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**01.30.1976 Letter from Charlotte Michaud to JoAnne Lapointe**

Charlotte Michaud

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Jan.30,1976

Dear Mrs. Lapointe,

I received your letter of appreciation for the material I turned over to the Heritage Center. Thought some of it might serve future historians. Much of it is in English because my career was devoted so long to writing for newspapers printed in English. When I joined the staff of the Lewiston Evening Journal in December 1925--just a few months before it was sold to the Sun--the Journal had very high repute in all of New England and even further. Its then-editor Arthur Gray Staples was even offered a job with a prestigious newspaper of the time in California, but ~~xx~~ since Staples had married a daughter of the owner of the Journal, he turned down the offer. However, the paper was also known as a high-rated training school for newswriters. Reference to that is made in one of the reviews printed by a Boston newspaper when I published Bagatelle. An editor of the Journal had suggested I sent a copy to the editor of the book section of a Boston paper (the Herald, I think) that got out a good book review section, and he gave me a favorable review and reproduced two of the verses from Bagatelle.

Also, don't know if I told you, but two other verses from Bagatelle were set to music. The first to be done was composed by Frances Turgeon Wiggin of Portland, active with the Maine Federation of Music Clubs. She has published a book about Maine composers--recently did a second edition of that--and is now due to do one specially on women composers--if I recall aright. Despite her maiden name of Turgeon, the family is neither French-Canadian nor Franco-American--probably Huguenot..some settled here in the early years like the Dr. Alonzo Garcelon who spoke French and became governor of Maine. As Miss Turgeon, the now Mrs. Wiggin who has lived in Portland since her marriage--she was a staff member of the Journal years ago, then she played the piano for a dancing school I attended several years in Lewiston. She saw Bagatelle displayed for sale in a Portland store--back in 1929 when it was published--got herself a copy, asked my permission to set the few lines on "Love" to music.. and we've kept in touch ever since. She's older than I by a few years so must be all of 80 at least--but still active, and on a notable scale.

Later, she asked me to write a French version of "Love". At that time, there was a famous nightclub singer in New York who specialized in singing in both French and English, alternating the languages in the same song. I did write a French version, but only got copies of it this month. The nightclub singer has long vanished from the entertainment field, and I had never known if Mrs. Wiggin had carried on with the two versions. However, I came across this year her 1974 Christmas card on which she had written that she "was getting prints made of the French-English version because she had found someone to sing that song." I then wrote to Mrs. Wiggin saying I had never seen the new version, so she sent me about half a dozen Xerox'd copies. I think I've already given the Center a copy of the English version. In the bag of other things I am accumulating for the Center I'm putting in a copy--and passing the others around to singers of my acquaintance.

In that same Bagatelle, there is one entitled: Song. That was written especially for Albert Auger, then a piano and voice teacher in Auburn. He used to come into the Journal office to give me news of his recitals which I frequently attended, so I knew some of his piano and voice pupils. I wrote Song with Henri Carbonneau in mind, and I did attend the recital when he sang it for the first time. Have never seen Mr. Auger's manuscript. Recently, I called Mr. Carbonneau and he told me he had never had a copy; said it was always easy for him to memorize, and his study of the song was always done at Mr. Auger's studio with the teacher playing from his script. There is a Mrs. Boisvert living on Third St. Auburn from whom I once obtained historical matter on the Auger family. She might have a copy or know where one might be obtained.

Maybe Juliette Boisvert Cloutier could carry-on on that matter of the Auger song. I don't have the energy any more to do that sort of thing.

Within a day or two, I also received a report of Dec.3 Heritage meeting, and the announcement of the Feb.4 meeting. I won't be able to attend the latter or any others that might follow, but I am interested in Heritage activities, and especially am I hopeful that it will carry-on beyond the lifetime of those now devoted to it.

In the Dec.3 report, I noted a request made at that session that the Lewiston Historic Commission article on Franch-Americans that I wrote might be translated into French. It certainly can be, but I'll have to build up more energy than I have at the present time to do it. Wouldn't mind if some of your members would attempt it. My writing language is simple, should lend itself easily to translation.

