

LE BULLETIN

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FRANCO - AMERICAN
COLLECTION
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LE BULLTIN: The Newsletter of USM's Franco-American Collection

In this Issue:

From the Coordinator f

Upcoming Event Series: Franco-American Voices f

LAC Class Visits to the Collection

Réveil: Waking Up French f

Sing-Alongs f

Donation: Leblanc Maps f

Donation: Club Richelieu Lewiston-Auburn f

New Online Content f

Spring Cleaning f

Giving to the Collection f

Le Messenger

f = version français

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Cover: *Le Messenger* Staff, 1928, at their office at 175 Lincoln St, Lewiston. Jean-Baptiste Couture (editor); P.S. Guilbault (foreman); Henri Carpentier; Omer Gauvin; Arthur Brunelle.

Pictured in the second row, from left to right are: F. X. Guay; Albert Bedard; Odule Laplante; Joseph Belanger; N. L. Gendreau; Mr. Runneau.

Pictured in the back row, from left to right are: Corine Gauthier (Dumais); Loretta Vachon; Blanche Verville (Sutton); Camile Lessard (Bissonnette)

From the Coordinator

This quarter's Bulletin is a bumper issue, jam-packed with news of what we're doing at the Collection. There are plenty of examples of the way the Collection is serving our diverse constituencies. This semester, we reached out to several classes here at the University of Southern Maine, and introduced lots of new students to the Collection. We've visited classes at other colleges, such as Bates College in Lewiston and the University of Maine at Augusta. Our public events, like our sing-alongs, continue to be popular, and there are two exciting upcoming events this summer.

As if that weren't enough, there's now more online content available than ever, meaning that if you can't come by the Collection in person, you can still explore some of our holdings via the Web. Of course, we're continuing to expand our holdings, and this issue also contains news of two substantial donations, and the efforts we're making to keep the Collection lean and relevant.

Happy Reading!

James

Du Coordinateur

Ce numéro du Bulletin inclut beaucoup de nouvelles de la Collection. Il y a plusieurs exemples des activités de la Collection avec nos communautés diverses. Le semestre dernier, nous avons introduit beaucoup d'étudiants à la Collection pour la première fois. Le Coordinateur a aussi parlé aux classes des autres universités, comme « Bates College » à Lewiston, et l'Université du Maine à Augusta, à propos de diverses questions franco-américaines. Les événements publics de la Collection sont toujours populaires, et il y aura deux événements passionnants cet été.

En plus, la Collection a enrichi le contenu de notre site web. Si on ne peut pas visiter la Collection en personne, on peut l'explorer par internet. Bien sûr, la Collection continue aussi à s'augmenter, et ci-dessous, il y a des nouvelles au sujet de deux dons importants. Enfin, ce numéro contient des nouvelles sur nos efforts de rendre la collection plus centrée et pertinente.

Bonne lecture!

James

Upcoming Event Series: Franco- American Voices

A trio of events through June and July will highlight the role of stories in our identity and history.



With help from the Maine Arts Commission and Maine Humanities Council, the Collection is excited to announce the following events:

June 15, 6:30-9 PM: Maine Voices – An Evening of Franco-American Story-Telling.

Join Grégoire Chabot, Michael Parent and Susan Poulin, some of Maine's most renowned yarn-spinners for some distinctly Franco-American stories. Each performer will bring their individual blend of humor, engaging tales and reflections on what it means to be Franco-American. Whether you're a Franco-American, or someone who enjoys a good story, this is an event you won't want to miss!

Free – no reservations necessary. Light refreshments. For more information, see our website.

July 20, 9AM – 12 Noon: Bringing Franco-American History to Life: Oral Histories in the Classroom.

Andréa l'Hommedieu, Oral Historian at the University of South Carolina, will be holding this special workshop for educators on conducting oral history projects, and using oral histories as a teaching tool. This event is worth 0.3 CEU's, and certification is available for a small fee.

Free – open to teachers and educators. Lunch included. RSVP to reserve a place – franco@usm.maine.edu

July 20, 2-4PM: Voices From Our Past: Franco-American Oral Histories, 1977-present.

