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James Myall

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Le Bulletin: 9 - Winter/Hiver 2012-3

Preserving and Promoting Maine's Franco-American History and Heritage.

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Write for us!

If you have something you'd like to share with the local Franco community, or if there's something you think would make a good article, please let us know. We're always looking for more contributors, either in French or in English. We also welcome your thoughts and comments. Call our email us with any feedback whatsoever.

Connect with Us

For the latest Franco news, both around the state and at the Collection, visit our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/usmfranco

Our Youtube channel contains the latest videos from our events, especially our sing-alongs.

From the Coordinator

James Myall

It's been a busy season for us at the Collection, and this issue of Le Bulletin is, accordingly, particularly full. I hope you enjoy all the news we're able to bring you. The Collection continues to sponsor events which contribute to our mission of preserving and promoting Franco culture – from our popular sing-along sessions, which returned in September, to book readings, of which we have held two successful examples so far. In addition, this edition of the Bulletin includes examples of scholarship conducted at the Collection. Andrew Cushing, of Bowdoin College, consulted with the Collection for his thesis on the poor farms of New England, and Rachel Spilecki's thesis for Suffolk University focused on the role of women in the survivance movement in New England.

Information is also included on two exhibits, one national, and one local, which use Collection resources – John Joseph Smith, of the National Language Museum in Washington, D.C., loaned copies of Maine's French newspapers for an exhibit in the DC museum, and Michael Koch compiled a photo essay of Lewiston-Auburn's historic theater scene with the help of the Collection.

As if that weren't enough, the Collection is celebrating our 40th anniversary this year. For more information on that, read on. As the Holiday season approaches, no doubt many of you will be just as busy as us, and, hopefully, will be taking time to reconnect with family, and many of those traditions which exemplify Franco culture (especially music and food).

Bonne lecture and Joyeux Noël!

James

Du Coordinateur

James Myall

Cet automne était une période de grande activité pour la Collection, et ce numéro du Bulletin est, en conséquence, plein. J'espère que les nouvelles vous amusent. La Collection continue à réaliser son but de préserver et promouvoir la culture et l'héritage franco-américains, y compris les séances de chanter en chœur (qui ont recommencé à septembre) et deux lectures de livres.

En plus, dans ce numéro du Bulletin, il y a des articles érudits recherchés à la collection. Le coordinateur de la collection, James Myall, décrit John Charles Frémont, un candidat franco-américain à la présidence en 1856. Andrew Cushing, de « Bowdoin College », écrit au sujet des fermes des pauvres de la Nouvelle Angleterre pour sa thèse; et Rachel Spilecki, de « Suffolk University », a utilisé la Collection pour sa propre thèse, au sujet du rôle des femmes dans le mouvement de la survivance française à Lewiston-Auburn.

Deux expositions incluent des objets de la Collection; une exposition locale, et une autre nationale. John-Joseph Smith a emprunté des journaux français pour son exposition au sujet de la langue française aux Amériques, qui est au « National Language Museum » à Washington, D.C.. Michael Koch, de Lewiston-Auburn, a produit une exposition sur le théâtre historique en Lewiston-Auburn, en employant la collection et l'aide de son directeur. On peut lire plus de renseignements au sujet de ces histoires ci-dessous.

En fin de compte, la Collection a célébré son quarantième anniversaire au mois de novembre. Plus de renseignements à ce sujet se trouvent ci-dessous. La période des vacances s'approchent – une période de grande activité pour tout le monde, mais aussi un temps pour rendre visite à la famille, un temps de nourriture et de musique – toutes les traditions franco-américaines!

Bonne lecture et Joyeux Noël!

James

Sing-Alongs

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Our popular sing-along sessions are back! Perhaps you're a regular at these events, and already appreciate the atmosphere of tradition and bonhomie that prevails. If so, you probably joined us over the past few months. But if you didn't, perhaps you'll be able to make it next time. Traditional French music, refreshments, and good feeling will be in abundance. Contact the Collection for more information.

