

John Greene, Marc Lapprand,  
Gérald Moreau, Gérald Ricard

FRENCH PRESENCE

IN

VICTORIA B.C.

1843-1991

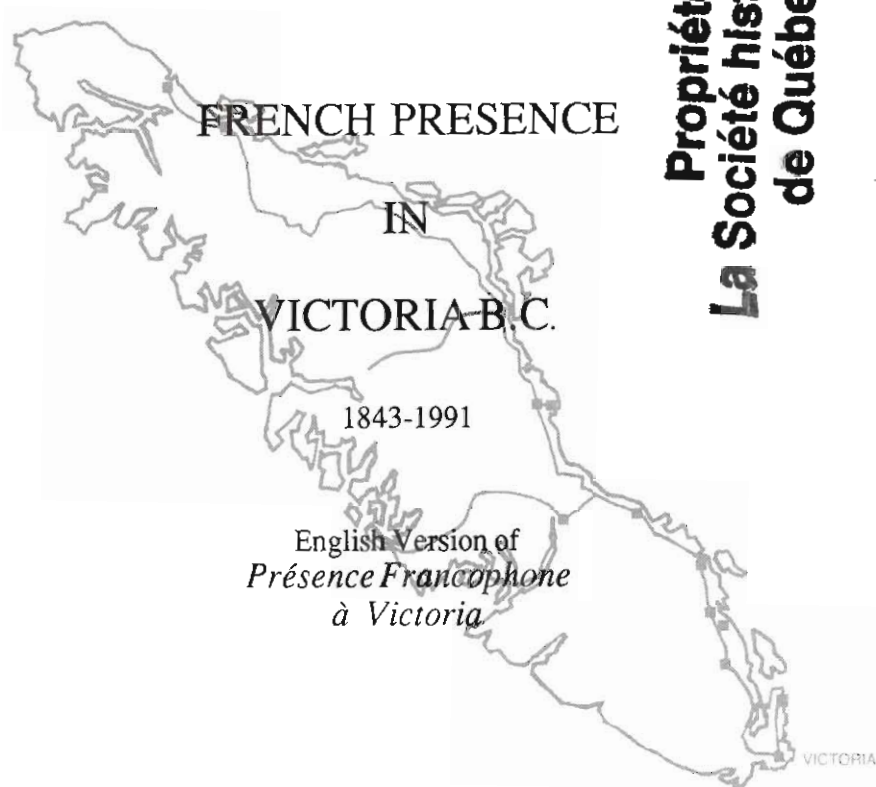
English Version of  
*Présence Francophone*  
*à Victoria*

VICTORIA

Publication of  
L'ASSOCIATION HISTORIQUE  
FRANCOPHONE DE VICTORIA, C.B.  
1991

John Greene, Marc Lapprand,  
Gérald Moreau, Gérald Ricard

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La Société historique  
de Québec**



Publication of  
L'ASSOCIATION HISTORIQUE  
FRANCOPHONE DE VICTORIA, B.C.  
1991

**LIVRE ÉLAGUÉ - SHQ**

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## Preface

An often unknown fact is the significant role that the local French-Canadians played in the history of Victoria and the surrounding communities.

With a deep sense of gratitude, one must thank the authors and researchers of this volume for their valuable contributions. Further, the determination of Laurette Agnew in bringing this manuscript to publication must be acknowledged.

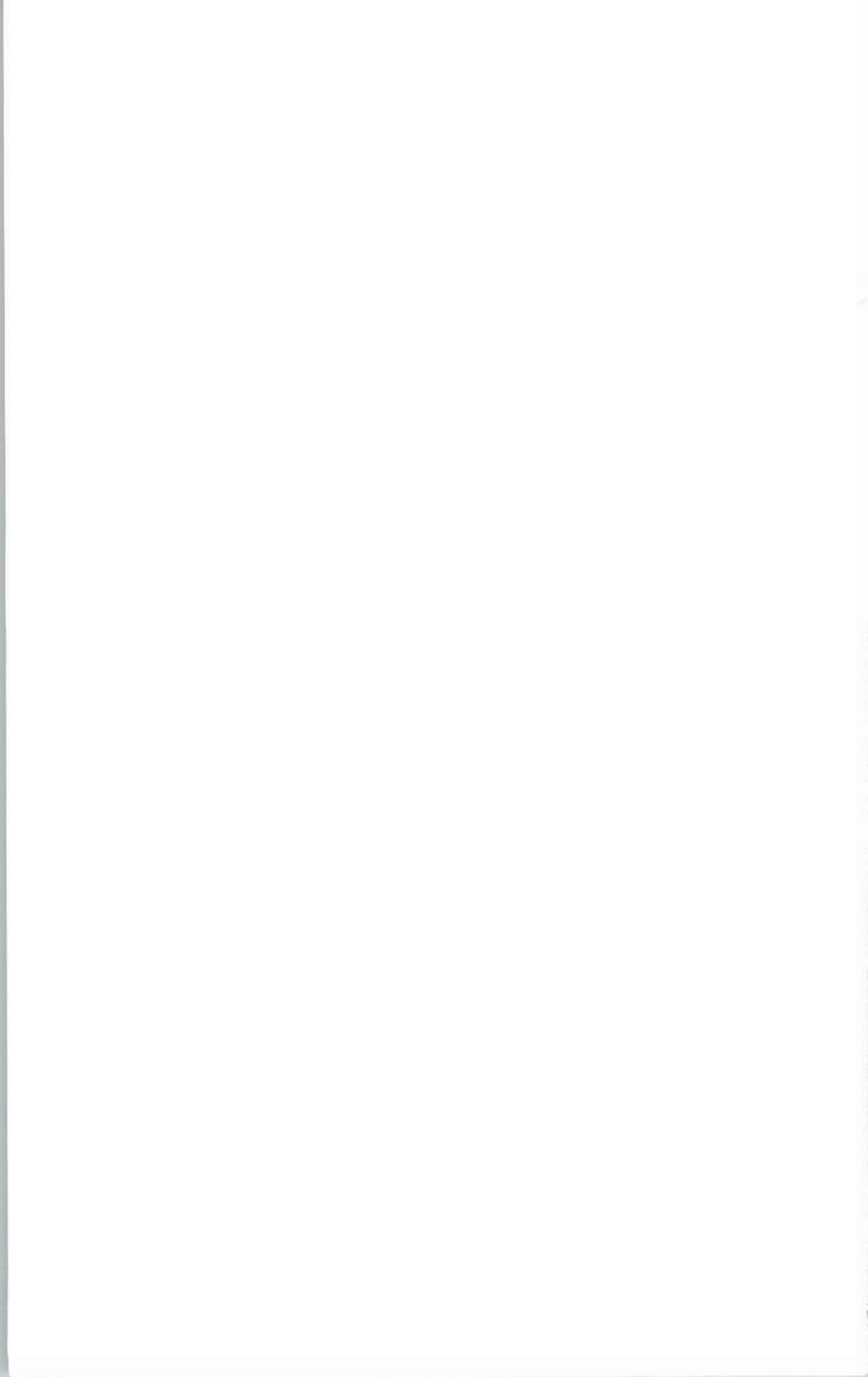
I have read and enjoyed this tracing of the history of greater Victoria and wish each of you the same pleasure and satisfaction. So many diversified stories enrich the culture and understanding of the many interesting families involved.

Again I extend thanks to all those directly or indirectly involved in producing such an excellent documentation of "The French Presence in Victoria" and to quote the esteemed Bishop Remi J. De Roo, "Let us wish that the success of this publication will encourage other writers and researchers to continue in this endeavour".

Vive l'histoire, and to the future, salutations.



Marie C. Rosko, mayor  
Town of Sidney, B.C.



## Presentation

For sometime the executive of *L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria* had been thinking of presenting an English Version of the history book , *Présence Francophone à Victoria* for the benefit of the English-speaking people. Unfortunately there were no volunteers for this project .

One day Marc Lapprand mentioned to Gérald Moreau, both of the University of Victoria, that he would enjoy doing the English translation of a part of this history book which describes the arrival of the first French Canadians in Victoria, B.C. Marc, joined with Gérald Moreau in initiating this project.

John Greene, ex-chair of the French Department at University of Victoria had provided the documentation for the chapter *Le Département de Français de l'Université de Victoria*, in the French edition, so he was the person best qualified to prepare the English version of this document. He agreed, enthusiastically, to participate in the realization of this future publication.

Another volunteer was required to write the section on religious history in Victoria's early day. Gérald Ricard, the author of the history of Mgr Modeste Demers in the French edition of *Présence Francophone à Victoria*, was the fourth person willing to assist in the realization of this project.

The authors of the French version have agreed to have their work used as documentation for the English version.



For the benefit of readers a list of the main subjects and the names of the persons who adapted and updated the French documentation follows:

- John Greene: The French Department at the University Victoria  
French At Camosun College  
Royal Roads Military College  
French at the Esquimalt Military Base  
"Ecole Victor Brodeur" and Biography of  
L'Amiral Brodeur
- Marc Lapprand: Loretto Hall  
The Fur trade  
Gold Rush and Victoria  
The Voltigeurs of Victoria  
"Le Courrier de la Nouvelle Calédonie"  
French Immersion  
French Survival
- Gérald Moreau "Paroisse Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Victoria"  
The Franciscan Fathers in Victoria  
The "Scouts et Guides" in Victoria  
"Fondation Canadienne-française d'Aide culturelle de  
la Colombie-Britannique-1864"  
"La Société Française de Bienfaisance et Secours  
Mutuels de Victoria-1860"  
"L'Alliance Française"  
"La Société Francophone de Victoria"  
"L'Echo de la Colombie"  
"Le Centre Socio-Culturel Français de Victoria"  
"L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria"  
"Nos Librairies Françaises"  
"L'Artisanat, Les Cornouillers, Les Décibels,  
Les Farceurs de Victoria, L'Age d'Or, Le Club Bonne  
Santé, Hotel et Restaurants."
- Gérald Ricard: Bishop Demers, 1809-1871 and Road Map  
The Sisters of St. Ann  
The Oblates of Mary Immaculate

The updating of some documents will provide actual facts and the index showing the names of persons, render this book more valuable for many.

Laurette Agnew, president, of  
L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria.

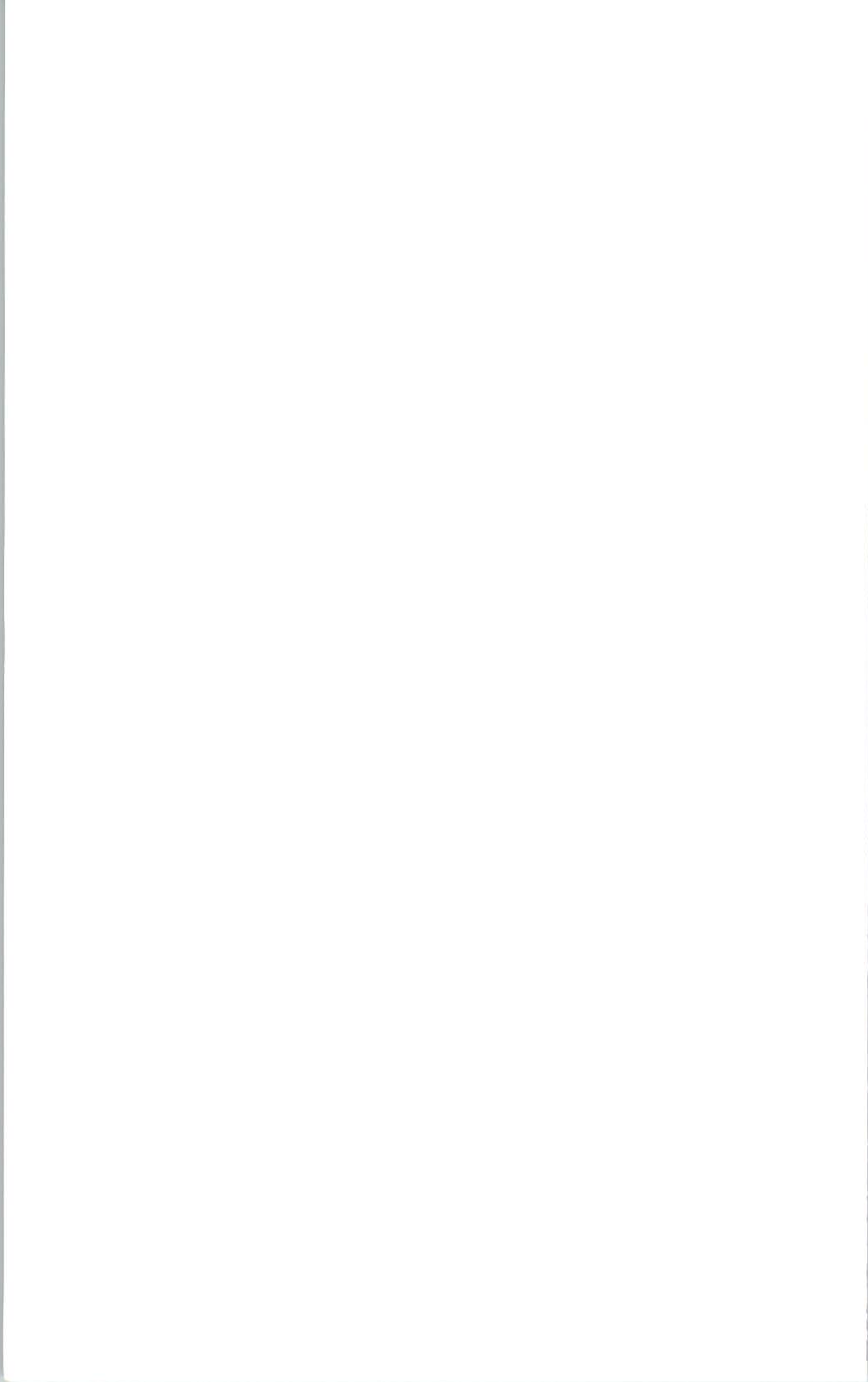
## Acknowledgements

The writers of this English Version of *Présence Francophones à Victoria* wishes to express their grateful thanks to the authors of the French version for giving the permission to use the book as bibliography.

We also wish to thank others who have assisted in the research for the original French book and for further research to update the English version.

The documentary sources consulted were from the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, of the Diocese, of the Sisters of St. Ann. Various libraries in the Greater Victoria also assisted in the research.

Although in minority, the Francophones were present in the early days of Victoria and are still present today.



## The Fur Trade and Victoria

Fort Victoria was becoming a necessity for the Hudson's Bay Company, and the founding of this fort was the result of numerous negotiations. Chief Factor John McLoughlin was in charge of the Company's operations West of the Rockies. His post, in 1824-25, was at Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River. Governor Simpson, who was travelling with McLoughlin, hinted at the fact that the main depot should be further north. In 1825, this sector comprised only a series of posts located either in the Columbia valley, or in the interior, what is today British Columbia. The transportation of the furs and of the other goods was done on that river.

The boundary was also in question: Until 1846, all the land stretching from California to Alaska was in dispute between Great Britain and the United States. In 1818, a joint-occupation agreement was signed, and it was renewed in 1827, for an indefinite period. This uncertainty about the boundary was in fact a constant source of concern for the Governors of the Hudson's Bay Company: as a matter of fact, in a more or less determined date, the principal depot was to be located in an area governed by the British. According to Governor McLoughlin Fort Vancouver's location was good, however, Governor Simpson was not convinced of that. He anticipated that the trade would develop mainly in the Northern part of the territory, and that moreover the principal depot should be further from the boundary. In addition to this, Fort Vancouver, the principal depot on the Columbia river, was gradually weakened both by poor health among its occupants and by the maritime disasters due to the difficult navigation on the river.

All these considerations seemed to justify another site further North for the principal depot. Despite his affinity for this place, McLoughlin used all possible means in order to find a more suitable location. He recommended that further explorations be made to find an appropriate site on the Island. With his instructions, Captain McNeil explored the Southern end of Vancouver Island in 1837. In his report addressed to the Governors Committee, McLoughlin indicated that he had discovered an excellent and easily accessible harbour. The surrounding area was flat and fertile. Following this, James Douglas, as he was examining the maps, gave Governor Simpson more information about the aspects of this region, and declared his conviction that this place would be the best on that rocky and sterile coastline. In 1838, Douglas was waiting for orders from the Company.

McLoughlin remained opposed to the construction of this post, and it is possible that he demanded to postpone the decision until his return to the Pacific Coast. Because of his numerous years of service, it was embarrassing not to comply with his request. In the fall of 1838, he went to London to confer with Officials of the Company, and upon his return, he made his first and only trip to Vancouver Island. With him were John Work (1) and Captain McNeil. They first went to Fort Nisqually, and thereafter to Fort Langley, on board the *Beaver*. They left Fort Langley on December 10, and reached the South end of Vancouver Island on December 12; they reported that the harbour was well located, and was accessible in all seasons. However, McLoughlin still could not accept it as a rival to his beloved Fort Vancouver, and thus answered that it did not fulfil their objectives.

Simpson had planned a third exploration voyage on the Pacific Coast. Both the Governor and the London Committee agreed to leave it to him to decide. During the same month, instructions coming from London were asking McLoughlin not to make any decision before Simpson's return, which delayed any decision until 1841.

The Governor, who had become Sir George Simpson in January 1841, sent a report to the Governors Committee in March 1842. He strongly recommended that the new depot be built on the Southern end of Vancouver Island. He confessed not having set foot on the ground himself, but that from his ship, he was able to observe the advantages of this site. *"As a harbour it is equally safe and accessible and abundance of timber grows near it for home consumption and exportation. There being no fresh water stream of sufficient power, flour or sawmills may be erected on the canal of Camosack, at a point where the channel is contracted to a breadth of 47 feet, by two narrow ridges of granite projecting from either bank, into the canal, through which the tide rushes out and in with a degree of force and velocity capable of driving the most powerful machinery, if guided and applied by mechanical skill. [...] there is [also] a range of plains nearly 6 miles square containing a great extent of valuable tillage and pasture land equally well adapted for the plough or for feeding stock"*. He further mentioned that salmon and whale fishing were also an engaging prospect. A post located on the Strait of Juan de Fuca would be ideal for the fur trade. It would furthermore be an asset for the development of the North-West coast of Vancouver Island.

Simpson's point of view was even reinforced by some political considerations. It was indeed dangerous to keep most of the assets of the Company in Fort Vancouver,



because there was already an important American settlement in the Willamette Valley, not far from Fort Vancouver. If the post was to be attacked, it could be looted, and this would cause financial problems to the Company. The keeping of good relations between the two countries was therefore a supplementary factor in favour of Governor Simpson's recommendation. McLoughlin assigned Douglas the task of re-examining Vancouver Island, and of selecting a site for the new fort. With his usual thoroughness, Douglas carried out his task and submitted his report. In addition to being a safe and accessible harbour, he pointed out the advantage of this stream where a flour and sawmill could be erected, as well as the plains of fertile land accessible from this sea-harbour. He admitted that all was not perfect, but he assumed that fresh water could be supplied in sufficient quantity for the dry season.

Douglas could not foresee that this decision was to influence greatly his career. He wrote his friend John Hargrave, in February 1843: *"The place itself appears a perfect "Eden" in the midst of the dreary wilderness of the North west coast, and so different in its general aspect, from the wooded, rugged regions around, that one might be pardoned for supposing it had dropped from the clouds into its present position. [...] The growth [sic] of indigenous vegetation is more luxuriant, than in any other place, I have seen in America. [...] Not a musquitoe [sic] that plague of plagues did we feel, nor meet with molestation from the natives."*

Douglas left Fort Vancouver on March 1st with 15 men (it is possible that they were French-Canadian) (2) and arrived at Fort Nisqually on March 9th. The following day he wrote a personal letter to Governor Simpson in order to find out his opinion about the size of the fort. His opinions

were not in agreement with that of Chief Factor McLoughlin, who claimed that a small fort was sufficient. Douglas' intention was to build a 300 hundred feet square quadrangle. He wanted to make room for further extensions. He left Fort Nisqually again on March 13, and reached Clover Point, on Vancouver Island, on March 14th, around 4 p.m. (3)

Douglas recorded the daily activities on a small pocket diary. As early as March 16th, after deciding the fort's location, he assigned 6 men to dig a well, and 6 other to square building timber. He spoke to the Songish to inform them about his intention of building in this place. They appeared to be pleased with his decision, and even offered to help by providing pickets. Douglas promised to pay them with blankets in return. He lent them axes so that they could do the job more easily, to be returned upon completion of the work. On June 12, Douglas had to go to Fort Vancouver; during his absence, he left Charles Ross in charge of the construction, and assigned to him Roderick Finlayson as his second. There were then less than forty men at the fort.

Work was going fast. In a report dated September 21, Ross indicated that the pickets and defences were erected, and that two buildings were already habitable. Wood necessary for the third building was hauled in. There was a water shortage during the summer, and it had to be carted from a distance of a mile and a half; once the wells would be dug, the situation should improve. Ross mentioned a large Indian population in the vicinity; they were quiet and polite, despite many opportunities of displaying an unfriendly disposition.

From June to September, 300 beaver and otter skins were received at the Fort. The trade would likely increase when the Cape Flattery Indians and the people inhabiting the west coast of Vancouver Island would begin to frequent the

new establishment. Since no farming had been carried out during the summer time, they lived on salmon and other fish brought along by the Indians in exchange for other products.

### **The Importance of The Fort**

The American influence grew stronger and stronger on Fort Vancouver, and it was becoming obvious that Fort Victoria would soon become the Head Quarters. In 1844, Captain Moot ordered that the annual supply consignment be shipped to Fort Victoria. In order to make more room, the stockade had to be extended, and new buildings were erected outside the quadrangle of the Fort.

In 1850, the Company and other private landlords were erecting buildings at a remote distance from the Fort. In 1851, James Douglas himself had his large residence built on a location that was later to be the site of the Parliament Buildings. The pickets and bastions that had once been necessary soon became a blatant anachronism. An article published in the *Victoria Gazette* in December 1858 poured ridicule upon the now useless fortification. However, the bastion survived for two more years. The Hudson's Bay Company having built a brick building on Wharf Street, the lot where the old fort was located was sold.

The 1856 gold rush marks the end of the fur trade in Victoria, but people of French Canadian origin had taken part in it as early as 1826, when John Work and Josette Legacé became united.

---

### **Notes:**

(1) John Work was born in Londonderry (Ireland) in 1792. His name was WARK, but it was recorded as WORK in the files of the Hudson's Bay Company, when he joined them on June 15, 1814, and he was to

keep that name. As a Company employee, he came to the Oregon region in 1823, but most of his activities took place on Canadian soil. He is known as a fur trader, a journalist for his Company, a chief of brigade, a clerk, a minor as well as a farmer and owner of a large piece of land on Vancouver Island.

He married Josette Legacé, daughter of Pierre Legacé, born in the province of Quebec, who had crossed the Rocky Mountains around 1807. He had lived with an Indian Chief near Spokane, Washington (Ref.: John Work of the Hudson's Bay Company, by Alice Bay Maloney, p. 100).

Pierre Legacé took one of the Chief's daughters as a mate, and Josette was born from their union. She herself said to her grand-son that he was a Nez Percé. Josette was a woman of great beauty and with a remarkable character. Only an Indian female could endure the privations imposed on the wife of a fur trader. After marrying John Work, according to the customs, at the beginning of the year 1826, she bore him eleven children whose descendants may be traced (Ibid. See note 17, p. 107 for further details). Josette and her children were following him most of the time. Almost all of them were born while the couple were residing at a post. However, Laetitia was born in 1831, in Idaho, when, according to history, the brigade was besieged by the Blackfoot Indians.

In 1832-33 John Work was heading a Southbound expedition along the Sacramento River. Torrential rains prevented the brigade to carry on their journey, so he decided to spend the winter at Buttes. It is at this place that he was joined by another brigade led by Michel Laframboise, made up of 65 men, among whom were several Oregon Indians. John Work, being a gentleman in the Company, was assigned to lead both brigades. In the Spring, they headed for the Bay of San Francisco. They were unable to pass a range of mountains, South of Cape Mendocino, therefore, they went back North. They spent the Summer along the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. Their stay was full of disappointment: no furs, bellicose Indians, and innumerable mosquitoes

which propagated diseases among them. John Work, abated, decided to return to the Fort, with the few furs he had managed to accumulate.

Laframboise had left the brigade in June in order to go back to Fort Vancouver where he had been expected for a long time. Work and his brigade men journeyed with difficulty Northward; most of them were convalescent. When they reached Oregon, they met with Laframboise, who had been summoned by his Company to rescue them. He was bringing along food and letters. These supplies let them continue their journey to Fort Vancouver, that they reached on October 31, 1833.

Upon his return, John Work was reunited with his family. In 1849, he was sent to Fort Victoria as one of the administrators of the Company. He became a member of the Legislative Council on recommendation of James Douglas, with the approval of London, in 1854.

John Work had always wished to spend his last days in his native country, but when he realized that he could live in great comfort in Victoria, he made this place his permanent residence. In 1850, he became the biggest land owner of Victoria, as well as the most famous farmer in the region. Nowadays, some streets located on what was his farm bear his name, his children's or his sons-in-laws'. He also wished to give a lot and a house to each of his daughters as a dowry. Tradition has it that each year he ordered dresses for his wife and his daughters, and that, one year, the ship coming from London would have brought along gold watches upon his request.

Josette and John's daughters had received a good education. They were the 'belles' of society, and were coveted as wives by the managers of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Englishmen freshly arrived in this country. The first one to get married was Sarah, she became the wife of Roderick Finlayson, from the Company, in 1849.

Another important ceremony must be mentioned. When Josette and John united in 1826, there was no civil or religious authority in the vast Western territories. Thus they became husband and wife according to the fashion of the land. In the first files compiled by Fort Victoria's



Chaplain, we may find the marriage act of Josette and John, dated November 6, 1849, administered by James Douglas, Chief Factor Hudson's Bay Company, and John Tod, Chief Trader. John Work had signed the declaration, and Josette Legacé had drawn a cross beside her name.

During his stay at Fort Victoria, John Work had also been assigned the duty of looking over Fort Simpson for a few years; in one of his trips, he was accompanied by 'Old Pierre' who was none other than Pierre Legacé, his father-in-law, who happened to be his faithful companion for the hunting expeditions in California.

(2) In the records of the Hudson's Bay Company, Ref. B-223 g8-1843-44, the following names of employees at Fort Victoria may be found: Joseph Allard, age: 41, George Barthélemy [sic], age: 29, Joseph Champagne, age: 23, all three from Lachine; Joseph Charpentier, age: 23, from Montreal. Israël Corbin, age: 25, Louis Dupuis, age: 23, and Jean-Baptiste Dupuis, age: 23, all three from Rivière-du-Loup Antoine Gagnon, age: 38, from Saint-François, Casimir Gariépy, age: 19, from Sorel, François Gravelle, age: 26, from Terrebonne Charles Labonté, age: 22, from Sainte-Anne, François L'Ecuyer, age unknown, from Beauharnois, Norman Martin, age: 27, from Stornoway, Léon Morel, age unknown, from Montreal, Gabriel St-Gré, age: 27 (all these places are in the province of Québec).

(3) When he arrived in Victoria, Douglas was accompanied by Father Jean-Baptiste Bolduc, from Saint-Joachim de Montmorency, Québec. Ordained priest on August 22, 1841, he came to the Pacific Coast on September 10, 1842. After he received evidence that the Indians accepted their visits, Father Bolduc went to one of their villages six miles from the harbour, Camosun, at the tip of the bay. His arrival caused a little turmoil, and the neighbouring tribes gathered at this place. On Saturday, March 18, 1843, with pine branches and an awning taken from a ship, a shelter was erected in order to give mass on the



following day. Douglas had allowed a few of his men to help the Father for this work. On Sunday morning, more than twelve hundred Indians from the three big tribes were gathered: the Kawitskins (Cowichans), the Klamas (Clallams), and the Isanisks (Sanetch). Douglas attended mass, along with a few Canadians and two catholic Ladies, whose identities are unknown. Douglas had seen to it that the ceremony be imposing. It is quite possible that this mass was the first one to be given at Victoria by a French-Canadian Priest. The latter stayed until March 24, then went back to his mission. In 1846, Father Bolduc returned back East; he held several important positions right up to his death, on May 8, 1889, in Québec-City. (J.B. Allaire, *Dictionnaire*, 1:63).