Collection Coordinator James Myall will offer an exposition of the oral histories housed at the Franco-American Collection. These interviews with local Francos were accumulated from 1977 and continue to be expanded. Some of the interviewees talk about growing up in the 1890s; all recount unique individual experiences of Franco-American life.

Free – open to everyone. Light refreshments. No reservations necessary. See the website for more information.



**Une série
d'événements à
venir: Voix Franco-
Américaines**

Un trio d'événements en juin et juillet met en accent le rôle du conte et des conteurs

dans l'histoire et l'héritage franco-américains. Grâce à la Commission des Arts du Maine (« Maine Arts Commission ») et au Conseil des Arts Libéraux (« Maine Humanities Council ») la Collection annonce les événements suivants :

Juin 15, 6:30-9 h après midi: Voix du Maine – Une Soirée de Contes Franco-Américains.

On vous invite à une soirée où trois conteurs franco-américains célèbres qui viennent du Maine racontent des histoires avec un mélange unique d'humour et du pathétique, et tous ces artistes réfléchiront à tout ce qui rend un individu franco-américain. Si on est franco ou non, on ne peut pas manquer cet événement!

Gratuit – les réservations ne sont pas nécessaires. Du café et des desserts. Pour plus de renseignements, visitez notre site-web.

Juillet 20, 9h du matin à Midi: l'Histoire Franco-Américaine Vivante: Les histoires orales à l'école.

Un atelier dirigé par Andréa l'Hommedieu, conservatrice de l'histoire orale à l'Université de la Caroline du Sud, pour professeurs et enseignants. Le cours enseignera la manière d'utiliser les histoires orales avec les étudiants en créant des projets d'histoire orale et en analysant les entrevues existantes. Les participants de ce séminaire auront la possibilité d'obtenir 0.3 CEUs. Les frais en sont modérés.

Gratuit – limité aux professeurs et enseignants. Déjeuner compris. RSVP à franco@usm.maine.edu

Juillet 20, 2-4 PM : Les Voix d'antan : histoires orales franco-américaines, de 1977 à nos jours.

Le Coordinateur de la Collection, James Myall, présentera des histoires orales trouvées dans la Collection. Ces entrevues avec des membres de la communauté franco-américaine remontent à 1977; la Collection continue à en enregistrer aujourd'hui. Les personnes interviewés ont parlé à propos de sujets divers:

Gratuit – pour tous. Du café et desserts. Les réservations ne sont pas nécessaires. Pour plus de renseignements, visitez notre site-web.

USM LAC Classes at the Collection

As part of a special outreach to students here at USM LAC, the Collection worked with professors of six classes to bring students to the Collection for a unique insight into local history and the Franco-American community. For many, this was their first visit to the Collection. Over 100 students visited the Collection from the following classes :



Les étudiants de «USM LAC» à la Collection:

Ce semestre, la Collection a invité six professeurs et leurs étudiants à visiter la Collection pour une perspective unique sur la communauté franco-américaine. Plus que 100 étudiants ont visité la Collection avec les classes ci-dessous :

HUM 399: Immigration in Lewiston Auburn (Christine Young)

SBS 345: Race, Class, Gender (Michelle Vasquez-Jacobus)

SBS 341: Family (Mark Silber)

HUM 307: Creative Non-Fiction (Pat Hager)

LCC 320: Sustaining Democracy (James Myall)

LCC 345: Culture and Community (Christy Hammer)

Here are some of their thoughts:

"[The Collection] helped me see what the culture was like, rather than just the industrial aspect; I learned that even though there were some Franco-Americans who hid from who they were, there were many who loved to share it. I was shocked at how many [Franco-Americans] there really were in Maine. [The Collection] is a cool place with a bunch of interesting material about Franco history"

Jocelyn Murphy, Social and Behavioral Sciences

"We learned about the Franco-Americans by reading *Loyal But French* and discussing it in class. Getting to see some of the materials that related to that helped me gain an even broader view of the issues. There is a lot more to the Franco-American heritage than I realized, and you can learn a lot about it there."