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Chanter en Choeur

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Les séances populaires de chanter en chœur ont encore lieu! Si vous êtes un habitué des événements, vous connaissez la tradition et la bonhomie qui s'y répandent. Mais si on n'est pas encore venu à une séance, on peut nous joindre pour la prochaine séance. Il y a beaucoup de musique traditionnelle française, de nourriture, et de bonne compagnie! Contactez la Collection pour plus de renseignements, s'il vous plait.

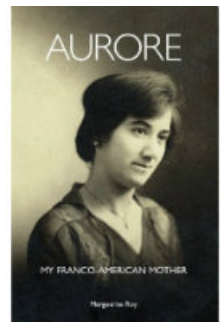
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Aurore : My Franco-American Mother

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On August 31st, the Collection hosted Auburn author Marguerite Roy for a reading and discussion of her first book, *Aurore: My Franco-American Mother*. Roy's memoir of her mother, *Aurore*, is touching and well-written; at times humorous, and at times tragic. A large crowd turned out to hear Roy read from her book, for which she used the Collection to conduct background research, and many in the audience heard stories that resonated with their own experiences and those of their parents. There were audible gasps and, occasionally, rueful laughter, at Roy's recollection of her birth during a snowstorm, in which her mother was dragged to St Mary's Hospital along Lewiston's trolley tracks, with several feet of snow on either side; and at her near-drowning experience several years later when she cut school to go skating on the (thinly) frozen Androscoggin River.

As Collection Coordinator James Myall said in introducing Roy, *Aurore* is a book that is relevant for many people, not just those with Franco-American roots, but to anyone interested in the history of Lewiston-Auburn, or the social conditions of life in early 20th-century Maine. Copies of *Aurore* are available at the USM LAC bookstore, or through amazon.com. The event was covered in the *Twin City Times* by local columnist Rachel Morin – you can read her review on our website



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« Aurore : My Franco-American Mother »

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Le 31 août, l'auteur local, Marguerite Roy, est venue à la collection pour une lecture et discussion de son premier livre, « Aurore : My Franco-American Mother ». La mémoire de Roy, sur sa mère, Aurore, est non seulement touchante, mais aussi drôle. Le livre inclut beaucoup de matières que Roy a recherchées à la collection, mais aussi beaucoup des souvenirs de Roy et sa famille. Beaucoup des auditeurs ont entendu des histoires qui étaient semblables à leurs propres vies ou les vies de leur parents. Certains ont eu le souffle coupé ou ont ri quand Roy a parlé au sujet de sa naissance, pendant une grande tempête de neige (sa mère a été tirée par son père à la voie de tramway, entouré des grands talus de neige); et quand Roy a décrit une aventure sur la rivière Androscoggin glacée, pendant laquelle elle a failli de se noyer.

Le Coordinateur de la Collection, James Myall, a dit que « Aurore » est pertinent pour les franco-américains, et, en plus, ceux qui s'intéressent à l'histoire de Lewiston-Auburn, et de la vie ordinaire au 20ème siècle. On peut acheter le livre « Aurore » au site web, « www.amazon.com », ou à la librairie du Collège Lewiston-Auburn.

Finding Your Inner Moose

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October 27th saw Maine playwright, performer and humorist, Susan Poulin, come to the Collection to read from her first book, *Finding Your Inner Moose: Ida LeClair's Guide to Livin' the Good Life*. Poulin, who is herself Franco-American, spoke about the process of creating her character, Ida LeClair, who lives in the fictional (but familiar) town of Mahoosuc Mills in Franklin County, Maine, and the cast of characters who contribute to Ida's down-home, no-nonsense 'life guide.' These include her taciturn husband Charlie ("finished third in his graduating class – of six"), her niece Caitlyn ("pretty as a button, even with that nosering"), and her dog, Scamp.

