



chez nous

NEWSLETTER OF Mars-Avril, 1999 VOL. 20 NO. 5

La société canadienne-française

Editor: Dick Bernard

#112

REMEMBERING TWENTY WONDERFUL YEARS OF LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE-FRANCAISE DU MINNESOTA March 19, 1979 – March 20, 1999



The founder of La Société, John Rivard, with Betty (Morency) Hudelson of the Range chapter, November, 1985.

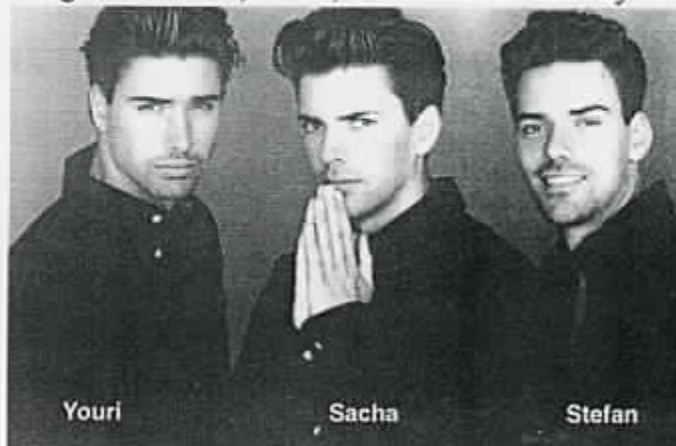
'JE ME SOUVIENS'

as recalled by members of
La Société Canadienne-Française du Minnesota

From Carmelle LeBlanc Pommepuy, 11 Ave.
Phillips, Seneville PQ H9X 3L2

I have fond memories of the French Canadian society gatherings. It was always in a friendly atmosphere and a sense of cooperation just like the old days. We would dress like our ancestors and reminisce on how they must have felt. I was particularly involved with the singing group so we also had fun at the practices, with lots of humor in between the songs.

One thing that I really appreciated about the social gatherings of La Société was that we could bring our children, Sacha, Youri and Stefan. My



Youri

Sacha

Stefan

The Pommepuy boys, no longer kids, in 1998



Members of LaSociete C-F 1983
MERCi to Carmelle Pommepuy

kids still remember all the fun they had with a great bunch of highly spirited members.

Our favorite time was the Christmas party where there was a good blend of tasty food, Christmas carols, dancing, Santa's visit, the live manger where my three sons were angels, and one of them played piano for baby Jesus. They were 7, 5, and 3 years of age. It gave them a taste of entertaining an audience. Today, at the age of 24, 22 and 20 they still entertain audiences with their dancing and music. La Societe has given many people a better sense of their identity. I encourage people of French-Canadian roots to keep it alive and well.

Editors Note: Jerry Forchette, in a note dated February 1, 1999, says that "Carmelle's son Stefan, is in a TV movie with Richard Chamberlain and Lauren Bacall - the "Life of Doris Duke", which was on television February 21."

Carmelle's Christmas letter, 1998, also recalls tradition: "...Our whole family is going home to New Brunswick for the holidays. There is no place like home for the holidays... We will have the "reveillon" at my parent's chalet after the midnight mass and then we'll have the big fat turkey on Christmas day at the farm house where we grew up. My brother will take us on a sleigh ride with jingling bells. We all buy only one gift that we exchange by taking a number corresponding to the number on the gift. It's a lot of fun for little money spent...." (The editor remembers a wonderful reveillon hosted by the Pommepuy's after midnight Mass at Our Lady of the Lourdes in the mid-1980s.)

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From Ms Jerry Forchette, 214 High Street, Chippewa Falls WI 54729. Editors Note: Jerry edited the Chez Nous beginning in the early 1980s, and was co-editor with Dick Bernard 1985-1993. Merci, Jerry, for all your effort in behalf of LaSociete C-F.

Je me souviens... Pea Soup days in Somerset WI, midnight Mass at the oldest French church in Minneapolis, Our Lady of Lourdes; La Societe members who sang there in the choir; volunteering "in costume" at the Festival of Nations at the French Canadian stand, bus tours of French in America historical sites; Christmas parties with Santa (George LaBrosse).

Je me souviens... the first time I heard the words "LaSociete Canadienne Francaise". I had recently moved to Minneapolis, so this particular weekend I decided to drive around the northeast side of town to get acquainted with the area. I noticed a celebration in a small park in St. Anthony. I walked around the grounds and came upon a concession stand, a French Canadian one no less. I struck up a conversation with two of the charter members, Dorothy Landry and Evelyn Lund. This peaked my interest, so when they invited me to their next meeting, I went, enjoyed, and joined. As time passed, I became quite active, at one point on the Board, and for a number of years, edited or co-edited Chez Nous.

It has been an adventure.

Editors Note: Jerry is one of the persons pictured with Governor Quie in 1982 (see the last issue of Chez Nous). She is at the left in the photo.

From Catherine Rivard, 63 Cottage Lane, Concord MA 01742. Catherine was first editor of Chez Nous.

One year I was visiting Minnesota from my home in Boston, and John Rivard, my father, Joseph, and I attended a meeting of LaSociete. We showed up at St. Louis Parish as usual, only to find that the doors were locked! As it was February, we were very cold, hopping up and down in the parking lot. We decided to go across the street to the Science Museum and ask if a room might be available for our meeting. We were told that we could use their coffee room, but there was to be no singing or dancing.

Of course we ignored that request, and soon the music began, with Francine Roche offering vocals while the rest of the group danced in a circle, with joined hands. We were very jovial and noisy,



Kids at the 1988 Christmas party of La Societe at St. Louis Catholic Church hall. MERCI to Mary Dicks, who points out her grandchildren, 1st row, far right, Elise LaFortune and Johnathan Dicks.

and it's a miracle we weren't tossed back out in to the snow bank. My father and I stood awkwardly off to one side, watching the festivities. Both of us were clumsy when it came to music and dance, and besides, we had always had a somewhat uncomfortable "hands off" father/daughter relationship. In fact, I could not have called to memory a time when we exchanged even a hug. So imagine my delight and surprise when my father suddenly grabbed me by the hand and swung me into the dance circle! And there we danced joyfully round and round with the others until we were exhausted, seeming to be part of something greater and more meaningful than our own private worries.

I went back to my life in Boston then, and my father didn't live many more years, but I have always credited the Societe with having been the catalyst by which we were able to overcome an important obstacle. I know, too, how eagerly my father anticipated the meetings each month; they gave him great joy, and I'm forever grateful that the Societe was there for him.

From Sr Ella Germain, 1172 Randolph Ave Apt 4, St. Paul 55105-2986

As I look back twenty years, I recall a variety of activities carried on by the members. At some of the meetings there were excellent presentations on our roots in France and French Canada. Of special importance were the voyageurs. John Rivard's portrayal of these hardy Frenchmen brought to life this period of our history. The excursion to Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, was

another opportunity to learn more about our heritage.

Every year, the Society enjoyed the Christmas Party with some French-Canadian foods. Sometimes the children participated in the program. La Pere Noel with his hearty laugh brought joy to young and old. Les Errants led the group in singing des cantiques de Noel. Other projects – the quilt made by a group depicted important events of the French in Minnesota.. the St. Croix boat ride on the Andiamo with snacks, song and wine, a "joie de vivre" day.

The Society is bonded by the excellent paper, Chez Nous. From the articles sent in by the members, the editor, Dick Bernard, is able to give us a flashback of our rich and interesting past.



Jeanne Belair, Sr. Ella Germain, and colleagues created LaSociete's quilt during the 1980s. It was an old-fashioned quilting bee activity. MERCI to Sr. Ella Germain.

In the last issue we published a photo of La Societe members with Governor Al Quie and Lt. Governor Lou Wangberg. We did not have the names of all those in the photo. Here they are, from left: Jerry Forchette, John Rivard, Dick Bernard, Huberta Bennett, Al Dahlquist, Jean Croteau, George LaBrosse.

From Evelyn Lund, 2015 Central Avenue NE #322, Minneapolis MN 55418-4520

I remember especially all the parades, in which I rode on the La Societe float. One of the earlier years we were in the Minneapolis Aquatennial parade. Oh, how the crowd cheered and clapped when they heard those French songs! Walking along side a Voyageur canoe in the St. Paul Winter Carnival, I remember how bone chilling cold it was. Recently, I have been in several Somerset WI Pea Soup Days, Little Canada parades, and the photo (above) was taken at Elk River Rendezvous Days in August, 1996, with Louis Ritchot, Renee Juaire, Mavis Fisher, Sarah Byrne, Marie Trepanier and myself.



Evelyn Lund, second from left in the photo, with Louis Ritchot, Renee Juaire, Mavis Fisher, Sarah Byrne, and Marie Trepanier in Elk River Rendezvous Days August, 1996. MERCI Evelyn.

From Mark Labine, 1887 Beckman Ave, Arden Hills MN 55112

The first time I went to a Societe meeting was in 1983. It was at the International Institute on Como Avenue in St. Paul. I joined the Societe in the fall of 1983. When I joined, I received a nice letter from Lillian Leger with a membership card, library privileges at the Minnesota Genealogical Library, and four issue of the membership newsletter.

Jean Croteau first asked me to become involved with the Societe on the bylaws committee. We redid the bylaws. Shortly after that I was elected to the Board of Directors. There were some 15 members on the board at the time. On June 6, 1988, I was elected President of the Societe and remained President for two years. I succeeded Pierre Girard. The Societe had \$2,100 in cash at the time.

In August of 1988, Riverplace in Minneapolis offered the Societe a free space to have a store. We decided to take the offer. Toni Bernard was the chair of the sales committee. We put a lot of time and effort setting up the store, which we finally got established in partnership with Gary Sax Antiques. No sooner did we have everything set up and ready to go than the property manager at Riverplace told us we had to move. We moved, reset up shop after much work, opened for business, when we were told we had to move again. We moved, right out the whole project. The whole venture was a lot of work, frustrating, but exciting and fun.