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THE CANADIANS, by the Editors of TIME-LIFE BOOKS.  
Text by Ogden Tanner.  
Microfilm, CBH, B-223 g8-1843-44.

## The Gold Rush and Victoria

The discovery of gold put an end to the fur trade era and accelerated the exploitation of natural resources, which is still carried out nowadays. In 1848, a carpenter found gold in the waters of an American river, and that led to the gold race in California, and eventually to the exploration of the American West Coast. Ten years later, gold was found along the Fraser river in British Columbia, which provoked a massive immigration of people coming from all over the place.

In 1854, a carter working for the Hudson's Bay Company had noticed some gold grains no bigger than a pinhead in the merging waters of the Columbia and the Pend d'Oreille rivers. He brought back half a mug of this black sand to the trading post of Fort Colville. During the winter, the men stationed at this Fort dreamt of prospecting in this area; they mentioned that to their friends in their correspondence, and Angus McDonald, a clerk in the trading post, noted that in the spring a few French Canadians and other Métis had installed tippers on the spot, and could make a salary of about three dollars per day. A handful of them went up the Pend d'Oreille river, and came back with three or four ounces of the precious metal. Thus started the gold rush. (1)

In 1856, an Indian discovered a large gold nugget in the Nicomen river, where he had just stopped to quench his thirst; he sold his treasure to the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company did not wish to rush the release of this piece of news, in order not to damage the lucrative fur trade in the region, but since the closest Mint was in San Francisco, the 800 ounces of gold had to be shipped by the *Otter* steamer, which contributed to the spreading of the sensational news.

Governor Douglas announced officially the discovery on April 16, 1856, and as of April 25, 450 men reached Fort Victoria on board the *Commodore*, at a time when the normal population of the Fort was only 400 souls. The number of gold diggers arriving from San Francisco was estimated at 30,000. All means of navigation were good, and all had to stop at Victoria before they reached their destination. (2)

### **The French Migration to California**

In order to understand why there were some Frenchmen among those miners, one has to consult the history of California. After it was announced that gold had been discovered in 1848, a first contingent of 40 men arrived on board *La Meuse* on September 14, 1849. France was then undergoing a revolution, and had financial trouble. This explains why between November 1849 and April 1851, four thousand French people immigrated to California. (3)

British Columbia thus received a portion of these immigrants from France. How were these new-comers? In 1853, a San Francisco paper, *AltaCalifornia*, published the following comments: "*The French people formed the most remarkable and the most important foreign group both from the point of view of their number as that of the elements of which it was made up. Workers from various disciplines were numerous, but there were also capitalists, retail merchants, physicians, teachers, architects, and a few former notaries, journalists, men of letters, political exiles, etc. In fact, many excellent people among a mixture of outcasts*". (4)

It is not easy to know the exact number of Frenchmen who came to British Columbia, however, they were numerous enough to constitute a separate ethnic group.

The working conditions were more advantageous than in San Francisco, therefore they were more inclined to come to British Columbia. They all had to pay for a licence, but there were no taxes on foreign miners. When the mining office was established, foreign miners were accepted as members. As a matter of evidence of the lack of discrimination, we may note that Governor Douglas had engaged for a government position a French minor known under the name of "*Capitaine Travailot*" (O.J. Travailot). From time to time, the latter had to send reports to the Governor. In June 1858, he was appointed Revenue Officer for the Fort Dallas District. He had the authority to write licences for the miners, and to collect fees. With Corporal William Fisher, R.E., he did the cadastral survey of the city of Hope. It is interesting to note that several of these reports were written in French on the Governor's headed notepaper. Travailot remained a citizen of this Province until his death. (5)

The most conspicuous evidence of the existence of a considerable number of French people in Victoria was the establishment of a French newspaper called *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle Calédonie*, on September 11, 1858. It was in fact the fourth newspaper in Victoria (6). Its proprietor was Paul de Garro, its editor was W. Thorton and the printer, Frederick Marriott, who had several months earlier started the publication of the *Vancouver Island Gazette*. The *Courrier de la Nouvelle Calédonie* was a tri-weekly political and literary journal. Only 9 issues are known to have been printed, between September 11 and October 8, 1858. Its short career may be due to the lack of subscribers and commercial advertisements. De Garro remained in the colony until 1861, when he died in an explosion that destroyed the steamer *Cariboo Fly* outside Victoria Harbour. (7)

Not every goldseeker was able to make it to the mine, but some went back to San Francisco, and some settled in Victoria. The French people wished to be distinguished from the French Canadians. During a law suit, the *Colonist* had to mention that a certain convicted person was not French, but Canadian of French origin (8). In Canada, the French were quite welcome, which was not the case in San Francisco. (9)

These French people participated in the various municipal duties; for instance, Auguste Francis Borde, son of a pioneer, Mrs. Antoinette Borde, was the chief of a fire brigade volunteer corps. He was a municipal employee, appointed to the collection of the water tax; he died at the Victoria St-Joseph Hospital in 1919. (10) His brother Hyppolyte was a shoe-repairer by trade, and participated in the Victoria sporting organizations. He was one of the honour guests during the silver jubilee of the city of Victoria in 1937. He died at the age of 86, at the St-Joseph Hospital on September 29, 1942 (11). There are still some descendants of the Borde family in the Victoria region.

There was no conflict between the English and the French groups. In an advertisement for his "*Select School*," Edward Mallandaine wrote in the *Colonist* on May 17, 1860 the following, in French: "Messrs [sic] les Français sont invités à faire un cours d'anglais le soir, et envoyer leurs enfants chez M. Mallandaine." (i.e. "The honourable Frenchmen are invited to take an evening course in English, and to send their children to Mr. Mallandaine's.") As well, in the *Colonist* of October 31, 1864, December 11, 1865, October 29, 1866, one could read that Mr. B. Deff, former lieutenant of the French Army under Louis-Philippe, was working in the mines, and during the winter season was

offering courses in French, Spanish and English. His courses happened to be very popular. (12)

The artistic aspect was not left aside either. The French in the colony wanted to keep their culture. In January 1861, they organized their own choir under the name *La Société des Enfants de Paris* (13). The group was directed by Mr. George Sandrie, who also directed the Philharmonic. The first concert presented exclusively in French, on August 16, 1861, was placed under the patronage of Governor Douglas. The group was made up of 30 to 40 members; a second concert was given in September 1861. It seems that the singing choir was absorbed by the English group of the Philharmonic. A subsequent incident underlines the fact that there was no rivalry between English and French: at the end of their lives, the Sandries did not have the necessary revenues to survive; to give them a good help, a ball was organized to raise funds for this couple. (14)

We could still mention numerous facts and doings by the French in this colony period. But we also have to mention that many French Canadians participated in the gold rush, and in the development of what is today the city of Victoria. Some of them settled in farms further North, in the Saanichton area, where some of their descendants live today. Nowadays, all these French and French-Canadians people speak English, but they are proud of their origin and happy to speak their mother tongue when circumstances allow it.

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Notes:

(1) *B.C. Historical News*, Vol. 13, No 4, Summer 1980.

(2) *B.C. Historical News*, Vol. 18, No 1, 1984.

(3) IRELAND, Willard E. "The French in British Columbia" *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* Vol. XIII, No 2, pp. 67-89.

(4) LEVY, op. cit. pp. 107-8.

(5) IRELAND, Willard E. "The French in British Columbia" p. 71.



(6) *American Newspaper* 1821-1936.

A Union list of files by Winifred Gregory, in 1937:

1) *Daily Victoria Gazette*, June 25, 1858 to November 24, 1859.

2) *British Colonist*, July 28, 1858.

3) *Weekly Victoria Gazette*, August 13, 1858 - November 26, 1859.

4) *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle Calédonie* September 11, 1858.

(7) *Victoria Colonist*, August 3, 1861.

(8) *Ibid.*, January 31 and February 2, 1861.

(9) IRELAND, Willard E. "*The French in British Columbia*" p. 75.

(10) *Colonist*, September 20, 1919.

(11) *Colonist*, September 20, 1942.

(12) IRELAND, Willard E. "*The French in British Columbia*" p. 75.

*Colonist*, October 31, 1864; December 11, 1865; October 29, 1866.

(13) *Colonist*, January 29, 1861; July 22, 1861.

(14) *Colonist*, May 10, 1870.

## The Voltigeurs of Victoria

In March 1850, Governor Richard Blanshard arrived at Fort Victoria to assume office. One of the tasks he had to face was that of the defence system on Vancouver Island. While he was visiting the various posts already established, he became aware that the white population was without protection. He asked the authorities to send two companies in order to protect the island. One of which would be stationed at Victoria, and the other one at Fort Rupert, where a coal mine was operated by the Hudson's Bay Company.

He was informed that three deserters from the *Norman Morison* had been murdered by the Indians; it was impossible to find the murderers. This fact incited him to demand a militia corps, although the British government did not want to assume the responsibility for those who exposed themselves to the Indians. Nevertheless James Douglas approved the idea of such a corps, but he thought that the Company should pay for it.

In 1849, Vancouver Island was ceded to the Hudson's Bay Company which could then dispose of all its hunting territories at will. Douglas informed George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, that he had proposed a solution to Governor Blanshard. He recommended the formation of a rural police, and, as a recognition of their service, a 20 acre lot located on the Company's hunting territory would be given to each man at retirement. He acknowledged that the Indians caused occasional depredations, but that nobody could foresee those incidents, hence the justification for this special corps. Such was the origin of the Victoria Voltigeurs.

This military police was largely recruited from French Canadian half-breeds who had crossed the continent in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. When they retired, they were settled in a village located on the Colquitz River, near its entrance into Portage Inlet. As it had been decided in 1851, Douglas instructed the Colonial Surveyor in 1859 to grant 20 acre lots to Nicholas Auger, J.B. Jolibois, and John Lemmon. (1) It is possible to trace the activities of these policemen with the financial reports that the Company submitted to the Colony's Governor.

### **Voltigeurs Cornered by the Indians.**

One day, the Voltigeurs had to apprehend some Indians who had killed several head of cattle belonging to a settler. One of the culprits was captured without difficulty, but when they tried to arrest the second one who had taken refuge in the principal Songies Village near Victoria, the Constable and his ten men were surrounded by a crowd of armed Indians. They managed to retire in disorder, while they were restrained at the point of the bayonet.

They lost two muskets and a boat, which Douglas tried unsuccessfully to recover by sending another group of Voltigeurs. They refused to give up the property unless the accused Indian was set free. Douglas then used a stratagem that proved successful. He ordered the steamer *Beaver* to be anchored in front of their village, in combat position. Again, during the course of negotiations, Douglas demanded that the Indian surrendered, to be tried according to British authority. Eventually, he was discovered hiding in the woods, captured and tried with his companion, on board the *Beaver*. Both were found guilty of murder, and sentenced to be hanged in the presence of their whole tribe. The execution, the first in the history of British Columbia, took

place on the point of Protection Island, at the entrance of Nanaimo Harbour, known today as Gallows Point. In order to prevent further skirmish, Douglas ordered that a Majesty's Ship be permanently moored at Victoria or Esquimalt. (2)

### **Varia**

- The following names have been recorded as members of an expedition to Cowichan (3): Basil (or Baptiste) Bottineau, Timothy Blayan, George Bouché, Joseph Charbonneau, W. Hutson, Tapise Montigny, Louis Montret, James Newbird, François Satakarata and Pierre Versailles. There was also an interpreter by the name of Thomas Quontany. Since the majority of the names were French, it is reasonable to assume that French was their usual language on a daily basis.

- Douglas appreciated the services rendered by this military police; is that the reason for their flamboyant uniforms? It was made up of a tasselled blue cap, a white regatta shirt, a blue military overcoat, buckskin pants, and worsted stockings. A scarlet belt completed the uniform, to which was attached a powder-horn, and a gun. All of this was great for colour display, but quite adverse to efficient camouflage! The Voltigeurs received a daily allowance of one dollar. Around 1856, they became a mounted police, and thus were able to widen their patrol zones.

- From December 1857 to March 1858, the following names were recorded in the Hudson's Bay Company's files: Lieutenant Henry McNeil, Sergeant Basil Bottineau and

privates Louis Maurice, L. Lavoie, Léon Morel, D. Bouché, Tom Keavé, Balan, Tamaree, Pakee. (4) They were the last to serve in the Voltigeurs Corps. In fact, this military police designed to protect the early white settlers that was so dear to Douglas had to be replaced during the gold rush. Then it became imperative to create a regular police force in order to maintain order in the midst of a white population that had tremendously increased both in number and in crime, although this increase could have been a hindrance against the raids among the Indians.

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**Notes:**

- (1) McKELVIE, B.A. & IRELAND, Willard E. *The Victoria Voltigeurs* British Columbia Historical Quarterly, Vol. XX, Nos 3 and 4, p. 221.
- (2) *Ibid.*, pp. 224-8.
- (3) *Ibid.*, p. 229.
- (4) *Ibid.*, p. 239.

## "*Courrier de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*"

As we have mentioned above, this paper was founded in 1858, by Count Paul de Garro, and it was the first French newspaper in Victoria. It meant to be a political and a literary paper, and was to serve the French people in the English colonies. The owner-founder's ambition was high, since he wanted to sell his paper in the mining areas and circulate it as far as San Francisco, and even in France. In the first issue, this is how he specified its tendency:

"Organ of the French and Canadians, The *Courrier de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* will follow an independent line; no consideration whatsoever will cause it to deviate from this course as long as we have the honour of holding the pen; but this independence gives us a precise obligation to render justice to the truth, and we will also be found among the ranks of the defenders of the law and the great principles of liberty and justice bequeathed by the Constitution of Great-Britain to her glorious children and to all who live under her protection.

The mines, the trade, agriculture, and even literature will find, as far as the format of the paper and the scope of its resources will allow it, a clear voice in the columns of the *Courrier de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*".

The paper was published every Monday, Wednesday and Friday of the week, it comprised a weekly edition for the mines, of which the first issue appeared on September 11, 1858. This paper claimed to be catholic, and was presumably printed on a press imported from France, which belonged to Bishop Modeste Demers.

It featured many advertisements and reported the debates of the House of Commons. On the October 8 issue, one could read a description of the comet of 1858. Social



events were also commented upon. Unfortunately, this paper did not rouse enough interest in the French population. In all, two weekly editions and nine issues of the other edition were printed. The paper had thus a short life, so did his founder, as we shall now explain.

Count Paul de Garro was born in France. He first went to California as a political exile, and later came to Victoria. His newspaper being a failure, this sulky man became a restaurant waiter. He hated being called "garçon!", and few clients enjoyed his unpleasant manners, due to the fact that his occupation was inadequate to his character. He had an impetuous nature, and dreamed of returning to France to fight Louis-Napoléon! This may explain why he tried his luck on the mines. One day, he boarded the steamer *Cariboo* with his faithful dog; David Higgins, a reporter, his only friend, accompanied him to the ship. The boat had hardly gone when the furnaces exploded. Victoria's population was immediately awakened by the sound of the explosion, and rushed to rescue the survivors. Higgins was the first to enquire about the restaurant waiter. The blast projected Paul de Garro into the water, where his body was later found. His dog was also hurtled by the blast, but escaped unharmed. He managed to go back to Paul's cabin and wouldn't let anyone in. When he was eventually brought back to the shore, he relentlessly continued the search for his master. He too disappeared, but contrary to his master, he remained alive as a legend for quite a while. Some claim that for years to follow, one could see a ghostly black dog howling on the sea front in search of a man he could not forget. Thus ended the adventures of a count whose ambitious aspirations were never fulfilled.

**Bishop Modeste Demers**  
**1809-1871**  
**Missionary to the Columbia**  
**First Bishop of Vancouver Island.**

On an unseasonably cold, blustery day, the eighteenth of March 1977, Bishop Remi J. De Roo, the fourteenth bishop of Victoria, formally dedicated a monument commemorating Bishop Modeste Demers, the first bishop of Vancouver Island.

This monolith of West Coast granite, bearing a bronze plaque, erected by the Historic Sites and Monuments of Canada, stands near the Chapel of St. Ann's Academy. Built in 1858 as the first Church-Cathedral of the diocese, it became the chapel of the convent of the Sisters of St. Ann. A gift of Bishop Demers, it was moved and attached to the first building of St. Ann's Academy. The plaque, written in both official languages, reads:

"Modeste Demers (1809-1871). Born near Lévis, Demers was trained at the Seminary of Quebec, ordained in 1836 and sent in 1838 as a missionary to the Columbia. His ministry extended from the interior of British Columbia to Oregon. First pastor of St. John's Church of Oregon City, he was appointed in 1846 first Bishop of Vancouver Island with responsibility for New Caledonia and the Queen Charlotte Islands. In the following decades Bishop Demers oversaw the transition from the fur trade era to that of a settled colony. By the time of his death in Victoria, the territory in which he had laboured was Canada's sixth province".



Among the addresses delivered by many guests battling the elements - for a good cause - one stands out particularly, that of Sister Eileen Kelly, S.S.A., Provincial Superior of the Sisters of St. Ann:

"In reviewing the life and work of Bishop Demers ... we cannot help but be reminded of the debt of gratitude that we owe to Quebec for its early missionaries who left the relative comforts of their village life to undertake the work of evangelization in the wilderness of British Columbia" (1)

Every man, woman and child in British Columbia, whether a native or recent arrival, a member of a minority or a majority, contributes a personal vision derived from social heritage, economic conditions or political circumstances. Only by gathering those visions with respect, allowing them time to grow in time, will there come to light a meaning of the past and an insight of the future.

Missionaries introduce visions, they create universes. Entering this universe, the convert shares in a new intellectual dignity, gains a higher sense of attainment. Dignity relieves uncertainties, encourages acceptance and promotes the creation of one's own universe to live in and to live by.

It may be said that the vision brought by the Catholic missionaries from Quebec added a dimension to the historical evolution of British Columbia without which the present B.-C. world would verily be the poorer.

The identifiable heritage left by Bishop Demers and those early Catholic missionaries - men and women - will gain significance when seen under the light of their education and formation in the social, economic and linguistic conditions prevalent in the Province of Quebec in the early XIXth century. Furthermore how those women and men of the

cloth adapted and evolved under the missionary conditions of late XIXth century in British Columbia.

As we delve into the history of the development of the West, at the turn of the XIXth century, several forces become identifiable. Pioneer men and women worked very hard at opening countries which became Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. They were not without purpose, ideals and means. There were not alone, they were not the first. There were, since 1670, the Company of the Adventurers of England Trading in Hudson's Bay and after 1870, its aggressive rival the North West Company, both with their traders, factors, winterers, adventurers. Both drew heavily for their traders, trappers, voyageurs, on 'Canadien' labour and experience, largely from the Montreal area and on the Metis, many from the Red River Settlement. The Companies' single purpose - the fur trade.

Many 'Canadien' traders, trappers, voyageurs having married Indian women (à la mode du pays) could speak to their wives and their tribes of the Black Robe Prayerman who would come from time to time to teach them about God, good and evil and perform baptisms. The ideal - the worship of God and the salvation of their souls.

Means of communication between groups were a jumble of English from the 'bourgeois', French from the 'voyageurs' and Chinook - a lingua franca-used with Indian tribes. There being more trappers and 'voyageurs' than 'bourgeois', their language, French was the most commonly used - even the 'bourgeois', factors, traders learned to 'get along' in French for their purpose. The means then, French as spoken in the fur trade.

Identified purpose, ideals and means will be the avenues through which we will seek to capture the 'race',

'moment' and 'milieu' which contributed to the person of Modeste Demers, the man, the priest-missionary, the developer-builder, the leader, 'the Apostle of British Columbia'.

The history of Modeste Demers is the history of the beginnings of the Diocese of Victoria. The reverse is also true. They are not only complimentary, they are one. They form an integral part of the one ideal, his vocation as a missionary for the salvation of souls.

### **Inheritance and Heritage**

The heritage left by Modeste Demers proceeds from his cultural inheritance, his education, the social context of his formative years, and the vocation he chose.. All have bearing on his capacity to adapt to the conditions of his successive missions.

The Demers families, originally from Dieppe in Normandy, had settled on the South shore, across the St. Lawrence from Quebec City, in the XVIIth century. There were several families, large, moral, religious, well respected. Their strong, active Catholic faith was to offer eight sons to the Church, four born in St. Nicolas de Lévis.

Modeste, born on October 11, 1809, one of eight children of Michel Demers and Rosalie Foucher, grew in age and wisdom under a British Government's determined policy of assimilation, with a concomitant struggle for leadership. Three groups were vying for dominance: the Anglophone bourgeoisie, the 'Canadien' habitant and the clergy. The clergy, solidly established within a complex institutional network, was a natural participant in that struggle. It had seen the effects of the French Revolution and felt quite concerned with the intervention of the

Protestant Colonial Government. At the turn of the XIXth century, the clergy was well aware of the threat to the education of their people and to the position of leadership and influence they had acquired after the events of 1760.

In 1760, the people of New France were crushed, one seventh of the population was killed, most towns on both side of the St. Lawrence were put to the torch. After two months of siege-bombardment only one house remained standing in Lower Quebec. Then, to finish the job, France abandoned its offspring completely. The treaty of Paris turned New France over to the British. The 'Anciens Canadiens' were not just defeated, they were conquered and abandoned. Writes Kenneth McRae: "To the Canadiens, it was a cataclysm beyond the power of the mind to grasp". The attitude of English arrogance and French distrust had remained distorting relations between the two groups. Two generations later, the 'Canadiens' had not gotten over the conquest. (2)

In their relationship with the people, the clergy enjoyed a double advantage, they lived close to the people and continued to exercise a strong moral influence. An essentially homogeneous society of some fifty-five thousand in 1759, with no significant immigration, but with a yearly birthrate of fifty per thousand and a death rate of twenty-five per thousand, the population was doubling every twenty-five to twenty-eight years. In fact it had quadrupled since 1760.(3)

While the population was growing, the education system was suffering. After the conquest, the exodus of the French governing body and the leadership, adding the British Government policy of assimilation, brought about a shortage, a veritable penury of teachers. In desperation, substitutes were drawn often more for their fidelity to the

precepts of the Church than for their knowledge or their pedagogical competence. A sense of their duty, as they felt it, brought those benevolent apostles of learning to add to their function of notary, cleric or verger, that of teacher.(4)

The social disarray brought on by the conquest, the shortage of schools, of teachers, of books, the distress of the 'habitants', all combined to favour the intent of the British Government to assimilate the French population. In 1789, the Council of Quebec recommended the formation of a school system where religious education would be forbidden. The Provisional Government's (read military) promotion of the construction of Protestant schools added to the disarray. One after the other, the private schools were forced to close. Generations of children would grow without schooling. "When in 1789, wrote Bishop Hubert of Quebec, in proportion, one would find easily twenty-four to thirty persons capable of writing", thirty-five years later, in 1824, Father Antoine Parent, the Superior of the Quebec Seminary, could affirm that "in many parishes, one could hardly find five or six persons capable of conveying their thoughts in writing and performing the most rudimentary operations of arithmetic" (5)

Whoever controls the schools also controls the soul of a people. The struggle for freedom of education and confessional schools is engaged. It will last for a century, opposing the Royal Institute for the Advancement of Sciences and the 'Canadiens', led by their clergy. The problem - how to offer qualified instruction to the young when for three quarters of a century, the people have been deprived of the most elementary education? In the meantime, deprived of representation in the Government by the Test Law, the 'Habitants' adopt a defensive, protective attitude; they close ranks around three irrevocable values:



faith, language and legal rights. In this tense atmosphere, this intellectual and social dead end, Modeste Demers will grow in age. . . and in wisdom.

### **His vocation**

Modeste Demers' education followed the norm of the times, rudimentary, acquired from itinerant teachers, at home and with the parish priest. In this strongly Catholic family, influenced perhaps by his 'cousins'priests, the seed of his vocation to the priesthood germinated. A religious vocation offered to the young men and women the most prestigious future and the ultimate mode of salvation. To pursue this ideal would not be easy. Providence placed formidable obstacles in the way. The highest reward was earned only by those daring souls who accepted to endure, to suffer most. Many who launched themselves with enthusiasm into the rigorous preparation for religious life, who put their souls to the test, looked with some condescendence upon the more cautious or thoughtful who, opting for a less elevated vocation, would not survive the ordeal of the seminary or the novitiate. For those who, by their dynamic faith, did triumph, the missions of the West mirrored an ideal of sacrifice and merit. In another vein, the missions offered an escape from worldly temptations as well as the protection of a safety valve against too intense a religious fervor.

His character molded by those social and religious influences, Modeste, having received the consent of Michel, his father, sought admission to the *Petit Séminaire de Québec*. Recommended by this Parish Priest, he was admitted by the Superior Jérôme Demers in 1825. He was fifteen years old. Seven years later having successfully completed his studies at the *Petit Séminaire*, he is promoted to the *Grand Séminaire de Québec* for four more years of

study for the priesthood. Ordained on February 7th, 1836 by Bishop Signay in the Cathedral of Quebec, he is assigned as curate to Trois-Rivières, subsequently to Trois-Pistoles (1837-1838) where he was to remain but fourteen months. He is described as a good, kind and gentle young priest, with few weaknesses and a natural, firm personality. (6)

### **Missionary**

Inspired with missionary zeal, Father Demers had solicited from Bishop Signay an assignment to the missions of the West. After the Treaty of Paris, the Bishop of Quebec was responsible for the affairs of the Catholic Church in all the British Territories in North America. His jurisdiction extended to Newfoundland, the Maritime Provinces, Quebec (Lower Canada), Ontario (Upper Canada) the Western Prairies, British Columbia (New Caledonia) and the Oregon Territory (States of Washington and Oregon). Through the efforts of Mgr Plessis, his predecessor, Rome had erected Vicariates Apostolic in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Upper Canada and the sees of Montreal and the Red River Settlement.

Settlers, established in the valleys of the Colquitz and Willamette rivers near Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River, had petitioned repeatedly both Bishop Signay and Bishop Provencher at the Red River to send a missionary priest.

In response, Bishop Signay accepted this young priest's "sacrifice for the Missions of the Columbia" and instructed him to join Bishop Provencher at the Red River Settlement. (7) The young priest received the news with heartfelt joy. But with the news of his posting came the following twelve commandments for the conduct expected of Catholic Missionaries.

1. The missionaries must consider as the first objective of their mission to draw the Indian tribes scattered over that vast country, and to Christianize the natives and to develop a peaceful community.

2. Their second objective must be to direct their attention to the fallen-away Christians who have adopted the Indian habits and who lived in a state of license and forgetfulness of their duties.

3. Convinced that the preaching of the gospel is the most certain means of obtaining such happy results, they will lose no opportunity, be it in their private conversations, or in their private instructions of inculcating its principles and maxims.

4. In order to be the sooner useful to the natives of the country to which they are sent, they will apply themselves from the start to the study of their Indian languages and will try to reduce them to regular principles so as to be able to publish a grammar after a few years of residence there.

5. They will prepare with as much speed as possible for baptism the heathen women who live in a state of concubinage with Christian men, so as to substitute legitimate marriage for irregular union.

6. They will apply themselves with particular care to Christian education of the children and will for that purpose establish schools and catechism class in all villages that they may visit.

7. In all places of conspicuous position, whether along the route of voyageurs, or at the meeting places of the Indians, they will be careful to erect high crosses as an evidence of their taking possession of such places in the name of the Catholic Church.



8. They will frequently inform the people to whom they are sent to inform how that religion ordains peace, meekness and obedience to the laws both of the State and of the Church.

9. They will make them understand the advantages they have in living under His Britannic Majesty's Government, teaching by word and example, respect and fidelity to the Sovereign, and accustoming them to address fervent prayers to Heaven for the prosperity of His Most Gracious Majesty for peaceful families and for the welfare of the Empire.

10. They will remain perfectly impartial in regard to the respective claims of the North West and of the Hudson's Bay, remembering that they are sent exclusively for the spiritual good of the people, the civilization of whom must be the greater advantage of both Companies.

11. They will at first fix their residence near a fort and there build a church, a house, a school and will draw their livelihood from the best that the lands given to them will afford. They will be zealous for the salvation of the clerks, employees and voyageurs in the service of the Companies being careful to go wheresoever the salvation of souls demands their presence.

12. They will furnish us frequently and regularly, whatever information may interest us concerning the retarding or advancement of the mission. If, notwithstanding their impartial attitude, they are disturbed in the exercise of their functions, they will not abandon their mission before receiving order from us.