Katrina Guiggey, Natural and Applied Sciences

"We are learning and reading about the Francos in Lewiston and what they faced and did when they settled. I did not know about the use of "frog" as an insult to Francos. The Collection was very interesting and informative on the Franco community and culture and how they were discriminated against."

Kristina Goranson, Nursing.

Réveil! Waking Up French



Réveil! Waking Up French is a powerful documentary of language loss in the Franco-American communities of New England. Produced by Maine resident Ben Levine, it chronicles the history of discrimination and suppression of Francos in the United States, and the recent renaissance of the culture. March 5, USM LAC students were lucky to have the opportunity to not only watch the movie, which has become well-known among Franco-Americans, but engage the film-maker in a thought-provoking question-and-answer session.

The LAC screening, which included students from three different classes preceded the television premier of the film on Maine Public Television. Check your television listings for repeat showings.

More information about *Réveil* and to order a copy of the DVD, visit www.wakingupfrench.com

Réveil! Waking Up French est un documentaire émouvant au sujet de la perte de la langue française dans les communautés franco-américaines de la Nouvelle Angleterre. Le film, réalisé par un résident du Maine, Ben Levine, raconte l'histoire de la discrimination et de la suppression des Franco-Américains aux États-Unis, et la renaissance récente de cette culture. Le 5 mars, M. Levine est venue à USM-LAC pour parler avec les étudiants de trois cours différents au sujet de son film.

Le « MPBN » a diffusé ce film pour la première fois peu de temps après cet événement. Consultez votre guide TV pour plus d'information.

On peut acheter le film *Réveil* (disponible en anglais, avec sous-titres français) en DVD à www.wakingupfrench.com

Sing-Alongs

Our monthly sing-along sessions continue to attract friendly and enthusiastic crowds. The group was invited to the St Mary's D'Youville Pavilion in April, and was welcomed by many of the residents there who are unable to attend the regular sessions. In May, we celebrated the 103rd birthday of one of our regulars, Mrs Antoinette Gagné. The sing-alongs will return in the Fall.

Chanter en Choeur

Les séances mensuelles de chanter en chœur sont toujours populaires. Les chanteurs ont été invité au Pavillon D'Youville à l'Hôpital Ste Marie en avril. Les résidents, qui ne peuvent pas aller aux autres séances, ont félicité les chanteurs. En mai, nous avons célébré Mme Antoinette Gagné, et son 103e anniversaire. Les séances recommenceront en automne.



Donation: Leblanc Maps

Vincent Leblanc, a long-time surveyor and amateur cartographer, worked in Lewiston-Auburn and the wider area for decades, and amassed a large collection of surveyor's charts, architectural drawings and topographical maps during his lifetime. Upon his recent passing, his nephew, Mr. John Myrand, donated the maps to the Collection. Thanks to a grant from the Maine Historical Records Advisory Board, the Collection is able to house and store the group of over 500 charts and plans. The maps are currently being cataloged and placed in archival folders, and should be accessible to researchers by the fall.

The hundreds of clients represented in the donation include local businesses, town and county governments, churches, post offices and civic organizations. The most unusual item discovered so far is a 1944 tracing of an 1857 map of Lewiston. These maps and charts span a crucial period of Lewiston's development from an industrial hub to a service-based economy. Future researchers will be able to use this donation to tell the story of a city in transition.

Donation: Cartes de M. Leblanc

Vincent Leblanc était un arpenteur et cartographe amateur. Il a travaillé à Lewiston-Auburn pendant plus que 40 ans, et il a recueilli une grande collection de cartes et dessins. Quand M. Leblanc est mort, en 2011, son neveu, John Myrand, a donné les cartes à la Collection. Grâce à une bourse du « Maine Historical Records Advisory Board », la Collection peut conserver plus que 500 cartes et dessins. Maintenant, le Coordinateur catalogue les cartes, et le public peut les voir en automne.