From Peg Campbell, 5909 S. Pike Lake Rosd, Duluth MN 55811

My favorite, most cherished memory of La Societe goes back to 1986. My birthmother died that summer and at that time I learned that my birth father was a French-Canadian from Edmonton, Alberta. My mother married a Scot when I was two years old and I was later adopted by him and raised with the Scottish name, traditions and an "adopted" ancestry.

In my attempts to learn more about my birth father and my actual ancestry, I learned about La Societe...and Dick Bernard extended the invitation to a French-Canadian dinner and festival at the Language Camp near Grand Rapids. Within weeks of learning I was of French Canadian extraction, I was at this gathering of wonderful and warm hearted souls. There was folk dancing and singing. The menu for a delicious full course meal was in French and was all French dishes.

Several people at this French Canadian celebration evening were dressed in costume. My husband and I thoroughly enjoyed the entire event and certainly learned more about French Canadian history, habits and people.

This experience helped me make the transition to being French Canadian descendant and

samedi, le 6 juin

menu

soupe de courges et de poireaux
pain de bonfleur

crêpe au fromage

roule de boeuf à la sauce
champignon

noilles aux epinards
carottes à la creme

tarfe aux fraises
à la creme vanillée



Somewhere in the canot is Ralph Germain. MERCI, Ralph

of our passengers in the Canoe were Miss Canada, and Governor Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin.

The trip to Milwaukee was an overnight bus trip with two stage shows, one each day, for an ethnic festival. We had a great time singing on the busy streets of downtown Milwaukee on Saturday night. Our French songs seemed to be well appreciated.



In 1986, the Range chapter visited Bill Hafeman, north of Grand Rapids. Mr. Hafeman was a master builder of birchbark canoes, built in the traditional way.,

The menu at the Grand Rapids event spoken of by Peg Campbell. MERCI, Peg.

over the years I've become comfortable and thanks to Chez Nous more informed about my roots.

Congratulations on 20 years of La Societe and 19 years of Chez Nous! I for one appreciate all you've done and continue to do.

From Ralph Germain, 312 Meadow Lark Lane, Osceola WI 54020

Of all the activities I was involved with in the Societe, the two that stand out the most were the times spent paddling a Montreal Canoe and the trip to Milwaukee with the singing group.

In 1976, the sponsors of Lumberjack Days in Hayward, WI heard of a French-Canadian group the Twin Cities and invited some of us to help paddle a Montreal Canoe and sing French paddling songs for the opening ceremonies of Lumberjack Days. I continued to do this for eight years. Some

From George LaBrosse, 919 N Shore Dr, Forest Lake MN 55025

It seems I've always had a deep desire to know why our family happened to live where they did and how they got there. In 1978, I was able to piece together my French Canadian genealogy with the help of Elmer Courteau, Paul Lareau, and my great-aunt, Amy Bougie Frie. This accomplishment only sparked further interest in my family history and the people of French Canada. In 1979, I met Madeleine Roche at the Festival of Nations. She graciously invited me to her home where 11 other French Canadians, led by John Rivard, were meeting to organize the first French Canadian Society of Minnesota. Being part of the Society was like being part of a large family. It's as if I had lost my brothers and sisters and had finally found them. I was fortunate enough to be accepted on the original Society Board and enjoy participating even to this day.

From Dick Bernard, 7632 157th St W #301, Apple Valley MN 55124

Reading all of the memories submitted by members brought back many, many other memories, some reflected in photos in this section of Chez Nous.

Just a few of these memories: in 1986, with the Iron Range chapter, seeing and hearing Bill Hafeman of Big Fork MN, describe construction of birch bark canoes in the old ways (note photo). **The giant pot of soupe aux pois**, the pig on a spit, and the singers at a delightful picnic in St. Paul, June, 1972 (photo, next page). **The guided tour** to see the church windows at the Catholic church in Hugo MN. **Being part** of the crew which made tourtiere at Our Lady of Lourdes in the early 1980s, and working at the giant dinners the Parish used to have there in February. **Mr Cheney** bringing his honey, and describing his skiing exploits. **Pat Poirier Ciochetto's** wonderful Quebecois stories, told in Hibbing to a rapt audience. **Visiting "Me and the Other"** - Carmelle Pommepuy and Francine Roche's wonderful French language program - on KFAI in Minneapolis in 1982. The studio of the then-25 watt station was eclectic in style - and in the tower of an old church in south Minneapolis. I was there when **Quebecers Martin Lavoie and Jean Guy Cote** appeared live on the program in October, 1982, playing and singing in the very cramped quarters of the tower.



Cover of the program booklet for the October 23, 1982, Program of LaSociete, featuring Francine Roche, Martin Lavoie, Bob Vaillancourt, with accompanists Jean Guy Cote, Lucille Lafleche Ingram and Mark Stillman. Karen West, then of Rancho Palos Verdes CA, whose husband, B. Marshall West, is grandnephew of Laura Dumas, longtime organist at Our Lady of Lourdes, drew the sketch for the program.

Participating in the Hibbing July 4 parade, with a canoe on a rather unstable haywagon - we had a lot of fun! But getting the wagon back home was a REAL trip for Ken and Blanche Nault. **The L'Heritage Tranquille** conference at Riverplace in the fall of 1985. **Participating in the Sibley House's** first St. Jean Baptiste Day fete in Mendota in 1997, and again in 1998. **Touring the old office of Wilbur Foshay** on the 26th floor of the Foshay Tower, a wonderful event hosted by member Bill Horn in the early 90s. **Participating in several lawn parties** hosted by Canada Consul

General Robert and Lorraine Dery at their home on Cedar Lake. The list goes on and on....

What wonderful memories this Society brings back. I hope for a new generation willing to take the reins, and build an organization that will last many more years!



Henry Bernard, at right, was in "Heaven" in late June, 1982, when he attended the LaSociete picnic in St. Paul. There was a GIANT pot of pea soup, (with carrots, as he liked it), a whole pig roasting on a spit, highly spirited French music and lots of joie de vivre. A few days later Henry was in rural Quebec, a short distance south of Quebec city, visiting the area of his roots (St. Henri Levis and St. Lambert) for the first time in his life.

And a Memory in the Making....

As this issue of *Chez Nous* goes to press, a hardworking committee is putting finishing touches on La Societe's 20th anniversary celebration, March 20, 1999. At least 114 friends will be in attendance, entertained by two traditional violinists, two dancers of traditional dances, and Les Canadiens Errants. Our founder, John Rivard, plans to attend, as does the Canadian Consul General Robert Dery and his spouse. We will see the magnificent Casavant Freres orgue in St. Louis Church. A catered dinner will be served. Our next generation begins!

Western History and Midwestern French

**An address by Dr. Virgil Benoit
to the Hibbing Historical Society**

April 23, 1987,

as reprinted in *Chez Nous*, Aout-Sept 1987.

Editors Note: Virgil is nationally known as an expert on the French in America. He teaches at the University of North Dakota, and can be reached as Rt 2, Box 258, Red Lake Falls MN 56750.

"Western History and Midwestern French" is the title of my presentation to you.

The West has been the great word of our history. The Westerner has been the type and master of American life. So wrote Woodrow Wilson¹. Tellers of American history have spent many years talking of the mass migration from Europe, as people have spent coming west into America. People who lived in America before the coming of the Europeans are today called Native Americans. Others are called Americans. But how precise are the terms European, American and America? What do these words mean?

Today Americans live in the United States; Canadians in Canada; Mexicans in Mexico, but all these people are not Americans in the same way even though they all live in North America. And what about people called Native Americans? Like the immigrants who have been coming to America since the 1500s, Native Americas are of varied backgrounds. In the Great Lakes area and the Midwest, Native Americans are of varied backgrounds. In the Great Lakes area and the Midwest, Native Americans are of the Chippewa, Sioux, Algonquian, Iroquois, Fox, Ottawa and Menominee nations, just to mention a few. Whereas other Americans are of the Finnish, German, Scandinavian, Jewish, Slovak, Asian, Irish, Czechoslovakian, Italian, or Greek nations, just to mention a few. Some groups even call themselves by terms that are indicative of their history beyond the European homeland, such as French Canadians.

As histories of people within North America are studied and retold, certain commonly shared

¹ Robert V. Hine, *The American West, An Interpretive History*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1973 quoted page VIII

ideas, and social views about America, come into focus. But alongside commonly held principles such as freedom and mobility; liberty, authority and prosperity; property and happiness; liberty and justice; liberty and equality, there stands a host of dreams, ideals, deals and realities of which histories are also made². As we study American history, it is helpful to keep in mind that the principles set forth to govern in America came from communities of thinkers; and the history of the principles contained in our Constitution are lived out in complex ways in the fields, the mines, the shops, homes and institutions of this vast country called America. The disciplines of the humanities which include history, anthropology, languages, and the study of cultures describe and analyze "qualities of people who might be forgotten or misunderstood, ignored even mistreated" if their histories were not told³. What now can we learn about principles of Western history through the study of the French in America, and even more precisely, the study of the French in the Midwest. **First of all, let us begin with an overview of the French presence in North America.**

French contact with North America began in the early 1500s, for we know that the markets of France were supplied with cod from the East Coast as early as 1506. Some bartering of furs also took place at that time. Soon thereafter, the French sent official expeditions to explore and claim land along the eastern coast from Florida to the Saint Lawrence valley⁴. In the 1530s and 40s, Jacques Cartier explored north of present-day Quebec City, and in the early 1600s, Samuel Champlain explored west and south of the city of Quebec, which he founded in 1608. Champlain was interested in discovering a sea called the "Sea of the West", which was thought to be between America and India with whom France wanted to trade. To facilitate exploration and trade in North America, Champlain placed young Frenchmen with Indian tribes to learn the languages and the geography of the Saint Lawrence valley.

In 1618 Champlain sent a young man by the name of Jean Nicolet to live among a nation of

Indians known as the Paouitagouing. Later the French called them the Saulteau because they lived in the area the French called Sault-Sainte-Marie. They were the ancestors of the present Chippewa. Nicolet lived for fifteen years with the Indians in the west, and in 1634 he made an alliance with the Winnebago, the French and all their families. This peace treaty took place on Green Bay.

