

[French Canadian Textile Worker]

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THE FRENCH-CANADIAN TEXTILE WORKER

New Hampshire Federal Writers' Project

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Subject: Living Lore

in New England THE FRENCH CANADIAN TEXTILE WORKER By Philippe Lemay
Reported by Louis Pare

"French Canadians from the province of Quebec have worked in the mills of Manchester for a long, long time. There was one as far back as 1833, and for more than 50 years they kept on coming until now we are 35,000 strong, 40% of the entire population of the city. Ours is said to be the largest single nationality group.

I am going to tell you as well as I can the story of the French Canadian textile worker; what brought him here; how he came, lived, worked, played and suffered until he was recognized as a patriotic, useful and respected citizen, no longer a 'frog' and 'pea soup eater,' a despised Canuck. And it's the story of all the French Canadians who settled in New England mill towns. The picture of one French Canadian textile worker and the picture of another are just as much alike as deux gouttes d'eau, or, as we have learned to say in English, like two peas in a pod.

Let me say, first of all, Monsieur, that the current of immigration was strongest between 1850 and the early 70's. Some came before, as you will see, others after, as long as there was no limit by law on immigration, no head-tax nor passport required. In 1871,

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French Canadians here were strong enough to have a resident priest of their nationality and a parish of their own. A second parish was founded in 1880 on the west side of the Merrimack. At the time, New Hampshire was a part of the Portland diocese. In 1884, thanks to French Canadian immigration, the Manchester diocese was created.

Why did our people leave Canada and come to the States? Because they had to make sure of a living for their family and themselves for a number of years, and because they greatly needed money. The wages paid by textile mills was the attraction.

Here and wherever else they went, they didn't forget their duty to God: the churches, schools and other institutions they built testify to that. But their duty to the country that was feeding them, that was another thing. They didn't like to become citizens and feared it for more than one reason. They couldn't speak English, and that, let me tell you, was a big handicap. They were afraid of war and might be drafted. Most of them were still tax-payers in the province of Quebec and the different places from which they came, and they felt that they couldn't pay taxes here too. Most of them hadn't come here to stay. What they wanted most was to go back to their Canadian farms with the money earned in the textile mills. So they kept putting off taking out naturalization papers.

But we already had able leaders, among them Ferdinand Gagnon, and they preached Americanization to all those who intended to stay in this country. They pointed it out as a duty to ourselves as well as to the country. They told us that naturalization was something that gave to a foreigner all the rights belonging to the citizen in the country to which the foreigner swears allegiance. Our people began to realize that their ideas against being naturalized were wrong. They saw the privileges as well as the duties, and so, as early as 1871, we had fifty voters in Manchester, fifty men who, supporting good Father Chevalier, were able to obtain from the city authorities, 3 without cost to the French-speaking Catholics, a French language school; building, heating, lighting, books and lay teachers. This success was encouraging. Naturalization increased, and that, if you take

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account of the many births, tells you why so many of us are voters and tax-payers today, why so many of our folks settled here for all time.

Before we had the railroads, immigrants from the province of Quabec came to Manchester in wagons or other horse-drawn vehicles. If they brought their household goods with them, and that was rare enough, they travelled in hay-racks. Did some travel on foot from Canada? No, I don't think so. Perhaps from places near the border to northern Vermont, but if any immigrant had walked as far as Manchester, we certainly would have heard about it from old settlers, and there were quite a few left in 1872. Anyway, travelling in wagons was bad enough. Even the trip by train in 1864 was terribly slow. There wasn't much comfort for the voyageurs and it was expensive, because we had to stop over more than once and even children were obliged to pay full fare.

Here is the case of my own family, for example. It took us four days and as many nights to go from our home town, St. Ephrem d'Upton, to Lowell. Train engines weren't big and powerful in those days. Besides, they were wood-burners, and you couldn't put enough wood in the tender to make long trips. So trains didn't run far and never during the night. We started from St. Ephrem in the afternoon and went as far as Sherbrooke and slept there. The next days we reached Island Pond, in Vermont, and spent the night in that customs town. It was a very small place, too. The following morning, the old Grant Trunk took us to Portland, [Maine?] and again we passed the night there, because the train went no further. After another night's rest, on a different railroad, we were on our way to Boston where we had to find lodgings once more. At last, the fifth day, we landed in Lowell where we were to live for eight years.

4

Many things can happen on such long trips, and something did while we were coming to the States, aux Etats, as French Canadians say it even today. At Island Pond, my mother was taken sick and couldn't go on with us when we left for Portland on the third stage of our journey. Father remained with her. We were told to continue towards Lowell

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and to mind our uncle and aunt who were making the trip with us from St. Ephrem. We promised to be good and followed our good aunt and uncle, but we worried on account of our parents. We weren't separated for long, though, for mother was a strong, healthy woman, of good Canadian stock. Father and mother arrived in Lowell only three days after we did, and what do you think they brought with them? A new little Lemay whom we all welcomed to our already rather large family.

The majority of French Canadian immigrants came to Manchester at their own expense. In fact, all of them did, so far as I know, and they didn't have to be coaxed, either. It is true that some companies, seeing in the type quebecois an honest, able workman, asking little for himself and rather unwilling to let himself be fooled by strike agitators, brought here a certain number through recruiting agents sent to Canada for the purpose. The companies built homes to house these new hands. However, if their fares and other expenses were paid by the textile corporations, it was never mentioned and I don't believe it was done.

Our people didn't come to the States with money they had saved up, though, since they emigrated because they were really obliged to go where they could earn their daily bread and butter. To raise enough money to buy railroad tickets for the family and pay for food, rooms and other expenses on route, they had to faire encan, sell all their household goods at auction. That money was practically all gone when they arrived here, and all they possessed was the clothes they had on their backs, you might say. Parents and children alike were dressed in homespun and homemade clothes and they were recognized as coming from Quebec province the very moment they left the train. Most of them, you see, were from small towns and farming districts, very few coming from large cities like Montreal and Quebec. As they were poor, all those who were old enough went to work without waiting to take a much needed rest.

They boarded at first with relatives, if they were lucky enough to have any here, or in some French Canadian family until they could rent a tenement for themselves, mostly in corporation houses, and buy the furniture that was strictly needed.

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Money was very precious to us in those days and we spent it carefully, getting along with only the things we couldn't do without, but we were able to make a living and save something besides. You understand that food, clothing, lodging, fuel, everything was much cheaper then than now. For lighting, we used kerosene lamps and the streets were lighted the same way. It was some time later that we had gas.

Our kitchen had to serve also as dining-room and living-room. There was no such thing as a parlor and no place for one, because all the other rooms, including the front one, were bed-rooms and there weren't too many, you can bet on that. We had no draperies or sash-curtains in the windows, just paper shades without roller-springs such as we saw later. A narrow strip of wood, of the same width, was sold with this paper shade and we nailed it across the top to the window frame. In the morning, the shade was rolled by hand and held up by a string fastened to a nail. The floors, not always of hard wood, were bare and had to be scrubbed on hands and knees with lye or some other strong stuff, once a week at least, on Saturdays. The only floor coverings we knew were round braided carpets and catalognes, seven or eight feet long and three wide, all homemade with rags carefully put away for that purpose.