Our young missionary accepted those commandments in an open spirit of obedience. They represented for him the wisdom of this Bishop and they would become his *modus operandi* . (8)

### **En route to the Red River Settlement.**

After a short visit with his family in St. Nicolas - God only knew when or even if he would return - Father Demers reported to Lachine to join the Hudson's Bay brigade on its way to the Red River; the first stage of the journey to the Columbia. Governor Simpson, parsimonious with Hudson's Bay facilities for non fur trade use, had authorized one missionary to join the brigade.

The HBC brigade of thirty canoes set off from Lachine on April 27, 1837. The crew of each canoe would include an Indian guide, a 'Canadien' at the rudder, six 'Canadien' paddlers. They could cover fifty miles a day on smooth water, singing lusty voyageur songs. They were experienced, they knew the drill well: by water as long as possible, portage as short as possible and back to water again. In a portage, the canoe is unloaded, two men carry it, two more follow to relieve them. The other crewmen carry the gear, supplies, tents, equipment. They wear a sort of head and back harness to help them carry two bundles of one hundred pounds each. They may have to make a return trip more than once.

Their route may be followed on the accompanying map. Up the Ottawa River then the Matawa River, Lac Nipissing, the French River into Georgian Bay. The North Channel of Lac Huron through the narrows at Sault St. Marie, Lake Superior, past Fort William to Grand Portage, intermittent portages to Rainy River, Lake of the Woods, more Portages to the Winnipeg River entering Lake Winnipeg at Traverse Bay, then South on the Red River to its meeting the Assiniboine. At last, on June 30, 1837, after an arduous journey of fifty-five days, covering over two thousand miles, with one hundred and forty portages. . . the Red River Settlement, St. Boniface de la Rivière Rouge.

### **Missionary at the Red River**

The Red River Settlement founded by Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, whose family had gained control of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1810, had received from the Company a grant of three hundred thousand square kilometers in the Winnipeg basin extending into now Saskatchewan and North Dakota. He called the Estate Assiniboia. Believing that cultural minorities have the right to preserve their way of life, in a humanitarian gesture, Lord Selkirk had granted, through the HBC, to the Catholic Missions of the Red River an estate of five miles by four miles on the East side of the River. He also granted a piece of land one hundred and fifty yards by one hundred and fifty yards on the West side of the River. The crops would be a source of revenue and provisions (9). The church built by Bishop Provencher he named St. Boniface, for the patron Saint of Germany.

Following the Seven Oaks Incident, a violent encounter between the North West Company and the HBC Lord Selkirk had engaged some one hundred and ten disbanded mercenary soldiers, mostly Germans, of a regiment from Switzerland named after Lieutenant De Meuron. In time they had settled on lands near Fort Douglas, but were often complaining, wanting more help. As most were Catholic, Bishop Provencher in 1818 had decided to dedicate that Church to St. Boniface, the patron Saint of Germany . . . " in order to draw God's blessing on the German Meuron Catholics, not too fervent, through the intercession of the Apostle of their nations". (10) The name was soon applied to the little Catholic settlement previously called 'La Fourche' of the Red and the Seine Rivers.

Upon his arrival at the Red River, Father Demers hastened to make "his obedience at the feet of Mgr de

Juliopolis" - Bishop Provencher. (11) Father Demers remembered meeting him in Montreal in the Winter of 1837. Bishop Provencher always left a sizable impression - he was six feet tall and weighed three hundred pounds.

Without delay, Father Demers gave himself wholeheartedly to his instructions, studying mores and customs of the 'Canadiens', the Metis and the Indian employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. During the Winter, awaiting the arrival of Father Norbert Blanchet, in contact with the Indians, he discovered a certain facility for their languages and for Chinook, the lingua franca of the West, an indispensable skill for the missionary odyssey in which he was about to embark. Father Demers had spent just one year at the Red River Settlement when Fr. Blanchet, appointed by Mgr. Signay as Vicar General of the Missions of the Columbia on the Pacific Coast, arrived on June 6, 1838. On June 26, Father Blanchet writes to Mgr Signay; "Mgr. de Juliapolis (Bishop Provencher) has given me for companion to the Mission of the Columbia Mr. Modeste Demers. He is very devout, his personality is kind, gentle, his good will is such that he would have been the most distressed of men had he been set aside". (12)

Father Blanchet had some experience at mission life, having spent some time in the missions of New Brunswick and Acadia. But for Father Demers, this was a new and exhilarating experience for which he had been preparing himself and to which he would devote his life.

### **On the Way to the Columbia.**

On July 10, 1838, the great adventure is launched when they join John Tod's HBC Brigade. Again same drill: by water as long as possible, by portage as short as

possible, then to water again. (Their journey may be followed on the map attached.) Up Lake Winnipeg to Grand Rapids, through Cedar Lake to the Saskatchewan River, on to the North branch of the Saskatchewan, past Cumberland House to Fort Edmonton, arriving September 16, 1838. After a short rest, overland, a pack train of sixty-six horses takes them to Fort Assiniboine, then on the Athabasca River to Jasper House. (13) Another pack train of seventy-seven horses takes them across the Continental Divide through the Athabaska Pass. In five days they reach Boat Encampment, a location on the Big Bend of the Columbia River now under the waters of Mica Dam.

Here, on Big Bend begins Father Demers' ministry. He offers the first sacrifice of the Mass on October 13, 1838 - the opening scene of the drama: Modeste Demers, Missionary of the Columbia. In a letter to the Secretary of the Office of the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon, Mgr Provencher writes: "It was a great joy for our evangelical workers when they at last set foot upon this soil Providence had given them to till. They celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass so as to claim possession in the name of the Lord and to petition for His continued protection. The most perilous part of the journey was yet to come" (14)

At Boat Encampment was kept a flotilla of York Boats. First built at York Factory, those boats were used on bodies of water that could accommodate them. Built of wood and mostly forty feet long, they could carry as much as several canoes. The crew consisted of eight to fifteen oarsman.

On top of the Rockies on October 16, Father Blanchet celebrated Holy Mass in preparation for the departure of the Flotilla down the Columbia. Delayed on Kootenay lake for several days by an unfortunate accident in



which some twelve passengers were drowned, after the proper ceremonies for the burial of the dead, they continued on to Fort Colville, Fort Okanagan, gazed at Mount Rainier and arrived at Fort Walla Walla. On through the Dalles, the Cascades then Fort Vancouver, arriving November 24, at five p.m.. The journey had taken four months and fourteen days.

In the absence of Chief Factor Dr. John McLoughlin, the missionaries were received officially and cordially by James Douglas, his assistant. They were offered the hospitality of the Fort and the services of a servant for their comfort.

### **Missions of the Columbia.**

Since its incorporation in 1670, the Company of the Adventurers of England trading in Hudson's Bay pursued a quasi feudal policy on its immense territory. Rupert's Land covered all land watered by the tributaries of Hudson's Bay, some forty percent of present Canada. The Company's interest, fur trading, tolerated no threat to its monopoly. Its factors were instructed to discourage settlements which would reduce the area of its fur preserve. For some one hundred and forty years, the Company would allow on its immense feudal estate no one but its own employees, a policy ruthlessly enforced by Governor George Simpson's harsh administration.

Dr. John McLoughlin had more humane considerations. With a different vision of the future of the territory, he would favour the 'Canadiens' and the Metis, once their engagement ended, to settle in the fertile valleys of the Willamette and the Cowlitz rivers. He would encourage them to maintain their language and their faith, even sending

twice petitions to Bishop Provencher for a missionary for the Columbia.

Dr. McLoughlin presents an interesting portrait. A farmer's son, born near Rivière du Loup, Québec, in 1784, he studied medicine in Scotland. Licensed to practice at 19, he joined the North West Company in 1803 as an apprentice doctor at twenty pounds a year. He became a partner in 1824. (15)

When a coalition took place between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, he was given the responsibility as Superintendent for the Columbia district of the HBC, a post he would retain over two decades. More than six foot tall, with prominent blue eyes and a shock of shoulder length white hair, Dr. McLoughlin was especially formidable when clad in his factor uniform of beaver hat, frock coat and tartan cloak. He was the man on the spot. While in loyalty, he defended the HBC monopoly, he found no difficulty of conscience in aiding the missionaries. A practising member of the Church of England, he was received in the Catholic Faith in 1842 by Bishop Blanchet. He died in 1857 in Oregon City. His ashes and those of his wife, who was part Ojibwa, rest beneath the cross of St. John's Cathedral in Oregon City. He has long been known as the Father of Oregon. (16)

The fortuitous meeting of Modeste Demers and James Douglas established a relation of mutual respect which was to last over their lifetime. Their careers, one political, the other religious would, at times, place them in opposite positions but their mutual understanding overcame the differences, uniting them in their common goal, order, peace and the material and spiritual good of the population placed in their respectable charge. They would meet again in Victoria under different circumstances.



James Douglas was himself an unusual man, also a man of his time. Born in Demerara, British Guiana, in 1803, a 'Scotch West Indian, son of a Scottish merchant and a free coloured woman' he was taken to Lanark, Scotland, for schooling when he was twelve years old. Apprenticed at sixteen to the North West Company, he entered the service of the HBC on the merger of the two companies in 1821. On April 27, 1828, he married Chief Factor William Connally's part Indian daughter Amelia (à la mode du pays). He had the marriage conformed by the Church of England rites in 1837. Governor Simpson described him a "stout" powerful, active man of good conduct and respectable ability . . . but one who became furiously violent when aroused". (17) Perhaps because of his sensitivity over his and his wife's background, his manner was generally reserved. In his later years, as Governor of Vancouver Island, he was considered singularly aloof, even pompous by his old friends.

It is in this environment at once rigid, yet semi-tolerant that Father Blanchet and Father Demers approached their missions. One can only surmise the warmth of their reception. However, despite the welcome, the dedication of the missionaries, conversions came slowly. Old habits are difficult to break, they die slowly, "the conduct of the 'Canadiens' of the Columbia is far from edifying", writes Demers "and this contributes more than somewhat to the delay in the conversion of the natives to whom they should serve as models"(18)

The life of a missionary was no bed of roses. Distances were enormous, the trails hard to follow through prairie, forests, along and across rivers. The Indians were not always receptive, often unpredictable. Their camps were scattered by a lake, a river or in the middle of a forest, as

band needs dictated. Often on foot, on horseback, by canoe, he would travel for days to give spiritual solace to a few families. Life was spent in privation and isolation, among wild population crawling in filth. For a true missionary, the mission was the crucible, and the response of the convert was gratifying enough to make the self-imposed ordeal worth while.

The facility Father Demers had discovered for Indian languages was serving him well. In less than a year he could converse in Chinook and several local dialects sufficiently well to preach the Gospel, translate prayers and compose hymns. Later would follow a Chinook dictionary, a prayer book, a hymn book as complements to Father Blanchet's 'ladder of salvation'. This Catholic ladder, a pictorial description of religious truth, used by the missionaries followed an historical approach, teaching Christianity by notching significant events on a branch of a tree. In this way, they recalled the most important phases of Biblical History.

Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties, missions came to be established on the Willamette, on the Cowlitz, at Fort Colville, Fort Nisqually and Oregon City, Only because of his faith in Providence would Father Demers undertake for the salvation of souls what others would undergo for the fur trade. He joined a supply brigade en route for the farthest regions of New Caledonia, land of the Kootenay, the Okanagan, Shushwap, Dene and Carrier tribes, the first missionary to enter the territory the traders had named " the Siberia of America" (19) This mission, as far as Fort St. James, Odyssey of deprivation and fatigue brought little encouragement. "These natives", he wrote, "have no morals whatsoever, the depravity in their midst makes conversions most difficult". (20) He had however managed to baptize

twenty eight children. This first mission to the remote regions of New Caledonia was to be his only one.

#### **Pastor of Oregon city.**

The Holy See , on December 1st 1843, erected the Apostolic Vicariate of Columbia and Father François-Norbert Blanchet, named Bishop of Drasa (IPI) became the first titular. (21) In the same year, Father Blanchet had selected in the town site of Oregon City, newly platted by Dr. McLoughlin, a block of land for a church and a school. On the 1st of March 1844, Father Demers was named Pastor of Oregon City, and agglomeration of some forty abodes, a parish without a name and without a church.

Pioneer conditions bring out in leaders unsuspected talents. Father Demers by force of circumstances took upon himself the tasks of architect, surveyor, carpenter, mason, blacksmith for the construction of the church. Completed in 1845, it was dedicated to St. John the Apostle and Evangelist on the 8th day of February 1846. St. John's Church in Oregon City includes the original structure, it is the oldest church building of any denomination in continuous use North of the California Franciscan Missions on the Pacific Coast. (22)

On the political side, 1846 marks the end of an epoch. England and the United States settled their differences and, by the Treaty of Oregon , signed June 15, 1846, recognized the 49th parallel as the frontier between their respective territories.

On the religious side, the Holy See, by virtue of three Bulls dated July 24, 1846, advanced the Apostolic Vicariate of Oregon to Ecclesiastic Province of Oregon City, creating at once eight suffragan dioceses": "The dioceses of Oregon City and Nesqually have been placed under the care

of the founder of the Mission, François-Norbert Blanchet with the title of Archbishop and Metropolitan of Oregon. The dioceses of Walla-Walla, Fort Hall and Colville are entrusted to Bishop Auguste Magloire Blanchet, brother of the preceding and formerly a canon in Montreal and lastly, the dioceses of the Island of Vancouver, the Archipel of the Queen Charlotte, and new Caledonia inclusive of all British and Russian possessions extending to Arctic Ocean, will fall to Bishop Modeste Demers who has contributed with the new Archbishop to the foundation of the Mission of Oregon." (23)

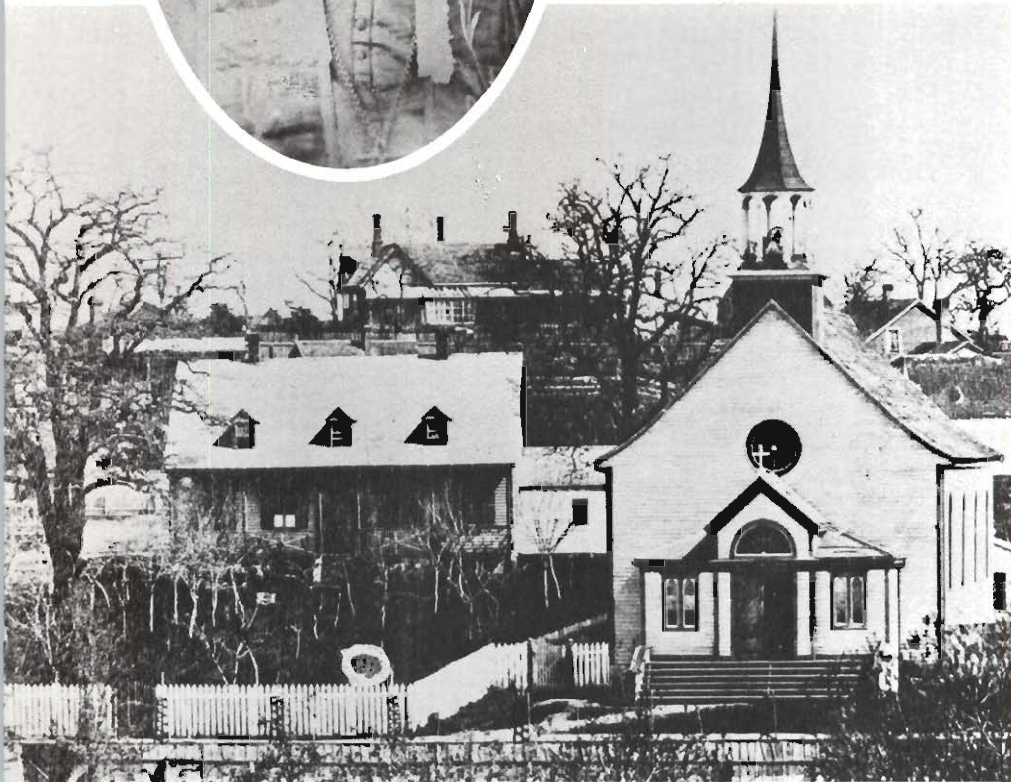
Archbishop Blanchet, in a memorandum to the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon, reports, in the style of the times, on the results obtained in the Mission of the Columbia as it becomes an Ecclesiastic Province: " . . .this day, after six years of efforts, so disproportionate with the needs, six thousand pagans have been converted, fourteen chapels built and missions founded, one thousand 'Canadiens' have been saved from the imminent dangers to their faith, perverse projects have been contended with and overcome in certain regions. We have moreover two establishments of education whose future is full of hope. Such are the results obtained despite the dearth of resources which weakens us to this day". (24) A page of history has turned. Bishop Modeste Demers has received and accepted another irrevocable commitment - he has crossed his Rubicon.

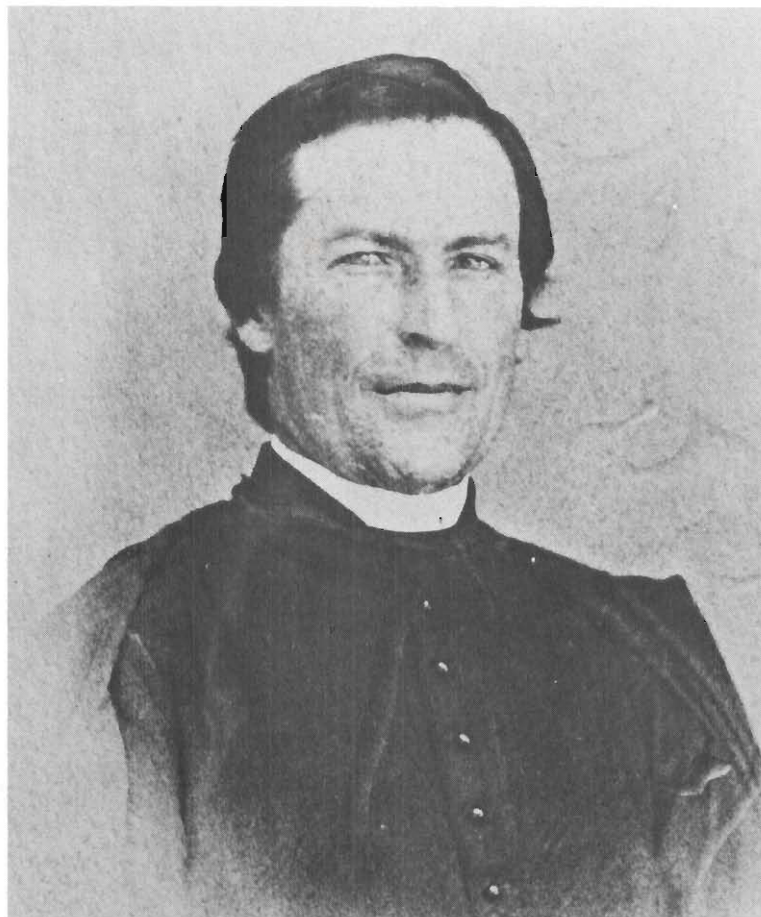




Mgr Modeste Demers  
BCPA 2534

First Bishop Palace and  
Cathedral in Victoria.  
BCPA 7785





Brother Joseph Michaud, c.s.v. born in Kamouraska, Qc entered at the "Clerc of St. Viateur in 1848. He was the director of the College of Rigaud since 1855 when he accepted, in the Spring of 1858, to go and found an establishment of his Congregation in Victoria, B.C. Until his return to the East Coast in the Fall of 1862, he used his talents as architect and builder. He built the first cathedral in Victoria, B.C. At the same time he completed his Clerical Study and Bishop Demers ordained him as a priest on March 25, 1860. Successively professor at the College, padre of the "Zouaves" in Rome, he continued well into his old age to make collection for the benefit of Joliette Museum. (Bibliography; J.B.A. Allaire, Dictionary 1:384 Photo BCPA 6577

### **Bishop of Vancouver Island**

Named to the episcopacy by His Holiness Pope Pius XI on July 18, 1846, Bishop Demers received the news ten months later. His first reaction - a deep anxiety for his missions of New Caledonia. What about his new diocese? He expresses his concerns in a letter to a priest of the Archdiocese, the writes in the mind and style of the times: "How deep the distress I felt in the very depth of my soul when in May 1847 a letter from Most Reverend Archbishop of Oregon City, traveling in Europe at the time for the advantage of his Missions of the Columbia, brought me the news that His Holiness Pope Pius XI had been pleased to appoint me to the new diocese of the Island of Vancouver adding to my charge the two other dioceses of Queen Charlotte and New Caledonia . . . what means has Providence placed in my hands so as to erect such establishments in the midst of these desert and uncivilized lands? Poverty, destitution but without a doubt, divine protection. It is in this manner that God shows His power and takes pleasure in confounding human pride. But we, poor instruments, must we not tremble at the thought of being called upon to lend to these wonderful works the assistance of our poor weaknesses? Was I to accept or refuse the burden of episcopacy? Fearful question I dared not answer

. . . I must however impose silence on the too intense claims of nature and await patiently the return of His grace the Archbishop still traveling in Europe. Finally, crushed under the weight of a thousand gnawing concerns, I offer myself on the altar of Holy Obedience, actuating in total dedication to the Holy Church of Jesus-Christ, the sacrifice of my life and my whole being for the salvation of souls."

(25)



Bishop Demers continues: "I chose November 30th, the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, for my consecration. His Grace the Archbishop officiated. A large crowd participated in this emotional ceremony. Without mentioning the children of the land for whom this ceremony held the charm of novelty, a good number of 'Canadiens' could not conceal their emotion, imploring Heaven to bless their land of adoption as He blesses their native land. (26)

"Here I stand, responsible for over thirty thousand natives, for the most deeply immersed in the depth of infidelity. For collaborators, but two priests who have begun a small establishment in New Caledonia at the head of the great Lake Okanagan, a vast territory I had the blessing of being the first to visit in 1844 and where I count some two thousand Christians" . (27)

"I must now leave forever my first flock of converts of the Columbia and New Caledonia, lose the use of several native languages I have learned with such difficulty and lay the first stone of a new establishment that awaits but strong, vigorous arms to rise amidst the waves of this immense ocean, I am truly in a position to say: 'messis multa, operari pauci'. The workers are lacking, the material means are lacking, may God provide". (28)

Faced with the pressing needs of his new diocese, the new bishop, without resources, without priests, has no recourse but to call for help. First a long laborious journey across Canada. Then in France, Belgium, Holland, Italy over the next four years, in seminaries, colleges, in the pulpit of great cathedrals, country churches, wherever the opportunity, he preaches the Propagation of the Faith and needs of the Missions. His appeal to the generosity of his audiences generally strikes a sympathetic chord. In Paris the Propagation of the Faith provides a printing press.

Shipped to Victoria, it will become the Colony's first printing press. (It may be seen in the Provincial Museum in Victoria.) (29) In Paris also, he ordained two priests, Father Pierre Lannier and Father Louis Lootens, later to become the Apostolic Vicar of Idaho. In Rome he is received in audience by Pope Pius XI before sailing for America in the Spring of 1851.

The term bishop conveys the notion of an organized Christian society, priests, faithful, an education system. For this pioneer of Victoria, such is not the reality. Bishop Demers has no priests, his faithful are Indians scarcely depaganized, opportunistic whites, prospectors, adventurers of many ilks and nationalities. Victoria, a regal name just given to Fort Camosun, is but a trading post established a few years ago in replacement of Fort Victoria, on the Columbia, now in United States Territory.

Bishop Demers describes his see: "The island of Vancouver, my new home, measures about one hundred leagues in length, its width does not exceed forty. It offers however the safest port on the Pacific Ocean next to San Francisco in California. Its population numbers some ten thousand natives, all heathens, with the exception of a few hundred children baptised by Father Bolduc, the only missionary to have visited the region. Here lies the immense field Providence has given to my care." (30) Help could only come from Providence. Under the burden of such responsibilities, without resources, would be weaken, even despair, where could he find the strength to persevere? His strength, he draws from his very weakness, his faith sustains him, he has offered his sacrifice on the altar of obedience to his God. "May I, said he, at least embrace joyfully and suffer patiently the crosses, pains and tribulations. He

may send my way". (31) The future would fulfil his wishes to overflowing.

### **The early years in Victoria - The missions**

On his way to Fort Victoria, Bishop Demers stopped over in Seattle to celebrate the first Mass and landed in Victoria, to take possession of his diocese, on the 29th of August 1852. Alighting from the canoe, he is received hospitably in what he describes as 'the mud-house of Father Lempfrit'. (32) The installation of Bishop Demers to the See of Victoria was celebrated the following Sunday in a little house located corner Courtney & Government streets. The attendance was composed of three priests, a sub-deacon and some forty spectators and faithful. "The reason, he writes, why my installation did not take place in the cathedral is simply that the lumber for its construction is still on the stump in the forest". (33)

Well aware by experience of the pressing needs of his diocese, he sets to work with a will. His simple program: maintain the missions already in existence and create new ones. There is a matter of some urgency, certainly the evangelization, the salvation of souls, but also, in practical sense, to come ahead of the protestant missionaries who enjoy the official support of the Hudson's Bay Company officials.

Missions follow rapidly, to the Cowichans, a large tribe occupying land extending from Lake Cowichan to the estuary of the Cowichan River at Cowichan Bay. The tribe comprised the Cowichans properly called, the Somenos, the Quamichan, the Comiakens, the Clemclemalutts, the Koksilahs, the Kenipsens and the Kilpalus. Closer to the fort, missions to the Songhees, the Klallams and the Sookes.

History notes that in consequence of those missions, James Douglas was able to conclude with the tribes advantageous treaties of peace and development. He was wont however to temper, even restrain the enthusiasm and drive of the missionaries whose lack of prudence, he thought, places them at risk with those 'barbarous natives'.

In spite of their unpredictability and volatility, Bishop Demers seemed at ease with the Indians and paid them frequent visits. They in turn would reciprocate so that his visits would often trigger a spontaneous procession. Groups would vie with each other in their demonstrations of piety and fervor. There are still among the Cowichans on the Tzouhalem Reserve several families who bear the patronymic Modeste.

His first house, built in 1853 on Humbolt Street, however modest, was to serve as church and rectory until the construction of the first cathedral. "I find myself now a village pastor. I celebrate Mass on Sundays and holidays, I preach sermons from time to time but as to resources, you know I don't hold them my hand". (34) And thus, when one project appeared to be moving along well enough, and when another was pressing, he would seek help from the available resources, Quebec and Europe. In retrospect, the first six years of his episcopacy were but a prelude. The planting and fertilizing of seed which would blossom forth in 1858.

#### **Modeste Demers and the Sisters of St. Ann**

The population of Victoria was growing, an imperative was becoming evident - a school. "He who controls the school also controls the soul of a people". Modeste Demers could remember. The dream, a catholic school with qualified teachers. He inquires, he seeks, he

prods, he prays. Help comes from Bishop Bourget in Montreal by way of a suggestion to call on the Daughters of St. Ann. Mgr. Bourget was very attentive to the future of that young community of women. As spiritual guide and support of Esther Sureau-Blondin and her dream of a religious community of women dedicated to the service of the poor, he had formulated with her the rule of the community and given her much encouragement when she opened in 1850 the Institute of the Sisters of St. Ann, in Vaudreuil.

Bishop Bourget on October 2, 1857 wrote his confrère: "I have spoken to the Daughters of St. Ann, in St. Jacques l'Achigan, who are a great consolation by their fervor and dedication. They would accept heartily the Missions of Vancouver and I believe they would do well" (35)

On the 19th of October, Bishop Demers was presenting to the community the "cause of the poor children of the forest". In response to his eloquent and moving entreaty, the whole community, thirty-eight professed sisters, novices, students even, solicit the privilege of joining the mission of the Island of Vancouver.

In the face of such earnestness, the Superior must make a choice. Four professed sisters and one auxiliary will join in this first mission. The first contingent to leave St. Jacques l'Achigan on April 14, 1858 was formed of four sisters.