During the period from the mid-1620s to the mid-1630s, the first Jesuit missionaries were sent to begin conversion, and the Company of One Hundred Associates was organized to control the fur trade and take charge of bringing settlers to New France. Thus, France's overall policy touched upon the principles of colonization, exploration, civilization, trade and negotiation, but realities altered a sense of ideal progress the French may have had. The main drawback for the French was that only 1,200 settlers came to New France between the years 1608 and 1660⁵. Also, because of diplomatic complexities resulting from alliances and trading partnerships between an ever-growing number of Native American and European nations socio-economic conditions were never stable. The Iroquois made a confederacy of five nations who traded with the Dutch and English partly in areas which the French claimed, while the Hurons and Algonquian nations formed an alliance with the French.

As competition for trade grew, the human geography of the west was dramatically altered. Wisconsin which had been populated by the Sioux in 1634 became the home of eastern Indians by the 1650s, and the Indian trade became the main resource of revenue for New France⁶. Knives, kettles, beads, bracelets, guns, ammunition, blankets, cloth, traps, looking-glasses, combs and brandy were all items which the Indians came to trade for furs. At first they had come to the shores of Labrador, then to Quebec City, then to Three Rivers and Montreal. Later, trade goods were carried to the west by voyageurs.

In the 1650s, Radisson and Groseilliers traveled west near to where the city of Superior is today. They observed great wealth in the Northwest, laden with fur bearing animals. They even returned with a great cargo of pelts, sufficient to make them rich. However, as in their case the

² See: Michael Kammen, *Spheres of Liberty, Changing Perceptions of Liberty in American Culture*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1986.

³ Henry Glassie *Passing the Time in Ballymenone, Culture and History of an Ulster Community*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1982, page 575.

⁴ Lionel Groulx, *Histoire du Canada Francais, Tome I Le Regime Francais*. Fides, Montreal et Paris, 1960, page 24

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 122

⁶ Louise Phelps Kellogg, *The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest*. State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 1926, pp 100-101



SCÈNE CANADIENNE - Des fuseaux au grand dévidoir

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principles of government control and free trade clashed. Their furs were confiscated because they had no license to trade. Insulted, Radisson and Groseilliers took their findings to London, England, in order to help organize a new trade company which was to be called the Hudson Bay company.

During the 1660s, France increased its efforts to settle New France. Aggressive government policies approved funding to establish families along the Saint Lawrence, to protect them militarily and to stabilize relations with the west. In 1670 Nicolas Perrot went west where he secured "a series of alliances with the tribes of central Wisconsin and the upper Mississippi, which laid the foundation for the French sovereignty in the northwest⁷."

In the years that followed, French life in the area of North America known today as the Midwest fluctuated according to European politics, especially between England and France, as well as by competition and trade practices affecting trade alliances among the European and Indian nations in North America. By the 1750s, the west was divided into the Ohio Valley, the Great Lakes region, the Mississippi valley, Louisianans, and the Canadian Northwest. In these areas the French had established posts to protect their interests. However, competition for trade, government regulations, individual free trade, notions of property and justice as well as goals relating to the destinies of nations combined to turn matters against French trade rights and property claims in North America. As a result, in 1763, France ceded to England all of Canada, as well as the Ohio valley

and Louisiana east of the Mississippi except for the island of New Orleans. From the time Jean Nicolet had made a treaty with several of the Great Lakes' Indian nations in 1634 to the time France ceded its holdings in 1763, the French had influenced the destiny of the American West for over one hundred and twenty-five years.

The nature of French presence in the Midwest changed a great deal after 1763 when a second French heritage began to take shape. This second heritage had first come to life in the trading posts managed by the French, as well as among the traders whose lives had merged with those of their Indian partners, spouses, and allies. By the late 1700s thousands of French Canadians were living in the West⁸. After the 1769s the owners of the fur trade businesses were no longer French, but their concern for continuity in the Indian fur trade practices led many of them to favor French Canadians and French/Indian known as Metis. A fur trade group based in Montreal in the 1770s became known as the Northwest Fur Company. Men like Alexander Henry financed their company for which the common laborers were mostly French Canadian and Metis.

The Northwest Fur Company was in direct competition with the Hudson Bay Company which had started its trade in 1670. Practices of the Indian trade in the northwest now pivoted around the Red and Assiniboian Rivers where Winnipeg is located today. It is at this location that Lord Selkirk was authorized to establish an agricultural community in 1812. The Selkirk Colony, known as Red River, was to assist in the control of the fur

⁸ Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur*, St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society, 1955, p. 7

⁷ Ibid. p. 122

trade monopoly which the Hudson Bay wanted to enforce against the intentions of an ever-growing number of Metis who claimed they were free to trade as they pleased, not only with the Hudson Bay Company.

By the 1820s the Northwest Fur Company had merged with the Hudson Bay Company, and the Metis had come to tolerate the new settlers at Red River. The Metis and French Canadians associated with the trade of the time lived mostly along the rivers of western Minnesota to the Turtle Mountains of north Dakota and north to Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Their center was Pembina, and from there they went out to hunt buffalo and trade. In the 1840s, trade developed between the Pembina area and St. Paul, and the Metis drove hundreds of Red River carts loaded with trade goods. Within the Metis families of this period were harbored cultural characteristics of the French, Chippewa and Cree language; stories; songs; dances; food; religion; communal ways; and notions about land and livelihood.

In 1869 the Metis resisted the manner in which the Canadian government was setting about to create the province of Manitoba. On October 18, 1869, a national committee of Metis was set up and a declaration regarding the people of the northwest was published. In the debates which followed, the Metis and French Canadians together preserved their rights regarding language, religion and schools. However, many Metis felt that their freedom of mobility and traditional ways of life relating to it had been compromised to such an extent that they moved to Saskatchewan.

Before the conflict of 1869-70, the Metis had created several towns in the area of Minnesota, Manitoba, North Dakota, and other towns were to spring up along the trade routes they had traveled. Pembina, Neche, Walhalla, Rolette, Belcourt [all North Dakota towns] are a few of the towns the Metis created in this second period of French/Indian heritage.

A third period of French heritage began in the 1860s with the arrival of immigrants from Quebec who came to farm and work in the urban areas in the west. Canadian settlements are found in the Midwest from Michigan to North Dakota. These settlers came to the United States in pursuit of happiness and property. They viewed the availability of land and jobs as opportunities for themselves. Society had changed a great deal from the time their ancestors had first traded with the

Indians. For one thing, when the settlers came property was clearly defined and defended, whereas in the Old West property had been a vague claim protected by diplomacy and trade alliances. Unlike many of the French allies of the Old West, settlers of the 1860s to the 1900s could start anew and participate in a fresh promise of America, as if America's history were beginning again.

Today in Minnesota as well as in the Midwest in general, it is possible for French Canadians to feel a bond with any of the three cultural heritages we have mentioned. There are those who feel a closeness with the old colonial French period. It's movements are found along the Mississippi from New Orleans, Saint Louis, to Prairie du Chien, to Chicago, Green Bay, Michilimackinac, Detroit, to the walled city of Quebec. There are those who cherish the lore of the voyageur. Annually they celebrate in joyful colored dress the trade practices and open air trade fairs of events called festivals and rendezvous. There are those who study the Metis culture and try to understand the intricacies of how marriages were contracted, children raised and alliances between French and families lived out. Other focus on the people who came to settle the vast land of America as farmers and twentieth-century entrepreneurs, and they wonder why so many settler-minded individuals forgot their history for so long. They study their genealogies, know their family trees and speak of the courage of their "first" pioneer folks. Other French Canadians simply say they are French and claim not infrequently that their ancestors were born near Paris. But to America the French of North America are not of just one heritage, they are of many.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We owe a special debt of gratitude to former Governor Elmer L. Andersen and his wife Eleanor, for a substantial grant to help defray costs of entertainment at the March 20, 1999, program, and the costs of this issue of *Chez Nous*. Merci.

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The French Voyageur and the Fur Trade

From the book
L'Heritage Tranquille: The Quiet Heritage
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by John T. Rivard

(The following is the live presentation the author made at the *L'Heritage Tranquille* Conference. Picture a voyageur costumed with feathers in his cap, a deerskin jacket, a sash and moccasins, waving his paddle and singing rhythmically as he enters.)

*C'est l'aviron qui nous mène, qui nous mène,
C'est l'aviron qui nous mène en haut.
M'en revenant de la jolie Rochelle²
J'ai rencontré trois jolies demoiselles.
C'est l'aviron . . .
J'ai recontré trois jolies demoiselles;²
J'ai point choisi, mais j'ai pris la plus belle.*

TRANSLATION

It's the paddle that takes us, that takes us,
It's the paddle that takes us up there.
Returning from beautiful Rochelle,²
I met three pretty maidens.
It's the paddle . . .
I met three pretty maidens.²
I didn't choose, but I took the prettiest.
It's the paddle . . .

His voice ringing and resounding over the waters, the French Canadian *voyageur* paddled his birchbark canoe over all the rivers and lakes of North America from the 1600s to the middle of the 1800s. The voyageurs opened the entire continent to the white people. As a result, two great countries were born – Canada and the United States.

Voici, un vrais voyageur, il y a deux cents ans. Mais, n'importe quel voyageur, moi! O non, non! Parmi tous les voyageurs je suis le plus brave, le plus fort, et regardez moi bien – le plus beau! Oh, some of you do not understand French? Too bad. I said: "Here I am, a real voyageur of 200 years ago. But not just any voyageur me. Oh, no, no! Among all the voyageurs I am the bravest, the strongest, and if you look real close – the most handsome! You know we voyageurs are not the most

modest. We are proud of our skill, our bravery, our strength and our wilderness expertise."

Today I will tell you the exciting story of the beginning of the State of Minnesota and the whole Middle West. I will talk about the Indians before the coming of the white people. I will talk about the early explorers, the fur trade and about that rugged, jolly and strong voyageur, who was unique in American history. There was nobody like him before his time, and nobody like him after his time.

It all began with Jacques Cartier, the French explorer. Cartier discovered the St. Lawrence River in 1534, 42 years after Columbus discovered America. He claimed all of Canada for the French crown. However, it took the warring French in Europe 74 years to send colonists to Canada.