6

Once a week, sometimes twice, our women folks broke their backs over the washboard and wrung the family washing by hand, washing machines and wringers being unknown at the time. There was no hot water in large, convenient tanks, only the one you heated on the kitchen stove in the washboiler, pans and pots, or if you came to afford it, a tea-kettle. This hot water served for cooking, washing the dishes, clothes and floors and to take the weekly bath in the wash tub.

But we had big appetites and ate well and slept well, going to bed and getting up early every day in the week, except Sunday. Sunday nights, we had our veillees du bon vieux temps, as we had them in Canada. The younger folks enjoyed birthday parties, but early French Canadian textile workers, even in the 'Seventies, never thought of celebrating their

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golden or silver wedding anniversaries. In 1871, our first parish was established and our new church was opened in 1873. In the meantime, we worshipped in Smyth Hall and in the church located on the corner of Chestnut and Merrimack Streets. A few years later, we had two parishes, so we really could practice our religion as easily as we did in old Quebec. We said our morning prayer separately, but after supper, before the dishes were washed, we recited the beads and evening prayer en famille, father or mother alternating with the children and the boarders.

After a while, the children became young men and women. They had been earning money for a few years and, being prouder, thought of changing from homespuns, worn even on Sunday, to more fashionable store clothes. We saved pennies until they became dollars and when there was enough, we dressed up, you bet, paying in full for what we bought, not a little down and so much a week, as so many do today with the creation and the spread of the installment plan.

"You must have heard about the earliest French Canadian settlers in Manchester, M. Lemay," M. Pare inquired.

7

"Yes, I learned much about then when I was a very young man, and I can tell you they all started in the textile mills where most of them stayed. The first one to come here was Louis Bonin, in 1833. I understand that a Madame Jutras kept a boarding house in Amoskeag village (the northwest corner of Manchester) in 1830. Hyacinthe Jutras was another old timer. In 1848, he was the best man at the marriage of Louis Bonin and Miss Henriette Bonenfant, the other witness being Miss Catherine Bonenfant. M. Jutras, who died in 1893, had a remarkable memory and was able to tell us much concerning the beginnings of the local French Canadian colony.

The records of births, marriages and deaths at City Hall were far from being complete. When the names of our people weren't changed so that no one could recognize them, they

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were left out altogether. It is true that the law wasn't strict so long ago, but certain doctors seemed to find it useless to register the names of children born of French Canadian parents. In some cases, they would simply report that on a certain day a boy or a girl had been born in a Frenchman's home.

The old records show that Louis Marchand married Sarah Robert in 1839. The first birth recorded is that of a child born of [M. et Mme.?] Cyrille Lebran in 1852. [Mme.?] Jean Jacques died in 1853. Others among the earliest settlers were J.P. Lariviere, John Montplaisir, Julie and Amelie Prevencher, Pierre Bonenfant, Michel Hevey, Jean Biron, Telesphore Lemire who died at Stoke Centre, P.Q., in 1891, Nazaire Laflotte, Joseph Janelle, Joseph Berard and Michel Cote, one of the men who, in 1849, chopped down the trees on the site of Saint Anne's church located on the corner of Merrimack and Union Streets where it still stands. The pastor was Father William McDonald who had come here in 1844. There was also a Thibodeau family and another by the name of Rocheleau.

In those early days, there was a City directory, but it was published only every two years. Those who came and left between the times names were taken & didn't figure at all in the book. Here is, as far as we are concerned, a remarkable markable thing about this Directory: after almost every French Canadian name, you found this : occupation , mill-worker ; and the addresses were always something like these ; Amoskeag Corporation, Stark Corporation, Machine Shop, Print Works, with the number, just as you'd say today ; John So-and-So, 40 Main Street.

Some doctors came to Manchester from Canada more than eighty years ago to minister to their sick fellow-countrymen, but none of them stayed very long because business wasn't very good or for some other reason. The first was Dr. Joseph A. Parent who came here in 1852, had his office at 20 Amherst St. and went away in 1854. That year, a Doctor Belisle became the resident French Canadian physician. He was still here in 1856 and had his office at No. 3 Granite Block, his residence at 12 Manchester St.

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The first photographer of our nationality group was Benjamin Milette with a studio at No. 79 Elm St., his home at 20 Pine St., corner of Manchester St. He came in 1858 and was gone in 1860. Dr. Elzear Provencher arrived in 1858 but remained only a short time, not so long as those who came before. Olivier Desmarais, who also took pictures, lived here about 1882. In 1862, Nazaire Laflotte entered the employ of the Barton Company, owners of a dry goods and notions store, and was probably the first French Canadian store clerk in Manchester. Our first merchant was Joseph Duval who opened a grocery and liquor store in 1863. In 1870, Nestor Goudreault rents half of Marchand & Beausoleil's grocery store on Elm St. and starts the first French Canadian bakery. Godefroi Messier is doing so well with his oyster and refreshment shop opened in 1869, that he takes his sons Pierre and Luther as partners and moves to a larger place at 285 Elm St. In 1870, H. Girard owned a shoe store at No. 5 Well's Block; the same year, L. Lacroix was a 9 wheelwright and carriage-maker on Elm St., opposite the Tremont building. In 1869, Dr. A.L. Tremblay, who came to Manchester in 1867, formed a company and started the first French language newspaper, La Voix du [Peuple?], with Ferdinand Gagnon, noted leader and pioneer of our newspaper man, as editor. In 1871, Father Joseph Augustin Chevalier became the first resident priest and founded St. Augustine's parish. In 1872, he resided on the north side of Laurel St., No. 62, between Pine and Union Streets.

There are now eight Franco-American parishes, each with its cure and most of these with vicaires or curates. By Father Chevalier and those priests who followed him to Manchester from Quebec province, parish records were very carefully kept. Every birth, marriage and death is written down with all the names spelled as they should be, and if you want any information, you have it complete and right. A census is taken each year in all the parishes; that tells us the number of Franco-Americans at any time. That may be a difference of two or three hundred between that number and the real total because some French Catholics married into Irish families and belong to Irish parishes, and others lost their faith and joined Protestant denominations.

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In 1871, there were about two thousand French Canadians in the city. After Father Chevalier's coming and the opening of the first church in 1873, immigration was speeded up for a while, as many as five or six families arriving on the Canadian train, the train du Canada, every day.

What was the pay of these earliest settlers? Well, in 1845, Michel Cote mixed mortar for five shillings a day, but in the mills where every other French Canadian was employed, the pay was fifty cents a day and the board cost two dollars a week. The workday began at five o'clock in the morning and finished at eight o'clock at night. The workers had a half hour off for breakfast, dinner and supper. Later, every day of the week, in summer as in 10 winter, the working hours of millhands were from six in the morning till 6 at night and that schedule was continued for many years. Nobody complained because everybody was happy and contented. It was good to have a steady job and a steady pay with the assurance that you didn't have to loaf unless you wanted to.

Today, we live in other times and fit ourselves to new conditions. The workweek has been considerably shortened and there is talk of making it even shorter. Machinery has been perfected, everything is modern. Between yesterday and today, what a difference ! During my fifty-three years in the local mills, I have seen a seventy-five percent improvement. New looms in which the machine stopped if a thread broke were introduced about 1885 and saved much time and cloth. Ring spinning succeeded fly spinning with fine results for everybody. In 1872, the mills made fancy shirting, fleeced and plain cotton cloth, as well as blue and brown drilling for frocks and over-alls; then came gingham and ticking and finally woolens, worsteds, every kind of textile product.