Susan, and Ida, accomplish the difficult task of giving advice that is both practical and funny. Those who attended the book reading were at turns nodding sagely and clutching their sides with laughter. Copies of *Finding Your Inner Moose* are available in the USM LAC bookstore.



« Finding Your Inner Moose »

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Le 27 octobre, Susan Poulin, actrice, dramaturge, et humoriste, est venue à la Collection pour lire des extraits de son premier livre, « *Finding Your Inner Moose, Ida LeClair's Guide to Livin' the Good Life* ». Poulin, qui est franco-américaine, a parlé de la création de son personnage, Ida LeClair, qui habite dans le village imaginaire mais familier, Mahoosuc Mills, dans Franklin County, Maine, ainsi que la famille et les amis d'Ida, qui contribuent leur propres conseils au guide plein de bon sens et de pragmatisme. Il y a le mari d'Ida, qui s'appelle Charlie (il a fini l'école en troisième place parmi six élèves), la nièce d'Ida, qui s'appelle Caitlyn (très mignonne, même en portant un anneau au nez) et le chien, Scamp.

Susan, et Ida, réussissent à donner des conseils non seulement praticables, mais aussi amusants. Les auditeurs à l'événement se sont amusés et ont beaucoup appris! On peut acheter « *Finding Your Inner Moose* » à la librairie de USM LAC.

40th Anniversary

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2012 marks 40 years (or so) since the Franco-American Collection had its beginnings as the Centre d'Héritage Franco-Américain. The Centre itself grew from an earlier project, an independent study project at St Dominic's High School in Lewiston under Joanne Lapointe and Louise Forgues. When the material collected by the students overwhelmed Mme. Lapointe's classroom, Lapointe, with the help of St Francis College in Biddeford, decided to create a permanent home for Franco-American history in Lewiston, which became the Centre d'Héritage. From 1972 through 1989, when it was transferred to the University of Southern Maine, the Centre had homes in several locations, including Ash Street and Lisbon Street in Lewiston, and Sacred Heart School in Auburn. In addition to collecting memorabilia and historical artifacts, the Centre sponsored cabarets, film festivals, theatrical productions, and other events.

In celebration of the Collection's 40 years of work, both as the Centre d'Héritage and as part of the University of Southern Maine, the Collection hosted a celebratory gathering November 3. One hundred and fifty friends joined us for an afternoon of traditional food and music. Collection Coordinator James Myall offered a history of the Collection, and Doug Protsik of the Maine Fiddle Camp educated us on the characteristics that make French Canadian fiddle music distinct.

In addition to reflecting on the past, attendees were also invited to dream for the future, as the Collection launched its *Cher Futur* project. Friends of the Collection and community members are invited to fill out a postcard to leave a message for the Franco-Americans of tomorrow. These messages will form a time capsule for our next large anniversary. To find out more, please visit our website.

40ème Anniversaire

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La Collection Franco-Américaine était créée en 1971, par quelques élèves de l'École St Dominique à Lewiston. Les élèves ont fait des études indépendantes au sujet des Franco-Américains de Lewiston et d'Auburn, sous la direction des professeurs Joanne Lapointe et Louise Forgues. En 1972, ils ont ramassé une grande collection d'objets historiques, donc Mme Lapointe, avec l'aide du collège St Francis, de Biddeford, a créé une maison permanente pour l'histoire et l'héritage franco-américaine, qui s'appelle Le Centre d'Héritage Franco-Américain. De 1972 jusqu'en 1989, quand l'on a cédé ces objets à l'Université du Maine du Sud, le centre se trouvait dans « Intown Manor », dans la Rue Ash, et dans la Rue Lisbon, à Lewiston, et aussi à l'ancienne École Sacré Cœur à Auburn. En plus d'assembler les objets historiques, le Centre accueillait des cabarets musicaux, des festivals du film, des pièces de théâtre, et d'autres événements culturels.

