from away can be as dedicated to the proposition that this place can be as great a place to live as any, what's to prevent locals, with both feet anchored in the history and shores of Long Lake, to be doing the same.

The future of the area, based on the present, is very promising. No wonder people, once they have set foot in this community, echo the feeling that this is the prettiest town South of the Border.

FOOTNOTES...as in setting foot on PELLETIER ISLAND

The Maliseets...."Been there, done that."

Menon ... "Ya pas rien la."

Sylvio... "Got my feet wet getting off my 'butt'".

Edwin... "Oops! Had an island. Now, a peninsula."

Wytopitlock lady... "Open a gift shop and they will come."

Typical island resident... "Come to our pig roast every year."

Choice fattened pig... "Oink,'d rather not, oink, oink."

2010



Donated Items in 2010

Donna LaPointe Boucher	Baptismal Set
Generous Treasure Shoppe	Statue of Blessed Virgin Mary, Wooden Baby Crib, Women Army Corp Uniform, Boxes, Blankets, Books, Home Made Aprons, School Maps, Set of Dishes, Albums, Post Cards
Sisters of the Holy Rosary	Statues, Gold Curtains, Religious Artifacts, Collection of Crucifixes, Porcelain Pot & Pitcher, Washboards, Game Board, Framed Photo of Elisabeth Turgeon
Gerry Morin	Religious Items, Souvenir Shirts of Wisdom High School
Dale & Cyrilla Picard Charette	Chalice With Dome, Numerous Religious Items
Annette Boutot	Doll representing Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
Philip Morin	Armoire, Jewelry Box, Wooden Tool Chest, Bench Saw
Stanley Albert	Child's Dress, Wooden Shoes, Photographs, Tools, Woolen Socks, Porcelain Pots, Meat Grinder, Globe, Flail, Basket, Special Cloths, Maple Sugar Taps, Traps, Grant's Pint Jar, Drill, White Pedestal
Edmund & June Marquis	Double Barrel Rifle
David & Dot Michaud	1949 Notre Dame de la Sagesse High School Diploma, Photo Albums
Bernadette Roy Albert	Boarder's Blue Jumper
MSAD # 33 Teachers Association	Scholarship Supper Register 1972 - 2006
Patricia Morin	Set of Dishes
Lee St. Onge	Clock, Dress, Purse, Hat, First Communion Items
Bernice Vaillancourt & Paul Vaillancourt	Heavy Duty Soap Bars
Gloria Gervais	Student Writings - "What A Veteran Means to Me"



Patricia Dow	Three Issues of Le Brelan (November 2008, 2009, February 2009) Association des Familles Michaud Inc.
Florence Rose Martin	Portrait of O'Neil E. Martin, Shoe Shine and Shoe Repairing Materials, Harvest Time Photo, Religious Books, Rosaries, Crucifixes
Phyllis Fortin Morin	
Florine Michaud	Hair Dryers, Curling Irons, Mink Coat & Hat, Yearbooks, Pamphlets, Missal, Watch
Rose Marie & Gerald Dubois	Tonka Toys, Cart, Buckets, Canisters, Barrel, Books, Carpenter's Adze, Drill, Ice Hook, Certificate & Nurse Cap, Mink Stole, Framed Picture, Handmade Man-Dal-La, Lamp, Woolen Blanket
Paul & Avril Marin	Laundry Case
Roland & Phyllis Paradis	Basket Making Supplies
Gerard & Diane Castonguay	Drum, Banjo, Box of Picture Frames
Jackie Plourde Daigle	Twist Stitch Afghan
Elmer & Francine Ouellette	Religious Items
Cynthia Daigle	2010 Pioneer Yearbook-Wisdom Middle/High School
Sr. Juliette Michaud	Collection of Recipe Books
Long Lake Public Library	Wisdom High School Pennants, Textbooks, Workbooks
Sr. Jackie Ayotte	Convent Bell
Alfreda Chamberland	Wooden Shoes
Aline Paradis Marquis	Statue
Patricia Ouellette	Afghans, Scarves, Crocheted Items
Jacqueline Ouellette Rossignol	Mother of the Groom Dress
Reno Gagnon	Gagnon Family Reunion Book



Ron & Sylvia Caron Belanger	Collection of Magazines, Braided Rug, Books
Jeannine Cyr Caron	1955 - 8th Grade Graduation Dress
Mildred A. Pelletier Bishop	Framed Confirmation Certificate
Berthier Michaud	Gasoline Chainsaw
Cliff & Theresa Guerrette	Hay Hook & Pulleys
Armand Chasse	Poetical Works of Longfellow
Mary Ann Chamberlain	Pictorial History of World War II, Lincoln Library
Walter Fournier	Photo of World War I Veteran - Ernest Boucher
Sr. Aurelie Michaud	Two Volumes - Les Belles Histoires du couvent de Ste-Agathe
Denis & Phyllis Martin Levesque	Black Double Door Cupboard