People work as hard now as they did years ago, but life is better, easier, more satisfactory for the mill-worker of the present time and we old timers are glad that it is so. We are glad that we have brought it about to a certain extent. We were proud and insisted on working for our living, instead of depending on charity. We wanted to better our condition; own our home; set aside something against a rainy day; give our children a better education than

Library of Congress

we had ourselves. So we did our work honestly and well in order to keep our jobs and got better ones. Out of our wages, we built churches, then schools, while supporting public schools and the government of our country, state and city. Our children, better educated, are already in higher positions or prepared to fill them with honor. Some of us have retired to the homes we worked so hard to buy, while others have bought farms and gone back to the occupation 11 which was that of their fathers and ancestors in the country where we were born.

Some French Canadians were not afraid and fought for the Union during the Civil War; there were many more in the war against Spain, but the greatest number served in the World War, hundreds having enrolled as volunteers in 1917. Our men would be ready and willing to answer another such call tomorrow. They'd rather have peace, just as the rest of the nation does, but if the fight is brought to them, they'll want to be in it, just as sure as you're there. I guess those early settlers I told you about won't have to be ashamed of us, because we've done our best.

You would like to have me introduce myself? Because it will lead me up to my first job in the mills, I will try to satisfy you, but we'll make it short, because there are so many things much more interesting to tell.

I was born in St. Ephrem d'Upton, P.Q., not far from St. Hyacinthe and Montreal, June 29, 1856. I was the fourth in a family of fourteen children, five of whom are still living. I told you that my mother was of good old Canadian stock. She was 97 years old when she died. My father was killed in an accident while at work; he was 80 and in perfect health, so he might have lived for quite a few more years, don't you think so?

When we came here in 1872, we lived in 'Squog, on the west side of the river. After I was married, I occupied the same tenement for 44 1/2 years in an Amoskeag corporation house, on the north side of Stark Street, between Elm and Canal Streets. For the last ten years, we have lived in this cottage I own on Candia Road, near Lake Massabesic. I have

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with as my granddaughter, the housekeeper, and her son, 17 years old and a Freshman at St. Anselm's College.

I have always loved to travel, especially since I have been out of the mills. I have a son living in Florida and I have spent seven or eight winters 12 with him. I drove my car both ways every time. This year, again by automobile, I went to Canada three times. No, I haven't forgotten my birthplace where father, mother and others of my family are buried.

I use glasses to read, but when it comes to see from a distance, my eyes are just as good as they were fifty years ago. Do I eat well? Mon cher ami, I can eat baked beans for supper and not feel the worse for it. I do quite a bit of work around the house. From spring until fall, I take care of my garden. My granddaughter thinks I work too much and often scolds me in a nice way; you hear her scold even now, but look at her smile. When I'm not working, I read and that brings me to a little nap in my rocking-chair. When you are going on 83, you too will like your petit somme 'in the afternoon. I am still considered the head of the family, loved and respected. With all that, who wouldn't be happy in his old days? As you see, we are able to speak English without a trace of accent, and that is natural; I have been in this country so long and the children were all born here.

After working for over sixty years, stomach ulcers began to bother me. I thought I wouldn't be able to go on any longer and spoke of leaving the mills, but they didn't want to let me go. The company in May and June, 1924, gave me a vacation with pay and told me that would put me on my feet. I did come back in July but things went from bad to worse with my stomach. In December, I was forced to retire and the Amoskeag, giving me a month's extra pay, had to let me quit my job as overseer of the Coolidge spinning mill. I went to the hospital where I spent quite a while and recovered my health.

I liked the people who were with me in the mills and I sympathized with them. I helped them as anybody else would have done in my place. Did I, when I was a boss, hide some who weren't quite sixteen, when inspectors visited he mills? I wouldn't have mentioned that

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if you hadn't put the question, but there is some truth in it, though I wonder who could have told you. You see, I started working in the Lowell mills when I was only eight years old and I could understand. If boys and girls were big and strong enough to work, even if they were a little under the legal age, I gave them a chance to keep their jobs. Their parents were poor and needed every cent they could get. So I'd tell these younger workers to keep out of sight until the inspector had gone away. There was no harm to anybody in that and it did a lot of good. And besides, the law wasn't so strict in those days. Looking back over the years, when I think of those who worked with me and for me, I feel in my heart that I miss a lot of friends and I'd be lonesome at times if I didn't have something to keep me busy around here. But let me talk about something else, about my first job, for instance, and then we'll go along.

When we landed at Lowell in 1864, there were very few French Canadians, only five families at one end of the city, fifteen at the other. Many more came after the Civil War was over. I was only eight years old, but that didn't stop me from going to work. My first job as a textile worker was in the Lawrence mill, No. 5, where I worked as a bagboy and doffer for about three years. Then I wanted to do outside work and one of my jobs was driving a one-horse wagon. In 1872, when I was sixteen, our family moved to Manchester. In 1875, father and mother returned to St. Ephrem.

Here, in the beginning, I started in a card room as roping and bobbin boy, but I wanted to be a spinner, not a mule-spinner. I had seen mule-spinning in Lowell and didn't like it at all; fly-spinning that makes cotton into thread, ready for the weave-room, that's what I wanted to do. But it wasn't until 1875, the year my folks went back to Canada for good, that I got my chance. How I landed in No. 1 spinning mill of the Amoskeag, where no French Canadian could be hired before, is a little story in itself.

14

Each spring and fall, it seems, the older immigrants had a touch of homesickness. Most of them still had farms in old Quebec. "I want to see if it is still where I left it," they'd smilingly

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tell the boss when they asked permission to be away for five or six weeks. So they went back to Canada twice a year. While there, they visited friends and relatives, that's sure, but their principal reason was a serious one, and they had to make many sacrifices in order to save up enough money to pay railroadfares and other necessary expenses.

At heart, Monsieur, they were still farmers like their ancestors had been, and they wanted to get something out of those farms, some of which had been in the family for many generations. In the spring, they attended to ploughing, harrowing and sowing; in the fall, to the harvesting of the crops. During the summer, some relative or neighbor kindly gave a look once in a while to see that all was well.

While they were absent from the mills--others having to loaf on account of sickness or for some other reason, spare-hands had their chance to work. That's how I got into spinning. The overseer was kept at home by sickness and the second hand hired me. When the boss came back, I was giving all my attention to my work and not losing a minute. We all did that. But the overseer didn't look pleased and he was mad when his assistant told him my name. He wanted to know why I had been hired when he didn't want any Frenchman working there in his mill. The second hand said he'd discharge me right away and I felt that my dream of becoming a fly-spinner was coming to an end quickly. I kept on working. The boss looked at me, seemed to think twice before he spoke and then said: "Don't do it now; wait until Smith comes back to work."

Smith did come back and I was out of a job, but not for long. The boss was sorry to let me go, that was plain. He took my address and said he'd let me know as soon as he needed me. He had changed his mind about hiring French Canadians after he had seen one of them at work. The very next day, at noon, he sent for me and after that I had a regular job in the Amoskeag. And that same boss hired many of my people, and that is the point I want to bring out in my story.