La grande clientèle de M. Leblanc inclut des magasins, des gouvernements des villes et des comtés, des églises, des bureaux de poste, et des organisations diverses. Un des articles les plus intéressants est une carte dessinée en 1944 d'après une ancienne carte de Lewiston de 1857. Ces cartes trace le développement de Lewiston d'un centre industriel à une ville où le secteur de services prédomine. Les chercheurs peuvent utiliser ce don pour tracer l'histoire d'une ville en transition.

Donation: Club Richelieu Lewiston-Auburn

The Lewiston-Auburn chapter of the Club Richelieu, a French international charitable organization, included many prominent local residents among its members during its existence from 1960 to 2010.

The Collection recently received a donation of club memorabilia from the surviving members of the organization.

The donation includes dozens of photographs and documents from the club's fifty-year history, as well as the official symbols of the organization, such as the club banner, collection bowl and chairman's gavel.

The artifacts will augment the Collection's existing holdings of Richelieu material donated by past members. In addition, the Collection already holds material on other local social clubs, including the *Association Canado-Américaine* and the *Institut Jacques Cartier*.

The donation was made by some of the last members of the Richelieu before its disbandment - Mario Gendron, Roger Mailhot and Jean-Robert Maheu of Lewiston. The late Daniel Isabel, who was the final president of the club, and the late Vincent Leblanc, who served as secretary and treasurer, were also instrumental in bringing the donation to the Collection. Richelieu International began in Ottawa, Canada, in 1945 and now has organizations in most French-speaking areas worldwide. The Lewiston chapter opened in 1960, and for fifty years supported local children and families, encouraging the French language and appreciation of French culture.

Anyone with memorabilia from the Club Richelieu is invited to donate to the Collection.



La branche en Lewiston-Auburn du Club Richelieu International, un groupe bénévole, incluait beaucoup de citoyens célèbres comme membres, pendant les années 1960 à 2010. Les derniers membres du club ont donné des souvenirs de l'organisation à la Collection.

Ce don inclut des dizaines de photographies de l'histoire du club, et aussi les symboles officiels du club, comme son drapeau, une boule d'argent et le marteau du président du club. Ces objets augmentent la documentation donnée par d'autres anciens membres du club. En plus, la Collection a déjà de la documentation des autres clubs franco-américains, comme l'Association Canado-Américaine et l'Institut Jacques Cartier.

Messieurs Mario Gendron, Roger Mailhot et Jean-Robert Maheu ont donné ces documents et objets à la Collection. Le don a été l'idée du président du Club, M. Daniel Isabel, et de M. Vincent Leblanc, le secrétaire et trésorier. Le Richelieu International a débuté à Ottawa, au Canada, en 1945, et aujourd'hui il y a des branches dans la majorité des pays francophones. Le club à Lewiston a soutenu les enfants et familles, la langue française et la culture française et franco-américaine.

La Collection veut inviter d'autres individus qui ont leurs propres souvenirs du club de les donner à la Collection.

New Online Content

In order to make the Collection more accessible, and as part of our outreach efforts, we now have more material online than ever! Did you know we have more than 200 photographs available through the [Maine Memory Network](#)? Many can be purchased online through Vintage Maine Images. Both websites are services of the Maine Historical Society.

In addition, you can now see just how extensive the Collection is through a series of Collection finding aids which are viewable online for the first time. In addition to the index of our subjects and biographical collections, some of our larger sub-collections now have their own finding aids. These include the papers and research notes of Professor Madeleine Giguère; the political speeches of “Mr Democrat” Louis Jalbert, and theater scripts from the collection of Roland Gosselin.

Finally, we also have audio-visual material online for the first time. Mrs. Monique Couturier has generously donated several items from her late husband, Robert Couturier’s estate. Mr. Couturier was elected Mayor of Lewiston in 1965, and was the youngest city mayor in the US at the time (aged 25). He was also a beloved leader in the Lewiston Franco-American community. Among the donation of his materials were a series of film reels containing television spots he produced as mayor in 1965. All ten are available online at our [website](#).