Sister Marie-du Sacré-Coeur, née Salomé Valois, on August 30, 1830 in Vaudreuil, had entered the Noviciate of Vaudreuil on June 9, 1851. Taking the veil before Mgr. Bourget on June 22, 1852, she pronounced her vows on June 9, 1853 at Vaudreuil. A teacher, she was to become



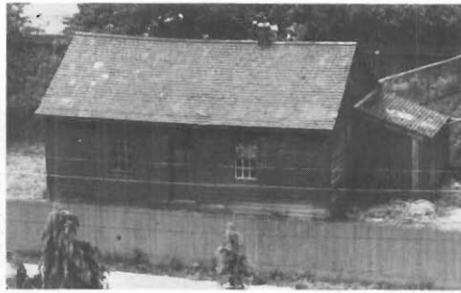


First nuns:  
Sister Marie du Sacré-Coeur, Sr Marie Angèle,  
St Marie -Luména et Sr Marie-de-la-Conception



ESTABLISHMENTS  
IN VICTORIA

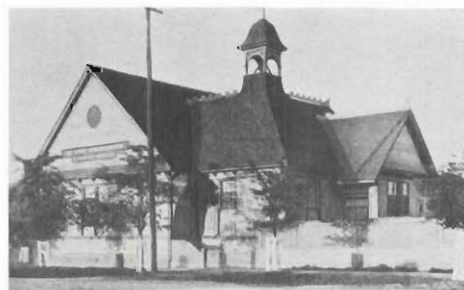
First convent of  
"Filles de Sainte-Anne"  
in Victoria, 1858  
BCPA 51927



St. Ann's Academy (1871)  
Vicarial House (1896)  
BCPA 51925



St. Joseph Hospital, (1876)  
BCPA 7987



Kindergarten (1898)  
BCPA 34777

the first Superior of the School in Victoria, later dedicating herself to the care of the sick at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Sister Marie-Angèle, née Angèle Gauthier on February 9, 1828 at St. Michel de Vaudreuil, had pronounced her perpetual vows in 1852. She was the most loved sister of the community.

Sister Marie-Luména, née Virginie Brassard on January 15, 1833 in St. Polycarpe, had entered the Noviciate of St. Jacques l'Achigan in 1855 and pronounced her vows in 1857. A kind and gentle teacher.

Sister Marie-de-la-Conception, née Mary Lane on August 2, 1826 in Rawdon in a family of Irish origin, had pronounced her vows in February 1858. She would devote her first six years in Victoria teaching and providing home care for the sick.

A lay auxiliary, Marie Mainville, 24 years of age, had a great desire to lead a life dedicated to charitable works modeled on the Sisters. When she returned to the Mother-House in 1883, she became the first Coadjutor-Sister of the Institute. (36)

Can we imagine the feelings of four young women, religious, having led a rather sheltered life, only one English speaking, embarking on this adventure to the great unknown, inspired by their zeal for their Church? Before their departure, Bishop Demers had managed to add to the expedition two priests: Father Pierre Rondeault and Father Charles Vary and two Clercs de St. Viateur, Brothers Joseph Michaud and Gédéon Thibodeau. The logistics of taking a mixed group to the West Coast were certainly a formidable enterprise as the itinerary would indicate.

On April 17, 1857, the Sisters bid adieu to their pupils. The next day, a horse drawn cart takes them to the ferry dock at Bout de l'Île where they board canoes to

Montreal. After a short farewell visit with their families, on April 14 , they board a train - destination New York and settle on the Steamer *Philadelphia* for a five week sea voyage via Panama Canal to San Francisco. On May 15, 1858 the *Philadelphia* enters the Bay of San Francisco. The Sisters of St. Vincent-de-Paul welcome our travelers in their convent. The short stay allows them to recuperate and to visit the city. The final leg of the journey begins May 28, 1858, on board the Steamer *Seabird*, final destination Victoria. They dock on June 5, 1858. (37)

Victoria - surprise! The gold-rush is on! Victoria was experiencing the beginning of a population explosion which had been neither planned nor even foreseen.

By 1856, gold had been found on the upper Columbia River and within a year reports filtered out of finds on the Thompson and the Fraser in New Caledonia. One Sunday morning, in the Spring of 1858, as Victoria colonists headed home from Church, a ship from San Francisco landed about four hundred and fifty miners from the played-out goldfields of California. They had been among the first to learn of the Hudson's Bay Company's gold deposit in the mint at San Francisco. The Fraser River gold-rush was on apace! More than twenty thousand people passed through this town of one thousand that year, sleeping in tents and bushes. Within six weeks of the arrival of the first boat load, two hundred new stores had opened as the gold-seekers bought supplies for their trek up the Fraser.

Such was the spectacle confronting the Sister as they landed. The floating population had little interest in things religious. That was not the Sisters' immediate concern, their first interest was the education of the young Indian and Metis who had run to meet them at the dock. That first contact seemed to bode well, the Natives measured the Sister from

foot to bonnet and gave them a name, they called them 'the women-priests'. (38)

As soon as he could, Bishop Demers introduced the Sisters to their 'residence', a 'house' he had just purchased from Leon Morel for the price of \$500.00. Measuring thirty by twenty-five feet, constructed in the French manner, 'poteau sur sole' with neither ceiling nor finished walls, a dirt floor, filthy, vermin infested by the Metis who had just vacated, and furnished with a rusty stove, a table of rough lumber and a rickety chair.

Time is of the essence, the Sisters move in. The next day, Sunday, Sister Marie-Luména, sitting on the stove taught the first 'class' of religious education, the women and children who had been drawn to the 'convent' by their curiosity. Bishop Demers' religious personnel now includes a community of teaching Sisters, doubling in home care for the sick besides the two priests and two brothers.

The school is launched, the register shows on date of June 22, 1858 the following pupils: Hélène Lavoie, followed shortly by Emma et Henriette Yates, Emélie Morel, Emélia Desmarais, Elizabeth Dodd, Elizabeth Anderson, Virginia Gurta, Elizabeth Effy et Lucy Angèle, the latter originally from Calcutta. The principal room serves as classroom, parlor, community room and dormitory, while the other becomes kitchen and refectory. After a short time thanks to a little funding from Bishop Demers and the skills of the Clercs St. Viateur, the living area of the 'convent' was doubled.

The Sisters had come to Victoria in response to Bishop Demers' call for help in the 'cause of the poor children of the forest' and that was the project they had undertaken. But plans were about to change. The officers of the Hudson's Bay carried weight and they were able to

'persuade' the Sisters to accept the daughters of HBC personnel. Governor Douglas setting the example, escorted his three daughters to the 'convent' on school opening day.

(39)

A special class would have to be organized. Since this enrollment showed signs of becoming permanent, a call was placed to the Mother-house for teachers. In 1859 arrived Sister Marie-du-Bon-Secours, and Sister Marie-de-la-Providence to 'direct the convent for the demoiselles'. Sister Marie-de-la-Providence at the ripe age of twenty-three, undertook the task of training the Sisters in teaching English while she worked at learning Chinook. The daughters of the 'bourgeois' families enjoyed their own classroom in a rented house down town. In order to draw attention to this somewhat makeshift establishment, it was given the grandiose title of 'Select School' to distinguish it from the original 'Colour School', where the boys, the Indian and Metis girls, the orphans and the waifs and strays were taught. (40)

Beside the classroom space problem caused by the dual school enrollment, a population problem was coming to the surface. The population of Victoria, when centered on the activities of the HBC, numbered in 1858 at most one thousand. By 1861, it was two and one half times that number, many whose occupation was different from the HBC's. Moreover, Victoria was becoming an important stop-over on the way to the mainland gold fields. It is reported that over twenty-five thousand gold seekers passed through Victoria on their way to the gold fields of the Fraser and the Thompson.

Such a flood of people created a need for supplies, government, policing, services which by their nature call for a certain stable population. With such an influx, the



linguistic mix was being altered rapidly; Francophones who, at one time formed a majority, were now becoming a numerical minority. There was also a social element, and with the opening of the Select School, it was becoming evident that as a language of instruction, French would not serve a growing anglophone school enrollment, especially if it belonged to the social and economic elite.

Beside the space and language of instruction difficulties, Bishop Demers had also to face another, more threatening. The Sisters enjoyed the admiration of the people, their dedication and helpfulness were recognized, their Select School and Colour School were filling social, educational and moral needs. It must have come as a shock when it was announced that they were ineligible for school subsidies by the Colonial Government. Bishop Demers could write: ". . .the Colonial Government gives me no assistance, not even for the Indian missions". This was but the first step leading to the "Free School Act" of 1865. Confessional schools were not recognized by law.

Henceforth, after the expense incurred in bringing and settling the Sisters in the schools, the Bishop found himself faced with financing the total cost of the schools. There may be a certain irony, perhaps a social irony, in that despite the lack of Government support, enrollment in the schools had outstripped the facilities. Drawing on his experience as a missionary, Bishop Demers soon realized that providing for the schools was but an additional financial burden that he would just add to the others. He would work at solutions with the means at his disposal. Successful schools would create their own social and economic support and besides there was always Quebec and Europe.

It must be said that in 1851, James Douglas had received without pleasure or satisfaction appointment as



Governor of Vancouver Island succeeding Richard Blanshard. With the appointment came at least three considerations: reconciling the sometimes conflicting interests of Governor and HBC official; a shortage of men qualified to sit in the Legislature; and the only source of government revenue available for public buildings, schools, a church and roads came from liquor licenses. (41)

Lack of Government funding for his schools Bishop Demers could not overcome immediately, but the other two he could work on concurrently. In the Spring of 1860, he purchased a piece of land on View Street (present site of St. Andrews' Cathedral rectory) and began the construction of a graceful brick convent. Upon its formal opening on August 26, 1861, the Bishop, by notarized act, conveyed the convent to the Sisters of St. Ann, land and buildings free and clear. At school opening, the first year pupils numbered forty 'demoiselles', catholic and protestant. Seeking a solution to the language problem, he approached it on two fronts. He had kept his friend Bishop Bourget aware of the growing language difficulty. Bishop Bourget would continue to recommend that the Mother Superior of the Sisters of St. Ann send English-speaking Sisters, while he would pursue his own entreaties directly.

The increasing student enrollment at the View Street school had confirmed the necessity of adapting the curriculum and language of teaching to the population. Adaptation would mean survival - not only of the school but of the mission. The Church, it had become evident, must also adapt to the needs of the community it seeks to serve. The transition had begun, the terms of Bishop Modeste Demers' dilemma were being defined.

Bishop Demers' dream of a diocese, he could see taking form, . . . not without trials and tribulations past,

present and future. After four years, there were now a school, a boarding school, an orphanage under the direction of six sisters, all together in the convent on View Street. In their 'spare time' sisters cared for the sick and the deceased. This exhausting work load was beginning to tell, there seemed to be no end, always more to do than time or strength allowed . . . health and spirit were being placed at risk. Repeated calls to the Mother-house went on unanswered. The situation was becoming critical, without some relief, the Sisters could not continue. If no help came, there seemed to be no other recourse but being recalled to the Mother-house. At a General Meeting on June 22, 1862, with the counsel of their Bishop the Sisters made the decision to request their recall to the Mother-house. One may well imagine the impact this decision may have had at the Mother-house. Mother Superior-General refused their request to abandon their post. Following further entreaties by Bishop Demers and Father Beaudet, OMI, eight new sisters arrived in Victoria on July 22, 1863. Mother Superior introduced them . . . succinctly . . . to their new Bishop: three are Irish, three among the Canadians know English well, especially Sister Marie-Praxède who is both fluent in English and a good musician. Sisters Marie-Romuald and MarieCatherine-de-Sienne are passably competent to give music lessons. Bishop Demers had taken a calculated risk and won . . . if ever risk there was.

Within a year, at the end of the school term, July 22 1864, the *British Colonist* could report on the oral examinations conducted at St. Ann's School for Young Ladies. "Before an interested and satisfied audience, interrogations proceeded from Natural Philosophy to English Grammar, from Modern to Ancient History, from Geography to Mythology. Progress made is evident. It

bears witness to serious study on the part of the students and of vigilant supervision on the part of the teachers. The correctness of the responses and the behavior of the students assure the religious of the highest possible consideration".(42)

By 1870, the Sisters were in sufficient number and well established in St. Ann's School for Young Ladies. They had also an establishment in Cowichan. They could perhaps take things a little easier. Their numbers were growing with local vocations. Five young women from Victoria had entered the Noviciate at Lachine: Cecelia and Agnès McQuade, Mary McEntee, Emily Henderson and Mary Lyons. Some would in time rejoin the Sisters in Victoria, reinforcing the commitment to education in the English language. (43) However, while English was the language of instruction, a French ambiance was retained, creating a cultural level favoured by the social elite, admired by the public and which served to confirm the Sisters of St. Ann as superior educators.

Growth was not to be denied however. Pressed as the Sisters were by the call on their educational services, the View Street convent had become too small for the enrollment. Moreover, the competition for paying students from the Anglican Bishop's Ladies' College was creating additional pressures. In addition, the Colonial Government subsidies for education were now channelled to the Official Church and its school system.

In retrospect, it is obvious that the Sisters of St. Ann were never short on courage and spirit. They had faith in their cause and had good reason to believe in their community's capability to deal with whatever the future might bring. Their next move marks the end of an era - the missionary, make do era, and the beginning of another - a

modern, dynamic era, characterized by expansion. In a daring move, the Sisters, in the Summer of 1870, purchased the Tuzzo Gardens on Humboldt Street and in 1871, began the construction of a new convent. The modern ministry of the Sisters of St. Ann had begun. It will continue beyond the episcopacy of Bishop Demers. The subsequent developments will form the matter of an appendix; The Sisters of St. Ann in the 'modern' era, 1870-1991.

### **Bishop Modeste Demers' Church-Cathedral**

Following the population explosion of 1858, the Bishop's first house serving both as church and rectory was no longer adequate. The Bishop now headed a team: the Sisters directing a school for girls, an orphanage, and caring for the sick: Brother Gédéon Thibodeau, C.S.V. teaching the boys: two priests, Father Charles Vary, ministering in Fort Victoria, Father Pierre Rondeault, responsible for the mission of Cowichan. Time now to build a proper church-cathedral. The cost of the project, as projects often do, will exceed all the available resources . . . but it must go forward.

Brother Joseph Michaud C.S.V. will draw the plans. A public subscription campaign is launched. The first gift comes from Governor Douglas, \$100.00, others follow promptly. (44) It is a community effort, everyone contributes, Bishop, priest, brothers, sisters. All resources are taxed to the limit, the Sisters even contribute the gifts received secretly from their families, they draw from their meager school revenues.

Inspired by romanesque architecture, classical in its simplicity, the church-cathedral measuring thirty by seventy-five feet, presents an harmonious symmetrical ensemble. Eight windows on each side represent the Beatitudes as well

as themes from the Old Testament, the four Evangelists and the twelve Apostles (45) It would serve the Diocese for twenty eight years. Under its doric arches, three Bishops would be consecrated. D'Herbomez, Seghers and Blondel, three priests ordained, Father McGuckin, OMI, Maloney and Charles Joseph Michaud, the architect of the Cathedral. The decorum of the liturgies, the sumptuous vestments, gifts from Europe or from the wealthy families enhanced the religious ceremonies as did the talent of the choristers. (46)

Bishop Demers lived constantly in the throes of difficulties inherent in a diocese building, where the harvest is heavy and the harvesters few. He kept in touch with Quebec and Europe either in person or by correspondence, seeking to recruit clergy. No doubt discouragement would point its ugly head at times, but his faith would sustain him. On the human level, he believed he could find understanding and moral support from James Douglas. Both understood, if on a different plane, that religion exercises a tempering influence on social mores and manners.

Shortage of priests had become a chronic condition, Bishop Demers was constantly seeking to alleviate. What rebuffs, what disappointments did he not endure? In Europe, at one time, ten priests had agreed to accompany him - joy! exultation! . a few days before departure, five withdrew their engagement and of the five who did accompany him, three had left after less than three months. But Providence was standing by, it did not allow obstacles beyond his strength and ability to overcome. A series of auspicious circumstances were about to come to his rescue.

### **The Oblates of Mary Immaculate**

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a community of missionary priests and brothers had been founded in 1816 by Bishop Joseph Eugène de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles. Invited by Mgr Lartigue, they came to Montreal in 1841. By 1844 there were in James Bay and the following year at the Red River Settlement. They would soon extend their mission to the Archdiocese of Oregon. Bishop Joseph-Magloire Blanchet of the Diocese of Walla Walla, serving an area which now comprises Eastern Washington, Idaho and Montana, appealed to the Oblate Superior in Montreal. The Superior, in reply, sent a priest and two brothers. Archbishop Joseph-Norbert Blanchet, while in Rome, had also appealed to Bishop de Mazenod for some men. Made aware of the tremendous need in the American North West. Bishop de Mazenod granted five men - one tenth of the entire congregation. They arrived seven months later in September 1846 and were assigned to several missions.

All was not well in the North West missions. Relations between the white settlers and the Indians were becoming unpredictable. In response to the aggressiveness of the American settlers, the Yakima tribes had become hostile and the Cayuse particularly aggressive. In such a climate of uncertainty, the missionaries lived constantly in fear for their lives. After the massacre of Rev. Marcus Whitman and the Presbyterian missions at Waiilatpu, Bishop Magloire Blanchet withdrew the missionaries and abandoned the Walla Walla missions.

In the meantime, Father Pascal Ricard OMI had established a small mission with a few Oblates in Nesqually, near Olympia.(47) But tensions, threats of conflict between American settlers and Indians made conditions unfavorable



to conversions and contacts fraught with danger. On the other hand, it was well known that Bishop Demers was always in need of priests. In Victoria, the Indians were numerous, well disposed and anxious to have 'Blackrobes' come to instruct them.

Considering both situations together, Father Louis D'Herbomez, interim Superior in Nesqually, by a letter dated October 15, 1857, petitioned Mgr de Mazenod for permissions to remove to Victoria. By way of a reply, Mgr. de Mazenod sent Father François Bermond, OMI to study the whole question of the move. Coming to agreement with Father D'Herbomez' request, Father Bermond wrote Bishop Demers on January 14, 1858:

"In the uncertainty in which we are placed by the prospect of an even more bitter war breaking out at any time between the Indians and the Americans, and not knowing whether such war will prevent us from doing anything in the diocese of Nesqually, and unwilling to have our priest inactive, I have thought of your repeated requests that we establish ourselves in your diocese. As we prefer work amongst the Indians, to work offered us elsewhere. I would appreciate it if your Lordship would let us know as soon as possible if you still wish us to undertake work in your diocese by founding a post on the Fraser, which could be a centre from which we could branch out and establish other Missions. If this plan meets with your approval, it will be necessary to start putting it into execution before autumn, so that we may build a house to lodge our Missionaries before winter sets in (48)

This letter was forwarded to Bishop Demers in Quebec where he was on a recruiting mission. He wasted no time to accept Father Bermond's offer. He wrote from Montreal on March 13, 1858:

"Let us together admire the merciful ways of God who disposes all things 'mightily and sweetly' and who after five years of waiting, has granted my prayers and heard the cries of the poor Indians, and given me, in such an unexpected way that which I have unceasingly asked ". (49) And so it was that on October of 1858, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate came to the Diocese of Victoria. Father Pierre Richard, Brothers Surel and Janin accompanied Father D'Herbomez, on their removal from Nesqually to Victoria. Named Superior of the small Oblate community, Father D'Herbomez established the first mission in Esquimalt. Work began with the construction of a chapel which they dedicated to St. Joseph, on land owned by the Oblates.

While this was the first Oblate establishment in Victoria, several Oblates had already seen service in Oregon and New Caledonia:, Fathers Lempfrit, Ricard, Pandozy, D'Herbomez, Chirousse, Richard, Fouquet, McGuckin are names which will reappear. Father Jean-Baptiste Bolduc, a diocesan priest had ministered in the Columbia between 1842 and 1850. In 1843, he had accompanied Chief Trader James Douglas on a journey of exploration and survey to Vancouver Island. Father Honoré-Timothée Lempfrit, OMI had been sent by Bishop Blanchet (during the absence of Bishop Demers), he had accompanied James Douglas to Victoria in 1849, ministering to the 'Canadiens', employed by the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Victoria. He is thought to been the first 'Blackrobe' to visit the Saanich Indians. (50) On his arrival in Victoria, Bishop Demers had been 'hospitably' received in the 'mud house' of Father Lempfrit.

Father D'Herbomez must have been quite a dynamo of energy. He could write in 1863, to Father Fabre, OMI, the Superior General in Montreal: " . . .in the District of

Esquimalt, we now have four chapels, one for the 'whites' and three for the natives". (51) An optimistic report to Bishop de Mazenod in France, not untypical of Father D'Herbomez reads: "It is time to tell you of St. Joseph's Mission at Esquimalt Bay, Vancouver Island. This mission, now in its infancy, promises to become the most important of our Congregation in this country. The steamboats carrying mail from Europe and U.S.A. come every fifteen days to Esquimalt; the other steamers from California do the same, because this is a better harbor than the one at Victoria. For the same reason, Esquimalt is the base of the English naval squadron in the Pacific and Indian Ocean. It is claimed that the British Government should establish a naval base here. If that happens, there is no doubt about the future of Esquimalt. Already the white population is slowly increasing and if we can judge of its future by the number who come to Church each Sunday, our Parish will represent nearly all the countries of the Catholic world. Frenchmen, Canadians, Englishmen, Irishmen, Italians, Spaniards assemble in our chapel with the natives of Sandwich Islands and the Indians of various tribes. Oh! that we were a new Saint Francis-Xavier! the gift of tongues would be so useful for us!" (52)

Moreover, as Superior, Father D'Herbomez was anxious to expand the missions beyond Esquimalt, even beyond the Southern confines of Vancouver Island. His thought was first to follow and consolidate earlier missions. The Saanich tribes offered an opportunity, they were not too far on the peninsula and they had already been visited by the 'Blackrobes'. In 1850 Father Lempfrit had spent about a week with the Saanich. Father Chirousse had also visited the Saanich Reserve. But Father Jayol with Brother Blondel would lay the foundation of the missions, building a log

chapel and a shelter. Subsequently, Father Mandart, a Breton ordained in 1865 and sent to Victoria, established a permanent missions in Saanich which became the Parish of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary . (53)

Named Vicar of Missions, Father D'Herbomez' mind turned to missions beyond Vancouver Island. In a matter of a few years, considerable exploration and expansion took place. Father Fouquet explored the mission territory west of Esquimalt, visited the Saanich Indians on the Island and the Snohomish tribes of Puget Sound. Father Chirousse, a veteran missionary was to travel north with Father Fouquet along the coast. Their journey took them as far as Fort Rupert, the Queen Charlottes and, on the mainland to Milbanke Sound near Bella Bella. The West Coast was not forgotten, and Father Jayol and Durieu went to evaluate the openness of the Indians. The expedition was not particularly fruitful as the Coast Indians had become addicted to alcohol. On the mainland, a school in operation at the Okanagan Mission headed by Father Richard was prospering. A decision was made to start a school for Indians at St. Mary's Mission at New Westminster. Father Gendre would be the director.

After an inspection tour early in 1861 Fr. D'Herbomez could report: "At Tulalip . . . half of the four thousand Puget Sound Indians had already been baptised and Father Chirousse's little school was filled to overflowing. At the Okanagan Missions one third of the Indian population and half the whites were now Catholic. In the Esquimalt district six hundred Indians had embraced the Faith. At Victoria there were fifty Catholics among two hundred white population. At St. Charles, New Westminster, and at Hope and Yale, the same signs of expansion were already evident." (51)

There is no doubt that those results brought great satisfaction to Father D'Herbomez and his Oblate missionaries. He would need all the vigour he could muster, another challenge was on the way - the education of the boys. The Sisters of St. Ann had the education of the girls well in hand, but the Clercs St. Viateur, short staffed with only Brother Gédéon Thibodeau and Father Joseph Michaud were finding it more and more difficult to teach a growing enrollment of English speaking pupils. Father Michaud having completed his task with the construction of the cathedral, after consultation, the Clercs of St. Viateur concluded it would be best to leave Victoria and return to their community.

The departure of the Brothers left a dangerous gap in the education of the young. But it served to confirm Bishop Demers' conclusion that education must be offered according to the needs and means of the people. With the encouragement of Sir James Douglas and of the Catholic population, the Bishop could do no better than to present the challenge and entrust the project to Father D'Herbomez.

Father D'Herbomez takes on the project with his usual vigour. He has no building, no teaching personnel, no money, there lies the triple challenge he attacks simultaneously on three fronts. The first; he has the ground cleared on a lot on Pandora Street near Mason Street. Construction begins apace. The school will be a two story brick building measuring thirty feet by forty-five feet. The second; he writes the Superior of the Irish Oblate, in April 1863:

"Here, everyone and all tastes can be satisfied. That is because we work both amongst the Indians and the white immigrants. Amongst the latter, life is almost as it is in Europe, while, amongst the Indians, there are enough hardship and privations to satisfy those who wish for



martyrdom . . . Because a good, solid Catholic education is essential, especially in a place like British Columbia where our Holy Religion has so many enemies, we hope and intend to found a College to be staffed by Oblates of the Anglo-Irish Province. We need volunteers from the Province also for the Indian Reservations. What help good, qualified, English-speaking Brothers would be to us to teach in these schools and to help our Priests who now have to be teachers as well as Missionaries! Help us, dear Father, to get the teachers we need. Train fervent, zealous Priests and Brothers of whom we are in such dire need. The harvest is ripe but the labourers are few. Pray that God will send us workers to reap the immense harvest that awaits them". (55)

The third; while construction is proceeding, classes for boys are taught in a house near the Bishop's residence on Humbolt Street.

Bishop Demers blessed the corner stone on April 25, 1863. The school, named St. Louis College for its founder, opened in January 1864. A functional, two story brick building, it comprised, classrooms on the first floor; on the second, a chapel and living quarters for the Oblate community. The only establishment of its kind in Victoria, open to Catholic and protestant pupils, it offered an ambitious curriculum: Religion, Latin, Greek, English, French, Spanish, philosophy, literature, history, geography, mathematics, science, art, and bookkeeping. Lessons in choral singing and instrumental music were also available. The *Victoria Daily Colonist* reported that: ". . . this establishment is under the patronage of Bishop Demers, Bishop of Vancouver Island and directed by the Oblate Fathers: Father Beaudré, OMI principal, Fr. McGuckin OMI prefect of studies, MM. Alex Gibson, B.A., P.J. Allen, OMI and Edward B. McStay OMI." (56)



The recruitment of Brother McStay gives rise to an interesting anecdote. In 1861, Father D'Herbonez had been called to France for a General Chapter of the Order. He was away for one whole year, returning in October 1862 with five recruits: Fathers Jean-Marie Lejaq, Julien Beaudré, Florimond Gendre, Brothers Felix Gillet and Edward McStay .

Ever awake to possibilities, and a firm believer that Providence helps those who help themselves, he had stopped to visit the Oblate Community of the Province of Ireland, in Dublin. At some point, entering into conversation with an Irish lay-brother who was teaching school in Dublin, Father D'Herbonez naturally spoke in French. Brother McStay, too polite or too awed by this Superior, could not understand a word but kept on nodding assent and adding at an opportune moment his total French vocabulary - oui! It is only the following day that Brother McStay discovered he had unwittingly volunteered for the Victoria Missions . Brother McStay was as good as his word . . . his only word . . oui! and sailed for Victoria to become the first English speaking Oblate Brother in British Columbia.

(57)

With all the activity centered on St. Louis College, growing parish needs were not forgotten. ...Father Beaudré served as Chaplain to the Sisters of St. Ann at St. Ann's Academy and preached in French at the Cathedral. Father McGuckin ministered to the English-speaking Catholics while raising funds to build a church for the French, French-Canadian, Italian and Spanish Catholics. Sufficient funds were raised. The chapel was built and opened in 1865 also dedicated to St. Louis.

### **Foundation of the diocese of New Westminster.**

In 1865, in a Victoria boasting a population of some five thousand, Bishop Demers could now take stock of what had been accomplished. St. Louis College, a growing bilingual school for boys; St. Ann's School a flourishing convent for girls with bilingual Sisters; the Esquimalt Mission prospering; Father Rondeault now a resident Priest at the Cowichan Mission at the foot of Mount Tzouhalem; the Sisters of St. Ann's Indian school near Cowichan Bay.

Needs were still pressing; recruitment of priests, increasing calls on his time and talents for administrative duties in Victoria... to the benign neglect of his Diocese of New Caledonia. Bishop Demers had foreseen the eventual separation of the mainland from the Island. At one time, when in Rome, he had advocated forming a new diocese in New Westminster. The Holy Father Pope Pius IX recognizing the wisdom of the recommendation appointed Father Louis D'Herbomez as the first Vicar Apostolic of British Columbia, with headquarters in New Westminster, the capital of the new Colony of British Columbia. Consecrated Bishop of Miletopolis (IPI), on October 7, 1864, in St. Andrew's Cathedral by Archbishop Blanchet of Oregon, Bishop Louis D'Herbomez chose as his motto: "If God is with us, who will be against us?"

