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## 02/11/1949 Portland City Hall Speech

Louis-Philippe Gagné

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*City Hall  
Portland -  
Friday, 11 fév. 1949*

I wish to express my appreciation to Governor Payne for his invitation to take part in this ceremony. I feel it is an honor and a privilege ~~for me~~ to be here tonight as Mayor of Lewiston, which is not only the second largest City in Maine, but also a community where 75 per cent of the population are American citizens of French origin.

The arrival of the French "Merci" car donated to the State of Maine is somewhat symbolic, more so than for most of the other States in the Union. The name of our State derives from the old French Province of Maine, south of Normandy, and which was the property of Queen Henriette-Marie, wife of Charles the 1st. I may add that as far back as 1604, sixteen years before the "Mayflower" came to our shores, there were Frenchmen in our State, among them Samuel de Champlain who was to be the founder of Quebec four years later.

But I am not here to remind you of those days when France was represented in our State by men like Cadillac, Sieur des Monts, baron de St. Castin and others. I am here to join with every citizen of Maine <sup>and</sup> tell the French nation, on behalf of the City of Lewiston, our greatest admiration and reiterate our friendship.

The French Consul in Boston, Mr. Chambon, already knows about our City and its different French organizations, whether religious, educational, musical, social and others. In fact he knows Lewiston so well that no one should be surprised to learn that the French "Merci" car for Maine contains four cases addressed to our Dominican Sisters. The Sisters will certainly have the occasion to express their gratitude to the French people, but I know they won't hold it against me if I assure you of their gratefulness, or if I say how much the City of Lewiston appreciates this gesture.



The motto of the American citizens of French extraction is "Je Me Souviens", or "I remember". I believe it shows a certain rapprochement between them and the people of France who are proving today that they remember the Friendship train sent by the United States to the French nation. Both our country and France have ~~so~~ much in common as democratic Republics; both have fought side by side for our Independence; both have fought on the same soil....over there.... against a common enemy; Lafayette was here; Pershing and Eisenhower were there.

Today, France and the United States are still fighting side by side in a war of ideals against another common foe, <sup>--Communism--</sup> and the mere fact that you are here tonight, ladies and gentlemen, indicate that you too are taking part in that struggle to save the human race. The Friendship train sent by the United States and this Merci train sent by the French nation have an important role to play in that war of ideology, and you can easily understand that role when you see two great nations as the United States and France that prefer an exchange of gifts and happiness while some other nations would like to exchange bullets, <sup>starvation</sup> and death.

In closing, may I extend the best wishes of the City of Lewiston to the French nation, and may God bless every one of those who have contributed to the "Merci" train. I am sure the American people will remember.