***Piano - Donated to the Ste-Agathe Historical Society by Louis & Claire Michaud
In Memory of his parents, Rosaire & Lucille Chasse Michaud - August 21, 2010***

***In Photo: Louis Michaud, Roger Morneault, Scott Gagnon,
Vincent Morneault, and Jeff Michaud***



Candide Chamberland Desrosiers

Hand Crocheted Table Cloth & Bedspread

Jeannine Sinclair Daigle

Magnetic Sign

Oneil & Delphine CotÉ Lavertu

Delphine CotÉ's 1929 St. Agatha High School Diploma

Cecil Dugal

Replica of American LaFrance Fire Truck

Claudette Paradis Bedard

Antoine Paradis' Knight of Columbus Suit

Bernard Michaud

Framed Baptism & First Communion Certificate, Charts and Books of Association Lacordaire, Wooden Table, Potato Bags, Book, Knitted Purse, Antique Chairs, Specialty Tools

Elaine Michaud

Framed Pictures & School Bags

Don Parent & Rina Cyr

1950 Electric Stove

Robert & Frances Collins

Stone, Sewing Machines

Danny Morin

Anvil

Sacred Heart Brother Cassock & Crucifix

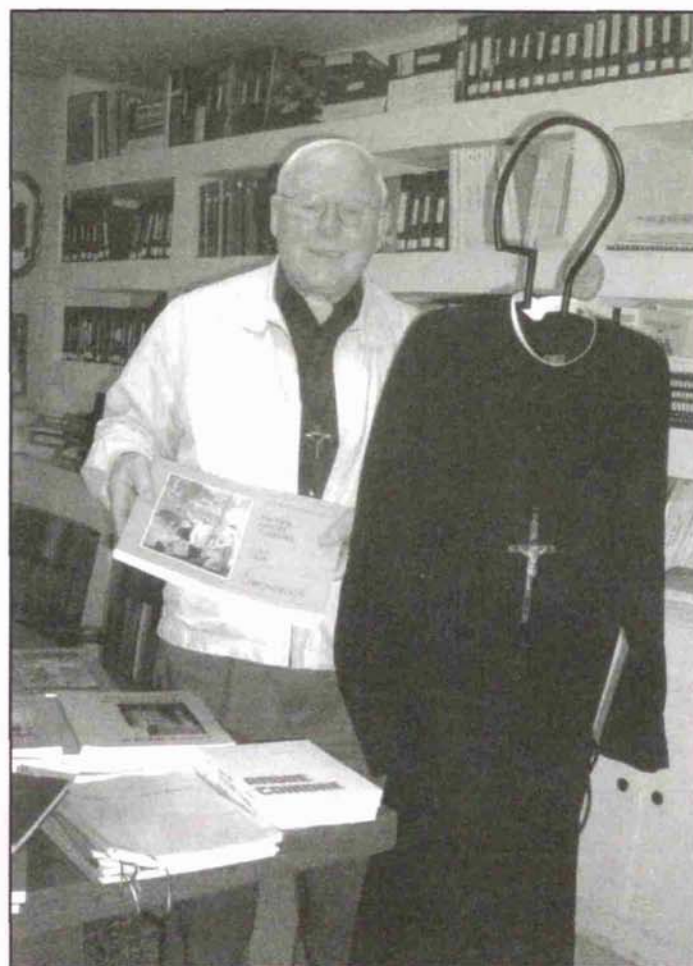
Collection of Books

Two Copies of The Deportation of the Acadians

Twp Copies of Evangeline (French)

Donated by Brother Leon Cyr, S.C.

August 26, 2010



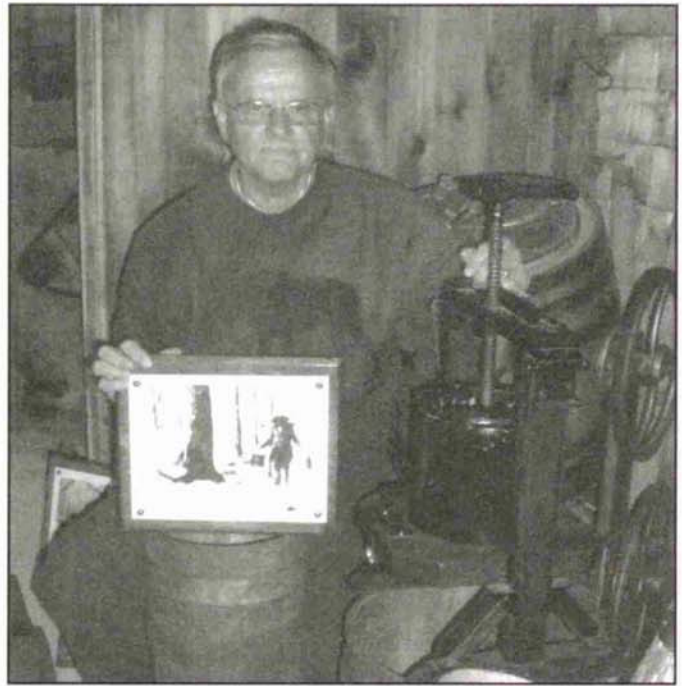
Maple Sugar Time Display

Apple Press

Donated by Keith & Bern Lord
Wallagrass, ME

In Photo: Keith Lord

August 26, 2010



MON ACADIE

A Lecture by Jacqueline Chamberland Blesso
Alliance Française of Bergen County, Ridgewood, NJ
April 20, 2010
(Translated by the Author)