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Later, I was transferred to No. 4 mill where there were, besides the overseer, three second hands in a department of 18,000 spindles. You can imagine how little work those assistant overseers had to do. They ought to have been running some of the frames to keep themselves busy. I went back to No. 1 with a job that paid me \$1.30 a day, 20 cents more than I was getting at No. 4. I was roping-boy, oiled the shafts and pulleys and did other jobs.

The boss of No. 4 mill wanted me back and offered me \$1.45 a day. I went, of course. One day, another overseer tried to get me, and when I spoke of leaving, Hamilton, boss of No. 4, wouldn't hear of it. To keep me, he offered me extra pay if I would do the work of a sickly operative who had to loaf at times, and more extra pay if I wanted to take the place of a third hand once in a while. I accepted, did my own work besides and, as long as the arrangement lasted, I got \$2 a day and a little more. I was finally given a regular job as third hand, quite a promotion for a French Canadian at the time. In 1881, I was made second hand and, in 1901, overseer in No. 1 spinning mill. It included No. 2, where I had such a hard time getting a small job twenty-six years before.

It was a big event when I was appointed overseer of the 1 and 8 spinning mills. There was to be a vacancy very shortly. I knew about it and, being convinced that no one would say a good word for me, I decided to speak for myself. I wasn't bashful any more. So, one day, I asked the super if he wouldn't give me the chance. He was so surprised that he couldn't speak for a long time, or so it seemed to me. He was looking at me as if he had been struck by thunder and lightning. What! A Frenchman had the crust to think he could be an overseer! That was something unheard of, absolutely shocking. And the super was shocked, I'm telling you. When he recovered enough to speak, he told me he'd think it over, turned his back on me and walked off. He was certainly upset.

The next day, he came to me and, still with a doubting expression spread all over his face, said he'd try me for six months. But I didn't want six months, I answered back. I wasn't going to clog up that spinning department. Either I was the man for the job, I said, or I

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wasn't. If I was, it wouldn't take six months to find it out. If I wasn't, I'd get out in a hurry. No six months for me. One month, that's all I wanted to show what I could do. The super seemed to be wondering again but answered it was all right with him just as I said. So I became the over-seer of No. 1 Spinning where I had made my shaky debut in 1875.

That was another step ahead for the French Canadians, wasn't it? But this time, it was an awful scandal. The sad news didn't take long to spread. Americans and Irish were mad clean through. They looked at me and spoke to me only when they were strictly obliged to, but as far as friendship was concerned, there was no more, you bet. I, a Frenchman, had jumped over the heads of others who thought themselves the only ones entitled to the job of overseer; here was a sin that could not be forgiven, and what was the world coming to, anyway?

My disappointed former friends had another shock of the same kind two years later when Theophile Marchand--we called him Tofil--was named overseer of weaving, and he was included with me in their hate. Tofil, who had been a first class weaver, was then a first class loomfixer, a big job in those days. His promotion, like mine, became the talk of "Milltown" and was a terrible scandal.

17

Later, those who were afraid of us got used to these things and took them in a better spirit, for several other French Canadian textile workers got well deserved promotions. Theophile Marchand, better known as John, was one of my own second hands, and I recommended him. He was a boss just three days, then he came back to his old job with me, after telling the superintendent that he'd be happier and healthier that way. 'An overseer's job has too many worries,' he said. 'The first thing you know, I'd be loafing because I was sick, and I can't afford to do that, because I have quite a family to support.' And so, my friend Tofil had the distinction of being the first French Canadian, perhaps the first one of any nationality group, to refuse an overseer's job.

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Others who didn't worry were a Mr. Lalime who was made a superintendent of weaving; Frank Houde who came with me to the Coolidge mill as a second hand and went later to No. 1 spinning mill as an overseer; Wilfred Lemay, one of my sons, who was second hand for the one who took my place as boss of old No. 1 when I was transferred to the Coolidge in May, 1910. Then there was Domicile Nolet, superintendent of carding at the Stark Mills, and a M. Blais, overseer of spinning for the same company, when Amoskeag bought Stark in 1922. They stayed as bosses for the Amoskeag until it shut down for good. M. Nolet became overseer for the Pacific Mills who opened a plant here a few years ago in a part of old Amoskeag. Pacific moved to Dover this year, Domicile followed and is still there.

An overseer has a good chance to get even with those who hate him and have been mean to him and his people, but such a thought didn't come to my mind. As soon as I had been appointed, the super came over and said to me: 'Lemay, now is the time to get rid of your first second hand. He never liked you and he's no good anyway. You are now able to discharge him and pay him 18 back what he did to you.' 'I'm giving this man a chance to make good with me if he wants to. Besides, he's just as good as I am. I won't punish him nor anybody else that way because I have been treated meanly. Don't expect me to get rid of John until I have good reason to, and that goes for all those who work under me.' So I kept my first second hand. I recommended him to take my place in No. 1 when I was transferred to the new Coolidge mill. Again the super couldn't understand me. 'But can he do the job?' he asked. 'Sure,' I answered, even better than I can.' 'There you are again,' replied the big boss. 'Whether it's to keep a second hand I don't want or to get him the job of overseer, you insist he's a better man than you, and the man isn't a French Canadian either.' 'He doesn't have to be one of my people, Mr. Super. If he's all right, I say so, and that's justice. Go ahead and try him out and find out what a fine man he is.' The super did, the man made good and I had my revenge twice against John, a Christian's revenge. I got no credit for what I had done but wasn't disappointed. My own good luck had brought me the congratulations and good wishes of only one American official, the superintendent of

Library of Congress

the Machine shops. The others kept their grudge until the time to congratulate had passed and then made the best of a thing that couldn't be avoided."

"What schooling did you have, M. Lemay?" M. Pare asked.

"None at all when I was a boy, " he replied, "and none until I had been made a second hand, and that was in 1881. I had three terms at evening school, each term beginning in October and ending sometime in March. Afterward, I took one term in a business college, again attending evening classes, of course. When I started to go to school, I already could speak English pretty well, and that was a great help to me.

When I was a young boy in Lowell, my father wanted me to attend day school, but I didn't care much for reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic. Father left home early in the morning to go to work in the sawmill, as he 19 had to walk about a mile and a half, coming back only for supper. As soon as he was gone, I went in my turn, but not to school; I went to the mills. At night, I got a good spanking, this happening every day, but I couldn't change my ways. I wanted to work, that's all, to do something for my parents who needed all the help they could get, with the family they had to feed and take care of. Father had to let me have my way, but he didn't like to and showed it more than once.

In general, French Canadian children living here could have had some schooling in the grammar school grades if their parents had been able to get along without the earnings of these boys and girls, but most of them couldn't afford that. The only ones who had a chance to get an education were the youngest of the children, because older brothers and sisters were in the mills, helping their parents at the time. There were even boys who went to college and became priests, doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, and girls who studied to be religious teachers thanks to the hard-earned money of textile workers in their families.