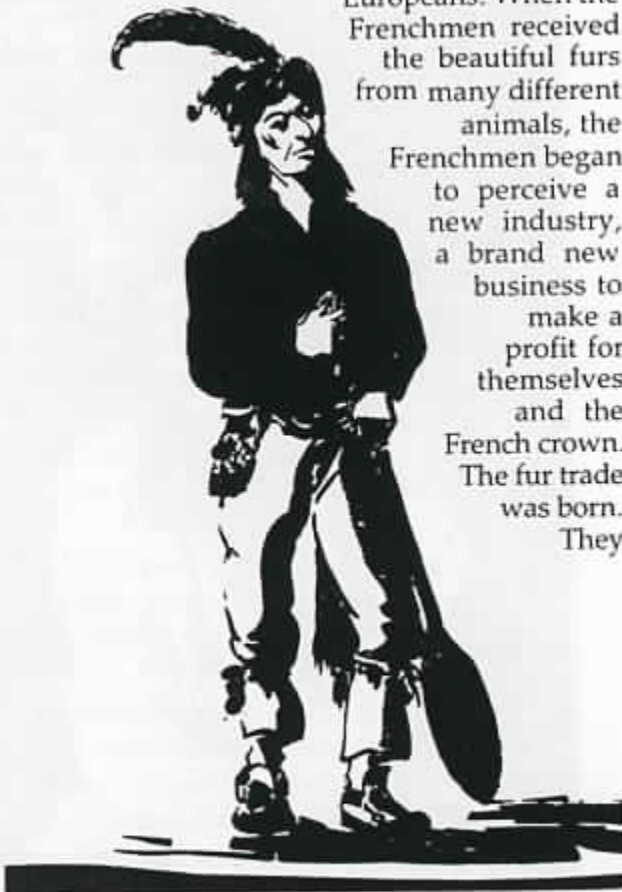
In 1608 Samuel Champlain led a small group



of French colonists to found Quebec. When they approached the site of Quebec in their sailship, they saw many people on shore. Champlain said to his men: "Let us bring presents with us when we go ashore. Those people do not know who we are, and they may do us harm. Our presents will show them we wish them no harm and that we want to be friends." The presents they gave astounded the Indians. For 10,000 years the Indian had lived on this continent without anything made of steel or iron. That means he had nothing manufactured; he had no machines. That means also that the Indian made all his tools and housing with only the substances in nature around him for survival. I will show you later how he employed the natural resources with great skill and knowledge.

The Indian was pleased with these presents. They would make his work easier and life more comfortable. The Frenchmen gave him guns, knives of steel, axes, pots and pans of iron and copper, steel traps, blankets and cloth. The Indians returned the friendship presents with their own presents. They gave the Frenchmen beautiful furs, corn, tobacco, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, pumpkins, blueberries, wild rice, maple syrup and sugar, the birchbark canoe, the toboggan and the snowshoe. In all, the Indians gave the white people 150 new

things to eat unknown to Europeans. When the Frenchmen received the beautiful furs from many different animals, the Frenchmen began to perceive a new industry, a brand new business to make a profit for themselves and the French crown. The fur trade was born. They



would send to France for manufactured goods that the Indian needed and wanted badly; in return, the Frenchmen would demand furs.

They would ship these furs to France to be sold throughout Europe. The people of Europe in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries desired to be well-groomed, with exotic fur coats and fur hats.

For over 200 years, from the 1600s to the middle of the 1800s, the only industry in the center of the North American continent was the fur trade. The fur trade began to fade out when the loggers and settlers entered Minnesota in the middle of the 1800s.

The French Explorers

The French began exploring the vast territory of which they knew nothing. The great era of exploration was initiated by Marco Polo when he returned from India and China in 1295. He wrote a book describing the vast treasures of exotic spices, Chinese silk, and precious stones available in the Far East. The Europeans wanted to go to the Far East to bring back ships loaded with these highly desired items, thinking it would make them rich and powerful. Explorers soon discovered that to cross Europe and Asia was too long and dangerous. To go around Africa was also too long and treacherous. Columbus led the way by going west across the Atlantic. He got only as far as the Gulf of Mexico, realizing there were

two continents between Europe and China. The explorers who followed him were determined to find a water route across the continents, and thus become even more famous than Columbus. The French began to go up every river thinking anytime now they would be in the Western Sea, and then only a few hundred miles and they would be in China. They did not know that Canada was 3,600 miles wide and filled with mountains and forests. Neither did they know that the Pacific Ocean was 5,000 to 8,000 miles wide. Adventure and fame sped them onward.

Champlain discovered Lake Huron in 1615. No ocean that, so he had to return to Quebec. Etienne Brulé discovered Lake Superior in 1622. Jean Nicolet discovered Lake Michigan in 1634, 100 years after Cartier discovered Canada. When Nicolet approached the end of Green Bay, he saw a large village. Aha, he thought he had arrived. Before landing, he put on a Chinese damask gown covered with birds and flowers: he thought he was in China! He was only in Green Bay, Wisconsin! Like all the others, he returned to Quebec.



Radisson & Groseilliers 1659
discovered Minnesota

Radisson and Groseilliers are credited with being the first to set foot on Minnesota soil in 1658. Marquette and Joliet discovered the Mississippi River, but they also found that the river emptied into the Gulf of Mexico, a part of the Atlantic. They made their famous discovery in 1673. In 1680 Father Louis Hennepin discovered St. Anthony Falls at Minneapolis. He was captured by the Sioux and held prisoner at Mille Lacs Lake. Du Lhut, who was on Lake Superior, went to his rescue that same year. LaVerendrye explored as far as Lake of the Woods in 1732.

All the explorers returning to Montreal and Quebec told fabulous stories of the Indians and the furs given them by the Indians around the Great Lakes. They related: "There are thousands of Indians out there. We saw millions of fur-bearing animals running in the woods and

swimming in the rivers. Look here at these wonderful furs we obtained by trading our supplies with the Indians."

The Fur Companies

The French began organizing fur companies before 1700. Franchises and licenses were issued by the governor in the name of the King of France. The Hudson Bay Company was chartered by the King of England in 1670. It operated west and north of the French companies with whom it was in competition. After 1760, when the English conquered Canada, the companies were licensed by the English government, but they hired French voyageurs to do the transportation.

The companies hired men to travel and manage the fur posts in the West. The *bourgeois* were the owners and partners. The *commis* were the clerks who managed the posts. The *voyageur* was the canoeman, the camper, the cook, and the guide as well as the builder of the posts. He did all the heavy work. He signed a contract to work for one or more years, usually three years. The *voyageur* was a very loyal fellow. When he gave his word, it was as good as gold. There were very few instances of renegeing or quitting. He was paid about \$400 for a year's work, a bit more than working on a farm, whence most of them came. He was sometimes called an *engagé*, or one who is contracted.

Coureur de bois was a term used to designate the men who traded with the Indians on their own without government sanction or license. They were courageous Frenchmen who struck out secretly to make money without the bother of red tape and taxes. They were black market wheelers and dealers who when caught were punished. The *voyageurs* were approved and legitimate persons respected by all.



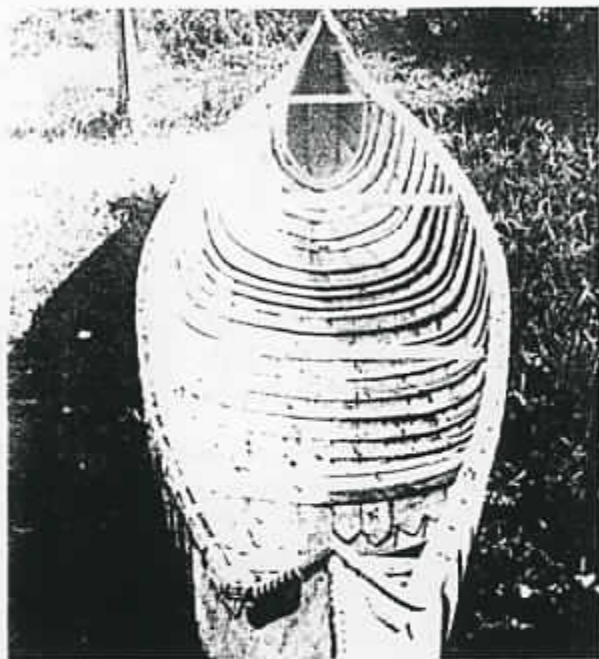
Rivard as a Coureur de Bois in an Indian canoe.

The Trip West

As soon as the rivers were free of ice in early April, the voyageurs loaded their canoes for the long trip west. They had learned from the Indians not only how to survive in the wilderness but also how to build and repair birchbark canoes. They knew how to find their way in unknown territory and also how to run the rapids and survive with very little for months at a time. Like the Indians they obtained white cedar to make the frame of the canoe. White cedar is the lightest wood in the forest. They covered the frame with birchbark, which is very pliable when filled with sap. Having no nails or screws, they used the root of the spruce tree to bind and lash the canoe together. Pine pitch was boiled, made runny like glue, and then applied to the seams of the canoe to make it watertight. The Indians had no oil or tar before 1859, when oil was first discovered in Pennsylvania.