When one mentions *Acadie* or *Acadien*, two questions usually arise: Where is Acadia? and Who are the Acadians? On board a whale-watching expedition a few years ago near Cheticamp, Nova Scotia, where one can see the Acadian flag flying everywhere, a man called out to our young guide, "what country does this flag represent?" We will come back to this question. Of course, you know the Cajuns, and their cuisine and music. They are the French-speaking people who arrived in Louisiana towards the end of the 18th century from several areas in the American northeast from to where they had been deported...But, in order to understand all of this, we must return to the past. With the help of a bit of geography, I will try to answer these questions by recounting a chapter of North American history that you probably don't know. I appeal to your indulgence because it is necessary to know it in order to answer them.

Acadian history began in France. On June 28, 1604, one of the first French expeditions, this one headed by Samuel de Champlain and Pierre Du Gua, Sieur de Mons, arrived in the territory of the Passamaquoddy (*les Etchemins*) at St. Croix Island, on the river of the same name situated between Maine and New Brunswick. In Calais, Maine, the National Park Service, in collaboration with the Canadian Park Service, maintains a commemorative area where one can see the Island. The quadricentennial of the arrival of Champlain was celebrated in 2004.

Buffeted by the wind, St. Croix Island was not a welcoming place, and 35 of the 79 pioneers, almost half, died of hunger, cold and scurvy during the first winter. Thus, in the spring of 1605, the colony crossed the Bay of Fundy (*la Baie française*) to establish *Port Royal* on the north shore of what is now Nova Scotia. Subsequent expeditions brought more colonists from the north and west of France. They prospered and spread out in the region subsequently named *Acadie*. They were highly skilled in building dikes to recover land. See <http://www.landrystuff.com/cpicard.htm> to view copies of a series of six paintings about the Acadian deportation by Claude Picard of Saint Basile, New Brunswick. The originals are at the National Historic Site in Grand Pré in Nova Scotia. The first one, "*Le Paradis terrestre*," depicts their early idyllic life.



*Painting of l'île Ste-Croix by, and
courtesy of, Don Cyr, Lille, ME*



There are different versions on the origin of the name *Acadie*: It is said that Verrazano had explored the area and named it *Arcadie*, based on the mythical land of ancient Greece. Another version, more plausible, comes from the name *Cadie* from the natives, which signifies a piece of land. It was the first European colony north of Florida. There were Huguenots who arrived in Florida in the 16th century, but the Spanish chased them out of the area. Other efforts at colonizing from other countries did not succeed, including a French expedition mounted by Jean Ribout in 1562 in South Carolina near present-day Hilton Head, which did not survive. Thus, the colony of *Acadie* preceded that of Québec founded in 1608 and the first English colony of Jamestown in 1607 and, of course, the arrival of the Pilgrims in Plymouth in 1620, the event celebrated by our national holiday of Thanksgiving. France founded a colony in America after Spain, but before England.

Acadie changed hands several times between the French and English in the wars for domination of North America in the 17th and 18th centuries. Victims of these skirmishes, the Acadians were known as the French Neutrals for their refusal to bear arms not only against their French brothers, but against the British when the French were in power. As you well know, the British won definitively at the beginning of the 18th century, and the Acadians were required to take an oath of allegiance to England. See Claude Picard's second painting, "***Le Serment d'allégeance.***"

Because of the amicable relations between the Acadians and the natives, the English were afraid of insurrection. In the middle of the century, they demanded an unconditional oath which would have forced the Acadians to bear arms against the French if there were to be another war. They refused. Their refusal of the new oath was used as the pretext to start their deportation in 1755 which lasted until 1763. Those who could not be captured and deported became fugitives. The third Picard painting is named "***L'Ordre de Déportation.***"

This diaspora is called "*Le Grand Dérangement.*" There are no precise numbers, but it is estimated that 10,000 Acadians were forcibly put on ships, with only the clothing on their backs and whatever they could carry, separating many families, as seen in the fourth painting, "***Le Départ Vers L'exile.***" Imagine this embarkation in the middle of confusion in the cold of autumn. I saw on television the ethnic cleansing and deportation of Kosovar families in Serbia in 1999. The similarity to the Acadians was striking, except that, for the Acadians, the conditions were much more primitive, and the eyes of the world were not looking on via *France 2* or CNN. No one came to help them. Then, their homes and farms were torched: fifth painting, "***On incendie leurs villages.***" The abandoned livestock had to fend for themselves.