After 1870, there were enough of our children to make schools necessary for them, with lay teachers for the first ten years or so. In Manchester, Father Chevalier, who came here in May, 1871, having been the first resident parish priest from Quebec in New Hampshire,

Library of Congress

started to build St. Augustine's church in 1872 and it was opened for worship in 1873. Young women helped the pastor by teaching catechism to the children in church each Sunday. It was as late as January, 1881, that the Sisters of Jesus-Marie were brought to Manchester from Sillery, near Quebec, by the cure of St. Augustine, to teach both French and English, besides religion, which ranked first, as it does now, in the school program, to young Franco-Americans."

Immigrants from the province of Quebec settled not only in Manchester but in other New Hampshire mill centers, Great Falls (now Somersworth), 20 Salmon Falls and Newmarket, to name only a few. In each community, they built church first of all, then a presbytere or residence for the pastor, as soon as possible a school for their children (which the children had to attend), and they finally bought a tract of land on the outskirts of the city for a cemetery. To protect their homes and families, they later organized mutual benefit or fraternal societies, the first of which was the Saint-Jean-Baptists Society, Union Saint-Pierre, Societe Saint-Augustin and Union Saint-Gorges Georges. The first of these groups and Union Saint-Pierre have ceased to exist but they lived remarkably long; Union Saint-Georges and Societe St. Augustin have joined the Association Canada-Americaine founded in 1896, I know of some St. Jean-Baptiste Societies, some started as early as 1867, that are today strong and active as independent fraternal groups.

Finally, to link themselves more closely, they had their newspapers. Some didn't live long like Voix du Peuple, the first one, and Echo des Canadiens, but L'Avenir-National, started as a weekly fifty years ago, is one of the important French dailies in New England. We have also two monthlies, Echo de Notre-Dame and Republique and Canadao-Americain, the monthly organ of Association Canado-Americaine. The church, the school, the societies and the press are what have kept Franco-Americans alive as a group. Let them all disappear, and we go into the famous American melting pot.

"From what I have already told you," M. Lemay continued, "it can be guessed that the children of Quebec immigrants, like most of their parents, had no school education when

Library of Congress

they arrived here. They had been well and religiously brought up by devout parents in their Canadian homes; their mother had taught them to pray, but they could neither read nor write. One of the exceptions was Joseph E. "Joe" Pellerin. Joe was 17 when he came to Manchester with his folks in 1881. He had been to grammar school under religious teachers at Yamachiche where the family then lived and which was the birthplace 21 of Joe's Canadian ancestors. He then had four years of classical studies at the seminary of Trois-Rivieres. He followed this up with two terms of business college in Manchester, attending night classes and learning bookkeeping, English and penmanship. He was a first class weaver and what did his education do to him? It took him off the looms in the early 90's and placed him in the weave room office. There he kept books, including the workers' time, for overseer Adam Graf, and marked the new cotton until 1922, at which time he was made a cloth inspector in another room. He remained there until he retired from the mills in 1930.

Joe was born in Baie-du-Fevre, near Nicolet, and is now 75 years old. He came here from Yamachiche with his father, step-mother, two brothers and sister. In the order of birth, he was the second of this family of four. His parents and sister returned to Yamachiche in 1884; one brother married and settled in Lowell, while the other, also married here, moving to Canada with his family some time later. My friend was an investigator for a local bank until 1933. He then retired and lives with his wife and unmarried daughter, Miss Germaine, in a corporation house he has occupied for the last forty years and is located at 59 West Bridge St. M. Pellerin has four children, two daughters and two sons. A son, Alfred, is an attendant in a State hospital, and the unmarried daughter is a fine pianist and the able organist of St. George's church.

Joe is a nice talker, has a wonderful memory and, with his distinguished appearance, could pass just as easily for a doctor, a lawyer or a professor as for a retired textile worker. But Joe was one of the best weavers known in his time, and that's what he's proud of. He tried his hand at politics twice. The first time, running for the City Council in 1889, he was

Library of Congress

defeated at the Ward 1 caucus by 25 votes. He tried again the following year and was elected as he had told his political enemies he would be.

22

Like myself, Joe says we owe our success in the mills to the fact that we were faithful, honest workers, giving our attention to what we had to do instead of losing time talking to our fellow-workers. Joe is a man of fine character, a loyal citizen who'd rather go without eating or postpone a trip to Canada than to miss a chance of voting on election days. He loves his adopted city and country in a practical way, being ever ready to serve them, yet he remains at 75 loyal to the land of his birth and to his nationality group here. He speaks English fluently while preserving his faith, his mother tongue and customs of our people. He is a very active member of St. George's parish, of parish and fraternal groups, a worker for every good cause. Yes, Joe sets a fine example for us to follow, he is a real leader among Franco-Americans in Manchester and he's a jolly good fellow."

"You wish to know about a French Canadian textile worker who was neither a boss nor an office clerk in the mills? Then let me tell you about Stanislas Gagnon. M. Gagnon is 63 years old and lives at 100 Orange St., near St. George's Church. Stanislas served the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company for 47 years, always ways in the card rooms where has done every kind of work that department offers to a textile operative. He was just twelve and a half years of age when he started to work as a mill hand, and he's still at it, a carder. He came to our city in 1888 with his mother, his grandmother on his father's side and his brothers and sisters. They lived first on Pearl Avenue, near their present residence, and Stanislaus has never moved out of that district, though he has belonged to two parishes. Our friend now occupies a very neat tenement and lives in comfort with his wife and their unmarried daughter. A married daughter is a resident of Boston.

M. Gagnon, when he was a young mans wanted his share of gold and adventure, so he left the mills to go to the Klondike where he spent three years.

23

Library of Congress

He returned to Manchester and worked for a while in the card room of the Amory mill. During the strike of 1922 and after the final shutdown of Amoskeag, he worked for several months at Exeter, this State, Lewiston, Me., Lawrence and Fall River, Mass., and Brattleboro, Vt., but he passed the greater part of his 47 years as a textile worker in the service of Amoskeag. He is a good hand and enjoys his work which he does faithfully and well. Everybody likes Stanislas who is a fine, good natured and good looking man, a six-footer and just a little shy, with a fair complexion, blue eyes, square shoulders and large, capable hands, all of which gives the impression that he is not a day over fifty.

For three whole days, M. Gagnon was an employee of the Stark mills. He was a boy of 13, full of fun and innocent mischief. He enjoyed himself until the third day when he got a good scolding from his boss. Stanislas liked it so little that he quit his job without giving notice and went back to Amoskeag. Like many youngsters of his day, Stanislas got his job in the textile mills by pretending to be 16. He was tall enough, but not built to look like a strong and able workman, and the bosses, though guessing that the truth was being stretched, gave him and other boys a chance.

As Stanislas was telling me one day, there were difficult moments in the lives of these young mill workers. If they happened to be loafing, they were generally out on the streets. Sometimes, a truant officer would come along and ask questions. Why weren't the boys in school? How old were they? Where did they live? Stanislas says he and his friends were in hot water all the time this third degree business lasted. They had to think up some reasonable answers in not too much time and apparently satisfied the officer, since they kept their jobs in the mills. If they had been forced to go to school, the loss of their small earnings, added together, would have made quite a difference in the family budget.