While at the General Chapter in 1861, Father D'Herbomez had a vague notion that he was being considered for the post of Vicar Apostolic, but the news of his appointment came as a shock - it meant leaving his missions, the work in progress. He must have had mixed feelings, physically, he suffered badly from rheumatism, a legacy from his missions among the Cayuse and Yakima Indians, yet intellectually, he felt unworthy of the appointment and at the same time confident that he could and would respond to

the new challenge. Prayerfully, humbly, but confident, he dedicated himself to the care of his new faithful in his Cathedral of St. Peter's in New Westminster.

"Perhaps you ask me, dear Brethren, what is it that induced my companions and me to forsake country, home, parents and friends; to sacrifice ease, pleasure and all that the human heart may legitimately enjoy, in order to come to British Columbia? Let me say, in reply, that it was neither the thirst for gold, nor the riches, nor for worldly possessions. No! It was zeal for the salvation of your souls to whom we would gladly make known and loved the supernatural goods whose possession Almighty God reserves for you after this life. While we endeavour to fulfill our duty, what trials have we not had to endure, as far even as to ruin our health. But also when success crowned our efforts, what joy, what consolation was ours ! . . . I shall remain henceforth among you beloved Brethren. From now on I shall be at your call night and day, and every one will find me ready to oblige him so far as it is possible with the strength and power with which God has endowed me".(58)

Quietly reading his office, Bishop Demers could have been distracted, reflecting on the unfathomable designs of Providence. His foresight had been acted upon in Rome. With the creation of the Diocese of New Westminster, New Caledonia would be served, the dynamism of a colleague had been recognized, he was happy for him . . . but Father D'Herbomez' promotion to the episcopacy deprived him of a key worker. Could he foresee the next blow?

The projects and missions Bishop D'Herbomez was planning for his Diocese of New Westminster would require the presence of all the Oblates and moreover the funds invested by the Oblates in St. Louis College. Bishop Demers could not but comply. He found he had to sell some

diocesan farm land to buy back St. Louis College for the sum of \$10,000.00 The finances would feel the blow to its capital for years to come.

The Oblates gone, the whole pastoral ministry as well as the teaching at the College would become the sole responsibility of diocesan clergy. Was Providence abandoning Bishop Demers? Not so!

### **Bishop Demers and Providence**

In 1857, two American Bishops, with the approval of the Catholic Hierarchy of Belgium had founded the American Missionary Seminary of Louvain. The purpose was to prepare with more advanced theological studies, young American and European seminarians. The American Bishops would, in consequence, receive in their dioceses a growing number of better prepared, English-speaking seminarians. When traveling in Europe, Bishop Demers never failed to keep the Superior of the American Seminary informed of needs in his diocese.

About the time the Holy Father was appointing Father Louis D'Herbomez as the first Vicar Apostolic of British Columbia, a young priest was being ordained at the American Missionary Seminary of Louvain. Charles John Seghers, educated by the Jesuit Fathers in St. Barbara's College, had proved a brilliant student. Along with traditional studies he had received music and singing lessons. Besides French and Flemish, he had gained a respectable fluency in German and English. One thought consistently dominated his studies for the priesthood, his vocation to become a missionary, to convert the "heathen". Upon being ordained to the diaconate, he transferred to the American Seminary at Louvain. He was ordained a priest on May 31, 1863.

When his Superior made him aware of an urgent plea received from Bishop Demers for missionaries to serve on Vancouver Island. Father Seghers truly believed his prayers had been answered.

Without hesitation, he volunteered and sailed immediately for Vancouver Island. His journey took him across the Atlantic Ocean, through Panama Canal, to San Francisco, he landed in Victoria on November, 1863.

At the time, the population of Victoria numbered some five thousand inhabitants. There were a few professionals, but the larger number were business people and farmers. There were also drifters who came to Victoria during the Winter when they could not pan for gold or mine coal. Father Seghers, with his 'gentlemanly' upbringing, soon formed a low opinion of the drifters. " They think of nothing but gold and speak only of money . . . the dollar is their idol", these white men were so immoral, he "feared the chastisement of God". He saw them exercising a demoralizing influence upon the Indians who would even sell their women for money and whiskey . (59)

The congregation numbered some fifteen hundred "fervent or lukewarm" Catholics whom he described to his Rector in Louvain: "We have to deal here not with American people, but with a population that judges and acts in an English way. They are a great deal more critical than the people in America. The authority for pronouncing English here is Walker, not Webster. They often laugh at my 'American pronunciation' of English . . . Let the gentlemen of the College who are coming to Vancouver bring along a large piece of oilcloth and a strong umbrella, for rain and wind are 'l'ordre du jour' here. A priest must be a 'gentleman' evidently. The other day I preached, and do you know the effect of my sermon? Well, it was remarked



that my hair was not combed nicely. One morning during Mass, the people noticed, in the ardor of their devotion, that my shoes were not polished. An Irishman lately presented me with a pair of dandy shoes because he could not see his priest walk in boots, and he wanted me to accept a pair of white socks because he felt indignant in seeing me wear black ones, O tempora, O mores! I have a chance to imitate St. Paul, 'Omnibus omnia sum'" .(60)

From his letters to his Rector in Louvain, we appreciate Father Seghers' ability to judge critically the character and personality of his parishioners and others . . . particularly the English as he sees them: "There is one obstacle they have to cope with, the intolerable pride of the English people. England thinks she is in every respect the first country in the world, and from her pretended elevation she looks down with pity and disdain upon all other nations. English people keep more or less together in this colony, while all other nationalities, Irish, French, Spanish, American, etc. mingle and sympathize.

. . . Hence, some English gentlemen, though aware that no education is equal to that given in our Catholic schools, in their haughtiness and national pride, would consider it a frightful humiliation to commit their children to the care of foreigners". (61)

True to the vocation for which he had been preparing himself, he was very keen on being allowed to go to the missions, but, while tall and slim he was also physically frail and bothered with a persistent cough. He seemed obsessed with a burning zeal to convert the Indians to Christianity and he could suffer considerable privations and hardships, which he at times brought upon himself, without complaint. He had prepared himself intellectually for the rigors of missionary life, yet Bishop Demers had to enforce rest on him as he



did not always show prudence in his zeal to convert the 'heathens'. Father Seghers led a somewhat introverted prayerful life and harboured an intense desire for sanctity, perhaps, in retrospect, an unformulated desire for martyrdom, the giving of his life for the salvation of souls. No doubt he believed work in the missions would increase his spiritual growth. Nevertheless, his Bishop had other reasons for retaining him in Victoria. In a letter to the Rector, Bishop Demers could say: "My Seghers is a priest according to God's own heart, active and zealous in His vineyard, having only the glory of God, and honor and triumph of religion". (62)

Leaving for Europe, Bishop Demers placed Father in full charge of diocesan affairs. Upon return, he wrote the Rector: "Seghers has been put to the test and bore up well, his work seems to be his life". . . . Father Seghers was becoming his Bishop's right hand man, assuming more and more duties. He felt his hopes of missionary work were being destroyed by his devotions to his duty to his Bishop. ". . . As long as the Bishop lives, I fear I will be nailed to Victoria. 'Non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu' ". Following a 'workaholic' schedule, he could ignore admonition to rest, noting: "My only complaint is that the Bishop makes life too easy for me".(63)

While prayerful and meditative, he nevertheless acquired a profound insights on the human and social condition of the Indians: "Poor people! unhappy people in this world, with little help for the next. They are generally excited by white men, and when they show any inclination to avenge the wrong done, they are threatened with the severest punishments, and there is no priest to teach them the doctrine of peace and to preserve them from the evil that they bring on themselves. The Bishop thinks that a war of exter-

mination is about to take place between the Indians and the white men, just as it is carried out in the United States. The death of the last Indian will be the end of that murderous struggle" .(64)

Perhaps the influence of the 'Mission to the Columbia' prevented the 'Cowichan troubles' from becoming another Waïlatpu massacre .

In 1869, Pope Pius IX called the first Vatican Council and Mgr Demers was invited to attend. While Father Seghers had proven himself a prudent and capable administrator, the Bishop felt that the workload would be detrimental to his health. Believing that a change of scene would be beneficial, he asked Father Seghers to accompany him as his theologian.

On their way to Rome, Father Seghers took leave to visit his family, his Rector and his Seminary. Bishop Demers continued on to Rome by himself. Victim of a train accident the Bishop suffered a compound fracture of a leg and was hospitalized in France for some time. Father Seghers proceeded to Rome by himself as the Council was opening on December 8. He found Rome exhilarating; the history, the Vatican, the churches, the libraries - a veritable nirvana for a scholar. During his time in Rome he gained a considerable expertise in Canon Law. Bishop Demers left the hospital to attend the Council . . . perhaps prematurely; he never recovered completely from the accident.

The Franco-Prussian war which had begun on July 19, 1870 brought an early adjournment of the Council. Before their departure, Bishop Demers and Father Seghers were received in private audience by Pope Pius IX. During the audience, the Bishop presented the Holy Father with stone statuettes carved by the Indians. Father Seghers, who was suffering from recurring bouts of phthisis (medical

euphemism for pulmonary consumption), received a special blessing from the Holy Father with the assurance that he would regain his health. On his way to Belgium once again Father Seghers made a short pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes, praying for restored health, while Bishop Demers went on to Paris. They returned to Victoria on November 2, 1870.

### **Bishop Demers and Confederation**

After 1867, negotiations conducted between the British Government's Colonial Office and the Canadian Government resulted in the sale of Rupert's Land to Canada in 1870. This transaction made Confederation the subject of much debate on the West Coast. Public opinion was vacillating between joining the new 'Confederation' of Eastern Provinces known as Canada, or being annexed by the United States. Negotiations were also going on between the United States and Great Britain on the settlement of the San Juan Boundary dispute, seeking clarification to some of the terms of the treaty of 1846. Public opinion was aroused mildly in British Columbia but, in the United States, a presidential election campaign brought out the cry: "54-40 or fight" . . . latitude 54-40 runs just north of Prince Rupert, at the southern tip of Alaska.

Bishop Demers did not hesitate to express himself clearly in favour of Confederation, rejecting annexation to the United States. He could draw on the experiences of Archbishop Blanchet and Dr. McLoughlin who, remaining in the United States, had suffered deeply from the social turmoil and injustice caused by the intransigence of American traders and entrepreneurs for whom the wild West law of the revolver supplanted the laws of the land and the rights of the residents already established. He could also

recall the lesson of history, his own history, relating his own situation to that of the Bishop of Quebec in 1776. Bishop Briand, then Bishop of Quebec, true to his pastoral duty, as he saw it, exhorted his faithful to protect the gains obtained by the Act of Quebec of 1774 and to reject the advances of the American invaders.

In 1871, the twelve thousand white residents of British Columbia agreed to enter the Dominion of Canada on the condition that the Federal Government build a transcontinental railroad to link it with the East. More than one third of those voters resided on Vancouver Island. Ten years later, the white population scarcely numbered 24,000 while the Indians were estimated at over 25,000.

On December 31, Bishop Demers suffered an attack of apoplexy. He recovered well enough to visit early in the new year his dear Indians of Cowichan.. He did not survive a second stroke and passed away on July 28, 1871. Some time previously he had written Pope Pius IX, petitioning for a special blessing for Father Seghers. In his will he had placed his diocese under the guidance of Father Seghers. When advised that Father Seghers was himself dying of pulmonary hemorrhage, he replied with perhaps more faith than conviction: "Il se rétablira bien vite!". Those words were the "nunc dimittis" of Bishop Modeste Demers, the First Bishop of Vancouver Island.

With the passing away of Bishop Demers ends the creative, formative years of the Diocese of Vancouver Island. "In the thirty-three years since he had first come to this territory, since he had first offered Mass high on the Columbia, he had ministered to the people of this farflung region. He had watched it grow from a chain of trading posts, to a crown colony and to a province . . . and he had contributed to its development by building churches,

schools, and missions. He has well earned the title of 'Apostle of British Columbia' ". (65)

A short time before his death, Bishop Demers had received a visit from his old friend Sir James Douglas KCB; friends since their first meeting in Fort Vancouver over thirty years ago.

They knew each other well, in a friendship tempered with mutual respect and a pragmatic understanding. The visit was a farewell of two lives converging, by different routes, toward similar goals, similar ideals.

In an editorial, the *Victoria Daily Colonist* paid tribute to the first Catholic Bishop of Vancouver Island. "Only those who came to this coast in the early days can form anything like an adequate idea of what Bishop Demers had to suffer and endure. In perils by sea, in perils by land, in perils by savage tribes, in perils among the wild beasts, in perils among his own countrymen, he did not count his life dear in promoting the great work to which he had devoted himself . . . There is scarcely a rod of ground which he has not trod; there is not an Indian village which he has not visited; there is not a white settlement in which he has not provided the ordinances of the Church. The late Bishop was not only a devoted and successful missionary . . . he was the most lovable of men . . . his humility never forsook him, as his zeal never flagged". (66)

The blessing Bishop Demers had requested for Father Seghers did come and he experienced a 'miraculous recovery'. With restored health and strength, he assumed control of the Diocese as Vicar Capitular. On March 23, 1873, Pope Pius IX named him Bishop of Victoria. He was consecrated in St. Andrews' Cathedral on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul by Archbishop Francis-Norbert Blanchet, archbishop of Oregon. With the consecration of Bishop



Seghers, the second bishop of the Diocese of Victoria, a new era has begun, the modern era.

### **Modeste Demers' Dilemma**

In retrospect, we may now reflect on what must have been Bishop Demers' dilemma, a perplexing predicament. Born in St. Nicolas de Lévis, brought up in the midst of a tightly - knit family, in a milieu dominated by a severe, rigid Catholicism, tainted with jansenism, and guided by an 'ultramontane' ecclesiastic hierarchy. The Church occupies the centre, the focus of social life, it dominates family relations. His personality, his character take form in this environment "qui se souvient", which remembers, retiring within itself, by need of self-protection and whose survival depends no longer on immigration but essentially upon the birth rate . . . 'la conquête des berceaux' . . . conquest by the cradle.

Modeste is a man of his time and place. He is also of that generation of those adventurers, in the better sense of the word, who, engaged by the HBC or the North West Company, leave in quest of adventure, to discover new horizons, for financial gain, or simply to release too binding ties. Sometimes one leaves a place rather than one goes some place . This very taste of adventure in Modeste Demers, a serious young man, takes the form of a vocation, not only to the priesthood - but missionary. He leaves not to gain, to acquire, but to give, give his time, perhaps his very life, for the salvation of the natives, to share with them his faith, staunch, sincere, tested.

His faith alone motivates him, gives him strength, courage to overcome whatever the future may have in store for him. His strength he draws from his fragility, it emerges from his crises.



In light of the panorama of his life, through adventures fraught with danger, met with courage and wisdom we may be inclined perhaps to surmise what thoughts crossed his mind. Modeste brought into his mission of salvation the triangle of his convictions - the triple shield which summarizes the defensive attitude of the French Canadians of the time; our faith, our language, our rights. Those rights are protected by the Quebec Act of 1774, but as one removes from Quebec, the protection fades, and the further one goes, eventually disappears. At Fort Vancouver, Father Demers holds neither rights nor privileges but those the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company grant him. There remain his faith and his language.

In the company of his superiors and his missionary companions, his language is not endangered. Indian dialects, Chinook are but temporary modes of communication, while English is the vehicle through which one communicates with the power, the officers of the HBC. However, in Victoria, with the increase in population, largely English-speaking, English becomes the language of the majority. We have noticed how rapidly in the schools, English became the language of instruction. By force of circumstances and numbers, those were the facts of life in Victoria in 1860.

Modeste Demers may have been conscious of his dilemma - his faith or his language. To be faithful to his mission, must he forsake his language? His faith which animates him, which consumes him, his faith and his mission - is it possible to live them in French? Possible . . . yes! but not in Victoria.

Consciously or not, Modeste Demers made his choice, the salvation of souls, if necessary at the cost of the language of his forefathers. His unshakable ideal gave him the strength to opt for his faith and his mission. He will

serve in the language of his faithful, bringing into life the motto he had chosen at his consecration: FIDES - faith.

Even after the departure of the missionaries and their first Bishop from Quebec, after over a century of ministry by English-speaking clergy and teaching body, a discreet French cultural presence is still discernible, a linguistic, literary, artistic influence in the cultural life of society and in the learning program of the young. It has been said that Canada needs symbols, values, the sense of a Canadian identity to survive. Might this discreet cultural influence be a tie that binds . . . acceptably, . . . willingly, . . . gently? . .

If so, it bodes well for a continuing Canada " a Mare usque ad Mare".

## APPENDIX

As we retrace the evolution of the Diocese of Victoria, its passage from pioneer mission to the now 'modern' era, we may observe that the growth of the Diocese in number of faithful, of parishes and missions follows remarkably well the growth of Victoria. We may also note another factor, the rapid modification of the linguistic mix. When, at one time, the language of a tiny majority, French had been displaced by the rapid growth of the English-speaking population. As Bishop Demers had foreseen, when he chose his FAITH over his mother tongue, English became the dominant language of the population. Yet, a French presence remains in many discreet ways - important perhaps beyond its numbers. We might well be living and enjoying in Victoria, the Canadian anomaly, the love-hate relationship between the two founding peoples . . . a step better than 'two solitudes'.

While the French language is no longer a major driving factor in our way of life in Victoria, it seems historically proper to outline, however briefly, the continuum in the 'modern' era, of the missions begun by the Sisters of St. Ann from Quebec and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate from France.

### **The Sisters of St. Ann in the 'Modern' era.**

#### **St. Ann's Academy**

The 'modern' era for the Sisters of St. Ann begins in the Summer of 1870 when they purchased the Tuzzo Garden on Humboldt Street and began the construction of a new convent. This building, after several additions became, in

1886, the Provincial Mother House. In the same year, the first Church-Cathedral built by Brother Joseph Michaud, CSV, in 1858, a gift of gratitude from Bishop Demers was moved to the site. Integrated to the rear of the main building, with direct access from the entrance hall, it became the chapel of the community.

Previous to 1889, the Novices were sent to the Novitiate in Lachine, but in that year, a Novitiate was opened in the extended building. The Convent was elevated to the status of Academy, St. Ann's Academy, in 1892 and in 1913, after another addition to the building, a curriculum of Commercial Studies was added. June 1973 marks the end of St. Ann's Academy . . . the harvest was insufficient...and the labourers too few. The Government of British Columbia purchased the land and buildings and the students were directed to other schools. The building was declared a *Heritage Building* in order to insure its preservation.

The Sisters opened their new residence, Queenswood House of Studies, a centre for prayer, retreats, workshops, days of peace and quiet. They are also active in ministries: catechetics, social justice, rehabilitation and prison work, care for the sick and elderly in Mount St. Angela extended care facility. Their chapel also serves the students at the University of Victoria. A growing number of Sisters, aged and deserving rest and peace now occupy their new home, St. Ann's Residence, blessed by Bishop De Roo on November 6, 1982. The means have changed, the numbers are fewer, but the mission of the Sisters of St. Ann continues.

## St. Joseph's Hospital

Since their arrival, and beginning with Sister Marie-de-la-Conception, the Sisters cared for the sick in their own home. As their missions progressed, Bishop Demers and the Sisters felt deeply the need for a hospital. Father Seghers had presented an initiative to the Bishop. He wrote his Rector: " We have no hospital, last year, I submitted to the Bishop and a few prominent members of the congregation a plan, and stated why we should have a hospital in Victoria, in charge of Sisters of Mercy . My plan was adopted with great enthusiasm. The whole population grew in favor of it and all, Jews and Protestants, as well as Catholics, contributed generously towards the proposed institution. But the money crisis came and stopped the execution of our proposition. Now times are so dull and money is so scarce that we must wait for better days." (67)

Better days . . . extended to 1875, a landmark year. Mother Marie-de-la-Providence, undertook the construction of a hospital with the means at her disposal; faith, a prayer and no funds. Predictably, generous donators would appear. They did. They raised \$13,900.00 . Dr John Sebastien Helmcken, Hudson's Bay Company surgeon, Justice of the Peace, Speaker of the Legislature, who had made the first financial contribution laid the corner stone that same year.

In his dedicating address, Bishop Seghers remarked: "Irrespective of creed or nationality, St. Joseph's Hospital will open its doors to such as are afflicted with sickness, it will afford relief and comfort to persons of every condition and standing in society; it will give shelter within its walls to the poor, the needy, the friendless, and the houseless". (68)

The original hospital, a two story brick building had a capacity of thirty-five beds and interestingly enough no

operating room. Surgery took place in any available room. The first operation, the removal of a pelvic tumor, was performed in the parlor under somewhat primitive conditions. Newspaper were spread on the floor, instruments and white cotton gloves were boiled in the wash boiler while doctors wearing wet gloves rinsed their hands frequently in bichloride of mercury solution. Chloroform was used as an anesthetic. (69)

In 1894, a third story was added, operating rooms were provided. Further additions were completed in 1897 and 1908. No longer adequate in 1951, it was replaced by a new building, using the same corner stone laid by Dr. Helmcken in 1875. Eventually, the property was purchased by the Provincial Government. The Sisters had neither the personnel, nor in fact the means, to provide all the requirements and facilities of modern medicine and hospital care.

### **St. Joseph's School of Nursing**

St. Joseph's School of Nursing developed as an adjunct to the Hospital. The founders' plans had foreseen such an eventuality. In his address at the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of St. Joseph's Hospital on August 22, 1875, Dr Helmcken . . . "thought it a great point in favour of this particular institution that it would be under the care of the Sisters of St. Ann, as this would guarantee good nursing which was more important than medicine, and it would be valuable if only for a school of nursing." (70)

From the beginning, the nursing Sisters had aides and assistants. However in order to improve their knowledge and efficiency a "program" of studies was designed by Sister Marie-Gertrude-de-Jésus (Weimer) to train two nurses. The "curriculum" for a class of two . . .



first day, work on the wards . . . 12 hour duty . . . no lectures except at the bedside . . .one procedure manual only . . .two weeks off per year. . .: "comfort nursing" . . .no antibiotics . . .ward work included housekeeping, preparing diets. . stipend, \$5.00 per month . . . slippers worn in the ward after 9 p.m. . . .flowers out of the room at night . . . formal lectures from Sisters and Doctors . . . in spare time, review notes . . . . Nevertheless, the "class" of 1900 graduated. . . and from that initiative grew St. Joseph's School of Nursing.

Sister Marie-Gertrude, first appointed to the surgical service, added to her responsibilities that of "superintendent of nurses", a function she performed for 18 years.

Her philosophy permeated the curriculum and the students' attitude: a blend of academic theory, intensive practical training, dedication to the nobility of the profession and ministering to body ailments with a supernatural motive. Sister Marie-Gertrude lived the school motto: "Non nobis solum" . . . not for ourselves alone.

With the graduating class of 1981, St. Joseph's School of Nursing gave way to new ideas, new philosophies and to the pressure of ever-increasing costs", as plans were being formulated for the relocation of Victoria General Hospital.

In July 5th 1981, "St. Joseph's School of Nursing passed into history but nursing heritage endures" (71)

Beginning with the first graduate, Anthony Williams on June 14, 1901, to the final graduating class of 1981, the School had trained 2,604 graduates in Nursing ( including ten men), 128 in Medical Technology and 159 from the School of Radiography. "Non nobis solum"

## The Oblates of Mary Immaculate

In a biased way, one might say that the Diocese of Victoria became a victim of its own growth and of the success of the missions of the Oblates. With the founding of the Diocese of New Westminster, Bishop D'Herbomez, OMI, called all the Oblates to minister to missions in New Caledonia. The loss of the Oblates left Bishop Demers having to staff the Oblates establishments with diocesan clergy.

The *Esquimalt Mission* was continued. St. Joseph's Chapel was still standing in 1933 when Father A.B.W. Wood came to the Parish. It was demolished by the Municipality of Esquimalt to make room for a municipal park. St. Joseph's Parish was eventually merged into a new Parish, *Our Lady Queen of Peace* on Old Esquimalt Road.

The *Saanich Mission* was established as a resident mission when Father Mandart, after living in a makeshift shack for about a year built a 'better shack' in a location just West of the cemetery on West Saanich Road. A substantial building was erected some time later north of the cemetery. Blessed by Bishop Seghers in 1879, named for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, it served as church and residence, later as an Indian School until it was demolished in 1962. When Father Mandart was recalled to Victoria in 1886 to serve the French-speaking community, priests from the Cathedral continued the ministry.

When Father Adrian Joseph Vullings, ordained in Holland in 1892, went to Saanich in 1893, he found the buildings in a deplorable state of disrepair. The Indians, without a resident priest, had abandoned the Church. It is during his tenure that the present church was built in 1892. It is the oldest church in continuous use in the Diocese. Father Vullings remained in Saanich until 1909, when he was recalled to Holland for one year. From 1909 to 1979

the Assumption Parish was served by a succession of Priests, Fathers Scheelen, Ronden, Contenraad, Boshouwers, Lemmens as well as the Marist Fathers. The Oblates returned to Saanich only in 1980. After building the present rectory, next to the Assumption Church, Father Terrance J. McNamara, OMI, was named rector of St. Andrew's Cathedral. Since then, the two parishes Assumption and St. Elizabeth in Sidney are served by one diocesan priest.

### **St. Louis College**

After the departure of the Oblates in 1866, diocesan clergy assumed the direction of the College; Father Leterme was Principal for sixteen years assisted at times by Fathers Jonckau, Van Nevel, Auguste Brabant, by lay teachers, and after 1893, by Sisters of St. Ann. In 1912, the Marist Brothers assumed direction of the College for a few years.

By 1914, the building was fifty years old and in serious need of repairs. Some members of the 'Renovations Committee' proposed that the initials OMI be removed from the face of the building. Bishop Alexander MacDonald objected stating the the 'heritage' should be maintained and that the initials OMI be retained in memory of the Oblate founders of the College.

The Christian Brothers of Ireland were invited by Bishop MacDonald in 1915. The College flourished under their direction and a new building was erected on the north side of Pandora Street. The Christian Brothers remained until 1968. Enrollment having decreased, St. Louis College was closed as a secondary school and renamed St. Andrew's Elementary School. For Diocesan administrative purposes, it has been incorporated in the Catholic Public Schools of Victoria Diocese and operated under the auspices of St. Andrew's Cathedral Parish. Sister Mary Theodoric, SSA, was the principal for many years, assisted by other Sisters of St. Ann and lay teachers.

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## Loretto Hall

What is the association of Loretto Hall, the Chinese Mission, the sisters of *Notre-Dame des Anges* and "la Francophonie?" An interesting story awaits you.

If you examine the Victoria section of the 1891 census, you can see pages and pages giving "Chinaman" as the name of people living on Johnson Street and nearby. For most of them, the occupation is given; as for names, well, they were hard to read and they weren't recorded in the census report. By the 1941 census, there were 5000 Chinese living in the Diocese of Victoria, of whom 2000 were in the City of Victoria.

This growing Chinese population needed a school, medical services and religious services. His Grace, Mgr. John C. Cody, understood this need. He met almost insurmountable obstacles, but his faith enabled him to overcome these difficulties.

In order to meet the needs of the diocese of Victoria, the Congregation of Missionary Sisters of *Notre-Dame des Anges* acquired the Pendray residence, which was named Loretto Hall, and was to accommodate young women; the profits would permit the Congregation to support financially the sisters employed at the future Chinese Mission. The name "Loretto Hall" was given by Bishop Cody because the date the contract was signed was the anniversary of the translation of the Nazareth house to Loretto.

The Hall was an important Victoria landmark. The opulent house was built in 1897 by the Pendray family, who had made their first fortune in Cariboo gold, and continued to make it grow with a soap factory on Laurel Point, later joined by a paint plant (this was the major national firm

Bapco Paint) and several other business ventures. The house combines California design, Venice glass, and decorations by German artists.

For various reasons, plans were changed and Loretto Hall became a residence for seniors, but in fact people of all ages were accepted - even students lived there. Travellers could always get a good meal. The residence was surrounded by a vast and magnificent garden reputed for the odd size of its bushes. The first owner had practised the art of topiary. The stunning reception hall of the house, situated on the Inner Harbour (it is now the Captain's Palace restaurant), could be used by local or visiting groups. At its beginnings, the *Club Canadien-français* of Victoria rented the hall and the gardens to celebrate *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* Day. The members also organized their "Bon Vieux Temps" dinners there. The club minutes for May 18, 1941 read: "The Mother Superior will be happy to receive our guests for dinner at fifty cents a head." One hundred and fifty tickets were printed, which gives an idea of the size of the dining room. The majority of the nuns were French Canadian, which helped create a French atmosphere.