It is estimated that 20%, hence 2,000, perished in shipwrecks, and from hunger, cold, smallpox – and grief – in the holds of these ships. To prevent them from reuniting, the survivors were scattered in small groups all along the Atlantic coast. Imagine separated families who would try to reunite at that time. There was no Red Cross, no telephones and no faxes to help them find each other. The colonists did not want them. In Acadia, they were self-sufficient and independent, but their wealth consisted of farms, homes and livestock. Since money did not circulate the way it does today, they arrived in the English colonies



with nothing. They suffered hunger and many other difficulties. They were sold as indentured servants. Children separated from their parents were brought up by colonists, losing their identity.

Some were repatriated. I use “repatriated” in quotation marks because several generations had lived in Acadia for a century and a half. They no longer knew France. They no longer understood the French agricultural system and they had difficulty adapting. In Acadia they were free and self-governing. Their quarrels and legal problems were resolved amongst themselves. They were a burden for the French who tried to feed them, give them shelter and place them; but a large number left to go back to the new world.

Others were incarcerated locally. Some were sent to English prisons and even to the Falkland Islands. After a while, many who had been scattered along the Atlantic coast tried to return to Acadia, sixth painting, “*Migration et retour.*” But, Acadia no longer existed. The territory, already occupied by Scotsmen and Englishmen, was now known as Nova Scotia.

Some other Acadians left the English colonies for the French colony of Louisiana. The term Cajun is a deformation of the word Acadian. One must go to the Lafayette area in the southwest of Louisiana to visit the *Cadiens*, as they call themselves. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the renowned 19th century Maine poet, recounted their travails in a dramatization of the history in his epic poem “Evangeline.” The sesquicentenary of its 1847 publication was celebrated in 1997. It was filmed in 1929 with Dolores Del Rio and Roland Drew playing the protagonists, Evangeline and Gabriel. A statue of the fictitious character, Evangeline, was erected in Martinville, Louisiana. The song “Evangeline” has become a “national” hymn for the Acadians.

To escape the English dragnet, a good number of fugitives hid in the forests or with the natives. One must once again try to imagine the conditions in which they found themselves in the middle of winter without shelter and with only what they had been able to carry with them when they surreptitiously left their homes. Many went to Quebec, and others hid out in small groups in what is now New Brunswick. After the American Revolution of 1776, many Loyalists (loyal to England) who were no longer welcome near the American revolutionaries, left for Sainte-Anne (now Fredericton) in New Brunswick. This arrival caused a great deal of friction between the Acadians who were pushed out of the area once more. Their homes were again burned. During the 1780s, they started to arrive in the upper St. John River Valley, and today there is a yearly commemoration of the disembarkation of 16 of these families in Saint David on the south shore about 1785. They were able to establish themselves on both sides of the river to found the colony of Madawaska. The Maliseets, part of the large native Abenakis nation, already occupied the area. There are at least two interpretations of the meaning of the native word Madoueskak: either “land of the porcupine” or “a placid and calm area where two rivers meet.”

Madawaska territory had long been claimed by both England and the United States. In 1842, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty established the upper St. John River as the border between the United States



and Canada splitting the territory in half. This agreement separated a cohesive population into two political groups – Canadians on the north side of the river and Americans on the south shore. For me, the result is that I am American instead of Canadian. Starting at the end of the 18th century, Acadians who had gone to Quebec and married, arrived in the area bringing their Quebec-French spouses and their parents and relatives from the Saint Lawrence River area to the Madawaska region, uniting these two francophone North American groups which formed the Madawaskan. Like most North American Francos, my ancestral line issues from several milieux – from royalty to an ancestor, Jean Chassé, from my paternal grandmother's line who was given the choice of either emigrating from Besançon to the new world or being incarcerated for illegally dealing in salt, a privilege reserved to royalty at that time. My genealogy is a mixture of Québécois and Acadians who arrived from France at the beginning of the 17th century and who have inhabited the new world for 12 generations.

After their long 30-year wanderings between the deportation and their arrival on the banks of the St. John River, which brings to mind the biblical exodus, their education had been transmitted orally by their ancestors and by itinerant priests. This does not imply a lack of cultural life. For those who are conscious of ethnography, I bear witness to a microcosm of Acadian mores. Our people sustained themselves with songs, dances, quadrilles and tales of *Ti-Jean* and other stories which took hours to recount, such as "*La Bête à sept têtes*."