24

Ask any French Canadian textile worker and he will tell you how well he got along with his overseer. Stanislas Gagnon, who never was a boss, says that he never had any trouble with his, nor with his fellow-workers, and thousands of other French-Canadians

Library of Congress

say the same thing. We got along well because we never killed time, gave our attention to our jobs and turned out work that the company could sell. That is why we got the reputation of being skillful operatives who could be trusted to remain on their jobs even if the bosses weren't always around to watch them. It is for that same reason the local textile corporations sent agents to Canada and to American textile centers to bring more of those French Canadians.

Our American overseers were always fair and just to us and it is fair and just to admit it. They were fine men and knew their business. They never bothered those who did their duty. We can certainly be thankful to them for their decent treatment of us. Stanislas Gagnon tells this story to prove it.

'My second hand,' says Gagnon, 'was an Irish-American who took away some work from an Irish operative. It was extra work for me without any extra pay. At first, being a little timid, I told the second boss I'd do the work, but the more I thought it over afterward, the more convinced I was the second hand was favoring his countryman at my own expenses and I refused to be anybody's goat. I went to my overseer and told him all about it. He thought I was right and told me so. He then went to the Irish assistant boss and asked him if what I 25 had said was true. The second hand admitted it was and went on to say that I lost a lot of time talking with women operatives and killed time otherwise. Speaking louder, he continued: 'He has plenty of time to do this extra work I gave him and he's going to do it or somebody's going to get out.' To which the boss answered: 'Yes, somebody's going to get out and it won't be Gagnon. I'm keeping him, so you'd better change your mind pretty soon about that extra work you gave him, because he isn't going to do it. Think it over if you care anything for you job.' The second hand changed his mind in a hurry and the Irish operative got his work back again. '

The overseer trusted Gagnon, that is why he stood by him. The company itself had much confidence in us and gave us big and important tasks to do. Not the least of these was the job of setting up the machinery and putting in operation the spinning department in

Library of Congress

the new Coolidge Mill, in 1910. We started in May. In December, the executives were told the job had been completed. They couldn't believe that it had taken only seven months, and only a personal investigation could convince them. If all those who worked with me hadn't given their full cooperation, it couldn't have been done, so the greater part of the credit belongs to them. We had set up in record time what was said to be the largest single spinning department in the world, 105,000 spindles and [?] hand on one floor, and there were also the picker-room men in the basement. Many French Canadians worked for me and my first assistant was Theophile Marchand.

26

It lasted nearly ten months and was the worse thing that ever happened. It was bad for the city, its merchants, tenement owners, business in general. It destroyed Amoskeag's trade and the Company, never recovering from the blow, kept going down until it had to close its doors. My sympathy, however, goes first to all the workers for they are the ones who suffered the most. They lost all their savings, went deep in debt and lived on canned beans while the hope of winning the fight was kept dangling before their eyes. They were told almost every day by the strike leaders to be patient and tighten up their belts because victory was in sight. But there was no victory, only defeat for all concerned.

As an overseer, I couldn't join their ranks in the labor union nor help them in any way, but neither could I be against them. As a boy, a young man and a middle-aged man with a family, I had worked long hours for anything but high wages. I knew what it meant to be poor, what sacrifices must be made if you want to lay something aside for a rainy day. The workers wanted more pay; I would have given them a living wage if it had been in my power to do so, every worker having a right to that. They wanted shorter hours; I would have given them a reasonable work-week if I had anything to say about it. Even as a second hand and an overseer, I never forgot my humble beginning and always considered myself a textile worker. Those strikers were textile workers too, and I was sorry for them. Yes, that strike of 1922 was really a terrible thing.

Library of Congress

Where did we meet the girls we married? Why right here in Manchester. No, we weren't in love before we left Canada.

27

We were too young to think of such things when we came to the States. Vary few had known in childhood the girls they were going to marry; so many of us, you see, came from different parishes and villages.

The young lady who became my wife in 1878 was Miss Selima Laliberte. She lived in a private home, that of her friend , Miss Laurence , who kept house with her two brothers and worked in the mills besides. Now Damase and Georges Laurence, Moise Verrette, and Joseph Baril and myself were intimate friends. Joe Baril's mother wasn't in good health, I had only one small room, so we spent our evenings together with the Laurences or at the home of Moise Verrette, never dreaming then that he would later be the owner of a large grocery store and meat market and twice mayor of Manchester. While visiting Georges and Damase, I became acquainted with Miss Laliberte. She was a fine, attractive girl and interested me. Soon I was going to the Laurence home mostly to see Selima, then for herself alone, We had fallen in love, we became engaged and were married by Father Chevalier in St. Augustine's church.

Joe Pellerin, once more the exception to the rule, found his wife in Canada, she was a stranger to him. He went to Yamachiche in the late summer of 1891 while on vacation after an illness. He was coaxed to take a job in a general store at Maskinonge, only a few miles away. He got the job and stayed thirteen months. His pay was five dollars a month with room and board, but it was a lucky day for him, he says, when he went to Maskinonge, for it was there he met the girl he was to make his wife.

28

He came back here in the spring of 1892, leaving his heart in the little Canadian village, and went to work for Adam Graf. In the fall of 1892, having decided not to wait any longer,

Library of Congress

he took the train for Maskinonge, married the girl he loved and brought her to Manchester where they have lived happily ever since.

We had family reunions, mostly on Sunday, to amuse ourselves. They were real veillees canadiennes and we certainly enjoyed ourselves. We sang without piano accompaniment songs of old Quebec, danced square and round dances and jigs, played games like l'assiette tournante (Spin the Platter) for forfeits, and played cards for the fun of it, mostly euchre, a game we learned here.

Sometimes, one sang alone; at other times, we sang in chorus. There were also chansons a repondre a sole with certain lines repeated in chorus by la compagnie, the gathering. Everybody who was asked to sing cleared his throat--that was the usual ceremony--, saying he or she had a cold, and called on the others to help him: Vous allez m' aider bein bien ? What did we sing? Well, Monsieur, we sang Vive la Canadienne and other popular songs of the Canadian folklore; sentimental songs, and one of them--I don't remember all the words because I didn't sing much myself--began like this: C'est aujourd'hui la jour de mes noces, C'est aujourd'hui la plus beau de mes jours. Ah! oui, cher amant que j'aime, Je suis a toi aujourd'hui pour toujours.

29

I couldn't translate that in verse, but here is what it means: This is the day of my weddings the happiest day of my life; beloved, I am yours and forever.

Some were very good at singing comic songs, like Zozo in which the words are so misplaced that sense becomes nonsense, the kind that makes you laugh. I believe I remember the first verse. Here it is, and it's crazy: Je suis Zozo, par mes actions comiques, J'ai fait parler de moi pendant-z-onze ans. Je suis le fils de mon seul pere unique It pour le sur aussi bien de Mouman Un jour, la nuit, cette pauvre Valere Tomba malade, mon pere me dit: Zozo, Va chercher du bouillon pour ta mere Qu'est bien malade

Library of Congress

la-bas dans un petit pot, Va chercher du bouillon pour ta mere, Qu'est bien malade la-bas dans un petit pot.

This part of another verse is even worse: Mais v'la t'y pas que ma maladresse Je chavirai les assiettes at les plats; Je fis une tache sur ma veste de graisse Et les culottea de ma jambe de drap....

In the first, Zozo, the son of his only fathers is told to fetch some broth for his mother who is sick over there in a little pitcher. In what there is of the second, Zozo knocks down the dishes and spills the broth over his fat vest and the trouses trousers of his woolen cloth leg.