The Montreal or Master Canoe

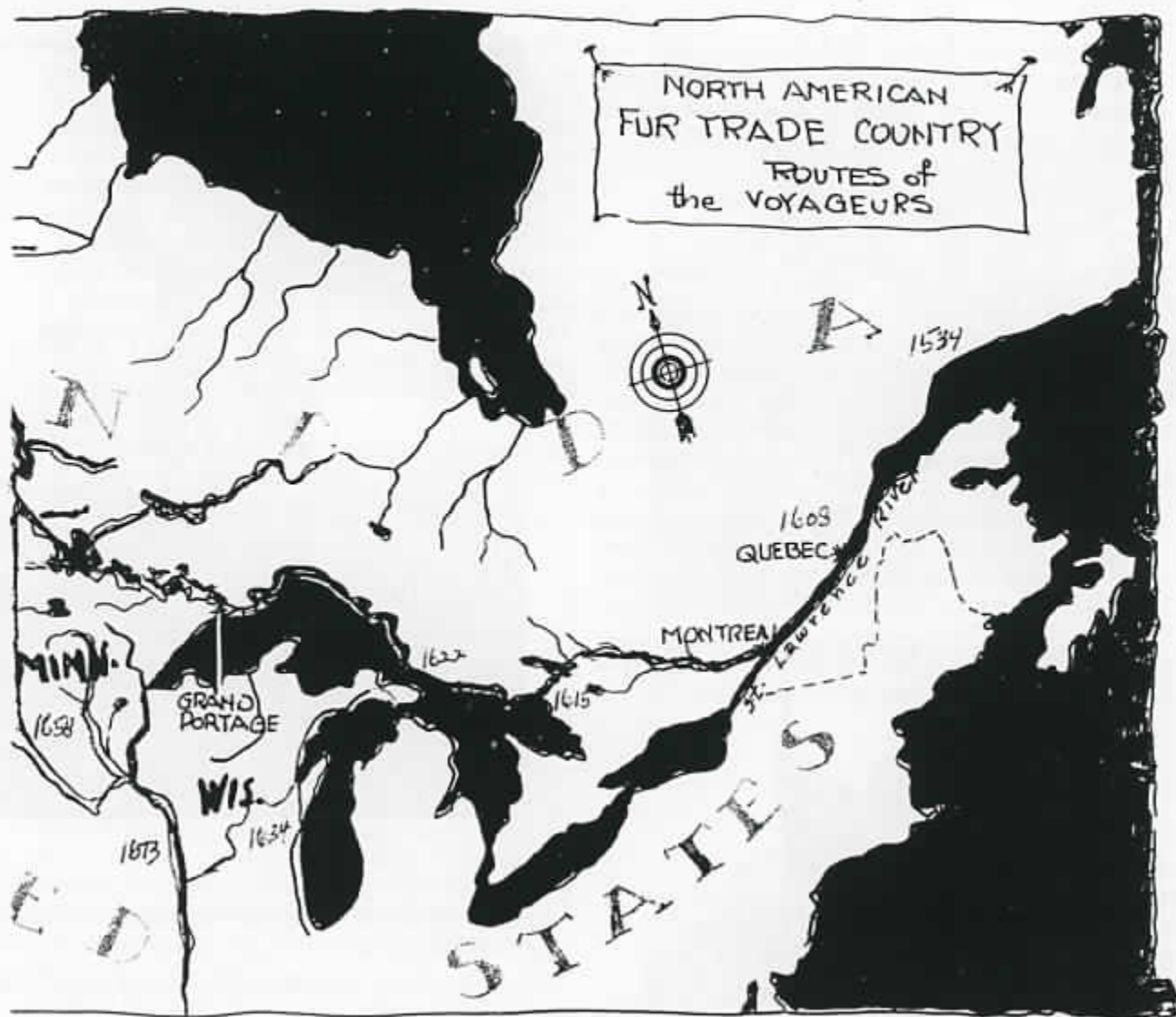
The Indian canoe was 18 feet at the longest. Knowing that it would take all summer to travel to the West, the voyageur was obliged to make a much longer canoe in order to carry more goods and thus make the trip of two years or more profitable. He made the Montreal or master canoe. This canoe was 38 to 40 feet long. Now he could carry 6,000 to 8,000 pounds of goods or furs. It took 12 to 14 voyageurs to paddle this big, clumsy canoe.



If you have been in a canoe, you know it is quite easily tipped and capsized. Loading a canoe with tons of goods is even more difficult to achieve. All the cargo consisted of packs wrapped and well-tied for the long journey. Suppose one pack weighs 150 pounds and is placed on one side. The next pack weighs only 50 pounds and is placed on the other side. The



A Montreal or Master canoe.



canoe will tip over. In the warehouses along the river in Montreal there were scales, so as soon as the pack reached 90 pounds, they said: "Wrap it up, tie it up." Now it is ready for loading. Well, if every pack weighs 90 pounds, it is easy to load a canoe. Place 250 packs on one side and 250 on the other, and the canoe will remain level.

At the crack of dawn in early April, the voyageurs jumped in their canoes and paddled as fast as they could all day until sunset. They paddled 60 to 70 strokes a minute because they wanted to arrive in Minnesota before November. It took most of the summer to paddle almost 2,000 miles, and they quickly discovered that it was very difficult to paddle on the ice!

At sunset they stopped in some bay or on an island, partially unloaded the canoe, and prepared their supper. When paddling the rivers, they ate only two meals – supper and breakfast. They would build a fire and cook their pea soup laced with salt pork in a large kettle for several hours. Dried peas and salt pork kept in any kind of weather. Vegetables

and meat would have easily spoiled in hot weather. Because of the salt pork, the voyageurs paddling between Montreal and the ends of the Great Lakes were called *mangeurs de porc*, pork eaters. The voyageurs paddling the rivers farther west were called *nor'westers* or *hivernants*, wintering men.

After a good meal with a little rum, they



Voyageurs lived on pea soup laced with salt pork.

slept for a few hours, under a canoe if it was raining. At dawn they were in the canoes again, paddling for two hours before they ate their breakfasts in the canoe.

The Portages

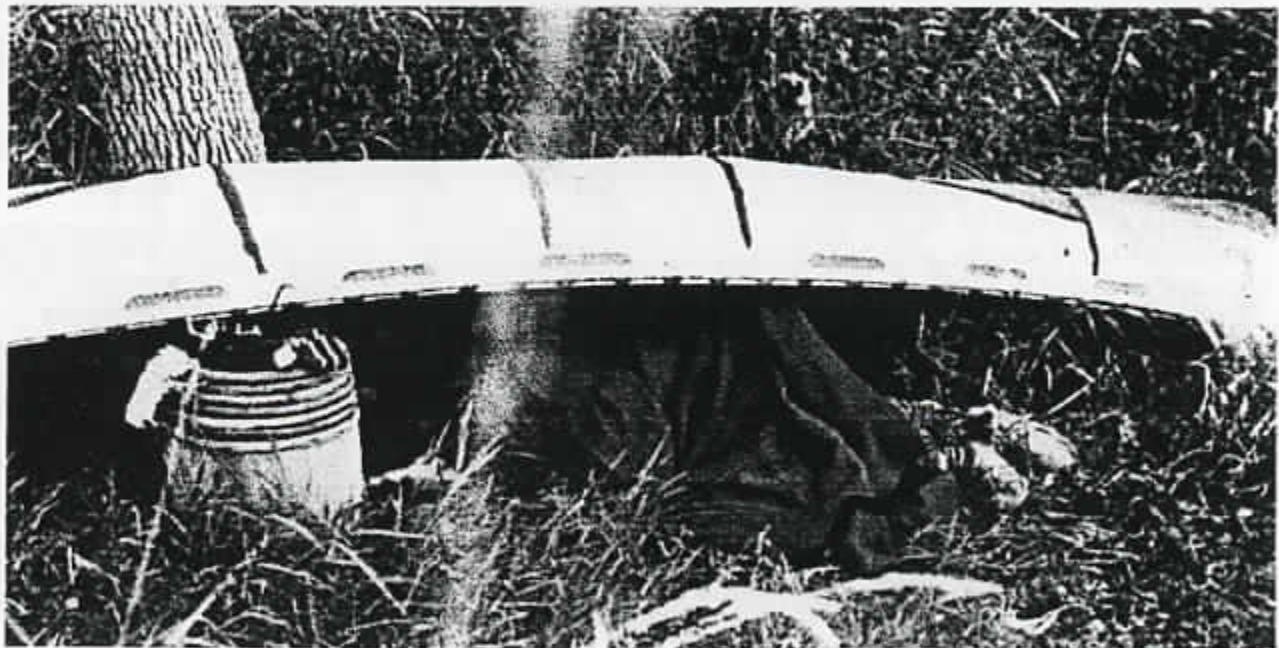
Between Montreal and Minnesota there were 36 full *portages*, a French word meaning "carrying place." A portage occurred when they encountered a falls, shallow rapids and rocks. Some portages were only a few hundred feet long. Some were one mile, some three miles, and the portage on the Pigeon River between Minnesota and Canada at Grand Portage is 8½ miles long. Now comes the hard part of being a voyageur: over 500 packs must be carried around the obstacle on the back of the voyageur, tied with a strap around his forehead.



Above: One or two men could easily carry an Indian canoe on portage.

Left: Rivard demonstrates how voyageurs carried heavy packs on portage.

Below: In wet weather voyageurs slept under their canoes.



The voyageur was a proud fellow. He was proud of his strength and skill; therefore he would never carry less than what he weighed himself. He never carried less than two packs - 180 pounds. Sometimes he carried three or four packs, and it happened this way. One voyageur would say to a companion: "I can carry three packs from way over there." The other voyageur would reply: "That's nothing. I can carry four." The contest was on. The voyageurs started at the early age of 16 and 17. At that age youngsters are quite competitive, and they love to test their strength and skill against each other.

Let me tell you a story. One day the voyageurs were making a long portage. The leader said to Pierre, a fun-loving voyageur: "Why is it that all the other voyageurs are carrying three packs and you are carrying only one?" Pierre replied: "Monsieur, the leader, you want to know why I carry one and the others carry three packs? I'm going to tell you right now. All the others are too lazy to make three trips!"

They had to climb steep, rocky trails around the falls or rocks, to water above the falls where they could replace the canoe in the water and paddle on their way. Mosquitoes and black flies were voracious. Six voyageurs went back to fetch the big canoe, which now weighs 400 pounds because it is soaking wet. To avoid a full portage, the voyageurs would often try to pull the canoe through the rushing rapids. They would remain wet the rest of the day. The portage between the St. Louis River and Sandy Lake in northern Minnesota was mud and mire up to the waist, a miserable portage hated by the voyageurs. On the rivers of the interior, the voyageurs used the 25-foot north canoe.



An early, not-very-realistic engraving of traders, Indians and voyageurs getting ready for a trading expedition.

The Fur Trade Post

After arriving in September or October, the voyageurs and clerk would look for Indian villages. Nearby they would build a post. A post 200 years ago was like a little fort. Everything was built with logs; the sawmills came only after 1840. They built a building to store the goods they brought, then a building to keep the furs. They had to have a place to eat and sleep and a store with shelves and counters. Finally they built a stockade with logs



An early engraving depicting a fur trading post or fort, with Indians camped outside the post.