They also composed *complaintes*, poems set to music and sung to a *timbre*, which is an air already known to the writer and his audience. The Franco-American *complainte* tells of the tragedy of a compatriot and preserves the memory of the victim of the tragedy. Part of the oral tradition, it was realized that the *complainte* was disappearing. Examples were collected and written down throughout Acadia. The following is from the Valley: "*La Complainte d'Abraham Gagnon*," composed in 1907, sung by Maxime Sirois, who learned it by heart when he was seven years old. At 92 years old, he interpreted it and he passed away a few months later. Collected by Lisa Ornstein, it can be found in the Acadian Archives in Fort Kent, Maine. Here are the first two of the seven stanzas:

*Dans l'année mille neuf cent sept-e, un' complaint' j'ai composée;
Le vingt-six du mois décemb'e, un accident est arrivé;
Un homme à la fleur de l'âge, peut-etr' que vous l'connaissez;
C'est l'garçon [à] Abraham Gagnon, dans le bois il s'est fait tuer.*

*Il travaillait sur les yard-es, c'est pour des billots rouler;
Y en a un qui lui échappe et qui s'en r'vient le tuer;
Sa mort a été si prompte; il n'a pas pu être assisté;
On na pas pu avoir le prêtre pour le préparer à l'éternité.*



The author of this complainte is unknown, but the people in my region know about the events which are its subject. It serves as a funerary hymn for two brothers who died in accidents and who rest in the St. Agatha Cemetery. Pergolèse composed the music to accompany Charles Henri Riboutté's 18th century lyrics for "*Que ne suis-je la fougère.*" The air also accompanies a paschal season hymn that the author undoubtedly knew. Relatively modern, this complainte, like its medieval predecessor, serves as a moral exhortation to the audience. It is a reminder that the Acadians came from France at the end of the Middle Ages.

Americans explain to children that the stork brings newborns. I don't know if you have a different way of explaining this event. I am told that in France babies are found in cabbages. The Acadians and Québécois would tell their children that "*les sauvages sont passés*" (the Indians came by) and brought a baby. At that time "*les sauvages*" meant "people of the forest" and was the name given to the natives. They would also say that the Indians had broken the mother's leg, which would explain her convalescence. In reality, it was the "*sages femmes*" or "*grand-mères capuches*" who assisted at births. Being young when one of my sisters was born, I was absolutely certain that I had seen "*les sauvages*" go by our house.

There were people who were known to possess what was called "*les secrets.*" It was believed that they could cure warts, stop the bleeding of an injury and alleviate the pain of a burn. A man could confer his secret on a woman, and a woman could give it to a man, but not to the same sex. When I was about ten, a compatriot who was supposed to possess the secrets, told me to not look at the wart on my hand for a certain period of time. After that time, it had disappeared and I believed that he had taken it away.

"*Le morceau du voisin,*" another custom, consisted of giving the best cut of the animal to the neighbor, who would also return the same favor when he butchered an animal.

Neighbors would assemble for large projects in a frolic to help alleviate work and to accomplish the hardest and most difficult tasks, like the building of a barn. Some people would do the construction while others cooked *boudin*, *cretons* (which the French call *rillettes*), *ployes* and *tourtières* (meat pies). They would gather dandelions, fiddlehead ferns, nuts, wild strawberries, raspberries and blueberries for dinner.

After the work and the feast, the fiddle would appear and dancing would start in the barn. The moment had arrived to have fun. If you've heard Québécois and Louisianan music, you know the kind of music that was performed here at weddings and celebrations. They also played the *guimbarde*, a tiny metal harp vibrated in the mouth.

People would get together at "*veillées*" taking turns hosting in the neighborhood to exchange banter and have fun. The winter holidays brought great celebrations and *réveillons* after midnight mass, and visits to the neighbors for New Year's wishes. Marian devotions continued during the month of May in the neighborhood schoolhouses and in the larger houses. The Acadians, extremely devoted to Saint Anne, often go on pilgrimages to Sainte-Anne de Beaupré in Quebec, especially during the summer.

Since the Madawaska region is interior and agricultural, people worked at woodcutting, practiced



animal husbandry and cultivated grains and potatoes. Of course, we call the tuber "*patate*" and not "*pomme de terres*" having adopted the name given to it by the natives of South America who were the first to cultivate it.



Woodcutters gave us the popular art of wood sculpture. During the long winter evenings without the diversions that we know today, they would carve toys and statues. Claude Cyr from Madawaska sculpted his granddaughter in Acadian dress. George Beaulieu carved a three-story castle with a clock. Albert Deveau of Edmundston uses a chainsaw to carve life-sized or larger statues. On the occasion of one of the Acadian Festivals during the summer, he sculpted Tante Blanche, a historic and mythical personage who had helped many people during a winter of famine caused by a ruined harvest.