30

Another song, this one a chanson a repondre, a sort of catechism and mentioned one God, two Testaments, etc. up to the ten Commandments. As he went along the singer, as we do in Alevette, repeated backwards what he had sung and finished as he had begun, with the words: Il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu, Il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu, which the others repeated after him in chorus.

For our round and square dances as well for jigs, the music was furnished by a fiddler who always played the same tune as long as you wanted him to--he knew no other-- and by a fellow who played the accordeon accordion but they never played together because their tune was different. We didn't care about that and we danced and had great fun. In St. Ephrem, even these home dances weren't allowed because our people believed that the devil himself was present as a cavalier wherever people danced. Stories of tragic happenings were told and made you shiver. Here, we never went to public dance halls but weren't afraid of the devil being in our homes if we conducted ourselves as decent people should.

In 1874, Father Chevalier, wishing to encourage the study of music among his parishioners and to give more prestige to the French Canadians of Manchester, called a

Library of Congress

group of young men to his home and proposed that they should start a band. The idea was quickly accepted and in a short time and after much work, we had the Fanfare Canadienne de Manchester. Instruments and uniforms were bought. At Father Chevalier's invitation, Joseph Lafricain came from Marlboro, Mass., to help in the organization of the musical group and to be its leader.

31

The men practiced in a small hall and were seated. There came a time when they had to learn to play while marching. So, one day, they went in carriages to the vicinity of Alsace and Amory streets where there was a park in those days but no homes. There they marched and played to their hearts' content. The Fanfare Canadienne became an institution. It paraded many times in our city and gave concerts which were well attended. It was engaged by fraternal groups and travelled as far as Quebec. There were twenty-seven members in the Fanfare called the French Military Band by the English newspapers. It was reorganized in 1882 as the City Band which ceased to exist only a few years ago. Father Chevalier's band was composed of textile workers and I played the slide trombone. I have here a list of the charter members. I'll read it off to you:

J. R. Lafricain, leader, clarinet; Solyme Daigneault, bass; Charles Blanchard, cornet; Edouard Harrington, bass; John Harrington, alto; Jean-Baptiste Blanchette, cornet; Joseph Gagon, bass; Charles-Borromeo Boulanger, slide trombone; Napoleon Monette, cornet; Hormidas Manseau, baritone; Jules Provencher, cornet; Fred [Sansouci?], alto; Edouard Geoffroy, cornet; Joseph Marcotte, bass; Victor [?], clarinet; Victor Sansouci, cornet; Edouard Brown, fife; Cyrille Lebrun, cornet; Damase Laurence; cornet; Philippe Archambault, alto; Joseph Letendre, cornet; Philippe Lemay, slide trombone; James Manseau, snare drum; Joseph Desjardins, bass drum and cymbals; J. Champagne, bass drum. Five of them died and the band escorted them to the church and cemetery.

32

Library of Congress

"It has often been said, Mr. Lemay, that the Franch French Canadian immigrants here and in all industrial centers had much to suffer from a certain nationality group for a number of years. Please tell us something of those troublous times , " said Mr. Pare'.

"Those days of petty persecution, beating, rock-throwing swill-slinging and tragedy are not nice to remember, " M. Lemay answered sadly, " Besides, Monsieur, a big book couldn't tell all the story. Our troubles came mostly, not to say entirely, from Irish people who, it seems, were afraid that we had come here to take their jobs away from them in the mills and who tried hard to send us back to Canada by making life impossible for us in America. They wanted us to speak the English among ourselves when we only knew French and it made them mad because we didn't. They had forgotten--or didn't know-- that French Canadians had taken into their homes many orphaned children of Irish immigrants to Canada and brought them up as their own. Yes, Irish-Americans should have been our best friends over here, not our worst enemies.

It was bad enough here in 1872 and later, but it was worse in Lowell about 1864. It was impossible to get drinking water from public pumps in the daytime. Irish boys threw dirt in our pails, so we had to go at night, in the darkness and by roundabout ways.

Sundays, we went to mass at the Irish church. There was no other. Irish lads sat behind us and, with needles or pins stuck in the ends of their boots, they'd dig into us. We jumped and yelled, and other.people in the church were disturbed.

33

We had our ears boxed by the man in charge of children. When we couldn't stand it any longer, we stopped going to church. The priest visited our homes to inquire about our absence. We told him why we stayed at home, the guilty boys got a licking and then we could attend Sunday services in peace.

Library of Congress

My father worked in a saw-mill located almost in the center of the city. For a time, the men were obliged to work at night and the owners had to build a shack where the workers could eat their lunch without fear of being injured or killed by rocks thrown at them. The job was lit up by flaming rosin placed in large iron pans, but all around the place, it was very dark, so it was easy to hide and throw rocks or bricks and you'd never know where they came from.

Irishmen were fond of clay pipes, 'T. D. [?]', they were called, but they must have thought nobody else had the right to use the same kind. When they met a French Canadian smoking a clay pipe, they'd break it off between his teeth. If he'd smoke a briar pipe, they'd push it down his throat. Not liking this sort of sport, our fathers and big brothers smoked nothing but short "T. D. 'S" that couldn't be shortened any more nor pushed in.

In Manchester, it was in those parts of the city where only Irish people lived, especially what was called l'Irlande, all around Park common which was called la commune d'Irlande, that we found plenty of trouble. Our family was then living in the 'Squog section of West Manchester, and the shortest way to St. Augustine's church, the only French church at that time, was over Granite St. bridge, across Elm St., up Lake Avenue through the Commune d'Irlande and up Spruce St. to the corner of Beech where the church was located. Well, sir, we couldn't pass there without having our Sunday clothes ruined by filthy swill thrown at us from yards and alleys. Rocks flew also, and many of us youngsters received painful beatings from young Irish-Americans who were nearly always armed with sticks. The only way for us to save our clothes and our skins was to go to church by making a long detour and approaching St. Augustine's from the east instead of from the west as we would have naturally done if there had been no enemies on the way. [?]

No, we didn't fight back, because we were afraid of having trouble with the law. Being strangers, we didn't know how it would turn out for us. The first Greeks who came to Manchester weren't so timid. Welcomed as we had been by the Irish, they thought they hadn't come from far-off Greece to be chased away without some resistance. They paid

Library of Congress

back with interest everything they received from the residents of the district. Often they were arrested but just as soon acquitted after they had proved that they had acted in self-defense. The Irish hated Chief of police Healy for that, though he was an Irishman himself, but he was a just man and a fine chief who made Manchester the orderly city it is. Anyway, the [Greeks?] did so well that the commune d'Irlande is now called the commune des Grecs where people may pass without being insulted or beaten up.

35

Some years later, French Canadian grown-ups were treated more decently. There were too many of us then and we weren't so bashful about defending ourselves. Irish boys alone remained mischievous. Armed with sticks and stones, they often chased French Canadian boys through streets and back yards, even into homes where the attacking "army" didn't always dare to follow.

But the worst blow struck at us was the killing of Jean-Baptiste Blanchette, a member of the French Band of which he was then the leader and a fine fellow if there ever was one.