The members of the *Club Canadien-français* participated in bazaars and raffles organized by the Chinese Mission; that was their way of showing their appreciation to the Francophone nuns who had devoted themselves to work in their city.

Sixty religious women lived and worked at Loretto Hall for varying lengths of time during the thirty years of its existence. It is naturally impossible to give a biography of each, but the founder of the Congregation, Mother Marie-du-Sacré-Coeur, who came to Victoria in 1939 to open the hall, deserves special treatment.

### **Founder of the Congregation**

Florina Gervais was born on March 7, 1888, at Saint-Césaire de Rouville. She studied with the Sisters of the *Congregation de Notre-Dame* whom she admired. She wanted to be a missionary in China, and in the summer of 1906 she approached the Missionary Sisters of the *Congregation of the Immaculate Conception*, founded at Montreal in 1902. She left for China on December 3, 1910. She felt completely comfortable among the Chinese. She might have found happiness and realized her ideal in her missionary work, but she felt another call and let her superiors know that she had decided to withdraw in order to give herself totally to what she believed, in full clarity of conscience, to be God's work. She returned to her family in Canada, and spoke of her project with Mgr. Larocque, Bishop of Sherbrooke; she wanted to return to China to found another institution. In 1915 she returned to China with a companion, Laurence Lamoureux. There, one of her Chinese students, Chan Tsi Kwan, was happy to join the Canadian women.

Miss Lamoureux died in China, after a few days of illness, and Mgr. Rayssac advised the two survivors to return to Canada and recruit a few companions in order to ensure continuity. In 1919, Mr. Gervais, Florina's father, after the fire which destroyed the church at Lennoxville, bought the presbytery, which had remained intact, for his daughter and her companion.

The opening of the first house of the Congregation was held on April 1, 1919 in Lennoxville. The canonical establishment of the congregation was accorded by Mgr. Larocque on September 7, 1922. Foundations in China quickly multiplied, and the Victoria house was the thirteenth. Mother Marie-du-Sacré-Coeur worked in Victoria from

December 1939 to July 1940, and returned in August 1949 to remain until October 1952. She died at the original house in Lennoxville on August 1, 1979.

### **Development of the Chinese Mission**

The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels was founded in 1922 in order to evangelize the Chinese, whether they lived in China or elsewhere. Beginning in 1939, and living at Loretto Hall, several sisters collaborated with the Fathers of the *Pères des Missions Etrangères* of Scarborough, realizing Bishop Cody's dream. However, the official acceptance of the Chinese Mission came about only on January 22, 1941.

Mother Marie-Gabriel (Chan Tsi Kwan), co-founder of the Congregation, was one of the first to work in the Chinese Mission. Sister Marguerite-Marie, born Marie-Lucie Vachon, and Sister Marie-Aurélié, born Noëlla Fréchette, arrived in Victoria in December 1939, and stayed until 1941.

"Holy Angels' School", for children of four to eight years of age, was attended by Chinese and other Canadians; classes were conducted in both English and Chinese, and music classes were offered as well. It was situated at 866 North Park Street.

From 1939 until 1962, there were continuous teaching at the school by both, Chinese Sisters, and Canadian Sisters who had returned from China and spoke the language. There were also two lay teachers, Mrs. Rochon and Mrs. Healy.

In their work among adults, the Sisters gave catechism classes, prepared for the sacraments, and visited families, the sick and retired Chinese in homes.

The nuns also worked for the Diocese of Victoria from 1941 to 1946, doing various tasks including helping with the upkeep of the residence and cooking.

In August 1945 Sister Saint-Paul-Marie, Superior at Lennoxville, asked Bishop Cody to find replacements for the religious since missionary work needed more and more people and all the nuns were to be withdrawn from all dioceses rectories. Teachers and nurses capable of working in Chinese and English languages were needed, which meant years of study. Conscious of the difficulties, Sister Saint-Paul-Marie added: "We will do all we can to send good students to the Sisters of St. Ann in Victoria, to study English and nursing for the future Chinese hospital." This statement confirmed the great interest she continued to show for the Victoria mission.

### **Departure from Victoria**

When China was closed to foreign missionaries, the order, little by little, opened missions in other countries: Japan, Peru, Tahiti, Brazil, Tanzania and Zaïre.

The teachers of Holy Angels' School were needed for these faraway countries, and the Chinese Mission of Victoria closed its doors on July 31, 1963.

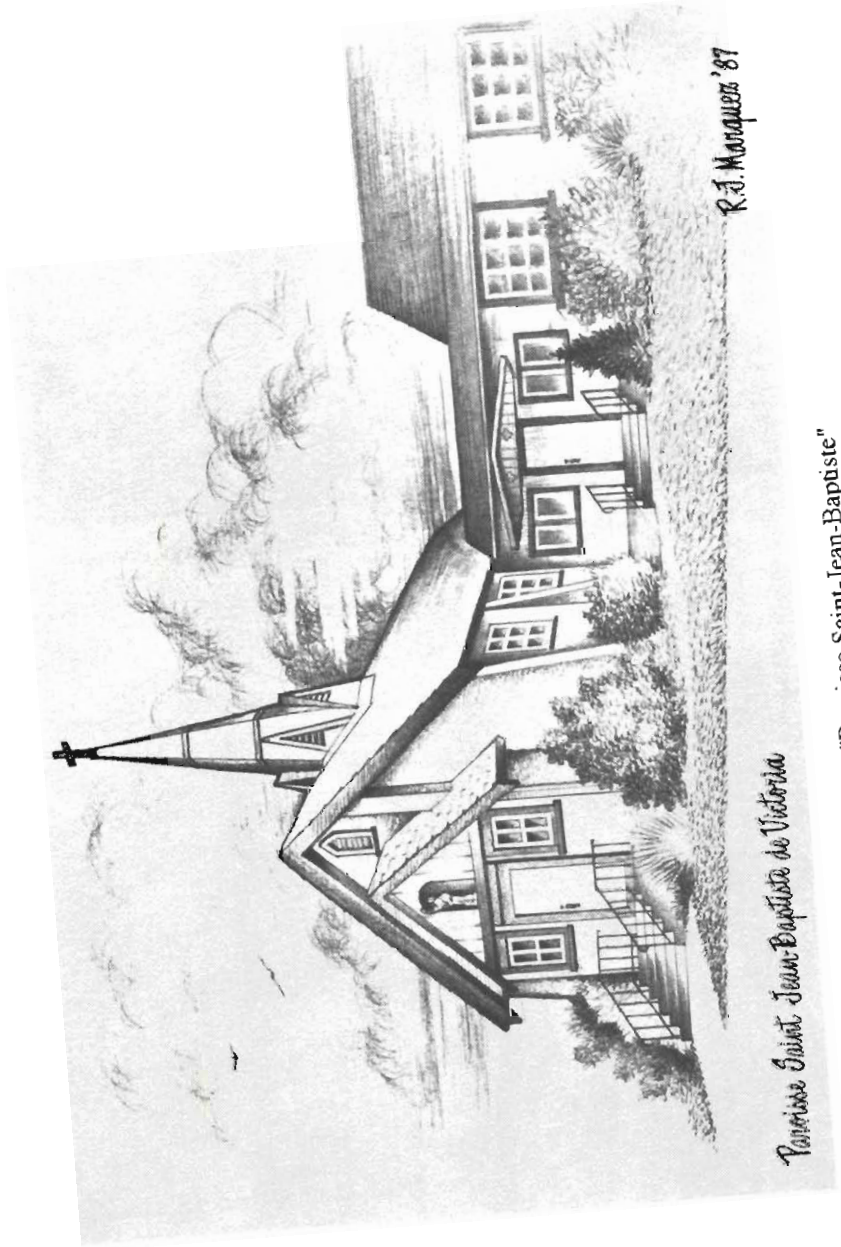
The foreign missions later claimed the nuns of Loretto Hall as well. They accepted the call, and Loretto Hall was closed on August 5, 1969. (1)

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#### **NOTES:**

(1) Information was obtained from Sister Isabelle Murphy, General secretary of the Congregation in Lennoxville, the Archives of the Diocese of Victoria and the Victoria Times-Colonist.





R. J. Manquees '87

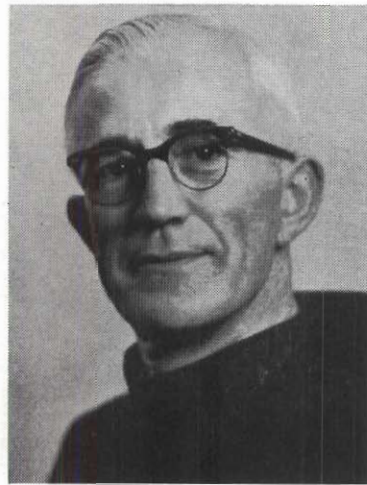
Paroisse Saint Jean-Baptiste de Victoria

"Paroisse Saint-Jean-Baptiste"





Madame Yvonne Fortin-Terrien



Father Clément-Marie Lépine,  
OFM, 1957



Father Harold S. Heard,  
Parish Priest  
"St-Jean-Baptiste" of  
Victoria, 1987.

## "Paroisse Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Victoria " 1957-1991

Living in the shadow of a church steeple is part of the French Canadian way of life. Considering this fact, it was only normal that the French-speaking Canadians of Victoria would want to own a place where they could attend religious services in their own language. *Le Club Canadien-Français* founded in 1941, had allowed them to know each other and to meet more often. As far as religion was concerned, Father J.A. Gaudet, chaplain of the Club, presided over the Blessed-Sacrament services which were followed by a homily in French and a meeting of friends. The Franciscan Fathers from the French parishes of Maillardville and Port Alberni occasionally celebrated mass at Loretto Hall during their visits to Victoria but that did not suffice to the members who wanted their own parish. The Franciscans, friends of the Club members, shared their enthusiasm.

On October 8, 1952 at an annual meeting the Club approved the opening of a special bank account for the establishment of an eventual parish and a sum of one hundred dollars was deposited. It was also decided that the profits generated from card parties and other revenues from social reunions would be deposited in the special fund.

At the 1954 general meeting the special account surpassed the three thousand dollar mark; at this time three persons were appointed to go and meet Bishop Hill and request the permission to take a one thousand dollar option on the Saint Mathias Anglican Church and its parish hall situated on the corner of Richmond Avenue and Lillian Street.

Bishop Hill did not immediately reply to the Club's request. Signatures were gathered and a petition was sent to him .

Finally, in February 1956 Bishop Hill met the club's representatives and declared that he was favorable to the idea of forming the parish along with the purchase of the Saint-Mathias Anglican church provided that it was paid cash.

From this meeting onward, events moved along rapidly. The club had always entertained a good relationship with the *Conseil de la Vie Française en Amérique* thanks to the French Liaison Travels organized every year. The *Conseil* had many times stated its support for French Canadians in Victoria and for their objectives.

The Club president, Mrs. Yvonne Fortin-Terrien went to the annual meeting of the *Conseil de la Vie Française* and presented the project for the founding of a parish. She explained that another eight thousand dollars was needed to meet Bishop Hill's condition paying cash for the Anglican church purchase. After serious consideration the Council made an eight thousand dollar grant which the Club promised to return to the donor if the Church project was unsuccessful.

Bishop Hill obtained Rome's approval for the creation of the French national parish in Victoria on March 4, 1957; he received the long awaited permission and communicated the news to Mr. A.W. Chrétien, president of the special committee(1). The authorized people were then able to terminate the necessary transactions between the Anglican church and the Catholic Diocese authorities.

One other hurdle remained; finding a Francophone priest to become pastor of the new parish. The parishioners waited more than six months before Father Clément Lépine, O.F.M. accepted the new post.(2)

On April 7, 1958, to celebrate the anniversary of the Vatican's authorization (March 4, 1957), Bishop Hill presided over the official blessing of the building. At a later

meeting of the Club, the members proposed a plaque to commemorate the gift that the club made of the church to the Victoria diocese; it was also proposed that this plaque be placed in perpetuity in the church.

The objective reached, the Parish and the Club established their own administration councils; it must be noted that they always cooperated in certain projects while working independently in other areas of activities.

### **Churchwardens and Parish Committees**

Life in a parish is naturally based on its religious services; this being said, there must also be an administration council composed of members called the church wardens; at *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* these men and women are supported by two organizations, one called the *Club Saint-Jean-Baptiste* for men and the other one for the women called *Le Cercle Sainte-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus*(3). The first meeting of the Parish Council was held on December 6, 1957 in the parish hall. Clément Lépine, O.F.M. was present, also present were the church wardens: Messrs Henri Côté, Claude Gaudet, O.W. Chrétien, Gérald Moreau, Ph. D. and Jean-Paul Schiller. Three of these people were still members of the council in 1963. Dr Gérald Moreau was the secretary from 1957 to 1961.

### **Another Franciscan Priest**

On February 27, 1962 Father Ignace-Marie Benoit, O.F.M. presided at the meeting of the *Cercle Sainte-Thérèse* in the absence of Father Clément who was hospitalized. Father Clément returned to the parish and resumed his duties as pastor until March 1963 when he suddenly passed away during a meeting in the parish hall.

Father Alexis Auger, O.F.M. became the new parish priest. At the appointment, Mgr. Remi De Roo, Bishop of Victoria, gave instructions on the election of church wardens. In April, in line with the new instructions, the two most senior members had to retire to allow for partial elections. Every year the two most senior numbers had to give up their places but could be reelected. A minimum of three persons and a maximum of five could be nominated. According to the rule Messrs. Côté and Schiller had to withdraw prior to the elections when all the parishioners were entitled to vote. Messrs. François Théberge and Olivier Thibault became the newly elected members.

### **The purchase of a future Rectory**

On January 10, 1964 Mr. Jos. McKenna sent a letter to the Bishop and the parish informing them that the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parish had the first option on the house next to the church at 311 Richmond Avenue. After the customary consultations, it was decided to buy this property for \$6000. cash. A loan was obtained from the bank in order to pay the house and make some repairs for renting. Thanks to the untiring work of the two parish clubs, le *Club Saint-Jean Baptiste* and le *Cercle Sainte-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus* the debt was paid in very little time.

### **Women as Wardens**

On November 11, 1969 Mr. Claude Gaudet was presiding the meeting of the Wardens. Present were: Messrs. Clément Gaudet, Olivier Thibault, Henri Côté, Jean-Paul Schiller, Mrs Yvonne Fortin-Terrien, Miss Irène Guertin and Mr. Louis-Philippe Fortier. On March 7, 1969 a resolution of the ecclesiastic council had recommend that at least two women be part of the warden council and these



nominations were left to the discretion of the Parish pastor and the elected Wardens. On November 4, Father Auger had approved the nomination of Mrs. Terrien and Miss Guertin. It was also recommended that Miss Mary Whitehead, great benefactress of the parish be also member of the council. It was desirable to form a Finance Committee to assist the Parish Priest. Mr. Henri Côté became the president of the Finance Committee and Miss Irène Guertin was well qualified to become the official secretary. She accepted and remained in office until 1979.

#### **Parish handed over to the Diocese.**

At a meeting held on November 28, 1972 it was reported that the Franciscan Fathers wished to hand over the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parish to the diocese as recorded in the minutes of their meeting, Father Alexis Auger had finished his mandate as pastor of the parish and the Franciscan Fathers could not assure his replacement. Subsequently, a meeting would take place between Bishop De Roo and parish representatives to chose Father Auger's successor.

The parishioners were disappointed and saddened by Father Alexis' resignation for they dearly loved him; but all was not lost. When Father Alexis announced his official resignation he mentioned that his superiors could not at the time find a replacement and that with their permission he could probably remain as priest in charge for the diocese. The council of the Franciscan Fathers did not object that Father Alexis continue to celebrate mass on Sundays in the parish provided he accepted to render this service. Following this information, Father Don MacDonald made it clear that such an arrangement did not in any way change the fact that the parish was now the responsibility of the diocese.



### **Father Alexis Auger's Death**

Father Alexis Auger passed away on May 16, 1978. He was eighty-seven years old. A few weeks later, on June 26, Bishop De Roo paid a ceremonial visit to the parish. A high mass was celebrated assisted by Father Ignace Benoît, O.F.M., acting Parish Priest of *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* and Father Zwonko, pastor for the Croatian Catholic Community, (4). After mass, a reception presided by the Bishop took place in the church hall. After having emphasized the works accomplished by Fathers Clément Lépine and Alexis Auger and expressed his gratitude towards the Franciscan Order for having sheltered these two priests since the founding of the parish, His Excellency insisted on appointing for the parish a Francophone priest. He said that he was convinced that Victoria should have a French-speaking church but that the parishioners had to assure its survival.

In December of 1977, at the fifteenth anniversary of his consecration as Bishop, His Excellency Remi De Roo had awarded Medals of Merit to the Reverend Father Alexis Auger and to Mme Yvonne Fortin-Terrien in recognition of the invaluable services they rendered to the French parish. His excellency had reserved for himself the pleasure of personally offering, during his canonical visit, another medal of Merit to Mr. and Mrs. Henri Côté, two people who had generously worked for the parish since its founding.

### **The Parish and the Diocese**

It was necessary to communicate the needs of the Parish to the Diocese. On July 12, 1978 it was reported that Louis-Philippe Fortier, Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean-Paul Schiller had met Gérald Ricard, assistant-administrator at the Bishop Office, to talk about the needs of the Parish. A letter

prepared by J.P. Vinay was presented and Mr. Ricard promised the case will be submitted to the Bishop.

### **New Parish Priests.**

From September 1978 to June 1979 the Reverend Father Harold Heard was the parish priest at *Saint-Jean Baptiste*. In his message of appreciation published in the supplement of *Le Soleil de Colombie* at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the parish, Father Heard wrote: "*Upon my arrival in Victoria, Sister Patricia lodged me as well as Miss Irène Guertin. My thanks also to Jean-Marie Fortier whom I saw almost every day, to Miss Eliana Mathieu and especially to Mrs Fortin-Terrien (5) the cornerstone of the Francophone community, to Aline Tétreault for the religious instructions and to the Decibels for creating a very lively atmosphere. My thanks to all those who contributed to the beautifying of the rectory. Finally we owe to Bishop Remi De Roo the continual existence of this Francophone enclosure so important for the capital of British Columbia.*"

Father Harold Heard, the only son of two children, was born in Sunderland at Tyne and Weaverside in England in 1913. In 1926 he studied at the Holy-Spirit minor seminary at Saint Mary's College at Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria, England. He later studied in Belgium and France between 1932 and 1940 during which time he suffered the horrors of the war. Finally, he was ordained a priest on November 1, 1941 and left for the missions in Africa two years later where he remained until 1978. Soon after his arrival in Victoria he was appointed pastor at the *Saint-Jean Baptiste* parish on September 1, 1978.

During his stay he requested that the statues be put in prominent position behind the wax candles. Father Heard

left the parish in 1979 but returned in 1984 and is still the pastor to this day.

On June 12, 1979 Bishop De Roo called a special meeting of the Parish Council to announce that he needed Father Heard's services elsewhere and that he had found a French speaking priest for the parish: Father André Dion.

Father Dion immediately took up his post at the same conditions as had his predecessor.

**Testimonial by Father André Dion  
on the Parish Beginnings.**

"The parish is part of my memories. I recall the visits that Father Albéric Fréchette from Maillardville and myself paid to Father Clément Lépine, the first *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parish priest.

At the time I was a vicar at *Notre-Dame-de Lourdes*. I lived in Maillardville from July 1958 to 1962. During those years Father Fréchette and I used to go and pay a short visit to the French parish in Victoria.

Father Fréchette meant a lot in the founding of their parish in Victoria. He always encouraged other French centers throughout British Columbia. It was then only natural for him to stay in contact by visiting Father Clément, a Franciscan like himself and by meeting Mrs. Terrien, Mrs. Parent and many other persons dedicated to the parish. Being Father Fréchette's vicar we often travelled together and little by little he got me interested in the French cause.

At that time Father Lépine had a room close to the kitchen. This room later became his office. According to our recollection French classes were held at that time where the *Nouveaux Horizons* hall is now situated. The parish priest was very proud to have us visit his church.

Eventually Father Clément moved to Robertson Street close to the church; not much later, Mrs. Terrien decided to cede to the Franciscan Fathers her house on Joan Crescent Street and take up residence in her new home on Robertson Street.

From the new larger dwelling transformed into a monastery the Franciscans could administer the French parish where Father Clément Lépine became the first pastor. A few years later Father Clément passed away; he was succeeded by Father Ignace Benoît as acting parish priest until Father Alexis Augers' appointment.

Father Harold Heard's arrival in 1978 turned a new page in the history of the parish. The parishioners decided to lodge the new priest in the house adjacent to the church which became the new presbytery.

July 3, 1979 was an important date in my life as a priest when Bishop Remi De Roo asked me to replace Father Harold Heard. Kneeling in the small *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* church I thanked the Lord I had returned to the parish that I visited from its beginnings.

At that time I thought admiringly of all the priests who had preceded me and of the numerous parishioners who had given their time, their talents and their energies to the church in order to preserve it as a precious French-speaking parish."

In March 1983, on Father Dion's thirtieth anniversary of his priesthood, the Club, the Foundation and the Auxiliaries offered him a gift. As a foot note one must recall that Father Engelbert Paradis, O.F.M. and members of the St-Joseph Priory in Victoria gave the parish a helping hand on various occasions.

## Religious and Cultural Activities

From the very beginning of the parish an organ was given. Miss Irène Guertin became the organist and remained so for many years. A choir was formed and Mr. M.P. McLean later became the church organist.

Mrs. Henriette Moreau and Mr J.-B. Quillévéré lent their beautiful voices as soloists when the church celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding. They continued to sing for weddings, funerals and midnight masses.

It would be difficult to name all the ladies who served the parish as sacristans; when reading the minutes of the *Cercle Sainte-Thérèse* one becomes aware that many dedicated themselves to this task. The precious altar cloths and albs which are no longer in use because of liturgical changes are being carefully kept. Madeleine Ricard is presently taking care of the alter linen.

In 1964, a library was created for the parishioners' use, it contained 500 books. Religious and French instructions were given at the parish. Among those who gave their time to these works you find Pierrette Paquette, Marie Robillard, Réal Topping, Louis-Philippe Fortier, Eliana Mathieu, Sister Elizabeth of the *Notre-Dame des Anges Congregation*, Marie-Paul Vinay, Marie Emmanuelle Vinay and OliveTetreault. Gérald Moreau and AntoinetteVaucher taught French to the Anglophone members of the parish.

Other people as well devoted themselves to those classes; however, although their names may not appear in the minutes they are no less inscribed in the memories of numerous parishioners.



## **The 25th Anniversary of the Founding of the Parish**

A week of rejoicing underlined this anniversary. From the 18th to the 26th of June 1982, the parishioners met for various activities. Mrs Dolorès McLean was the writer of a memorial newspaper which had been published as a supplement to the *Soleil de Colombie* of Vancouver. The parishioners had been invited to provide their biographies. Interesting historical notes were included. This supplement was widely distributed and some people preciously kept it. Upon this occasion, Mrs. McLean had been interviewed on the local television by Mr. Jean Lagassé. Mr. Lagassé had also interviewed Messrs. Henri Côté and Raymond Plante. The latter organized the activities held at the *Saint-Jean Baptiste* parish to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary.

During this interview, Mr. Côté spoke about the works accomplished. This is what he had to say:

"When you buy a house you seldom find it exactly the way you want it. You have to make changes, therefore I would like to give you a glimpse of almost all the work that was done there. (8)

We had to begin by reinforcing the building because the wind blew right through the floors. There was only a small oil furnace in the back of the church to heat the whole building. Inside we then built a platform for the choir and confessionals in the back of the church. We also installed an electric organ and a system of loud-speakers. Father Clément did not have a very strong voice, so he needed loudspeakers.

In the sanctuary, we must especially mention the Schiller(6) family for it is they who furnished and made almost everything from the altar to the beautiful scene of the Last Supper, as well as the side altar, the communion rail,



the candlesticks, the small benches for the altar boys, the plants, the flowers and the tabernacle. The magnificent crucifix behind the altar was obtained from the Sisters of Ste-Anne; at that time Mr. Schiller worked at the convent.

Most of the painting maintenance in the building was done by Mr. François Quillévére.

Several donations were made to the parish. Among them, the amount of \$6,000. was given by Mrs. Alida T. Chrétien for the maintenance and the upkeep of the church properties. (7)

Every Catholic church needs a steeple and since the old Saint Mathias church didn't have it, one was built in the parish hall in 1959. Subsequently the steeple was lifted atop the church. In the mean time, an oil heating system was installed in the hall to keep the whole building warm.

In 1967 the eighteen foot space between the church and the hall was closed; this created two classrooms for the children. A new entrance and a vestibule were added; furthermore, the floors of the hall and the church were replaced; the walls inside the hall were also covered with acoustical tiles. In 1981-82, the parishioners, with government help, built a wall between the church and the classrooms; these two rooms were transformed with carpets, furniture, a billiard-table, a piano and other items for the *Nouveau-Horizons* group."

Mr. Côté was always very active in the parish; he was churchwarden from the very beginning and was re-elected for many years.

At one interview, Mr. Raymond Plante, tireless organizer, described the daily activities of the celebrations. He expressed the desire to reside in Victoria which he had the opportunity of visiting in 1960. He moved to the city in 1974; from then on to 1990, when he was transferred to

Vancouver. Mr. Plante gave much of his time to and shared his experience with the parish. A churchwarden for many years he always actively took care of the administration, the upkeep of the parish and the services for senior citizens. He was an indefatigable collaborator, always ready and willing to help. He had a gift for proposing solutions to many problems. Renting the parish halls is an important source of revenues. Mr. Plante served as a liaison officer between the parish and groups.

United behind their pastor, Father Harold Heard, the church-wardens constitute the principal link of the faultless chain that the history of the parish represents. Dedicated men and women worked as members of the parish council since 1957, that is, since the founding of the *Saint-Jean Baptiste* parish and all gave time and energy unselfishly. The churchwardens of today are:

President,	Gérald Moreau, Ph D.
Vice-President.,	Ginette Vallée
Secretary,	Jean-Claude Vincent
Treasurer,	Jean-Marie Fortier

Members: François Aubert, Julie Barrand, Hector Buissière, Henri Côté, Claude Gaudet, Mireille Larminay, François Quillévé, Daniel Nadeau, Angèle St-Amour, Lloyd Johansson.

### **The Saint-Jean-Baptiste Parish Bulletin**

Unlike most parishes that distribute a weekly bulletin *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* publishes one once a month. It is a small parish and it means few volunteers. Printing a bulletin on a weekly basis is costly and being small, the parish budget is limited. On the other hand, whereas other churches publish their bulletins in a greater frequency but normally containing only four pages, *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parish prints a more voluminous bulletin, usually six to ten pages. Several parishioners have undertaken this work in the past, in most cases the endeavor lasted a year or so and the task of finding replacements was always difficult. (9)

Since 1989, the Parish Council president, Gérald Moreau, decided that rather than live in a climate of uncertainty, he would write the bulletin himself provided some one assisted him particularly in the typing, something he could not do himself. Through sheer necessity, he became editor of the Parish Bulletin.

In the fall of 1990, once again, having no one to type the bulletin, it was the church's good fortune that Ginette Vallée kindly offered her services and became so to speak, associate-editor. Mrs. Vallée immediately gave the church bulletin a new face-lift, she changed the format of the pages from legal size to letter size; at certain important religious feasts such as Christmas and Easter she embellishes with drawings on the cover-sheet and other pages. She also added colour to the bulletin by offering the cover-sheet in red, yellow, green and blue, making it much more attractive than the rather drab way in which it used to be presented. Most important of all, Ginette Vallée pledged to devote many years to this work thus avoiding the many interruptions of past times.

The hours of various religious services and the names of the different committees are printed on the cover-page . Inside the bulletin readers find reflections on religious and moral topics according to the time of the year, short quotations from the Gospel and announcements of parish religious and social activities. Lastly, one page is filled with paid announcements, something that helps defray the cost.