What may seem like outdated French expressions, are currently employed in our region. We still use many elements of the 16th and 17th century French language. In France, the guttural pronunciation of the /r/ was introduced in the 17th century. Since many Acadians had already left the hexagon before this happened, they brought with them the rolled /r/. On the north side of the Saint John River, the guttural /r/ is heard, because education is conducted in French and there has been more contact with other French regions. While on the south side of the river, because education is conducted in English and there has been less interaction with other French areas, the rolled /r/ has been kept. Thus, 16th century speech was conserved at home. With a rolled /r/, we say: *Robert revient de la rivière avec un raton*. At any rate, certain regions in France still use the rolled /r/.

To give you another example of this speech, let's look at the diphthong /oi/ which the metropolitan French pronounce /wa/ as in *toi* and *moi*. In our area the /wa/ is pronounced in different ways. It's pronounced /wè/ as in *étwèl* for *étoile*, *mouchwère* for *mouchoire* and *bwère* or *bwére* for *boire*, which corresponds to the pronunciation at the beginning of the 16th century in France. Two other pronunciations developed during that century: /è/ and /wa/. The /è/ survives in the Valley as in the pronunciation of *drète* for *droit*, or *frète* for *froid*, while the /wa/ of the present metropolitan speech is rarely heard on the American side. The /wé/, as in *twé* and *mwé* which currently exists in our area, comes from before the 13th century. In France, even after the strong effort at standardization of the language in the 17th century, the /wé/ persisted until the 18th century. One can imagine Louis XIV who would have said: "*Le rwé, c'est mwé.*" The French immigrants, having already arrived in the new world at the beginning of the 17th, continued the other pronunciations brought with them of /wé/, /è/ and /wè/ as in *twé*, *drèt* and *étwèl*.

Certain /ah/s are pronounced like /âw/s, especially in the words *pas* and *âge*. Again, in France the /âw/



changed to /ah/. In Maine we say: “*Au Madawaskâ on parle p s comme au Canad .*” The / / in *merci* is pronounced in our area, as well as in Nova Scotia, like an /a/. We say *marci*.

Because of the isolation from other French areas, we also use some antiquated words. On a vacation to Guadeloupe and Martinique a few years ago, we arrived at *l’Anse Mitan* which brought to mind our word *mitan* which means middle. We put flowers *au mitan de la table* (in the middle of the table). *Chantepleur* [or *champlur*] is another interesting word that we use which is a small spigot on a cask or barrel, but which we use for all faucets. The word *robinet* does not exist for us. When the name of a new object was not known, it was named after another object which resembled it. We also borrowed indianisms like *moccasin* and *boucane*. A small cabin for smoking meats to conserve them was called a *boucan*; the smoke coming out of the *boucan* was named *la boucane*.

I would like to quote a few sentences from Ephrem Boudreau of Nova Scotia, the author of an Acadian glossary. He says: “Acadian speech is not a patois. It is what has been the most beautiful speech from France in the 17th century, that of Touraine, Berri, Aunis, Anjou, that of the court of Henri IV. Isolated for a long time from Qu bec, from France and from other French areas, Acadian French has faithfully preserved, without appreciably modifying it, the speech brought by our ancestors from France in the 17th century. From a linguistic point of view, Acadian speech is thus a phenomenon, an archeological specimen, a historic treasure.” I would say that it’s the speech of the 16th and 17th centuries, because the Acadians brought with them in 1604 the speech of the 16th century.

Antonine Maillet, the writer with an international reputation, wrote her doctoral thesis on the comparisons between the works of Rabelais and Acadian speech. She says: “Acadian is an ancient language... We did not invent anything here: all the words that I use are French words, but old French words...Go and verify this, it’s in Rabelais, in Villon, in Marguerite de Navarre, and even in Moli re.” A prolific writer, she is considered to be the most important Acadian author; *La Sagouine* is perhaps the best known of her writings. Her novel, *Pelagie-la-Charette*, on the subject of the return of the dispersed Acadians, won her the Prix Goncourt in 1979. Her extensive production has been translated into many languages. She said that we must not forget *le Grand D rangement*, but we must climb on top of this experience and go past it. She graciously accorded me an interview which may be found at: <http://riverreview.umfk.maine.edu/documentsfin/jcblesso1.htm>

Does the French language survive on the American side of the Valley? When I was young, everyone spoke French. I learned English for the first time when I went to school. In the 50s, in elementary school, the State prohibited us from speaking our language and we would receive demerits or corporal punishment if we spoke French in the schoolyard. A 1959 teachers’ handbook says: “A teacher violates her moral and legal obligation when children are encouraged to speak other than English at recreation, in the schoolyard, before and after school and even outside of school.” Consequently, there are psychological problems associated with the speaking of the French language. People of my generation and older speak French.



But, most young people who still understand their parents prefer to speak English amongst themselves. The language is galloping to its annihilation. Fifteen or so years ago, an immersion program was instituted in two of the primary schools with the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy. Last year, a few classes in French were substituted for the immersion program. It's not a good omen. French will not be re-established unless we start with the youngest children.