Spring Cleaning

Thanks to the generosity of community members, we receive a large number of donations, especially of books. The sheer quantity of donations means that we’re not always able to keep them all. Some are duplicates of books we already have, and some just don’t quite fit our mission – literature produced in France, for example. Some donors ask us to return unwanted items to them, but most folks are happy to see their donation go to a new home.

This spring, we sent the call out to Maine libraries and schools to see who might be interested in our extra materials. The response was great! We were able to provide a number of Maine’s libraries with materials on Franco-Americans and help educate more Mainers about the community. Over 200 books were sent to new homes, in particular the Canadian Studies Department at the University of Maine in Orono. Other places our extra books wound up were the Dover-Foxcroft Academy, the Canaan Public Library, Hartland Public Library, Belfast Free Library Special Collections, Abbot Memorial Library, and School Administrative District #4 (Guildford).

Notre Site-Web Se Développe

Savez-vous que le site web de la Collection contient plus de 200 photographies (au « [Maine Memory Network](#) »)? On peut acheter ces images de « Maine Vintage Images ». Les deux services sont fournis par la Société Historique du Maine.

En plus, on peut voir la grandeur actuelle de la Collection sur notre site-web. Le site inclut beaucoup de répertoires sommaires pour la Collection, qu’on peut voir sur l’internet pour la première fois. Les répertoires sommaires sont les indices de nos collections des sujets, et des biographies, et, en plus des sous-collections les plus importantes de la Collection.

Ces sous-collections incluent les papiers de recherche de Madeleine Giguère, professeur de l’Université du Maine en Sud, et fondatrice de la Collection. Il y a aussi les discours politiques de « M. Democrat » Louis Jalbert, ou les textes de théâtre de Roland Gosselin.

Récemment, Mme Monique Couturier a généreusement contribué des matériaux audio-visuels de son mari, le défunt Robert Couturier, maire de Lewiston. Quand il a été élu en 1965, M. Couturier était le plus jeune maire d’une ville aux États-Unis (il avait 25 ans). Il était aussi un chef bien-aimé de la communauté franco-américaine du Maine. Le don qui est numérisé sur [le site-web](#) comprend dix films politiques réalisés pour la télévision en 1965.

Le Grand Nettoyage

Grâce à la générosité de ses amis, la Collection a reçu beaucoup des dons, particulièrement des livres. De temps en temps, la Collection ne peut pas accepter ces dons – parce qu’ils sont des exemplaires des livres que la Collection possède déjà, ou parce que ils ne correspondent pas à notre mission (les livres publiés en France, par exemple). Nous invitons toujours les avis des donateurs. Certains demandent que la Collection retourne leurs dons mais la plupart des donateurs veulent que nous les donnions à une autre collection ou bibliothèque.

Ce printemps, la Collection a fait appel à des bibliothèques et écoles du Maine en demandant s’ils voulaient les deuxièmes exemplaires de nos livres. Et beaucoup des organisations ont dit « oui »! La Collection a pu donner des livres au sujet de l’histoire et l’héritage franco-américain à plusieurs bibliothèques. On a envoyé la plupart des livres à l’Université du Maine, au département des études canadiennes. D’autres livres sont allés à l’académie Dover-Foxcroft, à la bibliothèque publique de Canaan, la bibliothèque public de Hartland, les collections spéciales de la bibliothèque de Belfast; la bibliothèque commémorative « Abbot »; et les écoles du district administratif des écoles numéro 4 (à Guildford).

Giving to the Collection

If all our hard work makes you wonder how you can support the Collection and our work, you're in luck! It's now easier than ever to give to the Collection. You can donate financially online, through USM's giving page, or send us a check marked "USM's Franco-American Collection". Since the Collection receives *no direct funding from the University*, your donations really do help us accomplish our mission.

Further instructions can be found on [our website](#).

Pour Contribuer à la Collection

Si les activités de la Collection vous inspirent, pensez à soutenir la Collection. C'est très facile! On peut offrir un don financier sur l'internet, ou on peut nous envoyer une cheque (écrivez « USM's Franco-American Collection, svp). La collection ne reçoit aucun financement direct de l'Université, donc votre donation nous aidera énormément.