Pour célébrer 40 ans de travail sous deux noms différents – le Centre d'Héritage et la Collection Franco-Américaine – la Collection a invité nos amis à une fête le 3 novembre. Cent-cinquante amis se sont amusés pendant deux heures en écoutant de la musique et goûtant une cuisine traditionnelle. Le Coordinateur, James Myall, a parlé au sujet de l'histoire de la Collection, et Doug Protsik, fondateur du 'Maine Fiddle Camp' a expliqué ce qui distingue la musique canadienne-française. On a pensé au passé, bien sûr, mais en plus, on a pensé à l'avenir. La Collection annonce un projet, qui s'appelle 'Cher Futur.' Nous invitons tout le monde à écrire une carte-postale qui contient un message pour les Franco-Américains de l'avenir. Les cartes-postales formeront une partie de la prochaine anniversaire de la Collection. Pour obtenir plus de renseignements, visitez le site-web de la Collection.

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Poor Farms of New England

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Andrew Cushing, B.A.

The term "poor farm" means little in today's parlance. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though, poor farms existed in nearly every town across Northern New England. These institutions, sometimes called town farms, operated as the primary welfare model for the destitute, elderly, felons, and orphans of the day. Based on the popular belief that physical labor and time spent in nature would cure a myriad of vices, the poor farm garnered support from moral reformists and frugal tax payers alike. One Lewiston, Maine newspaper iterated in 1877 that "the first condition of preventing pauperism is that relief shall be connected with labor as far as possible" ("Sweet Charity Among the Poor of Lewiston and Auburn," Lewiston Daily Sun, 20 January 1877). Preventing pauperism, however, was easier said than done; the poor farm model had dubious success between the 1820s, when many first appeared, and the 1940s, when many finally closed. Since the mid-twentieth century the poor farm has slipped from memory, remaining only in faint recollections, yellowing town reports, and occasional road signs. My project sought to explore the reasoning behind starting, maintaining, and closing these quiet models of American poor relief.

As it turned out, the Franco-American Collection offered me a rich collection of primary sources for my honors thesis. From the archives I found newspaper articles detailing the sordid Baubiers, an impoverished family that Lewiston city officials exiled to the Rangeley Lakes region in the 1850s. The collection's newspapers and memoirs also revealed tales of the City Farm's piggeries and the boiled trash they ate, the mayors' annual Christmas visits, the bodies of babies found beneath barn floorboards, and the economic frustrations that ultimately contributed to the closure of poor farms throughout Northern New England. Thanks to the Franco-American Collection I was able to infuse my project with the colorful and curious stories like those listed above—and thanks to those stories my topic got the nuance it deserved.

Women and La Survivance

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Rachel Spilecki, B.A.

After finding the USM L/A Franco-American Collection, I decided to use its extraordinary amount of primary and secondary source material for my thesis in the pursuit of an Honors degree in History from Suffolk University in Boston. The pictures, documents, pamphlets, business directories, maps, parish records, and oral history interviews held in the Collection led me to focus on French Canadian women's centrality to their émigré communities and their cultural identity, specifically in Lewiston, Maine.

My study, which focuses on the years 1860 to 1900, attempts to analyze and illuminate the contributions made by lay women and women religious to the perpetuation of French Canadian social, ethnic, and religious identities in the northern United States. These women brought with them the three-fold value system and tools of La Survivance, a nationalist movement arising from the British conquest of the French Canadian provinces. The community norms and ideas embedded in La Survivance inspired French Canadian immigrant women's extraordinary, though little recognized, engagements with the challenges of emigration, employment in the textile industry, the attendant re-imagining of motherhood, participation in artistic cultural community groups, the establishment of an ethnic parish, the moral and academic education of the community's children, and the institution of significant charitable organizations.

Without the generosity of Maureen Perry, James Myall, and all those who have donated to the Collection, I would have never been able to unearth this wonderful history. Although I used the resources of other institutions in Lewiston, I used the material in the Franco-American Collection to not only give me context but to also see an interesting story that had not yet been told. The Collection is fascinating, broad, and rich, and I am truly indebted to it and its staff for the accomplishment of my Honors degree in History in May 2012.

