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## **Franco-American Immigration Notes**

Charlotte Michaud

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Most of the French-Canadians that migrated to Lewiston-Auburn from 1860 came from the Province of Quebec, and that section of the Province called the "Cantons de l'Est", which was a section developed later.

~~xxxx~~ The first French-Canadian settler ~~wx~~ to Lewiston was George Carignan, who came from Wotton, Que., county of Wolfe. A daughter of Carignan married Joseph LeBlanc, the dyer and cleaner, whose descendants are still continuing the business which began as the Lewiston Steam Dye House, over 100 years ago.

Hector Durocher, who was married to Alphonsine Lariviere, ~~xxxx~~ was another early ~~xxxxxx~~ immigrant to Lewiston, coming from a small village near St. Hyacinthe. This family was related to the first pastor of SS. Peter and Paul parish, who was the Rev. Pierre Hevey, who came from St. Hyacinthe. relationship  
It is assumed the ~~xxxxxxx~~ came through the Lariviere family,

*Hevey was born at Sherbrooke April 12, 1848.*  
Charles Gagnon, married to the sister of Hector Durocher, came to Lewiston in the early 1860's, and Mr. Adelard Janelle recalls that this Gagnon used to say that when he arrived in Lewiston, there were but five French families living here. Charles Gagnon had a son, Albert, and a daughter, Alphonsine. The family lived on Lisbon St., facing Birch St. They conducted a lodging house, and had farm animals on the property.

At that time, itinerant merchants came to Lewiston and Gagnon would lodge them. These merchants, Syrians, would peddle wearing apparel that ~~hx~~ they carried on their backs. Mr. Janelle recalls that there was quite a Syrian colony on Lincoln St. ~~xxxxxxx~~ between Chestnut St. ~~xxxxxx~~ and the Hill ~~canal~~ <sup>mill</sup>.

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Albert Gagnon later lived at the corner of Pierce and Walnut Sts. in a house that ~~later~~ <sup>after it</sup> became the first building to house the Sisters of Charity (popularly known as the Gray Nuns). In that building, the nuns conducted a school, a hospital and ~~xxx~~ what they called a children's orphanage. It was called the ~~xxx~~ "Hopital Notre Dame de Lourdes". The nuns came from St.Hyacinthe at the invitation of Father ~~Kxxxxx~~ Hevey, in 1878.

Alphonsine, sister of Albert Gagnon, married a man of Polish ancestry, named Joseph <sup>Belinsky</sup> ~~Belinsky~~. A daughter of theirs married a <sup>Mr.</sup> ~~Mr.~~ Gagne. <sup>who served on the school board</sup>  
<sup>Morris</sup> Crowley; another daughter married a ~~Mr.~~ <sup>Mr.</sup> Gagne.

Albert Gagnon, mentioned above, was ~~xxxxxxx~~ a shoe repair man conducting his own cobbler's shop, was also a good amateur actor and singer, who became a leading member of Le Cercle Canadien and the Orpheon. and early '70's

In the late '60's, other French-Canadian families established here those of Zephirin Blouin, <sup>Arthur Reny</sup> ~~Arthur Reny~~ Gauthier, included ~~xxx~~ Eugene J. Cloutier, Charles Sabourin, James (Jim) ~~Gxxxxxxx~~

Cote, <sup>xxxxxxx</sup> Pivin, Provost, Guay  
<sup>Alphonse Auger, Louis Trudel</sup> ~~xxxxxxx~~ most of whom were in business. <sup>Ray, father was Geo. J. Renier, and Lucinda Renier</sup>

coal and lumber  
 The Cloutier family engaged in the sale of wood fuel and grocery; the Sabourin sold drinking water from a spring on Webster road; the Gauthier and cordwood (Henri and were lumberjacks and later engaged in the lumber business; Pivin ~~xxxxxxx~~ Joseph) were stone masons; the ~~xxxxxxx~~ Blouin (shoes, grocery and real estate) Ludger Trudel was bookkeeper for many of these, serving as appraiser, and working out estimates.

bakery,  
 Arthur T. Reny was in grocery, and real estate--the grocery long on Lincoln St. facing the Grand Trunk station. He was active with the founding of St. Louis parish and the bringing of the Little Franciscans of Mary to teach at the parochial school. These nuns came from Baie St. Paul, Que., (county of Charlevoix).

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Directrices  
N. H.  
suite

Mme Léon Lévillée (Lillian)  
Mme Paul-E. Dumaine (Gertrude)  
Mme Joseph Labrie (Hélène)

58 Pine, Nashua, N. H. 03060  
10, ave Fairlane, Nashua, N. H. 03060  
93, rue Chestnut, Nashua, N. H. 03060

603 88-33253  
603 88-35845  
603 88-23050

Mme Blanche Grosvenor - Barnes St Curve  
" Blanche Veillette  
" Blanche Robinson and Mrs Langdon - Kew  
" Rose Lee Lafayette - Hartford

At that time, livery stables were a big business, renting horses and carriages. Among the early French-Canadians who operated such businesses were Joseph and Octave Guay, brothers: Bussiere, and express, Potvin, Joseph Dumais, trucking for several merchants, delivering merchandise that arrived by train.