On peut trouver plus de renseignements sur [notre site-web](#).

Le Messenger: Lewiston's Franco-American Voice

This article accompanies a small exhibit of Le Messenger materials at the Collection, which will run through July 2013.

Le Messenger was one of the longest lasting and oldest of the 195 French-language newspapers in the US. It was co-founded by Louis-J Martel and J-D Montmarquet in 1880. Its earliest shareholders were Regis Provost and Bros and Hubert Delorme. The reporting staff included Etienne D'Estimauville, Emile-H. Tardivelle, J-L-K LaFlamme, Louis-N Jandreau, Joseph Michaud, P-X Anger, F-X Belleau, and Dr J-A Girouand.

Initially located in Little Canada, the newspaper would eventually move to a still-iconic building at 223 Lisbon Street in 1911. During its 88 years of publication, *Le Messenger* not only informed the Franco-Americans of Lewiston but helped them become active members of their new homes. Thanks to the newspaper, many Francos became involved in local and state politics. The paper boasted a number of influential editors who were also civic leaders, and would play a role in the controversial "corporation sole" affair of the 1890s, which pitted the Irish hierarchy of the Catholic Church against its French-speaking parishioners.

Le Messenger printed its final regular issue 9 May 1968 (a commemorative issue was distributed for free in 1970 to celebrate Maine's statehood sesquicentennial). Efforts at Americanization in the 20th century, and other assimilating forces had led to a sharp decline in the number of French-speakers, and the market for a French-language newspaper dried up.

The paper's headquarters at 223 Lisbon Street are now home to a new publishing outfit- Lewiston-Auburn Magazine.

(continued on next page)

Louis J. Martel

Left: Plaster bust by Robert Wiseman, 1899

This bust was made after Martel's death by Robert Wiseman, then a medical student, who would succeed in fulfilling an ambition of Martel's – becoming Lewiston's first Franco-American mayor, in 1914.

Born in Ste-Hyacinth, QC, Dr Martel (1850-1899) came to Lewiston in 1873, to practice medicine in the new immigrant community, at the invitation of Father Hervey, the local priest. He became a US citizen very soon thereafter, in 1879, and encouraged his fellow countrymen to do the same, often supporting them financially. He also organized naturalization classes, and was sometimes known as "the Father of Naturalization."

Nevertheless, Martel recognized the need to maintain the French language, and that it was the primary means of communication in the community. Therefore, he co-founded *Le Messager* as a voice for Lewiston's Franco-American community, and used the paper to encourage the new community to become involved in civic life. *Le Messager* succeeded in bringing more Franco-Americans into local and state politics, as evidenced by the active roles played by many of its editors.

Martel himself served in the Maine Legislature in 1884, was a city alderman from 1890-2 and was the first Franco-American to run for mayor of the city in 1893, but lost the election narrowly.

In addition to *Le Messager*, Martel was also instrumental in founding St Mary's Hospital, l'Institut Jacques Cartier, *Le Club Musical* Literaire, other French societies. However, his generosity and lack of business acumen led him to die penniless. The Martel School in Lewiston was named after him in 1925.



Jean-Baptiste Couture

Right: Photograph, c.1910

Born in Levis, QC, Jean-Baptiste Couture (1866-1943) was one of 18 children born to Oliver and Marie Herbert Couture. He attended a normal school (teacher training college), housed at the Chateau Frontenac, in Québec City. To cover his tuition, he swept and built fires in the grand building.

Couture came to Lewiston at age 17, having been an apprentice typesetter at the newspaper *L'Evenement* in Québec City. He was recruited by *Le Messager* to be a typesetter in 1883. By 1887 he had been promoted to manager of the paper and in 1891, he purchased the organization with his brother-in-law Pierre Guilbault. Couture would manage and edit the paper for several decades, and oversaw its change to a daily format, and move to its headquarters at 223 Lisbon Street. He also founded a radio station, WCOU, above the newspaper press in the same building.