A special bulletin is planned for Father Heard's fiftieth anniversary of the priesthood on November 1, 1991. This special edition will include among other things, a photograph and a short biography of the parish priest, a message by His Excellency Remi De Roo, Bishop of Victoria and homages from the parishioners. This very special bulletin will be printed on paper of excellent quality. This project is enhanced by the welcome cooperation of Marie Woodridge and Ginette Leblanc, respectively president and director-general of *La Société Francophone de Victoria*. Other people: Diane Huettl, Henriette Moreau and Roberto Marquez are giving a helping hand.

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NOTES:

- (1) The Special committee was composed of Mr. O.W. Chrétien, Mme. Yvonne Fortin-Terrien , Mr. Jos. Moreau, dentist and Mr. Jean-Paul Schiller.
- (2) The date of the Parish foundation was November 22, 1957 and the first high mass was on the first Sunday of December 1957. (Minutes of the meeting of the *Cercle Ste-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus*, Page 175.)
- (3) In the documentation of the parish we found that le *Cercle Ste-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus* was organized in October 1958. Mrs. Jeannette Schiller was the first president and Mrs. Marie Côté became

the president in 1960. The first minutes of the meetings found were dated January 19, 1960.

(4) Around 1975 the Croates were renting the church of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste parish to hold their own services. They were paying \$10.00 each time they were using the church.

(5) Mme. Yvonne Fortin-Terrien arrived in Victoria in 1940 as a retired person. At the time, she never thought her next 40 years in Victoria would be so fruitful. The following are some of her accomplishments:

- Foundation of *Le Club Canadien-Français* in 1941.
- Creation of *la Fédération Canadienne-Française provinciale* in 1945
- Acquisition of a French Catholic parish in 1957
- Organization of a French library
- Establishment of a Foundation for cultural assistance.

In 1939 the University of Ottawa had conferred her le. *Prix d'Action Catholique* in reward for the work done with the Dominicain Institute. She was married to Georges Terrien on May 10, 1915 and they had one daughter, Yvette, married to the honorable Noël Barbes, judge at Amos, Qc. Due to illness she left Victoria for Amos in 1980 and she died in 1982 at the age of 87. She is buried in the Notre-Dame cemetery in Ottawa.

(6) Jean-Paul Schiller, well qualified carpenter, did most of the woodwork in the Sanctuary.

(7) Mrs. Chrétien died on May 12, 1974.

(8) This purchase was made in 1957

(9) It would be impossible to name everyone who help for the bulletin but they are remembered.

## The Franciscan Fathers in Victoria

In 1961, Bishop J.M. Hill consecrated Saint Joseph's convent, the Franciscan residence, at 1076 Joan Crescent in Victoria. By this gesture he acknowledged, with some delay, the Franciscan Father's patience and dedication. This convent was preceded by the first Franciscan missions established on Vancouver Island in 1789, thus 172 years before.

### The Franciscan Fathers on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

In 1774 the Franciscan Fathers Juan Crespi and Tomás de la Peña Seravia accompanied don Juan Perez commander of the Spanish corvet *Santiago* which was exploring the Pacific north coast. Father Crespi wrote in his diary that on August 6 they arrived within sight of the land that we now know as Vancouver Island (1)

On Sunday, the next day, the two priests celebrated mass on board and again on August 10, feast of Saint Laurence, and on the 15th, feast of the Assumption. (2) The ship could not reach the sixtieth parallel as planned nor disembark on the coast to erect a cross. (3)

The following year the Spaniards returned with a considerably larger crew. On August 18, 1775 they disembarked at the 57°18' in the vicinity of Sitka and in two other areas at approximately 56° near Ketchikan. These points are situated in what we know today as the coast of Alaska.

On February 17, 1789 a flotilla of two ships commanded by Don Estaban José Martinez, arrived at the San Blas port on the South sea. The purpose of his mission was



to explore the Pacific coast from Monterey towards the north.

The expedition consisted of officers, sailors, soldiers, two chaplains and four Franciscan missionaries who were Father Severo, superior, Lorenzo Lacies, Jose Espi and Francesco Sanchez.

In June 1789 they anchored at 49°33' latitude north and 20°18' longitude west in the Santa Cruz port one of the numerous havens in the San Lorenzo de Nuca bay. On June 25 the commander had a cross erected and claimed the territories discovered since 1774 in the name of Charles III, King of Spain - the Crown of Castille and Leon - in virtue of Pope Alexander VI's bull. The first Franciscan mission was thus founded at Nootka on the west coast of Vancouver Island .(4)

Commander Martinez had previously seized a few English merchant ships in the Nootka bay, John Meares, co-owner, reported his ships' seizure to London. Altercations and threats of war between London and Madrid followed; however an agreement between the two capitals put an end to the quarrel. By this agreement Spain promised to reimburse the damages caused by the seizures of the vessels. It was followed by the third Nootka accord; Spain and England recognized for each other the right to trade in Nootka as well as in other coastal areas not yet under Spanish control. At this point in time, neither Spain nor England could maintain a permanent establishment whether a garrison or a trading post. Pursuant to the Accord the Franciscan missionaries were obliged to abandon their San Lorenzo de Nuca mission in Nootka. This interruption of Franciscan missions lasted 172 years. (5)

Even before Saint Joseph's priory was opened a few Franciscans answered Bishop Hill's call by accepting the re-

sponsibility of two parishes, one in Port Alberni in 1950 and the other in Victoria in 1957. Names that come to mind are Fathers Chicoine, Lépine, Paradis and Auger.

According to a report by Father Hervé Blais, archivist for the Franciscan Fathers in Montreal, Father Chicoine, the second Parish Priest at the Notre-Dame parish in Alberni, was an ardent patriot and actively involved in the French Canadian cause in both Alberta and British Columbia. It is believed that he personally intervened at the Apostolic Delegation for the granting of a national French parish in the city of Victoria. When Bishop Hill of Victoria officially announced the creation of the new parish, Father Chicoine was overjoyed. Many parishioners were good friends with the Franciscan Fathers and this may have influenced the Superior of the Order. At any rate the priests who ministered to the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parish, to the Ste Ann Academy, in particular Father Engelbert Paradis, who celebrated mass there everyday, were quite well known by the people of Victoria.

Father Clément-Marie Lépine arrived in Victoria in November 1957 and became the first priest at the Saint-Jean-Baptiste parish. He dedicated himself to this parish until January 10, 1963 when he passed away suddenly at a meeting in the church hall. Born on June 29, 1899, Father Lépine entered the Franciscan novitiate in 1923 and was ordained a priest in June 1930. Except for the time spent at the novitiate, this Montreal citizen spent and worked most of his life away from his province of Quebec. His first nine years of priestly life were spent teaching in the Edmonton College in Alberta, in Fort Saskatchewan and in Morinville. The time spent in Japanese concentration camps (December 1941-June 1942) after only four years of apostolic works

took a heavy toll on his health. Of these four years he spent two as superior of the Denenchofu convent in Tokyo.

Upon his return to Canada the Maliseet home in New-Brunswick retained him as superior from September 1942 to March 1943. Subsequently he was asked to work on the Pacific Coast amongst the Japanese fisherman deported to Kaslo, B.C.(New Denver) by the Canadian Government. Father Lépine was always attracted by Japan, but his second obedience to Japan in 1948 lasted less than one year because of his poor health. His sense of dedication drew him to Winnipeg, to Saint Charles in Manitoba and to Cochrane in Alberta. His last post as a priest was the French Canadian Parish in Victoria, B.C.. Father Clément Lépine was remembered for his many qualities: his frankness, his gentleness and his great priestly charity.

Another Franciscan priest, Father Alexis-Marie Auger, succeeded Father Lépine. Father Auger was born in Roxton Falls, (Quebec) in 1890. His parents called him Joseph Charles; upon entering the Franciscan Order he was named Alexis. He began his studies with the Marist Brothers in his natal village and later pursued his classical studies at St-Hyacinthe, Qc. He joined the Franciscan Order in August 1910 and was ordained a priest in Quebec City by Cardinal Begin.

Six months after his ordination he left for Europe where he taught French, Latin and Greek in Holland, Switzerland and France. The first World War period created some hardships for Father Alexis Auger. Between 1918 and 1923 he preached, became chaplain for the Clarisse Sisters and was appointed superior of the Franciscan monastery and noviciate in Amiens, France.

When Father Alexis Auger returned to Canada in 1923 he practised his ministry in Montreal, Quebec and

Maliseet, New-Brunswick. In 1940 he was appointed superior and professor at the Franciscan monastery at Biddeford Maine and he remained in the United States until 1948. Upon his return to Canada he was appointed to posts in New-Brunswick, in Alberta and in Quebec. He was living in Edmonton, Alberta when he was chosen as parish priest for the Saint-Jean-Baptiste church. While ministering to the French parish he became superior of the Franciscan convent for a while. Father Alexis Auger was well liked by his parishioners and his friends who remember him fondly. Very shortly after his death, Father Ignace-Marie Benoit, O.F.M became interim parish priest.

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NOTES:

- (1) *Diary of the Sea Expedition* made by the *Frigate Santiago* ... in Herbert Eubene BOLTON, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1027 p. 345-346 ( Archives of B.C. *Memoire No 11*, Victoria, B.C. Kings Printer, 1914 p.10-12.
- (2) Father Crespi in *Diary of Sea Expedition* ... p.346, 352, 355
- (3) *Ibid*, p. 365
- (4) *Journal of a Voyage in 1775 to explore the coast of America* in Daines BARRIINYGTON, *Miscellanies*, J. Nichols 17781, p. 469-534, see in particular p. 504-509 (All this is written in the "Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa", Page 216, Title of the Chapter: *L'implantation de l'Eglise catholique en Colombie-Britannique- 1838-1848*
- (5) BARRT M. COUGH, article *Nootka Sound* in *Canadian Encyclopedia*. Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers 1985, Vol II p. 1263-64
- (6) *Obituary*, Victoria Times, January 10, 1963. Also *obituary notice* Franciscan Archives.
- (7) *Obituary notice*, Franciscan Archives.

## "Scouts et Guides" in Victoria

On October 24, 1979 parents held their first meeting in the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* hall at 307 Richmond Ave to begin a Scouts and Guide movement. Two persons, Dolores McLean and Carl McLean attended an instructional session for the Scouts in April of 1979. Two other persons, Janice Closson and Lise Fortier, did the same for the Guides.

Madeleine Mulaire was given the responsibility for the formation of the Guides and Napoléon Gareau for the recruiting of the Scouts. The *Jeannettes* met for the first time on November 7, 1979. The round, which was eventually recognized, became the fourth round of the *Cornouillers*. The membership fee for each *Jeanette* was \$15.00 and \$10.00 for the second *Jeanette* of the same family.

An action plan was proposed in 1980 for the establishment of Scoutism and in the same year a meeting for the *Castors* attracted 23 girls and boys.

The first *Jeannettes* expressed their promises on March 5, 1980; there were nine of them and on this occasion their banner was presented. The first company of Guides was formed only three years later. Officially recognized in September of 1985, it bears the name "Compagnie Tékakwitha de Victoria."

Various activities were organized for the Guides such as a summer camp at Kingswood in 1985 and a survival camp on Saltspring Island in December. The *Castors* ceased their activities in 1982 for lack of animators. Four years later, in January 1986, the *Castors* movement was resurrected and a pack of Scouts was seriously considered. Several people, among whom Aline Tétréault, took part in this venture. In the ensuing months the whole "Scout et

Guide" movement came to life in Victoria and remained healthy ever since thanks to dedicated people such as Monique Arseneault, Pierre Gagnon and Bruce Riddick. Team spirit and solidarity are fundamental goals amongst Guides and Scouts; they must at all times keep in mind the desire to help others and to be willing to serve God and country.



**"Fondation Canadienne-française d'Aide  
culturelle de la Colombie-Britannique"  
1864**

The foundation owes its existence to Mr. Henri Côté who, with a group of *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parishioners, wanted to provide financial assistance to Francophone activities of the time.

A committee suggested the setting-up of a fund for mutual help that would accumulate a pool of money; this money would then help maintain what had already been acquired by the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parish, thanks especially to a gift of \$8,000 by *Le Conseil de la Vie Française en Amérique*; as well, the special fund might assist other Francophone parishes in British Columbia.

The Foundation was established on September 23, 1964 and immediately began its work. The principal aim of the French Canadian Foundation for Cultural Assistance in British Columbia was mutual help in the religious and cultural areas serving the Catholic and French causes in British Columbia. Among the five founding members were Joseph Henri Côté, president, Hortense Ellwood, Bibiane Barbeau, Yvonne Fortin-Terrien and Alida Robinson-Chrétien; others joined the organization at the first general meeting held on September 24, 1964. (1)

This society had its legal registration on September 19, 1967 and became the *Fondation Canadienne-Française d'Aide Culturelle de la Colombie-Britannique* as it is known to-day. Every year at about the same date the event which was so important for the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parish and the Francophones is remembered.

There were many ways by which one could become a member of the *Fondation*, you could be an honorary donating member for life by donating \$500.00 or a founding

member for the sum of \$100.00 before September 1966 or simply become a regular member by paying \$10.00 per year. Two other membership categories were established: known benefactors and anonymous benefactors by donating substantial amounts to the *Fondation* during one's life or in your will.

The *Fondation* set an objective for itself at its inception: collect \$10,000.00 in the first ten years. No gift from the fund was to be made before reaching the objective. Another policy stipulated that the *Fondation* was to be completely separate from the *Cercle Paroissial* and the *Club Canadien-Français de Victoria*. Thanks to a gift of \$5,000. made by Mrs. Alida Chrétien in 1972, the *Fondation* was able to distribute 80% of its annual revenues. The other 20% of the annual revenues are reinvested to increase the capital.

The *Fondation* offers study bursaries and financially helps the French association of "Scouts et Guides" in Victoria. It also helps the religious instructions to the French children of the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste Parish*. In a sense the *Fondation* serves as an insurance policy since it guarantees the parish's existence. Any donation is always graciously accepted.

(1) The actual board of Directors is as follows: Madeleine Vincent, president; Rémi Moreau, Vice-president; Gérald Ricard, Secretary-Treasurer; Henri-Côté, Honorary President.

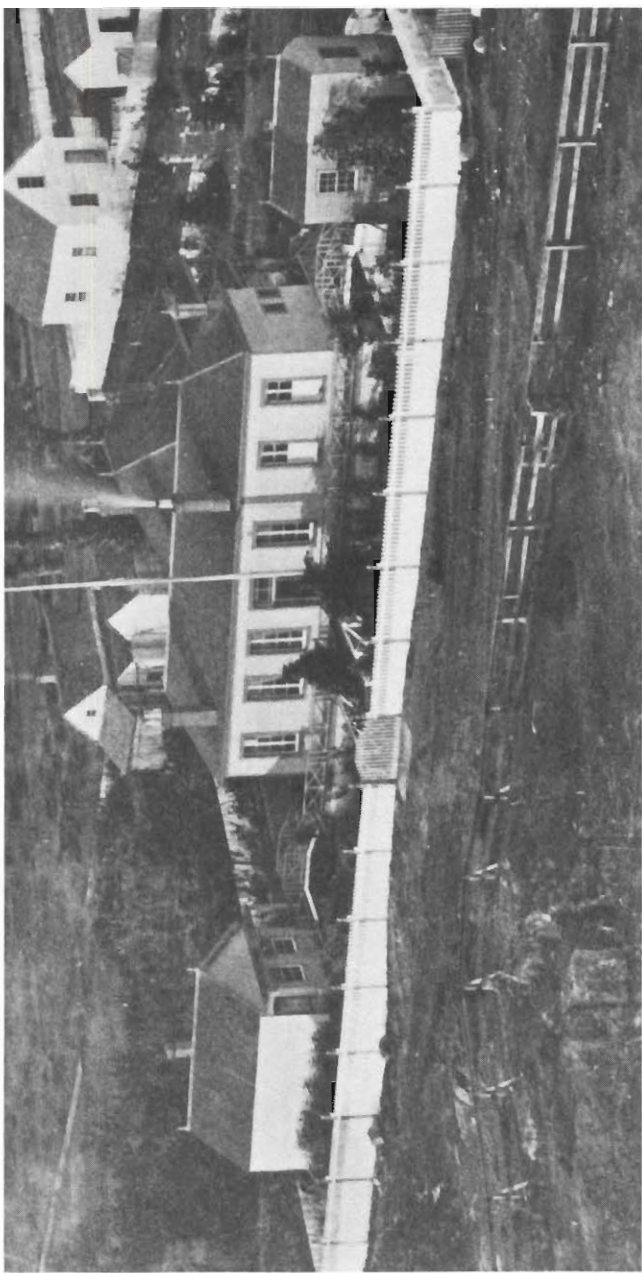
## "La Société Française de Bienfaisance et Secours Mutuels de Victoria - 1860 "

From the Colony's very beginning, a group of Frenchmen applied the principle of association for the care of sick people. Jules Rueff and Sosthèmes L. Driard arrived in Victoria in 1858; the former became merchant and the latter a hotel owner. Driard, born at Lachapelle in France, emigrated to California in 1850. With J. Rueff and J. Vaillant he had established in California a home for the sick and for the needy who were not members of the Society. Relying on their experience, on February 24, 1860 these two philanthropists set up an organization of mutual benefit in Victoria.

*The Colonist* of March 6, 1860 recognized that the French had created in Victoria a replica of the Relief Society existing in San Francisco; in fact, the statutes of both Societies were almost identical. For example, to become a member of the Society one had to be in good health and make a commitment to pay one dollar per month. In the newspaper advertisement the shareholders and the prospective shareholders were asked to go to the Police court (sic) to appoint an Executive Committee of eleven members according to the adopted statutes.

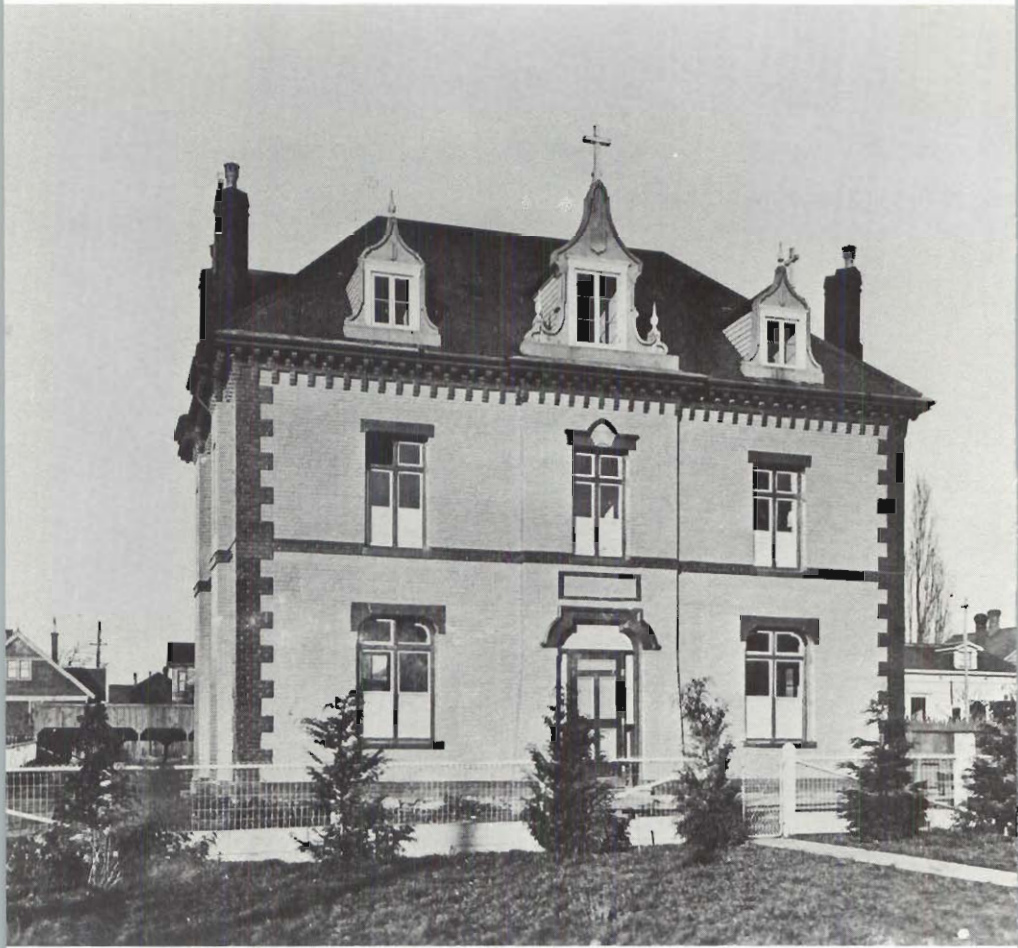
They could pay their subscription and make their donations to Mr. Perrodin on Johnson Street. Members were admitted at the hospital without cost; medication and doctors' were free. Everyone without distinction of nationality could be admitted at the hospital. The non-members of the Society had to pay a hospital fee according to a fixed rate.

In keeping with the Society rules, a majority of the administrators had to be French and negotiations had to be conducted in the French language. However, the rules were printed in English.



French Hospital of "La Société de Bienfaisance et de Secours Mutuel de Victoria." BCPA 9438





St. Louis College . (see page 86) BCPA 21833

A house situated on Herald Street between Government and Store Street and which belonged to Mr. Waddington was rented and converted into a twenty bed hospital.

The *Victoria Gazette* of June 8, 1860 announced that the hospital was ready to receive patients. On the same day the name of the members of the Board were published. They were:

P. Corbinière, President;	A. Ledrier, Vice-President;
T. Perrodin, Treasurer;	L.A. Hincelin, Secretary;

H.Banel	J. Bigne
A.Casamayou	L. Driard
P. Manetta	J. Rueff

J.B. Timmerman, Legal Counsellor; Dr Clerjon, physician

Dr Nicolet Michel Clerjon had studied at the "Clinique et Académie médicale de Paris" and had practised in China and in California. He had arrived in the Colony in 1858 and remained until his death in February, 1864. Doctor J.W. Powell succeeded him.

Thanks to a good administration it was possible to build a new hospital on Humbolt Street in 1865. Every year the names of the elected directors and the financial report were published. The local newspapers were highly complimentary of the hospital and praised the French people's generosity. Some pedestrians in the Beacon Hill park believed that the French flag they were viewing was on the Consulate. This building was an ambassador of peace where human suffering was relieved thanks to citizens generosity.



In 1870, the *Victoria Colonist* announced that the Society had planned to enlarge the buildings; the Society also wanted to beautify the one acre land with shrubs, flowers and sidewalks. The projects would cost several hundred dollars.

The members of the Society formed a large family and consequently their meetings were cheerful. In 1872 Mr. Driard, president, retired; he was offered a golden walking cane. By this gesture the members wanted to express their appreciation to the Society's founder and their gratitude for his dedication as president in the last four years.

An editorial published on January 29, 1873 indicated that the Society had more than two hundred members of every nationality. The hospital, surrounded by beautiful gardens and situated in one of the best districts of the city, was an ideal location for convalescents. The assets of the Society were evaluated in the hundreds of dollars. After providing medical care for many years, the hospital was compelled to close its doors in 1884; nevertheless the members continued making their contribution and receiving weekly allowances when they were ill. Their Society remained flourishing.

On April 22, 1890, all the members of the Society were summoned to an extraordinary meeting with the purpose of electing a committee that would meet Royal Jubilee authorities. Their committee intended to ask under what conditions might the two hospitals amalgamate. Should the conditions be unfavorable, the French Society would erect a new building. The Society assets were estimated at \$10,000. to \$12,000. .

On October 8, 1890 the two hospitals merged and the Royal Hospital which had existed from 1858 to 1890 became the Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital. The members of the *Société Française de Bienfaisance et Secours Mutuel*

*de Victoria* could elect to the new hospital three members as Directors. They became members for life which guaranteed them daily services in the clinic and the use of a bed if they needed hospital care. Up until 1937-38 the privilege of electing directors was used at least partially. In 1949, two members for life could still benefit from the advantages offered by the joining of the two hospitals.

The activities of the Society demonstrate that from the Colony's very beginning the Francophones of the province had the desire and the energy to unite and to survive. They were never numerous but they left their marks; to this day a handful of Francophones exists; they know how to live, to protect themselves and to enjoy themselves in French.

This mutual benefit society was "avant-garde" of our present medicare organization.

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## "L'Alliance Française"

The *Alliance Française* organization committee met in Paris on the afternoon of Saturday July 21, 1883 at 215 St-Germain Boulevard in a room of the historical Society surnamed *Cercle St-Simon*. A few people were members of this committee: Paul Cambon, resident general of France in Tunisie where the first *Alliance Française* was founded, was present at the meeting.

A decree of the Interior Ministry approved the Association on January 24, 1884; it is therefore on this date that the *Alliance Française* was founded or that, at least, its definite organization took place. The first elected president was Charles Tissot, former French Ambassador.

Action committees were formed and divided into fourteen sections of which number twelve for Canada, the United-States and Mexico. In Canada, *l'Union Nationale Française d'Amérique du Nord* comprising five hundred societies, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on June 24, 1884 at the very moment when in France the *Alliance Française* is founded and organized. Its action that places an important priority on language teaching facilitates the Administrative Counsel which, since 1885 has the power to appoint a delegate in Montreal. Two years later, a second delegation was entrusted to the Canadian poet Louis Fréchette, laureate of the *Académie*: he went to France where he was enthusiastically welcomed; upon his return he was given a new mission; that of creating stronger links with Laval university of Quebec City, a university far too long unknown in France.

### **In Canada**

The first permanent committee of the *Alliance Française* in Canada was founded in Montreal by a group of Canadians, both Anglophones and Francophones. Many other Canadian cities followed suite.

However, in 1951 all the *Alliances Françaises* in Canada held their general meeting in Ottawa where they decided to unite in a federation independent of the United States. The meeting elected as the first president the Right Honorable Thibodeau-Rinfret a former chief justice of Canada. Madame Geneviève de la Tour Fondue-Smith is now president of the *Fédération des Alliances Française du Canada* which has its headquarters in Montreal. The Federation extends from coast to coast and comprises 23 committees, each one administering itself. Many of them are located in their own building as is the case in Vancouver, Ottawa, Rivière du Loup.

The *Alliance Française* in Canada has two goals: pedagogical and cultural. The French courses are intended for both adults and children. For example, you will find in Ottawa a course for civil servants and a kindergarten in Winnipeg. Regina, Banff and Edmonton teach French and offer conversation classes. Specialized courses for the industries, classes for children, a diploma course in language and conversation for adults in Toronto as well as in Vancouver are offered via traditional and modern audio-visual methods. In addition, all committees have a library for the benefit of their members and receive books and disks from Paris and the Federation .

Every year, the Federation welcomes two lecturers officially delegated by France; they undertake a lecture tour and fulfill a highly worthwhile cultural mission throughout Canada. A variety of socio-cultural activities such as films

in French, concerts, theaters, expositions, etc. are part of the *Alliance Française* programs in Canada. Bursaries are also given to students learning French.

### **In Victoria**

The Victoria branch of the *Alliance Française* was founded in 1907. It was a humble beginning since there were very few members. The meetings were held either at the president's home or in a member's house. When reading the minutes of those meetings one quickly realizes that the emphasis was put on French conversation or the study of a book. In addition to that, the two official delegates from Paris came to give a lecture. In the 1960's the Alliance was very active. The meetings were held in the Fine Arts gallery on Moss Street twice a month, once in the afternoon and once in the evening. There were then approximately one hundred members. Lectures, classes for children were offered under the patronage of Eaton's store fashion show, parades and luncheon-meetings.

On Tuesday afternoons, traditionally, members met over a cup of tea, some cakes and sandwiches and engage in French conversation. A lecturer would put the process in motion and first devote a few minutes on a current affairs topic often accompanied by slides. This idea produced good results in that it provoked a conversation; thanks to the refreshments, the members were encouraged to speak at length.

*L'Alliance Française de Victoria* has remained active over the years and was ably guided by many presidents. In 1991, Madame Nicole St-Claire is in the fourth year of her mandate in the presidency.

Throughout the world on all five continents, *l'Alliance Française* has more than 1200 committees over

800 libraries, approximately a quarter of a million of students belonging to almost every nationality on earth and more than 300 schools of which the most important is *l'Ecole internationale de culture et de civilisation française de Paris* officially recognized by the University of Paris.