A present-day reproduction of a fur trading post yard.

10 inches in diameter, placed deep in the ground and 12 feet high, around all the buildings. To keep the Indians out? No, to keep the animals out. Two hundred years ago there were large animals in Minnesota: elk, moose, buffalo that weighed over a ton, bears and wolves by the thousands. There was a lot of food inside and many lives to protect. The voyageurs and fur traders got along very well with the Indians, even intermarrying. The French treated the Indians as equals, persons of value to be respected. There was little fighting or attacks. The Indians became warlike and attacked white people when the whites took their land away and pushed the Indians onto reservations.

Life and Work of the Indians

In order to fully understand the impact of the fur trade upon the life, work and traditions of the Indian – called “culture shock” – let us briefly show you some tools of the Indian before the advent of steel. The axe was made of stone. The Indian had to chip the stone to make it sharp. He had no steel chisels or hammers. He would use other stones or the antlers of the elk to chisel the rock. Then he made a groove to tie the handle on by rubbing sand with a belt

of deerskin. This would take hours of work. He would use the axe to cut down some tall, thin trees to use as poles to make his teepee. After he had his family in a nice, warm teepee, he then wanted to feed his family. He ventured into the woods to bring back some deer meat; deer were quite plentiful. To make the arrowhead he needed a stone that flaked off in small chips to form a pointed and sharp tip. He discovered that the flint stone made good arrowheads. The pointed and feathered arrow was then ready to do its work of providing food for the family. The sharp arrow penetrated the thick, tough hide of the deer. You know, the Indian did not go out and grab the deer by the tail! He had to make the arrow straight. Suppose he made it crooked. He would shoot at the deer, miss it, and hit his grandpa in the derriere!

The Indian needed the deer hide. The Indian women were excellent tanners of hides and furs. They would make blankets and coats, then scrape the fur off the remainder with a bone tool, and soften it to make clothes: jackets, dresses, pants, moccasins, straps, laces and pouches. You don't take the hide off a deer with your fingernails: the Indians needed a skinning knife. They obtained a stone, polished it and had a knife. They also needed another kind of

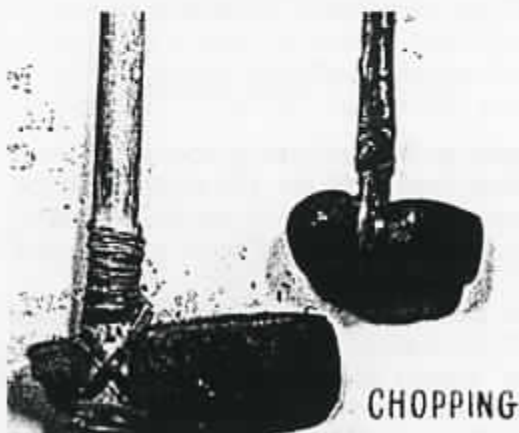
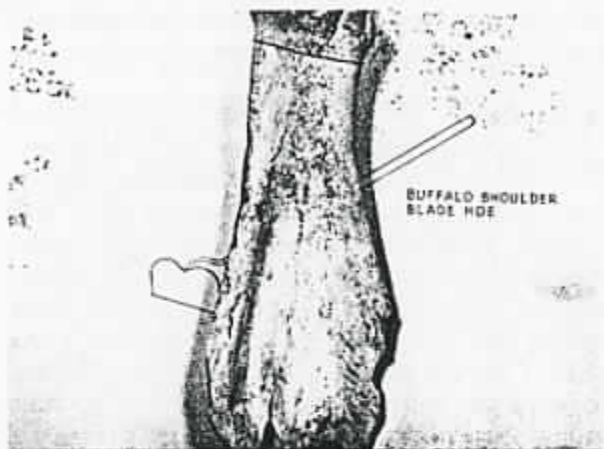
knife to cut the animal in pieces to take to their teepees — a hunting knife of stone. Again, hours of chipping.

The Indian women took the deer meat, added wild rice, onions and seasoning, and boiled it into a stew. The Indians sat around a large rock or in the teepee and ate off their birchbark plates. Now they needed a table knife to cut the meat and vegetables. They made these also from stone.

When the women prepared clothes, they did not use small needles and thread from the rushes. The deerskin was too thick and tough. They took a bone from the ankle of the deer, rubbed it on a rock to make it pointed, and used it as an awl to make a series of holes. Then they cut laces from the deerskin and laced the pieces of garment together.

The Indians had large gardens of corn and vegetables. Having no plows of steel or animals to pull the plows, they used the shoulder blade of the buffalo, which has the shape of a hoe. They tied a long handle on it, and then grubbed every inch of the ground to be planted. For a rake they would use the antlers of the deer.

The Indians played many different games, such as lacrosse, also a form of hockey and basketball. On special occasions the parents



An Indian woman working on a deer hide.

gave gifts to the children. One such gift was a doll that the girls dressed up with skins and moccasins.

Sometimes a child today thinks: I would like to be like an Indian. All they did was hunt, play, fish and swim. Quite the contrary: the Indian children had to attend school also. The parents, relatives, and neighbors would hold classes to teach the children how to make tools, clothes and teepees. Suppose an Indian child would say: "I will not go to school. That's too hard. I would rather go out and play." That child would soon starve to death, as the child would not know how to make tools to furnish the food.

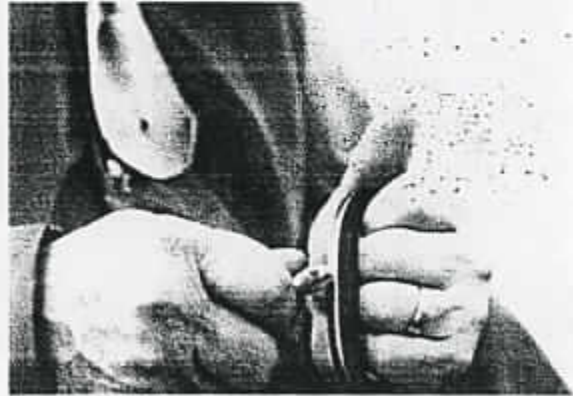


A flintlock.

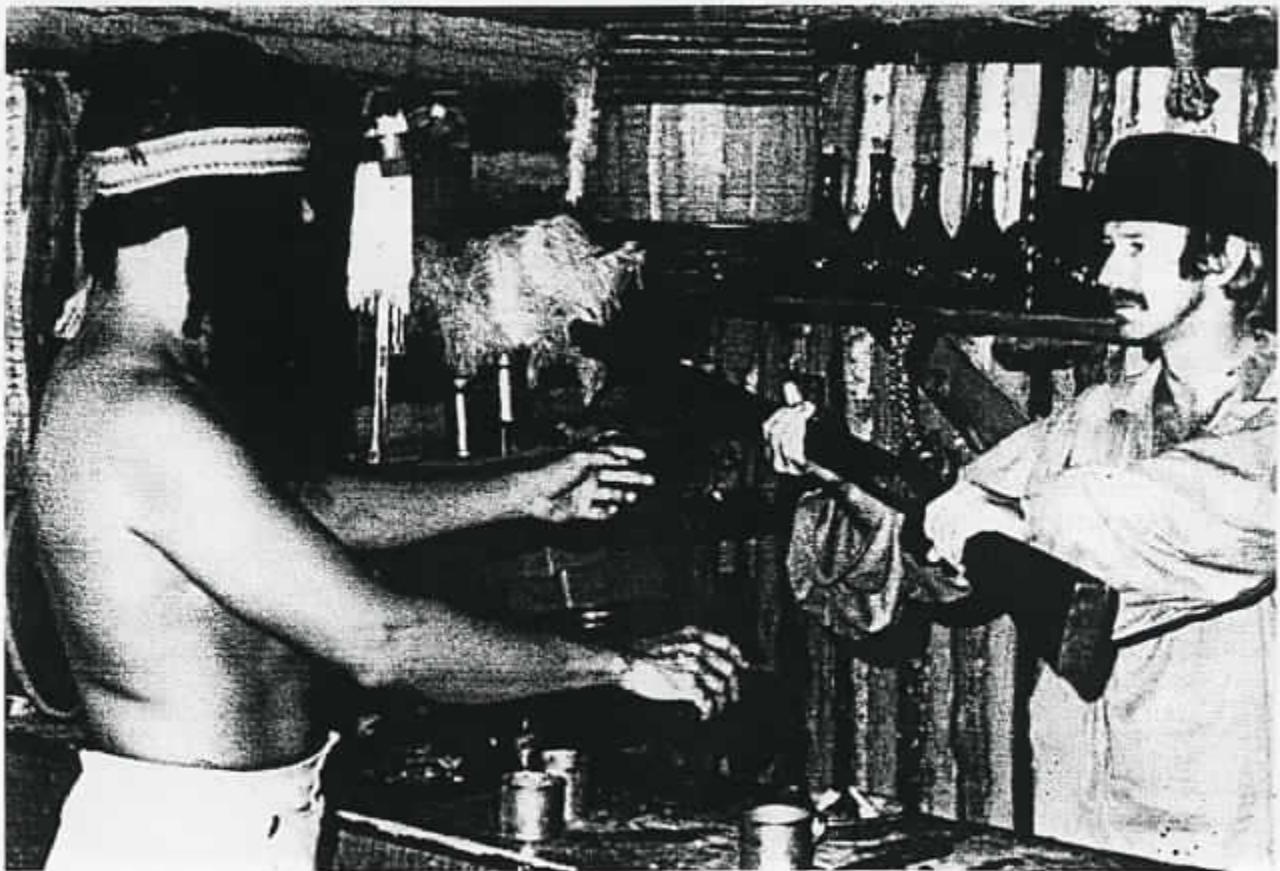
The Fur Trade Store

Imagine an Indian coming into a post store for the first time in his life. His eyes would get as large as saucers! He beheld ready-made tools of steel, guns, knives, blankets and colored beads.