Couture tangled with the state's Catholic hierarchy and state legislature, when he opposed the "Corporation Sole" law passed by the legislature in 1887 which gave the Bishop of Portland full control over local Catholic parishes. Couture and *Le Messager* led protests from French Canadian parishes who objected to being assigned Irish-American priests. As a result, Couture was placed under interdict by Bishop Louis Walsh. However, Couture outlived Walsh and was eventually reconciled with the church.

Couture served two terms in the Maine Legislature as a democrat and was appointed to the Maine Liquor Board between 1933-37, immediately after the repeal of prohibition. In his old age, Couture turned over the management of the company to his sons Faust and Valdore before selling the publishing group to a collection of local investors. In 1933, Couture was awarded the French government's highest honor, the *Legion d'Honneur* for services to the French Language.



Louis-Philippe Gagné

Left: In Le Messenger Offices, 1940s.

This image, inside the offices of *Le Messenger*, shows Gagné receiving a wire from the a news organization.

Gagné (1900-1963) was born in Québec City, and worked there as a sports reporter for *Le Soleil* from 1917. In 1922, he joined the staff of *Le Messenger* under editor Louis-Napoléon Gendreau.

As a radio host, he presented *L’Oeil et Son Autueur* on Jean-Baptiste Couture’s station WCOU, whose studio was above the *Messenger* offices.

He gained US Citizenship in 1928, ran as a ward clerk in 1928, was a member of the school committee from 1930-1934 and was Mayor of Lewiston 1947-1949.

He was responsible for popularizing snowshoeing in New England, and was first president of the *Union Américain des Raquetteurs*. He founded *Le Club Montagnard* and *Les Vigilants* snowshoe clubs.

Camille Lessard Bissonnette (Liane)

Born in Québec, in 1883, Lessard emigrated with her parents to Lewiston in 1904. She worked first in the mills, and then at *Le Messenger*, as editor of their women’s page.

As journalism was not a respectable occupation for a young woman, she wrote under the *nom-de-plume* Liane. This also allowed her to take controversial stances in favor of women’s suffrage in her columns.

She went on to work in various positions in Canada, including for *La Patrie* in Montréal, all the while contributing to *Le Messenger*. While working as a “colonizing agent” in Edmonton for a railroad company, she published a column called “vue de l’ouest (view from the west).

In 1936, *Le Messenger* published her novel, *Canuck*. Originally planned as a serialization, it was instead published as a single volume. Bissonnette eventually moved to California, where she died in 1970.

Canuck

This book, based on Lessard’s own experiences as a mill worker, tells the story of Franco-American immigrants from the perspective of a young woman, Vic. The protagonist is a modern woman who seeks to accomplish many things in her new homeland. The book remains a unique first-hand literary account of immigration to New England, and bridge between one country and another.

It was an early march morning in the year 1900. A train locomotive on the Boston and Maine Railroad line arrived in Lowell, Massachusetts, pulling, in addition to its luggage cars, three passenger cars full of French-Canadian immigrants. With the sound of engines puffing and worn wheels screeching, the locomotive, its nose pointed towards Boston, gradually slowed down, and eventually came to a complete stop about a hundred feet from the train station.

Passengers poured out of the wagon’s front and rear doors like swarms of bees, jostling each other, pushing their way forward with knees and elbows, anxious to vacate, as quickly as possible, the smoky, dusty, putrid atmosphere in which they’d been

packed like sardines for hours. Perhaps their rush towards the exit was also due to the fact that they’d arrived, at last, in the States!

Old and young, men, women and children, all looked weary and sleepy-eyed from an endless night spent on train benches.

The men carried huge sacks under their arms, packs on their backs, bulging suitcases in their hands, the girls pulled younger children along by the wrist, the women held babies in their arms, and the entire crowd, like a flock rushing towards the same destination, pressed towards the welcoming train station where lamps were still burning.

Canuck, Camile Lessard Bissonnette (1936), translation Rhéa Coté Robbins (2006)