Acadian Culture in Maine, to which I contributed, is the result of a study of the Acadian region in Maine by the National Park Service. This effort represents the recognition by the U. S. Congress of the significance of our culture. In 2007, the New York Times published a travel article about both sides of the American and Canadian border along the St. John River. Although the historical facts are a bit muddled, it will give you an idea of the region: <http://travel.nytimes.com/2007/06/29/travel/escapes/29american.html>



Let's come back to our question at the outset concerning the Acadian flag. I was listening with a great deal of attention when our young guide on the whale-watching expedition answered that "**the Acadian flag does not represent a nation, it represents a people.**" Of course, **it's a people without a country.** Like the French tricolor, it is blue, white and red, but with a yellow star symbolizing Mary, Stella Maris, who guided the exiles through tempests and sufferings.

The British government had never admitted to the facts of the *Grand Dérangement*. During the 1990s, an acknowledgement of the wrongs committed against the Acadians was sought in a campaign led by Warren Perrin from Louisiana. There was never question of a demand for reparations for the injustices committed against them, only a mea culpa. In her proclamation of December 9, 2003, Queen Elizabeth II finally admitted the role of the British government under George II who had given the orders for the dispersal of the Acadians. To commemorate the occasion, I wrote an op-ed piece for the *Bangor Daily News* and *France-Amérique*.

The Acadians were stripped of their goods, deported, scattered throughout the world, imprisoned, killed, sold, combated, beaten, disbanded, destroyed, conquered and reconquered. They lost their belongings, they suffered and they covered a lot of territory. On the other hand, what did they do and what are they doing? They spread out, are reborn, redo, remember, succeed, help each other, increase, construct and reconstruct. They endure and **they survive.**

The Acadians get together every five years in an area which maintains an Acadian population. I attended the *Congrès Mondial Acadien* in Lafayette, Louisiana in 1999. Since then, there have been other gatherings. But, in 2014, the *Congrès* will take place in our region of Northern Maine and on the other side of the St.



John River in New Brunswick and in Quebec Province, an area which has been combined under the designation *l'Acadie des Terres et des Forêts*.

I would like to end with a poem which is part of Norman Dubé's 1976 collection "*Un Mot de Chez-Nous*." Normand was born in Lille on the American side and he passed away a few years ago. He uses the word "*ratoureur*" which is someone who likes to play pranks. He also uses the word "*chétif*," which has the sense in the Valley of someone who likes to

tease and who is a little bit mischievous. The poem is entitled: "**Théophile.**"



Lorsque Théo était vivant
Le village nous était un paradis
Lorsque Théo était vivant
Il était raconteur
Il était vieux-sage
Il était bouffon
Il était ratoureur
Travailleur
Mangeur de boudin
De tourtière
De 'plogue'
De creton
Comme il était Acadien

Il avait les yeux chétifs
Très bruns
Il avait les cheveux touffus
Très blancs
Il était pâle
Il avait les épaules courbées
Il avait le pas lourd
Parfois chancellant



Toujours mesuré
Jamais pressé
Comme il était Acadien

Il était pour les quadrilles
Il était pour les folklores
Il était pour les enfants
Les jeunes
Les coeurs grands
Il était pour le soleil sur le sarrasin
La pluie sur les noisettes
Les patates terreuses
Les grands bouleaux
Les sapins
Le bleu de l'Atlantique
Le drapeau
Le porc-épic
Comme il était Acadien

Théo
Il pleurait aux funérailles
Il saluait tous les amis
Il parlait aux veuves
Il souriait aux enfants
Il buvait 'son coup'
Un peu partout
Avec n'importe qui
Pour le moindre prétexte
À Noël
Les anniversaires
Le vendredi

Théo
Comme il était vivant
Comme il était Acadien
Sa plus grande vertu était
D'être humain.