What do you think was the first item he wanted? He wanted the steel axe even before the gun. Would that take a big load off his shoulders! Look at how sharp it is! The handle is solid and firm, and he does not have to spend hours making it – it is ready to go. The next



Flint and steel for fire making.



An Indian reaches for the flintlock gun offered by a trader.

item was the gun. The gun of 200 years ago was not the gun of today with its cartridges and fast trigger. The gun then was the flintlock gun.

A person carried gunpowder in a horn of the buffalo to keep it dry. He poured a little down the barrel and tamped it down with a ramrod. Then he dropped a lead ball down the barrel and tamped that down. He tamped some wadding of cloth down to form a tight charge. Next he placed a little powder in a trough next to a hole in the barrel near the charge. He pulled back the trigger, which had a piece of flint. When he pulled the trigger, the flint struck steel, and made sparks which fired the gunpowder, first in the trough, then in the barrel. The lead ball was on its way to kill an animal. In those days it was sometimes necessary to be

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a very good marksman. Suppose you were hunting a bear, and he began to charge you. You better hit him between the eyes on the first shot, because you would not have time to reload.

The next item the Indian desired was a knife of steel. How wonderful for him were the skinning knife, the hunting knife, and the butcher knife. After knives he wanted the steel trap. Before the steel trap the Indian used snares and pits. He covered the pit with brush and placed the bait in the middle. As the animal reached for the bait, it fell in the hole. But the Indian had to be close by to club the animal before it scratched its way out. Now, with 40 or 50 steel traps in the woods and around the swamps, he could catch many animals each



Beaver skins were valued most, but traders also accepted raccoon, muskrat, marten, wolf and mink.

BEAVER FASHIONS IN HATS



Rivard examines furs in a well-stocked trading post.

day. The more animals, the more furs; the more furs, the more goods at the fur trading post store.

The women wanted iron pots and pans the worst way. Cooking over an open fire or in clay pots was hard work. Now they could have pots and pans of different sizes. They were easy to clean and unbreakable. The women also wanted colored cloth, steel needles and thread. Skins were warm, but hard to clean, and too warm in summer. Cloth was cool and washable.

The Trading Procedure

When the Indian entered the store, the trader would say: "What would you like for your furs today?" The Indian would reply: "I want gun." The trader would say: "Bring me 15 of your best beaver furs, and I will give you the gun and some powder." If the Indian had only 10 fox furs, he would receive three traps, an axe and a knife. Everything in the store had a value in furs according to their worth and quality. The beaver was the most popular in Europe at that time. The long, tough guard-hairs were clipped to reveal the soft plush underneath. This plush also made the beaver hat a must among the rich. The trader accepted the raccoon, the muskrat, the martin, the wolf and the mink. The voyageur pressed the furs into 90-pound packs. He loaded them in the master canoes, paddled back to Montreal, and turned the furs over to the company. If his contract was not up, he returned to the West for another year of hardship.

The Jolly Voyageur

The voyageur was an essential element of the fur trade. Without him the fur trade could not function. He was not only rugged, strong, brave and durable, but he was a jolly fun-loving fellow. He loved to sing, dance, jig and tell stories. He knew hundreds of songs and sang them at the slightest provocation. He had to sing, and I'll tell you why. There were 12 to 14 voyageurs in each master canoe. Suppose one paddled slow, another fast, another with deep strokes and another real shallow: the canoe would go down the river like it was intoxicated, from one shore to the other. To make the canoe travel fast and straight, they would sing paddling songs of a great variety. Songs like: *C'est l'aviron, En roulant ma boule, Au près de ma blonde, Allouette, Youpe, Youpe*. . . All these songs had a good beat to paddle in rhythm.

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Each song had several verses which told a story of old France or romantic stories of love, courtship, love lost and knights of old.

Around the fire at night, they would be lonesome for family, neighbors and friends they had left behind for three years of loneliness and hardship in the wilds. They loved to sing funny songs, action songs to forget their misery. They would tell stories like this typical voyageur story. One voyageur says to the other: "You know, back home in Montreal I have fine neighbor. His name is Zephirin, and he is very strong fellow. He is a blacksmith. All day he strikes his steel hammer on his heavy anvil to make the horseshoe, best horseshoe in Montreal. One day he is making the horseshoe when Marie, his girlfriend, comes for a visit in the shop. After while, Zephirin looks around, sees nobody, and says: 'Hey, Marie, can I have a little kiss?' Marie is young girl and very bashful. She gets red in face and finally says: 'All right, one kiss.' Now there is big problem: Zephirin is short like this and Marie is tall like this. After a moment Zephirin gets good idea. He climbs on his anvil and he is just right to give Marie big kiss. After a while Zephirin says: 'Marie, can I walk home with you?' 'All right,' she says. After they walk about three miles, Zephirin says: 'Marie, can I have another kiss?' Marie says: 'No kiss.' Zephirin says: 'No more kiss today?' She says: 'No more kiss today.' Zephirin says: 'Well, if there is no more kiss today, I might just as well drop my anvil.' "



Rivard as a jiggling voyageur.



John Rivard in his voyageur costume in front of a freshly caulked log cabin.

The Voyageur Costume

The voyageur had a unique manner of dressing. There were the working garments and the dress-up clothes. For nice occasions he wore feathers in his *tuque*, stocking cap. He wore his hair long because it protected his neck from the pesky mosquito and black fly. He wore bright-colored shirts. Around his waist was the *ceinture fléchée*, tassled sash, which was made of hand-woven wool with geometric designs to make it attractive. It also had a function. When his back got tired from paddling, he would tighten up the sash to give his back a little support.

He hung his clay pipe around his neck to keep it from breaking. He loved his pipe and tobacco, which he had learned to enjoy from the Indians. The voyageurs had an unwritten agreement that they would stop the canoe every hour for a pipe break. They would stop the canoe, take out tobacco and pipe, light it up, and smoke for ten minutes. This pipe break was so regular that they would often measure distance by the pipe, in this manner. One voyageur would ask the other: "Pierre, how far from here to Thunder Bay?" Pierre would

answer: "Three pipes." The voyageur would know then that the distance was about three hours away.

How did they light their pipes and the fire at night to cook their pea soup? In their *sac à feu*, a moose-hide pouch hanging from the shoulder, they kept the necessities of every day. He drew a flint stone and a piece of steel fitted to the hand. Over dry leaves he would strike the stone to steel, and the sparks would fly, setting the leaves on fire.

The voyageurs wore moccasins made of tough moose hide. Sometimes they wore smaller sashes just underneath the knee to keep the trousers higher and the bugs from crawling up their legs. These sashes were the same design as the big sash.

In the hot days of summer they wore a breech cloth instead of heavy trousers. This left the upper legs open to the breezes. To protect their legs from prickly brush they wore leather leggings. They wore as little as possible in summer paddling on the river. Their trousers were made of a corduroy cloth. In freezing weather they wore a capot, a hooded wool coat made from the Hudson Bay blankets. There were many variations of attire among the voyageurs, as they were rugged individualists like the youth of today.

Honorary Voyageurs

I was appointed the Official Voyageur for the State of Minnesota by the *Société Canadienne-Française du Minnesota* in 1980. I have the privilege of conferring an honorary title of voyageur upon you today. But to become an honorary voyageur you must sing the official voyageur song with me. I'll sing it in French, then we'll sing it together in English.

*Avance, avance, avance;
Reculé, reculé, reculé;
Celui qui manquera l'embarcation,
N'aura pas'd vin dans son bidon.*

(Translated to rhyme)

Advance, advance, advance;
Retreat, retreat, retreat;
If you don't paddle, you better look out.
No wine for you, and a bust in the snout.

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Make believe we are around a campfire deep in the north woods along a river. Now place both feet on the floor with your hands on your knees. Slap your knees as you sing with me.

Voyageurs, attention!
Right hand in position.
Sing: "Advance, advance . . ."
Voyageurs, attention!
Right hand and left in position.
Sing: "Advance, advance . . ."
Voyageurs: Right hand, left hand,
right foot in position.
Sing: "Advance, advance . . ."
Voyageurs: Right hand, left hand, right foot,
left foot, in position.
"Advance, advance, advance;
Retreat, retreat, retreat;
If you don't paddle, you better look out,
No wine for you, and a bust in the snout."

Now you are all honorary voyageurs!
Merci beaucoup, mes amis!

Official Voyageur of Minnesota



John T. Rivard was the Northern District manager for the Minnesota Historical Society for several years. He supervised and managed the following sites: the Northwest Fur Post at Pine City, the Mille Lacs Indian Museum, the Charles A. Lindbergh Boyhood Home at Little Falls, the Split Rock Lighthouse, the Oliver Kelley Farm at Elk River and three other sites. Since his retirement in 1978 he has been presenting live historical programs to schools, colleges and civic organizations. His illustrated talks are: The French Voyageur, History of Lumbering, The Native Americans, Charles A. Lindbergh, The Middle East Question, Early Explorers and Settlers, The History of the French-Canadians, and Japan, China and the Orient. He is a graduate of Laval University of Quebec. He resides in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

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The Voyageurs magazine. Gopher Historian Leaflet Series No. 1. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1968.



Robert Dery, Consul-General for Canada in Minneapolis, extended welcome to the group. He pointed out that March 20 was International Francophone Day. The Canadian Consulate provided many gifts for the door prize drawing. Other gifts were also provided.

“The celebration of the 20th anniversary of the French-Canadian society was a very special one. The hall was filled with people interested in French culture, which was so well manifested in the ambiance, the presenters and the varied program of the evening. It is through the able, dedicated and persevering efforts of Dick Bernard with the help of his volunteers that the evening was filled with the “joie de vivre” so characteristic of the French.”

*St. Ella Germain
St. Paul MN*

“Dick, Marie, Bob and Joyce, Treff, Sr. Ella Marie, John, Louis, LeRoy, Mike and Pat, Dorothy, Josee, Les Canadiens Errants, Jane Peck, Linda, Fr. Morrissey, Anatoly et al – a grand merci pour vous efforts. It was a much appreciated and successful evening!! C’est si bonne!! Tres bien. Merci, Merci!