On the night of September 30th 1880, Blanchette and four friends, who also belonged to the band, were talking quietly about the Fanfare and its leadership, in French, of course, on Amherst St., near the corner of Vine. The friends were Georges Laurence, Edouard Harrington, Joseph Desjardins and Frank Manseau. Blanchette, called John Blancard Blanchard by the English-speaking people, had met them at the Excelsior House, Concord St., where he owned a lager beer parlor, his other place being at 34 Amherst St. All five walked to Amherst St. where they continued their conversation. It was a little after 11 o'clock.

Three Irish young men--no need of mentioning their names--came out of another beer parlor located nearby, on the same street. They, like many others, hated to hear French spoken and called on the five "frogs" to "talk United States". They rushed the French Canadians as they passed them. The three attackers were drunk. Blanchette pushed

Library of Congress

them away, One of the three came back at Jean-Baptiste who met him once more, and the assailant, either struck or pushed, fell on 36 the sidewalk. A large, round beer bottle, containing a small quantity of hard liquor, was broken in the fall. The man was now furious. He got back to his feet, seized the upper part of the broken bottle and holding it by the neck, he threw it and it struck Blanchette on the left side of the throat. Blanchette had run into the street and there he fell. The jagged edge of the broken bottle had made a wound one inch deep and two inches long and cut the jugular vein. Blanchette was soon bathing in his blood which was coming out so fast nobody could stop the flow.

Quickly, Harrington and Laurence picked up their friend and carried him to his room over the saloon. They laid him down on the floor where another pool of blood was soon formed. There was now a wide, sticky red trail leading from the street, onto the sidewalk and the stairs and into the room. A piece of glass, the pointed end sticking out, was still in the wound. It was removed and one of Blanchette's companions held his hand over the gaping hole, trying to stop the constant flow of blood. Officer John Cassidy, later deputy chief, was patrolling his beat when a woman shouted to him from an open window that a man was dying upstairs. Officer Cassidy went to the bloody man room then called his captain and he soon arrived on the scene with four doctors who did all they could but couldn't save the terribly wounded man. He died twenty minutes after being hit, having lost all his blood.

The news spread like wild fire around the usually quiet city. The next morning, at 7 o'clock, hundreds of French Canadians stood near the corner of Vine and Amherst Streets.

37

The bloody spot was still there and staring at it, they said: 'This is where three Irishmen killed Jean Blanchette last night.' The crowd was excited and you could hear a low grumbling, but there was no other demonstration. They held themselves as they had done whenever they had been made to suffer. Only this was worse and could hardly be believed. A man had been killed by a "frog" hater. Those hundreds of men could have

Library of Congress

cried as if Blanchette had been the near relative of all of them while they kept looking at that awful red spot which nobody had thought of cleaning up.

The Irish lads were arrested and locked up in cells at the police station. Two were charged with being drunk and fined, being held afterward as witnesses. The bottle-thrower who admitted throwing the top half of the beer bottle but insisted he didn't know where it landed, was accused of murder. At the January term of Superior Court, he was sentenced to five years in prison. He served his sentence and died a few months after coming out. He was only 18 years old at the time of the tragedy; his father and mother were dead and he lived here with an uncle. He had worked in the mills but had been idle for some time.

Jean-Baptiste Blanchette was 23 years of age and had come to Manchester thirteen years before. He had worked for the Amoskeag in a weave room, then in the Langdon mill. Later, though still a young man, he had saved up enough money to run two small lager beer parlors where French Canadians liked to gather and talk of the things that interested them. They had no social clubs at the time.

38

Blanchette wasn't married. He roomed with the family of Alexandre Boucher and boarded at 22 Concord St. His body was laid out at the home of his good friend, M. Harrington, 51 Pearl St. The funeral took place at St. Augustine's church on Sunday morning, October 2nd, at 9 o'clock. As early as 7 o'clock, there was a large crowd of French Canadians in front of the Harrington home. At half past eight the long funeral procession started its march to the church.

In front was the Fanfare Canadienne led by Joseph Lafricain its first conductor, who had come back to honor his friend John, one of the founders of the band. Then came the Societe St. Jean-Baptiste, 104 members wearing their insignia and carrying their banners, the president, Charles Robitaille, leading the imposing group. Blanchette had been voted in as a member but had not yet signed the society's constitution and by-laws, so he wasn't

Library of Congress

an active member, but the Societe turned out just the same. From 200 to 300 young men, all intimate friends of Blanchette, marched in ranks behind the hearse. There was also the French Republican Club of which John was a member. Then followed carriages in which were Blanchette's relatives. His father lived somewhere in New Hampshire but no one knew his address. Following the carriages, in the procession, were about 1,000 persons of all ages. Crowds lined the streets on the way to the church and all seemed to sympathize with the relatives who escorted the body. In a few minutes, the church was filled. Father Chevalier officiated at the high mass for the dead and gave absolution. On the casket, we could see the uniform 39 our friend wore and the cornet he played in the band, with a crown of natural flowers made by Miss Emelie Harrington.

After the church service, the procession was formed just as it had been before and marched to St. Augustine's cemetery, in the southern end of the city, where the body was buried.

The French weekly, Echo des Canadiens, wrote nice things about Jean Blanchette, and that was quite natural. But the Daily Union calling him John Blanchard, praised him even more. In the story of the murder, it described John as a 'genial and pleasant fellow' and, in its edition of Mondays Oct. 3rd,--here is the clipping--after relating the details of the funeral, it says: 'The large number of friends of the deceased who turned out to show their respect shows plainly the esteem in which he was generally regarded. Blanchard was popular, well liked by all who knew him. It is the general opinion that he had no enemies and that he was upright in all his dealings.' The Union called the killing a 'terrible and bloody tragedy.'

Only a few hours before Blanchette met his death, I had visited him at his room. I was terribly shocked when I heard what had happened. He was a very dear friend of mine, always cheerful, quiet, minding his own business, kind to everybody. I asked myself how anyone could have struck him down in this awful manner just because he was talking to

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fellow-countrymen in the language that was most natural to him, his mother tongue. I can't understand now, after almost sixty years.

40

That tragic episode of 1880 brought much grief to the French Canadian colony and, compared to it, the mean things that had been done to us seemed very small indeed. Feeling ran high among us, but not one of us thought of avenging our murdered friend. As always, we suffered in silence with the hope that some day, our right to live peacefully in America would be recognized. We had so much confidence in God and in this adopted country of ours. Well, the day did come. Now, the surviving French Canadian textile workers of long ago, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have won the respect and esteem of their fellow-citizens. Yes, we surely have found our place in the sun of American liberty. Franco-Americans are prominent in all lines of business and many are quite successful in politics. Since 1918, Manchester has had four mayors and they were all Franco-Americans. We have distinguished doctors, lawyers, educators, judges, artists, architects, bankers and clergymen, one of these having been the third bishop of Manchester for 25 years.

To what do we owe our success? I believe we owe it to the self-sacrificing French Canadian immigrants from old Quebec, to the courage that made them refuse to accept defeat and quit when that would have seemed the natural thing to do; to the cheerfulness that carried us through our trials and tribulation and helps us old-timers to wait happily for the final bell calling us home to rest after our long, hard life in the textile mills. And perhaps the bloody death of Jean-Baptiste Blanchette, a martyr in the true sense of the word, had its share in bringing about the conditions we are enjoying today.