STE-AGATHE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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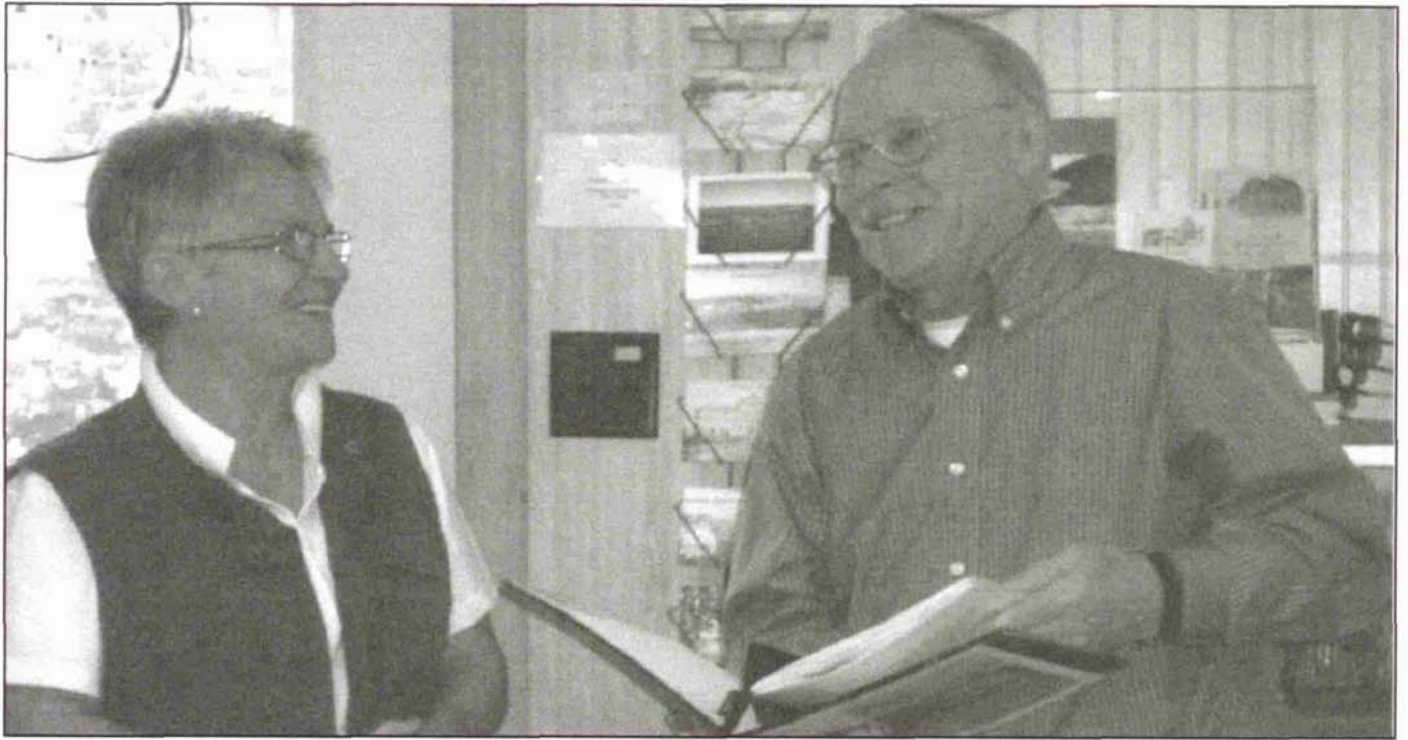


Part of the Exhibit 100 High School Graduations in St. Agatha



*Jean Paul Michaud, Maude Marin, Patricia Dow
Maude Marin, Class of 1934, oldest St. Agatha High School Alumni
at the Summerfest Banquet - August 1. 2010*





*Terry Ouellette and Gerald Dubois - Appreciation Brunch September 12, 2010
The Board presented Gerald a photo album of his work displayed at the Center.
Gerald & Rose Marie moved to Kentucky on September 25, 2010*



*Weaving Sweet Grass L-R: Sally Gagnon, Jacqueline Rosignol, Bernadette Thibeault,
Lise Sirois, Jackie Daigle, Geraiding "Nune" Michaud, Jeanne Lavertu,
Jeannine Daigle and Fran Chasse*



Dear Friends of the Ste-Agathe Historical Society,

We hope you had the opportunity to visit with us this past summer and view the special exhibit of the 100 years of high school graduations of Notre Dame de la Sagesse High School, St. Agatha High School and Wisdom High School. The 2010 Summerfest week-end provided many visitors the opportunity to visit at the Marquis-Pelletier Museum House and the Preservation Center. Special amongst the guests included the Class of 1960 members who celebrated their 50 High School Reunion.

Textile Thursdays continued to be a popular attraction for the summer. Artisan Lise Sirois organized various themes for the afternoons. Some of the most popular included basket weaving, working with the loam, rug hooking with recycled woolen garments, card making, and sweet grass braiding.

The season to display and growing artifact collection lasts from mid-June to Labor Day - though this year we had many visitors in September and October. During the winter months the collection of photo albums and family reunions books are placed at the Long Lake Public Library so that they can be available year round.

The historical society keeps busy throughout the year. Some of the off season projects that we are addressing include building a website and returning to the cookbook project. The Board of Directors meet on a monthly basis. At this time the Board Members include:

President Terry Ouellette
Vice President Gloria Gervais
Secretary Carole Plourde
Treasurer Philip Morin
Harold Chamberland
Anne Chamberland
Jackie Michaud
Lise Sirois
Judy Chamberland
Cliff Guerrette



Thank you to our volunteers and Trail Guide: Gloria Gervais, Doreen Daigle, Trail Guide Donna Boucher, Lewis Michaud, Julie Cyr, Sylvia Belanger, Marie Mae Chamberland, and Florine Michaud





*Joyeux Noël
Bonne et Heureuse Année*

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