National Museum of Language

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John Joseph Smith

The National Museum of Language since opening its doors in 2008 has offered an eclectic selection of exhibits and an engaging speaker series to broaden the linguistic and cultural awareness of Americans and other visitors to our National Capital area. Our current exhibits include permanent displays of historical and actual writing systems around the world, and most recently we created a look at American English as it was 150 years ago, on the anniversary of the War of 1812: "Pass it on!, "Emerging American Language in 1812". The

speaker series brings world class researchers and linguists to the Museum four times a year for special presentations on a wide variety of topics. There are over 2 million "francophones" in the United States, that is, those who speak French at home or otherwise strongly identify with the language and culture. It is the first or second language of about 10 million people in the Americas, even excluding those who speak French-based creole languages.

So, this "National" Museum has decided to open by the end of October of this year a new exhibit focused on aspects of the French language in the Western Hemisphere: "Glimpses of French in the Americas." We also plan to invite one or more speakers to offer perspectives on the French language and franco-american culture to complement this newest addition to the museum.

We seek to offer a glimpse into the exceptionally diverse universe of French dialects and creoles in the Americas, by showing a bit of that diversity of speaker communities and their histories in the Americas. We envision an ever growing exhibit, as we seek to expand our displays and artifacts through gifts and donations. Initially, we plan to focus on the experience of French in the United States, most particularly in "Cajun" Louisiana and New England.

For this latter effort we are grateful to the Franco-American Collection housed at the University of Southern Maine and Professor James Myall, in Lewiston, a community which at one time boasted one of the highest concentration of francophones in New England, and which continues to be a center of French culture in New England.

Lewiston/Auburn is also the location of the Franco-American Heritage Center, a venue for residents to continue to celebrating their rich history and contributions to Maine. On display at the National Museum will be several editions of two early and mid 20th Century era French newspapers, Lewiston's "Le Messenger" and "Le Petit Journal", as well as a paper published in the Woonsocket Rhode Island francophone community, "La Sentinelle".

These newspaper selections display not only the breadth of French language usage in all aspects of daily life in these two vibrant industrial immigrant communities, but the determination of its speakers and their leaders to preserve the vitality of their language and culture in their larger anglophone, often "nativist" communities. This Exhibit offers just a select geographic slice of "francophonie" in the Western Hemisphere. But the French language community is a very much broader geographic universe of people and cultures celebrating a common language heritage.

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L/A's Storied & Historic Music, Dance and Theatrical Performance Halls & Performers: A Visual Photographic Retrospective

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By Mike Koch

In the fall of 2011 I was asked to join a small idea group to kick around the notion of putting together an art show with images of a few of our local theaters. As the suggestions rolled a plan and a passion, backed by enthusiasm, grew.

Being at the right place at the right time, with a passion for history, art, photography and our two cities this project fell right in my wheelhouse. A few weeks passed with a general search into the availability of images, for starters. Finding what was out there became more and more obvious, this show had legs. Roughly eight months later a wonderful collection of Lewiston and Auburn's visual history, spanning more than a hundred years of theater, came to life.



The images began to develop a life of their own as the Monet of blurred vision became a clear Daumier and a collection of worthy images of our time told their own story. Seeing the extraordinary lives our community of friends, relatives, descendants and neighbors' led in the evenings of L/A through the years was exciting and wondrous at the same time. There was dancing in halls all over town and in the outskirts dancing in granges. People came from all over New England; Vermont, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts - all for the entertainment found gracing the stages of our theaters. Actors, singers, comedians, musicians, acts and theatrical groups of all kinds came to this area because the people here supported and enjoyed those artists. As well, many of those entertainers were from Lewiston, Auburn and many were from Canada, here for the work.