*Chelle Stone
St. Paul*



Father Paul Morrissey of St. Louis King of France Catholic Church, downtown St. Paul MN, gave a very informative and interesting talk about the history of the Church after Mass on March 20. St. Louis Church was designed by Emmanuel Masqueray, the same architect who designed the St. Paul Cathedral and St. Mary’s Basilica in Minneapolis. Masqueray considered “the little church” of St. Louis to be his favorite, of many churches he designed. Father Morrissey also described the magnificent new Quebec produced Casavants Freres organ, which was dedicated in April, 1998. St. Louis frequently has organ concerts. Ask the church for details (651) 224-8847.



Professor Anatoly Liberman of the University of Minnesota captivated and amused his very attentive audience with his only slightly tongue-in-cheek celebration of the French language as opposed to English. Professor Liberman has a career long fascination with the origin of words.

LSCF member Treffe Daniels works with Anatoly as a volunteer, helping trace words to their roots. Dr. Liberman described himself as a Russian native working in the Department of German, Scandinavian and Dutch at the U who was speaking to French-Canadians on the topic of English. Often, he had us "in stitches".

"Congratulations, your feast was a great success and the attendance numerous."

*Georgette Pfannkuch
Host of
Bonjour Minnesota
Music and culture from
France and
francophone countries
KFAI 106.7 FM
Every Wednesday
8:30-9:30 p.m.*

"A big "Thank you" for inviting us to a well-done party! The meal was excellent and so was the program. We thoroughly enjoyed it and are glad to have been part of 'his celebration!"

*J.P. and Pauline Cadieux
Eagan MN*



Jane Peck (at right) and her Dance Revels company demonstrated traditional dances of Quebec. They presented a very entertaining program.



Evelyn Lund, long time and very active member of LSCF, attended the dinner with her daughter Mavis Fisher.

We are always looking for stories, photos and announcements for Chez Nous. We publish once every two months (next deadline June 15, 1999), and your contributions make this newsletter what it is. The last three issues have been basically about our own society's history. Regular stories will return in the next and following issues. Send to:

*Dick Bernard
7632 157th St. W #301
Apple Valley MN 55124*



Les Canadiens-Errants sang to an appreciative audience. (Our sincere apologies to Rene Juaire, director, who inadvertently disappears behind the music stand to the right of this photo!) 23

"Peggy and I would like to thank you for March 20. We had a great time despite the fact that we aren't French. But for a little while Saturday night, I think we both began to think that we had French blood flowing in our veins! It was a very enjoyable evening. Thanks for thinking of us."

*Jim and Peg Dobrancin
St. Paul MN*



Linda Breitag, traditional fiddler extraordinaire, provided fine dinner entertainment. Linda has a great CD & tape available, called "Feet to the Fire". CD is \$15, cassette \$10 plus \$1.75 for shipping. Linda Breitag, 2415 E 22nd St., Minneapolis MN 55406.



John Rivard and Robert Dery engaged in conversation during the delicious dinner, which was catered by Woodbury company C'est si bon, and served by members of the organizing committee.

March 20, 1999

A VERY IMPORTANT NOTE TO MEMBERS OF LA SOCIETE

Our next business meetings are Monday, April 5 and June 7, starting at 7:30, at the International Institute on Como Avenue, St. Paul, across the street from the state fairgrounds. We will be discussing some major decisions which need to be made about the future of our society at these meetings. We urge your active involvement in ensuring the future vitality of this organization.

Other notes:

- *Requiescat in pace* to **Helene Peltier**, one of our longtime members, whose funeral was March 20 in Columbia Heights. Helene was 87. She was long active in La Societe. Memorials preferred to donor's choice. (Obituary at left).

- **Marie Nichols** is seeking persons to help with the La Societe booth at the **Festival of Nations** in St. Paul in early May. Marie's home phone is 651-578-2517. La Societe has kept the French in America visible at this Festival for many years.

- The March 20, 1999, Minneapolis Star Tribune, on page B-8, had an article **about St. Louis King of France church.**

St. Louis church has frequent organ recitals on the magnificent **Casavant Freres organ, produced in Quebec and dedicated in April, 1998.** On Sunday, April 18 at 4 p.m. the organ concert will be French or French inspired, in honor of the Little French Church. Organist is the internationally known Wilma Jensen. Other upcoming recitals are the Annual Student Competition on Saturday, April 10, time TBA; Friday, May 7 Choral Concert by the Minnesota Oratorio Society at 8:00 p.m.; Monday, May 17, 8:00 p.m., Organ Concert by John Vanella, Organist at Holy Rosary Cathedral, Duluth. Sunday, May 30, 4:00 p.m., The Rose Ensemble for Early Music, presenting music in honor of Joan of Arc. More information, including reservations and ticket costs, can be obtained by calling the Music Office of St. Louis Church, 651-224-8847.

- To note: for the last two years, **Sibley House at Mendota**, a Minnesota Historical Society facility, has celebrated St. Jean-Baptiste day, June 23. We have no information at the moment. But watch for information and plan to attend. It has been a very enjoyable activity.

- And finally, some historical notes: Minnesota became a territory on March 3, 1849 – 150 years ago this month; the first meeting to form La Societe was March 19, 1979. Bon anniversaire!

Peltier

Helene Eugenie, age 87, of NE Mpls. on Wed., March 17, 1999. Preceded in death by parents, Clara & Arthur Peltier; brothers & sisters-in-law, Dolph & Helen Peltier, Felix & Virginia Peltier and Wilfred Peltier; nephew (god-child), Larry Sullivan; grandniece, Laura Wallander and great-grand-nephew, Zachery Croal. Survived by sisters, Mildred (Leo) Sullivan, Genevieve Peltier and Delores (Charles) Wallander of FL; sister-in-law, Lorraine Gibbs of AZ; 19 nieces & nephews; 44 grand-nieces & nephews, 9 great-grand-nieces & nephews, many relatives and special friends. Retired Hennepin County employee. Member of Mpls Hiking Club since 1936. Genealogical Society, Audubon Society, and La Societe Canadienne Francais. Mass of Christian Burial Saturday, 10 am, Immaculate Conception Church, 4030 Jackson St. NE, Col. Hts. Burial St. Genevieve's Cemetery, Centerville, MN. Visitation Friday, 4-8 pm, with prayer vigil 6:30 pm at Billman-Hunt Chapel, 2701 Central Ave NE. Special thanks to the staff of Tre-villa of Golden Valley Care Center. Memorials preferred to donor's choice. Billman-Hunt Chapel 612-789-3535

March 20, 1999

WELCOME to our celebration of 20 years of La Societe Canadienne-Francaise.

This evening is especially to thank our founder **JOHN RIVARD**, and all who made the first twenty years so memorable. We leave the destiny of the next twenty years to you! May La Societe Canadienne-Francaise du Minnesota live on!

We ask your help tonight. We will be very "cozy" at dinner, since we have a much larger attendance than anticipated. Please be patient and help in any way you can. We did not wish to turn away guests.

The cost of tonights event is more than double the amount you paid. You are paid in full. But if you can afford an additional contribution of any amount, it would be very much appreciated. Make checks to LSCF and give to us tonight, or send to John England, treasurer, at 2002 Palace Avenue, St. Paul 55105. Merci.

Former MN Governor and Mrs. **Elmer L. Andersen** have graciously agreed to underwrite much of the cost of this evening's entertainment, and the Mars-Avril Chez Nous. Our special thanks to them.

If you are not a member of LaSociete, but interested, leave your name/phone/address with us tonight. Our next business meetings are Monday, April 5 and June 7, starting at 7:30, at the International Institute on Como Avenue, St. Paul, across the street from the state fairgrounds. We will be discussing some major decisions which need to be made about our society at these meetings. We urge your active involvement in ensuring the future vitality of this organization.

Other notes:

- Requiescat in pace to **Helene Peltier**, one of our longtime members, whose funeral was today in Columbia Heights. Helene was 87. She was long active in La Societe.
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- Today's Minneapolis Star Tribune, on page B-8, has an article about St. Louis King of France church. See also the article on reverse (which we are sending to the writer of the article.) St. Louis has frequent organ recitals – the next is tomorrow, March 21 at 7:00 p.m. On April 18 at 4 p.m. the organ concert will be French or French inspired, in honor of the Little French Church. Look for a brochure in the back of the church.
- To note: for the last two years, Sibley House at Mendota, a Minnesota Historical Society facility, has celebrated St. Jean-Baptiste day. We have no information at the moment. But watch for information and plan to attend. It has been a very enjoyable activity.
- And finally, some historical notes: Minnesota became a territory on March 3, 1849 – 150 years ago this month; the first meeting to form La Societe was March 19, 1979. Today, at 7 p.m., is the beginning of Spring!



A true jewel in downtown St. Paul is St. Louis, King of France Catholic Church, to be found at the southeast corner of 10th and Cedar Street. The present church is the third building used by the French-Canadians of St. Paul. The first church (1868) was at the northeast corner of 10th and Cedar; the second (1881) was at the corner of Exchange and Wabasha (the site of the present-day Fitzgerald Theater). The present day church was constructed in 1909. The above photo, which is undated, shows the present day church and, at left, a portion of the school which had been built in 1886, replacing the first school built at the site of the present church in 1873. (The school was demolished in 1963.) In a 1958 column, well known columnist Oliver Towne wrote a description of a visit to the school. Among other comments he mentioned the nationalities served there: "...because this is a melting pot these days, the LaVasseurs, Goyettes, Lancettes and Juaires who came from miles away, sit with other youngsters of all nationalities - Italian, German, Negro, Oriental and Spanish...because the French influence has faded with Americanization, the subject of the French language was discontinued in the 1930's....In that first school of 1873 there were only 130 students, with names like Auge, Gadbois, LaPointe, Nadeau, LaMarre, Villancourt, Souci. And by the way, two names O'Toole and Kelly...."

The architect of this stunningly beautiful church was Emmanuel Masqueray, whose name may be familiar to readers. Masqueray was the noted French architect who, at the same time in history, designed the magnificent Cathedral of St. Paul, and the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis. Mr. Masqueray was known to have made the remark: "The Cathedral and Basilica are grand indeed, but my favorite is St. Louis Church. It is my little gem."