That suggestion gave me an opportunity that I welcome to do some explaining about that publication. It was suggested by Prof. James S. Leamon, history professor at Bates College, who was the first chairman of the Lewiston Historic Commission. By the way, that municipal commission was created by John B. Beliveau when he was mayor of the city and among its five members he appointed Adelard Janelle, myself, Brother Boucher? then principal of St. Dominic's Regional High School, and Robert V. Connors, then principal of Montello School. Brother Richard Boucher resigned when he was assigned to Massachusetts by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, and Principal Connors resigned about the same time because his school duties did not permit him to give the required time to the Commission.

For several meetings, Mr. Janelle, Prof. Leamon and myself were the only ones in attendance. I recall that Prof. Leamon was somewhat discouraged at one time, fearing the commission might die out for lack of interest. He even asked me and Mr. Janelle if we would continue working with him in the event the commission might no longer exist as a municipal body. We both agreed. In time, Librarian Gross joined the group, *and didn't you?*

It was Prof. Leamon's idea that the first publication of the Commission should be about the Franco-Americans. He said students arriving at the college, even new faculty members, were always surprised at the "French character" of Lewiston, mentioning hearing the language spoken on the street, and noting the many French names over stores and offices. He asked me to write what I could about these Franco-Americans--later on, he emphasized that he wanted me to "clean out" my mind of all I knew about them.

My first <sup>*was submitted*</sup> ~~submitted~~ script, at a meeting where only Janelle, Leamon and I were present, I began to read what I had written. It wasn't long before the Prof. stopped me, saying what I had written would only interest the Franco-Americans. What he wanted was some thing explaining what kind of people ~~x~~ these Franco-Americans were, where did they come from, why did they come here and how did they manage once here--because, he emphasized--what he wanted was a story the English-speaking community would read and learn about the Franco-Americans. I could understand his point of view, and it was an important one because Franco-Americans formed such a numerous group in the community that they lived and operated much by themselves, and especially in their first years of residence here, they had very little contact with the "Yankees".

And this leads me to another angle I've wanted to tell you about. You took it up in a telephone conversation long ago, but we had already been talking for some time and I had to leave you abruptly before replying because I was getting over-tired. If I recall aright your question had some thing to do about what had given me some importance in the community.

I believe my main contribution to Franco-American life in this city has been through my work at the Lewiston Evening Journal especially. I was the frist Franco-American to be ~~employx~~ employed by that paper. Their social page at that time was the height of exclusiveness. They used one woman's picture daily, whether the woman was newsworthy that day or not. They just said who she was and mentioned her background. Since they were unacquainted with Franco-Americans, it's probably needless to say that no F.-A. woman was ever used at that time.

Since all I knew were Franco-Americans, and those my mother knew--I specialized in news of such people. It was some years before I even thought of submitting a woman's picture for the social page. I submitted the wife of Dentist Lafond. He had joined the Rotary club--the only F.A. to be a member then, so on the strength of his profession and that Rotarians had admitted him, his wife's photo was acceptable. She never mixed much in the active life of the community, but did belong to a card club--a popular activity for women at that time, but I didn't fail to explain to the editor that Mrs. Lafond was the daughter of a Canadian judge. Thereafter, more and more women got active in many organizations and pictures multiplied on the social page.

I don't recall that any photo I ever submitted or any story that I wrote was turned down. My biggest problem came from Franco-Americans who didn't want to be mentioned "in the papers"--outside of Le Messenger--but I argued they could give their news to the Messenger and to me, as well. That usually worked, and it got easier with the years. Before my submitting news of Franco-Americans to the Journal--and the Sun soon got into that practise, too--what little news of F.A. used were apt to be about Exilia Blouin, an early resident who had a lovely contralto voice. She was one of a quartet hired to sing at the Pine St. Congregational Church (then at the corner of Pine and Bates Sts.) but invariably her first name would get printed: Escilia because at that time French-speaking residents were being taught the French style of writing, and the letter "x" was written "sc" snuggled close together. That also explains why the French style "r" frequently appears as "v"--especially in oldtime city directories.

For 17 years I was a writer for the Journal, where it was understood that I was to submit all the news I could get about Franco-Americans. When I left the Journal to work for the Gannett papers of ~~Rutlandx~~ Portland, my coverage had to be more general, but the Franco-Americans had their proper share. For both papers, my contributions was a paying proposition for them, but, for me, my great satisfaction was that I made "my people" better known to the community as a whole. I quote "my people" because so often it got so my news editors would say: "would your people be interested in this?"..

That about cleans me up about things I've long wanted to say to you and you can share them with the Heritage if you wish.