The show kicked off with a special preview at the Community Little Theatre's 'A Night at the Tony's' - CLT's Fundraiser Auction on September 8th, 2012, in the CLT Lobby Gallery and opened to the public the following week. The show can still be viewed at CLT at 30 Academy Street in Auburn during business hours. Better to call first. It can also travel.

Were it not for a very special small number of individuals and organizations, this show would not have been. The friends I have made and the education gained has been incredible. They are; Karen Mayo, Julie L'Heureux, Kat Carney of The Community Little Theatre, Doug Hodgkin, and staff of the Androscoggin Historical Society, James Myall of USM LAC's Franco-American Collection, Calvin Rinck of the L/A Economic Growth Council, David Gouda of Lewiston City Hall, Mary, Fred and Kevin at Kimball Street Studios were amazing, Dan & Sandy Marquis of Marquis Signs, and also the great support and assistance from Auburn City Hall, Auburn Public Library, The Public Theatre, Lewiston Public Library, Lewiston Sun Journal and Photo Finish.

Our area has been raising a kind of renaissance in the arts recently. We should all continue to support being involved in any and every way in our local arts.

[READ MORE](#)

James Myall

The Republican Party's most famous president is surely Abraham Lincoln. But Lincoln's Presidency was preceded by the campaign of the party's first nominee, the more radical John Charles Frémont, in 1856. Although Frémont's anti-slavery position would narrowly lose him the 1856 election, the candidacy of this Franco-American explorer, officer and politician was nonetheless important in shaping the early Republican party. Moreover, the attacks on Frémont in 1856 will be familiar to modern political observers, and not just for his, 'French Connection'.

In 1856, the newly-formed Republican Party, which had formed in opposition to slavery, held its first national convention in Philadelphia. They chose Frémont as their candidate, partly because the major issue of the day was whether to expand slavery to the western states. Frémont was also a romantic military hero, which the Republicans hoped would make him a unifying figure. This was a hope that ultimately failed. Frémont came second in a three-way race to Democrat James Buchanan, and only won Electoral College delegates in

Northern states. Sustained attacks by the Democrats and the anti-immigrant Native American Party destroyed Frémont's campaign. A young Abraham Lincoln (who had narrowly missed out on the nomination as Vice-President on the ticket) defended Frémont eloquently, but to no avail.

'Birthers'

Frémont had been born out of wedlock to Anne Prior (or Pryor) and her French tutor, Charles Fremont. Anne, only 17, was married to the 60 year-old Major John Prior. Fremont claimed to be a French Royalist refugee of the Napoleonic Wars. In reality, he was probably a Québécois merchant who had escaped from a British ship, having been captured en-route to join relatives in Saint Domingue (Haiti). Charles Fremont was the name he assumed to hid his real identity, Louis René Frémont (Rolle, 1999)



During the 1856 election, not only did Frémont's opponents point out that his mother and father had never married, but demanded to see Frémont's birth certificate, to prove that, as a natural born citizen, he was indeed qualified to run for the Presidency. Unlike President Obama, however, Frémont was unable to produce his certificate.

Religious Prejudice

Frémont's foreign origins caused him further problems during the election campaign. As the son of a French-speaking immigrant, there was a wide-spread rumor that Frémont was himself a Catholic. The Native American Party was fiercely anti-Catholic in its policies, but such sentiments were rife in America in this period. Although Frémont was himself anti-immigrant, he could not shake the fears of many voters that a Catholic in the White House would lead to secret control by the Pope in Rome! Frémont himself refused to address the rumors, stating that the issue should not have a bearing on the campaign. Although Frémont's stance may have been backed by the Constitution, more recent campaigns show that religious affiliation makes a big impression on the electorate.