This was the era of group picnics, and the Guay brothers had big carriages with ~~xxxx~~ benches that could seat several, and the picnics were frequently on the William Janelle farm ~~xxxxxx~~ home at Greene. At that time, SS. Peter and Paul parish was already active. Mr. Janelle was first president of L'Association St. Dominique, and all ~~xxxxxx~~ parish groups would come ~~xxxxxx~~ in turn to his farm for their picnics.

The Provost family headed by Eusebe included three businessmen: Regis, ~~xxxxxx~~ Pierre and Louis, active in ~~xxxxxx~~ grocery, bakery, furniture, wood and coal. In time, Regis specialized in the grocery and bakery which ~~xxxx~~ was usually a combined business ~~xxxxxx~~ then; Pierre went to furniture, and Louis, coal and wood.

Regis married Guay, and they had two sons: Adrien who went into the coal and wood business with Arthur Provencher in a business still active under the name of P & P Fuel Co; and Romeo, went into the insurance business, buying out the Gastonguay insurance company founded by Albert T. Gastonguay, whose son, Lucien, had operated it for several years.

Pierre married Lucias Brunelle and their children were ~~xxxxxx~~ who moved to Manchester, N.H., ~~xxxxxx~~ Sylva who died; Dr. Adolphe, an eye and ear specialist who ~~xxxx~~ moved to Manchester, N.H., and Justina, who didn't marry and continued to live in the family homestead at Third and Cook Sts., Auburn. After his wife's death, he ~~xxxxxx~~ married Virginie Gagne and there were three children from this marriage, Cecile, who died at the age of six months; Dr. Normand, who never practised medicine and occupies the family homestead with his half-sister; and Dr. Pierre, who practised medicine at Augusta and has since died.



Families that followed usually came through acquaintance with the earlier arrivals. By that time, the Grand Trunk railway was established giving easy access from Canada directly to Lewiston. Usually, the father came first to find ~~ax~~ lodging for his family, and this done, the family consisting of the wife and usually several children, arrived by train. Miss Charlotte Michaud recalls hearing her mother say many times that her mother arrived with 11 children, accompanied by another woman name of Carrien dit Poirier, who also had 11 children.

This ~~xxxxx~~ latter family, always known under the full name in Canada, abandoned it in favor of Poirier when they arrived here and continued to be known under that name ever since. ~~xx~~

Such combined names were ~~xxx~~ fairly common among French-Canadian families, and according to common knowledge the ~~xxxxxxx~~ practise began to distinguish families that bore the same family name. The first name usually was that of the wife's family name.

The Brunelle and Morneau families were also among the first here. ~~xxxxxx~~ Charles family had a bakery on Spruce St., and the Morneau family first had a foundry then a confectionery store, which was long operated by a son, also named Charles. This son conducted the candystore for some 25 years or more. He was an amateur actor and singer who long directed amateur productions in the French language for the entertainment of these immigrants. After he closed the candy store, this Charles Morneau went into the ~~xxxxxx~~ undertaking business with a newcomer in town (formerly of Waterville) a chemist, Grondin, who married

Daviau. The story of this Grondin ~~xxx~~ could make a novel on its own. This business failed, and Morneau went into the ~~business~~ newspaper business, with Henri F. Roy, under the name of Echo du Maine, publishing three times a week, on those days Le Messenger did not publish. This failed also.

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Morneau then went into the insurance business for the Metropolitan and worked ~~thxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ in Lewiston and Berlin, N.H. becoming assistant manager until he retired. He then became organizer for Maine for the Artisans Society of Montreal, until he had to resign again because of age, and thereafter until his death, he operated an elevator in the first Mfgs. Bank building at Lisbon and Ash/ Sts. He married three times but never had any children.

Albert Morneau, brother of Charles, was the first Franco-American to serve as State senator in Maine, from Lewiston.

A sister of theirs, Emilie, married Israel Ouellette. Their children included Edouard, long employed at the Fortin funeral home, Lewiston.

Aurore, another member of that family, married a Crowley, and had a daughter, Martha.

Speaking of the Crowleys, these were among several Irish families that settled in the Lincoln St. Hines alley area, where there was such a prevalence of French-speaking families, that these Irish descendants learned French in their early years and spoke it like natives and intermarried freely among French families, so that one finds families with names of Crowley, Maher, Dennison and fairly current Ricker, among others in current municipal officialdom who are recognized as Franco-Americans because of so many intermarriages with French-speaking families that the only remaining English angle is the ~~xxxx~~ family name.

The great immigration influx came between 1870 to 1880. In 1870, there was but one French-speaking parish--SS. Peter and Paul--with a population of 1,000 ~~xx~~ Parish records reveal that in that period, families were arriving at the rate of 100 daily.

This was also the era of prohibition in Maine, and the French-Canadians, like many others, conducted ~~xxxx~~ illicit traffic in liquor in private homes, and under the guise of drug stores. Several local families were long identified with this business.