Military Record

Frémont's military record, and reputation as a great explorer was supposed to have been his greatest asset, yet even this came under attack. In the 1840s, Frémont had led expeditions to Oregon, Utah and California, fulfilling what many thought was the United States' manifest destiny. The deeds of 'the Pathfinder', as he was known, had inspired the Oregon Trail, the California Gold Rush, and the Mormon migration to Utah. Yet during the Mexican-American War, Frémont, as Lieutenant-Colonel of the California Battalion (a total of 428 men) had ordered the murder of three unarmed Mexican civilians. An eye-witness reported the story in the Los Angeles Star, September 27, 1856.

Coupled to this was Frémont's court-martial for misconduct, disobedience of orders, and mutiny. The conviction was derived from Frémont's assumption of the role of Military Governor of California in 1847, contrary to President Polk's instructions. As a result of both allegations, Frémont failed to carry his adopted state's four electoral votes, despite having served as Senator for California between 1850-51.

Romantic Affairs

Even Frémont's romantic life came under attack, and he was accused of several extra-marital affairs dating back over many years. One, with a young Cherokee woman, was alleged to have occurred before his marriage in 1841, but it was no less scandalous for that. In addition, it was alleged that he had a Hispanic mistress in Los Angeles while his wife Jessie lived in Washington, D.C.. Most seriously, the Republican National Committee was apparently forced to buy off a French chambermaid who claimed to have been made pregnant by Frémont in New York, in 1856. (Rolle, 1999)

Financial Dealings

Frémont was immensely wealthy by 1856, having cashed in on the gold rush – in the 1850 census he is recorded as having a fortune of some \$250,000. His record as an absentee landowner, and 'monopolist' came under scrutiny, as did his ties to a major bank, Palmer, Cook and Co. There were allegations that Frémont planned to appoint its owner, Joseph Palmer as secretary of the treasury. In 1856, connections to the banking industry an immense personal fortune were reasons for scrutiny as much as today.

Divisive Candidate

Most controversially of all, Frémont was an ardent abolitionist to a trait that would have him briefly challenge

most controversially of all, Frémont was an ardent abolitionist (a trait that would have him briefly challenge Lincoln for the party nomination again in 1864). This cost him votes in all the Southern States and in much of the Moderate North – Pennsylvania, and Illinois, for example. Even supporters of the Republican agenda feared that Frémont's election would lead to civil war, and in 1856, there were still hopes that a peaceful solution could be found.

In the end, Frémont performed remarkably well for a candidate from a new political party in its first national showing. He received 31% of the popular vote, to James Buchanan's 45.3%, and if he had carried Pennsylvania and Illinois, he would have won the election. Pennsylvania alone might have allowed him to win the vote in the House of Representative (Rolle, 1999).

Later Life

Frémont's career declined rather precipitously after 1856. Lincoln considered appointing him ambassador to France in 1861, but as a native Georgian, Frémont's loyalty was questioned. Instead he was given command of the Union's Army of the West. He lost this commission when he attempted to violate the neutrality of Missouri and emancipate the slaves in that state. In 1862, having been moved to the Mountain Department, Frémont's army fought General Jackson to a standstill for eight days.

In 1864, a group of Radical Republicans, frustrated at the slow progress of the emancipation agenda, nominated Frémont as their Presidential candidate. Frémont withdrew after negotiating with Lincoln to have his bitter enemy, Postmaster Montgomery Blair, removed from office. After the Civil War, Frémont's Pacific Railroad, designed to connect St. Louis and San Francisco, went bankrupt, and although he served as Governor of Arizona from 1878 to 1881, Frémont's family depended on the publication earnings of his wife Jessie until his death in 1890 in New York City.

Despite the failure of the 1856 campaign, which nonetheless paved the way for Lincoln's 1860 victory, Frémont is remembered largely for his reputation as an explorer and as the Pathfinder. The French side of his character, a detriment in his own time, is largely forgotten. Yet as the son of a Québécois immigrant, Frémont must be one of the most famous Franco-Americans. Dozens of Western counties, cities and streets are named in his honor, as are a college football trophy (the Frémont Cannon in Nevada) and a US Infantry Division (8th Mechanized Infantry, the Pathfinders)

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