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## "La Société Francophone de Victoria "

Nineteen-forty-one, the Second world War period. A handful of French-speaking Canadians felt that they should unite in an association to protect the French linguistic and cultural heritage in British Columbia, but more particularly on Vancouver Island. Mr. Joseph Tremblay, (1) who lived at 730 Princess Avenue (cf. minutes of April 21, 1941), decided to open his house for the first meeting attended by only six persons. Determined pioneers as the following will show; their numbers increased at all their meetings. The President, Mr. Georges Terrien (Mrs. Yvonne Fortin-Terrien's husband), had given the following order: find all the French-speaking Canadians living on the Island, invite them, get them involved, unite them and keep them in an association.

### "Le Club Canadien-Français".

The French-Canadian Club of British Columbia (*Le Club Canadien-Français de la Colombie-Britannique*) had not only found a name for its association but had also given itself a goal: "Make a strong effort to find the French Canadians of British Columbia (Sic) Reunite them, regroup them, encourage meetings, develop its interest in the French language and help the members whenever possible". (cf. minutes of April 21, 1941).

Besides recruiting, other problems arose such as finding a center for the Club, to name but one. In the mean time, meetings were held here and there. Until 1957, that is to say, until the purchase of the Anglican church property at 301 Richmond Avenue, the Club met in private homes, in rented halls, in the Bishop's library and even outside in the gardens of Loretto Hall in the summer time. The Bishop of

Victoria, Mgr. Cody was sympathetic to the French Canadian movement in Victoria. As honorary president his name appears regularly in the Club's minutes; (2) one therefore easily understands why he lent his library. Father J.A. Gaudet, vicar of the Catholic diocese, was the first chaplain.

In his rallying cry, Mr. Terrien had amongst other things requested the interests of French-speaking Canadians be revived; however, in order to achieve this, the means had to be found. The Club's directors organized the *Saint-Jean Baptiste* (3) dinners, card parties, Christmas celebrations, a literary reading room in the "Veritas" library and many other activities.

As it was the second world war era, numerous military men from Quebec came to Victoria and Esquimalt for their army training; the Club attempted to make their stay in the city easier by organizing picnics and social gatherings to help them overcome boredom in a 'foreign land'. At a Club meeting in September 1942, it was announced that a contingent of 16,000 soldiers from eastern Canada would soon arrive; the task of entertaining such numbers of people was a tremendous challenge.

The military was not the Club members' only concern; in fact, in 1944, they decided on a fund raising drive in response to children's needs in France. (4) The following year, in 1945, they launched a fund raising campaign in favour of "Radio Saint-Boniface Limitée" and was able to send its modest but sincere contribution (5) to the Manitoba French speaking radio station.

On June 24, 1945, the first convention of the French language in British Columbia was held in Victoria; according to the Club annals, this convention, presided by Bishop Cody, constitutes an extraordinary importance for the future of the Francophone community. Upon this occasion the

French-speaking Canadians of this western-most province adopted the principle of a Federation of French Canadian groups in British Columbia. (cf. minutes of June 24, 1945) Three months later, on precisely September 2 and 3, the founding of the Federation is announced in Vancouver at a convention of British Columbia Francophone groups. At that convention the participants asked the *Club Canadien Français de la Colombie-Britannique Enregistré*. to transfer its charter to the new provincial association. This request later created some difficulties between the Federation and the French Canadian Club of British Columbia (6)

A new weekly newspaper had just been founded. The director and manager, Georges Bérubé, in an energetic campaign, quickly recognized the Club's attitude and was able to put good salesmanship and his French Canadian patriotism to good use. During the May 5, 1946 meeting, Mrs. Yvonne Fortin-Terrien moved that the Club buy a share worth \$100.00, an amount which seems insignificant in 1991 but certainly important in 1946 especially when considering their modest financial resources.

Mr. Joseph Tremblay and many others followed the example; a few months later the bankrupt newspaper disappeared from the Francophone provincial scene; and so did the shares. (7)

### **A New Goal**

From the very beginning the Victoria Club had spent its energies regrouping the French-speaking Canadians in the city by indeed very humble means; entertainment, gatherings and meetings. Time had come to set new goals, to seriously think of a parish for themselves, of a French-speaking parish that is. A Quebec proverb, which almost became a dogmatic truth, said that the language was the guardian of

the faith; in Victoria, in the nineteen fifties, faith became the guardian of the language. It is around the church steeple that Francophone Canadians would rally henceforth to preserve and promote their cultural and linguistic heritage. A parish, really their own, was a beautiful ideal but it could not be realized without money. (8)

Already, at its meeting of October 8, 1852, the Club had decided to open an account at the Perpetual Help Credit Union in order to deposit funds that the membership proposed to collect while waiting for the purchase of a church. The means by which these funds would be found were well known and many times used: card parties, social gatherings, donations and others. Slowly, the special fund as it was called, grew. On November 25, 1954, it consisted of \$3,020.42; two years later the fund had grown to \$6,358.75 and on November 12, 1956 the *Conseil de la Vie Française en Amérique*, an organization established with the aim of helping French speaking minorities in Canada and in the United States, added a donation of \$8,000.

The Saint Mathias Anglican Church property at 301 Richmond was for sale. Bishop Hill of the Catholic diocese of Victoria allowed the Club to buy the property under the condition that it be paid for with cash money. It is at this time that the *Conseil de la Vie Française* in Quebec came to the Club's rescue, for clearly the necessary funds were not there. From this point forward all efforts would be centered on obtaining a French speaking parish; signatures would be collected, money would have to be found and a committee of three persons was formed to meet the Bishop. Mgr. Hill encouraged the French Canadians to be patient. While waiting for the happy and greatly desired event, the Club had placed the parish, if it were granted, under the guidance of Saint John the Baptist. Finally, on March 4, 1957 Mgr. Hill tele-

phoned Mr. O.W. Chrétien to inform him that Rome had granted permission to create the French parish. In fact, the *Club Canadien-Français de la Colombie - Britannique* had bought the Anglican church on Richmond Avenue to give it to the Francophone people of Victoria.

The first priest of the French Church in the provincial capital, Father Clément Lépine, O.F.M. was introduced at the Club's general meeting on November 29, 1957. At another meeting of the Club held *Au Vieux Québec*, Madame Yvonne Fortin-Terrien requested as a favour that her house retain the name *Au Vieux Québec*. Upon occupying the house the Franciscan Fathers promptly renamed it Saint Joseph's Priory

Mission accomplished, the Club set other goals for itself, in particular a French language school in Victoria and began another Special Fund.

The Club continued its activities but not without some upheaval. For example, in 1960, it decided to withdraw from *La Fédération des Franco Colombiens*, and formed *Le Conseil Supérieur d'Administration sur l'île de Vancouver*. (The Superior Administration council on Vancouver Island (cf. minutes of October 19, 1960) This schism lasted only two years since Father Wilfrid Brazeau, pastor of the *Notre-Dame de Port Alberni* parish and member of the Conseil Supérieur, advised the Club to reintegrate the Federation ( cf. the minutes of January 16, 1962.) Hardly two weeks later, at a general meeting of January 29, 1961 the "Ladies" announced that they were withdrawing from the Club's executive board. An election was immediately called and Mr. Henri Côté was elected President of the Club.

The new decade, that of 1970-1980, began with a name change. The Club became *Le Club Canadien-Français*

*de Victoria*. It was the beginning of a new era, an era of grants from the Secretariat of State in Ottawa. Up until this point the Club had existed thanks to membership fees and to meagre funds raised from activities such as the ones already mentioned. Now, however, the Club would be able to take advantage of a new federal help policy for minority groups. The grants from Ottawa would in fact allow French-Canadians to blossom on Vancouver Island. At the monthly meeting of February, 1974, the president, Mr. Henri Côté read a letter in which he was asking a subvention from the Secretariat of State. Affirmative response; in September of the same year the Club received the sum of \$8,000. from Ottawa.

French cultural life continues to develop. The Socio-Cultural Centre (9) is established; animators are hired to encourage and help regional groups. More and more artists from Quebec, the Prairie provinces, Vancouver and even Maillardville offer programmes in Victoria. During this time French-speaking Canadians in the capital city organized a choir, a theater group, a café and an arts and crafts committee, the culinary art, a television programme, a history society, a bulletin and many other activities.

In passing, let us mention the creation in 1979 of a Francophone bookstore *Le Coin du Livre* managed by Nicole Cadorette; this new enterprise went from success to success. (10)

If the pioneers of the nineteen forties and the nineteen fifties could see the present state of their Club they would surely cry out: "Miracle"! Financially their forebears handled crumbs; this began to change in 1981 when the Club received from the Secretariat of State a \$45,000 grant which permitted it to hire a secretary and rent an office.



In 1982 the Club changed its name once again; it became *La Société Francophone de Victoria*.

As much as 1957 is an important date because of the founding of the French parish, as much 1985 is another important date because it concerns the French language school in Victoria. The new Canadian constitution gave French-speaking minorities educational rights that they had never enjoyed before. Taking advantage of the new rights a *programme-cadre de français* (French-language programme) was opened in September 1979 at the Uplands Elementary School; *l'École Victor Brodeur* already existed for the children of the military. Consequently, on May 23, 1984, a memorable date in the *Société Francophone de Victoria* annals, the Honorable Jean-Jacques Blais, Minister of National Defense, spoke of the possibility of amalgamating those two schools (cf. minutes of May 12, 1984). Commander Dezoba inherited the responsibility of beginning negotiations between *l'École Victor Brodeur* and the Victoria School Board. Mr. Jean Lagassé, as determined as an English bulldog, represented *La Société Francophone de Victoria*

Perseverance has its rewards. The *Programme Cadre* and the military School were amalgamated. To-day, as a result of those negotiations, there is one large school located on Head Street in Esquimalt; it bears the name *l'École Victor Brodeur*, a French-Language School for the French-speaking community of Victoria.

Yes indeed, if the pioneers could return, surely they would cry out: "It is a Miracle!"

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#### NOTES:

(1) Some people have wondered in the following years who was really the founder of the *Club Canadien-Français de la Colombie-Britannique*. At a meeting on January 7, 1945 Mrs. Georges Terrien

(Yvonne Fortin-Terrien) and Mr. Georges d'Estrubé acknowledged that Mr. Joseph Tremblay was the inspirer and the founder of the club.

(2) The first elections of le *Club Canadien-Français de la Colombie-Britannique* were held on June 9, 1942, in the Bishop's library. Mr. Louis Fortier was elected president. At a previous meeting on April 21, 1942 Bishop Cody had been appointed Honorary President of the Club.

(3) The Club organized its first *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* dinner at the Loretto Hall convent on Belleville Street. It cost .50¢ per person.

(4) By means of a lottery, two concerts, two church collections and a tag-day, the Club succeeded in gathering the sum of \$3,973.59 which it presented to the children of France ( cf. minutes of June 3, 1945)

(5) April 7, 1945 the newspaper *The Colonist* announces that *Le Club Canadien-Français de la Colombie-Britannique* collected \$113. to help the French Radio in Saint-Boniface, Manitoba. ( cf. Minutes June 3, 1945)

In 1950 the Club gave \$500.00 to the French Parish *Notre-Dame of Port Alberni* to help for the purchase of a church bell. At its founding the French-speaking parish was given \$8000. by *Le Conseil de la Vie française en Amérique*, a council dedicated to the preservation of the French language and culture in North America. The *Notre-Dame* parish of Port Alberni has now been completely taken over by the Anglophones and today there is not a single French word pronounced in the Church service.

(6) Having ceded its charter to *La Fédération Canadienne-Française de la Colombie-Britannique*, le Club de Victoria is now called *Le Cercle Canadien-Français de Victoria*. This transfer of the Charter was done under some conditions from the Victoria Club. Here they are as recorded in the minutes of August 27, 1946.

a) the Head-Quarters will remain in Victoria, B.C. ;

b) the first vice-president will be from Vancouver Island when the president resides on the main land;

c) consequently the charter, the official seal will be put at the disposal of the *Fédération* when the later feels it opportune. The Federation accepted the charter at its convention of September 1 and 2 of 1946. Four years later the *Fédération* returned the charter to *Le Cercle de Victoria* who accepted it and readopted its former name *Le Club Canadien-Français de la Colombie Britannique enregistré* while remaining in the provincial association .

(7) Many people on the main land such as parish priest, leaders of the French Canadian movement and individual members filled with good will bought shares. The ephemeral newspaper was always published with several weeks' delay. It disappeared from the French Canadian scene in British Columbia after only a few months of existence. The shares vanished as well.

(8) In 1951, the Club asked Mgr. Hill, Bishop of Victoria, for a mass and a sermon in French. The Bishop offered a Sunday mass and a sermon in French at 9:30 a.m. every two Sundays at Esquimalt. The distance made the offer unpractical (cf. Minutes of meeting, March 1, 1951)

(9) "Le Centre Socio-Culturel "which will become *Le Centre d'Accueil* is the object of another article in this book

(10) Created in 1979 *Le Coin du Livre* had already made a profit of \$6,000. in 1983. (cf. Minutes of meeting January 5, 1983); in September 1984 its turnover had reached \$100,000. In January 7, 1985 the manager declared that she expected a \$120,000. turnover for 1985. In 1986, the book-store changed its name to *Les Librairies Colombiennes Incorporées* . It filled orders from different branches established through British Columbia. The Victoria branch was named *La Librairie Française de Victoria*

## "L'Echo De La Colombie"

Every Association needs a means of communication. The *Club Canadien-Français de Victoria* is no exception to the rule. The Club felt it necessary to found its bulletin *L'Echo De La Colombie*, precursor to the *Phare*.

The nineteen sixties bring to mind important facts of our country, particularly in Quebec. It was the Quiet Revolution era. Jean Lesage and the Liberal Party in Quebec had been elected; the new Premier had surrounded himself with a team that they called *L'Equipe du Tonnerre*. (a team of great power like a Thunderbolt), a group of dynamic men and women who wanted to transform Quebec into a modern society. It was also the epoch of the separatist fever in Quebec. The Laurendeau-Dutton Commission on bilingualism and biculturalism established by Lester B. Pearson, Prime Minister of Canada, was travelling across our land listening to the Canadian population in order to learn what measures it should recommend to the Federal government that might satisfy the linguistic and cultural aspirations of the two founding races. The Quebec nationalistic effervescence had crossed the boundaries of *La Belle Province* to overflow into other regions of Canada. Even British Columbia had felt the new political fervor of Quebec. The French-speaking Canadian minorities had been claiming for a long time, without any great success, their educational and cultural rights; the opportunity had arrived, it seemed, when finally perhaps their case would be won. Never the adage "We must strike the iron while it is hot" was truer!

It is clear to one who begins to leaf through the pages of *L'Echo* published between 1964 and 1966, that French-speaking Canadians in Victoria, Vancouver, Mail-

lardville and elsewhere in British Columbia were fighting an epic battle so that in the end they would gain French-language schools and that the French-radio and television networks would be extended into their province. *L'Echo de la Colombie* was in some way the spokesman for the *Club Canadien-Français* in its demands.

Yet a bulletin does not happen all on its own! Once again the good will of the people was called upon. Numerous persons answered the call. The list of all the collaborators in their work would be too long to mention, nevertheless some names immediately come to mind; for example Jean Robillard for the magnificent drawings on the front page of *L'Echo*. Mr. Robillard, besides contributing to the bulletin had undertaken the recruiting for the Club. The challenge was tremendous but Jean accepted it with a trench soldier's resolve. Thanks to his personal efforts the Club's membership increased from forty to one hundred and sixty members in less than one year.

*L'Echo de la Colombie* had given itself several goals: educate and inform the members, entertain the readers by a variety of texts to satisfy everyone's tastes and finally announce the Club's meetings and social events. For these reasons Marie Robillard (Jean Robillard's wife) wrote a column entitled *Parlons Mieux*. Raymonde Mahy presented a monthly page of recipes. Editorials, members' biographies, marriage and birth anniversaries, christenings and deaths were published regularly in the bulletin.

Among the loyal contributors you will find Gérald Moreau, Director, Réal Topping, Gabriel Topping, Diane Paquette, Clément Gaudet, Doris Gaudet, Alban Gaudet, Violet Gaudet, Jean Mahy, Françoise Quillévéré, Denise Péron and many more. One must bear in mind that in the nineteen sixties the club did not receive grants from the

Secretariat of State, thus it had to rely on volunteer help and whatever meagre means were available. And yet, when you read *L'Echo* with some hind-sight (twenty years later) you cannot help concluding that in spite of very limited resources those people succeeded in achieving something interesting and very much worthwhile.

### **Subsequent Editions.**

In his illustrious novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, Louis Hémon wrote of the Quebecers: "those people belong to a race that refuses to die" ... This comment can be applied to *L'Echo de la Colombie*.

Pronounced dead in 1966, the valiant little bulletin reappeared in February of 1967 and was published for the last time in October 1968. The 1964-1966 format was kept.

In April 1974, a new resurrection ... If, according to Saint Thomas, you can not believe without seeing, one only has to look at the first issue of April-May to realize that the color (yellow) had not changed. Régine Bérubé, Nicole Ford, André et Rita Bérubé supported by the directors of the *Club Canadien-Français de Victoria* joined at the steering-wheel of the resurrected bulletin. The last issue - the fifth one - came off the press in February 1976.

The archives reveal that as early as 1962, four years before *L'Echo de la Colombie*, Mr. Henri Côté, dynamic Francophone leader, wrote short monthly bulletins which he sent to his French speaking compatriots in Victoria. All those publications and their directors lead the way for the *Phare* which is honored by such tenacious and dedicated predecessors.

Today, the official bulletin of the Society no longer bears the name *Le Phare*; it is simply called *Le Bulletin Mensuel*. In September 1991 the publication will be called *Le Reverbère*.



## "Le Centre Socio-Culturel Français de Victoria "

When Francophones and Francophiles want to work together they can accomplish great things. And this is exactly what they did! One day they decided to organize a center where French-speaking families could meet and pursue their social and cultural efforts while awakening Anglophones' interests to the cause of French.

The *Alliance Française* and the *Club Canadien Français* already existed but they had no centre where families and students could meet and enjoy themselves in French.

In June 1973 the Modern Languages Association of Teachers held a meeting in the Ewing building at Camosun College to discuss the establishment of such a centre. A board of directors was formed to prepare a programme of summer activities and learn how to erect a permanent socio-cultural centre. Money was needed to establish and maintain the centre and, with that in mind, a request for a grant was sent to the Secretariat of State. The request was successful and a cheque for the grant was received in January 1974. While announcing the good news the Secretariat's representative congratulated the initiators for the good undertaking which would consolidate the action of various cultural organizations in the city of Victoria. It was understood that French would be used by the Board and occasionally at cultural events.

The director of the Companies Registrar in British Columbia signed on January 17, 1974 a certificate in the name of the *Centre Socio-Culturel Français de Victoria*.

A centre was opened at 1315 Broad Street; recruiting was begun in February of the same year and when the first

bulletin was published more than a hundred names appeared in it.

On June 8, 1974 the *Daily Colonist* published a report by Mrs. Sybil Butterfield, (1) the organization's president, announcing that thanks to a federal government grant, seven students had been hired for the summer holiday period. This entailed paying a secretary-receptionist for the centre and the other six would take care of the play grounds or would be used in the tourist information offices. Besides the many activities that took place during the year one which deserves mentioning is the fact that the centre was a meeting place for the sailors' families at the Naval Base. At Christmas, for example, these sailors had been welcomed in French speaking families where they found a family environment.

In 1976, after a joint project between *Le Centre Socio-Culturel Français* and *Le Club Canadien-Français* (Student Community Services Programme) the Secretariat of State expressed its wish to support just one Francophone cultural organization in Victoria. Thus it suggested that the two associations merge for the Francophone community's greater good. To comply with the Secretariat's wishes, a proposal to join the two bodies was presented to the Centre's executive board. This did not meet with everybody's approval. Nevertheless, after some debate it was proposed that the *Centre Socio-Culturel Français* continue to work closely with the *Club Canadien-Français*. The club would become the office. This proposal was finally accepted on March 15, 1977.

Following the agreement signed on March 15, another problem arose, the centre's assets in the case of a dissolution. Mr. Roy believed that in the circumstances the best solution to the problem was to join the two Societies. On

April 18, 1977 the Centre's directors introduced, in conjunction with the Club, an extraordinary resolution to amalgamate the two Societies. *Le Centre Socio-Culturel Français de Victoria* was recognized as a non-profit Society under "The Societies Act".

Later, in April 1978, the Centre and the Club submitted a request to the Companies Registrar asking that the two be merged. In 1978 a resolution was sent to the Registrar stipulating that the furniture would be given to *Le Club Canadien-Français de Victoria*. The bank account in which members fees had been deposited would be closed and the funds handed over to *La Fédération Jeunesse Colombienne*, Victoria Chapter.

Thus came to an end an organization which had regrouped many Francophones and Francophiles in the city of Victoria.

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NOTES:

(1) Mrs. Sybil Butterfield is bilingual and she is a descendant of seven Canadian generations. She teaches French in a High School in the Sooke School District.

Bibliographies:

Documentation provided by Mrs. Sybil Butterfield including several newspaper clips. Documentation in the Archives of the *Club Canadien-Français de Victoria*. (In 1982, the name *Le Club Canadien-Français de Victoria* became *La Société Francophone de Victoria*.)

## "L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria "

Our purpose at the outset is to explain how the historical committee of *La Société Francophone de Victoria* " became *L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria* .

*L'Alliance Française* celebrated its centenary in 1983; the president of the Victoria Chapter, Mr. Thomas Godin, had invited *La Société Francophone* vice-president, Mr. Jean Lagassé, to give a lecture. The proposed subject was: "The contribution by Francophones in Victoria's development".

Throughout his research Mr. Lagassé soon became aware that *La Société Francophone's* files constituted the main source of information. The Provincial Archives admitted that they had very little due to the fact that their principal role consisted of gathering, classifying and conserving documents confided to them. Moreover, they had rarely received documentation on Francophones.

During his lecture, Mr. Lagassé pointed out this deplorable fact and suggested forming a small group of people willing to do this sort of research. Everybody thought that the idea was a good one but no one offered to participate. The idea surfaced again after a Sunday Mass at the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* Parish. Mr. Raymond Plante and Miss Eliana Mathieu participated in a conversation on the topic. Miss Mathieu said that she would raise the matter to members of the *Nouveaux Horizons* of the parish . In April of 1984, following considerable recruitment work, approximately thirty persons answered Miss Mathieu's appeal. At this point in time began a programme which would unite for a common cause various organizations such as *Les Nouveaux*

*Horizons, La Société Francophone de Victoria*, the B.C. Provincial Archives and *La Société Historique Franco-Colombienne de Vancouver*.

In the following weeks Jean Lagassé sent out convocations to a certain number of people, most of whom recommended by Mrs. Joanne Hugues, genealogist and professor at Camosun College. A few persons responded. Mr. André Chollat, president of the *Société Historique Franco-Colombienne in Vancouver*, was invited to come and meet the group; he gave the project his blessing. The people at the meeting decided that the research work would be directed by the Historical Committee of the *La Société Francophone de Victoria*. It was also felt that members of *Les Nouveaux Horizons* in the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* parish could provide a great deal of information on facts related to Francophones in Victoria. This group also made it possible to obtain a small grant from the Ministry of Health and Welfare, - New Horizons Program. In May 1984, *La Société Francophone* officially appointed Mrs. Marie Robillard as president of the Historical Committee.

The goal of the Historical Committee was to analyze and file documents pertaining to the Francophone community's contribution in the Victoria development as well as its surrounding region. The personnel at the Provincial Archives of British Columbia cooperated very well in elaborating procedure to follow in the areas of research, documentation, editions, classification and preservation of documents. At the Provincial Archives Messrs Leonard C. DeLozier, archivist, Derek Reimer and Allen Specht of the oral History Division and Miss Francis Gundry of the Manuscripts Division were the precious collaborators.

First, the documentation accumulated by *La Société Francophone de Victoria* was securely placed in the

Provincial Archives. A copy of documents use for consultation was handed over to *La Société Francophone*.

At a meeting held at Miss Irène Guertin's home on November 19, 1984 some decisions were made:

- communicate with Francophones in Victoria in order to record their memories,
- consult senior citizens to identify and catalogue their old photographs,
- prepare a repertory of baptisms, marriages and deaths among the members of the *Paroisse Saint-Jean-Baptiste*.

The committee's objectives became broader. To facilitate its identification a new name was foreseen at a meeting of the Committee on March 8, 1985 at Laurette Agnew's residence.. This new name was: *L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria* . It wasn't until October 9 that the name was formally adopted at a general meeting of the committee.

At this point events moved along rather rapidly. At this same meeting the members officially recognized the founding of *L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria* . It was also decided that the Association would be registered as a Society and that the ten members of the executive committee be declared founding members.

Also, on the same day a request for a grant from the Ministry of Health and Welfare was contemplated. Marie Robillard accepted to have the printed application signed by the ten members of the committee and send it to the Ministry. Laurette Agnew prepared the status and constitution of the new society and obtained the approvals and the signatures on December 15, 1985 of the interim council of the new Society; and the Society was registered December 18, 1985.



As early as January 10, 1986 the sum of \$14,247.00 was granted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Program New Horizons.

The Historical Association now boasts to its credit the publication of a volume entitled: *Présence Francophone à Victoria. C.B. 1843-1987*. This work, published in 1987, is the fruit of a great deal of research and contains considerable documentation which constitute a source of inspiration plus a wealth of historical information.



John Greene  
Co-author of French  
Presence in Victoria



Marc Lapprand  
Co-author of French  
Presence in Victoria



Gérald Moreau  
Co-author of French  
Presence in Victoria



Gérald Ricard  
Co-author of French  
Presence in Victoria

Authors of French Book:  
"Présence Francophone à Victoria "( 1987)



Left to right: François Aubert, Gérald Moreau, Jean-Paul Vinay,  
Gérald Ricard, Laurette Agnew, Marie Robillard, Antoinette Vaucher.  
PHOTO: IAN McKAIN



Executive of "L'Alliance française" in 1964. Left to right: P.J. Vaucher,  
vice-president; Mme K.D. Stone, president; Mme Eunice Young,  
secretary and Jos. Haegert, treasurer. (see page 124)



Aerial View of the University of Victoria. #0207870411  
Photo by: Don Pierce, UVic Photo Services.



## **The French Department at the University of Victoria**

### **Introductory remarks**

The French Department is currently a flourishing enterprise, with fourteen permanent members, several contractual instructors, about fifteen assistants (many of whom are senior students), two support staff and over one thousand students, several associated programs - Maison Française, French Diploma, Special Programs, programs for teachers - some of which merit a separate presentation.

### **The Origins**

At the beginning it was not a university, but a college with important links to "La Belle Province", since Victoria College was born as an affiliate of McGill University in Montreal. This proud alliance is still recognized in the arms of the University, headed by three red Martlets, heraldic birds which symbolize McGill. The name of the student newspaper, the Martlet, and the red colour of the hoods of graduates also perpetuate this tradition.

It was the first principal of the College, E. B. Paul, who first taught French, a subject which occupied a central place in the curriculum from the very beginning. Mr. Paul left his name to the main building of the Lansdowne Campus, today occupied by Camosun College (which is not formally tied to the University). But in the very earliest days, far from having a campus, the college did not even have its own building - it occupied rooms in Victoria High School and was dependant on the School Board.

So it was without leaving their High School building that the first students began memorizing their conjugations,



first with the principal, then with Miss Edna Henry who taught the language of Racine from 1906 to 1915. That was the year in which the affiliation with McGill ended, and the creation of the University of British Columbia led to the suspension of post-secondary teaching by the Victoria School Board. It was only in 1920 that the college rose phoenix-like from its own ashes, and the following year it was installed in the magnificent setting of Craigdarroch Castle, where it remained until 1946.

From 1920 to 1962 the college was affiliated with U.B.C.; this relationship is commemorated by the blue and gold colours of the University flag and of the uniform of the sports teams.

In 1920, the powerful personality of Mme Sanderson-Mongin appeared on the scene; for twenty years she infused Victoria youth with the *joie de vivre*, the energy and the enthusiasm without which French can hardly be called French. Who could forget her wit, her good humour and the charming way she had of teasing her “polite young men”, asks Harry Hickman, one of her students, who was in fact to replace her just before the ‘39 war. He remembers the very classic program of the time: Molière, Balzac, Anatole France to represent modern literature... and “still more grammar.”

Students at that time only began their studies at the college; to finish the B.A. they had to cross Georgia Strait. Nevertheless the college gave the first two years instruction to many youth who were to make a name for themselves later. Some didn’t even wait to leave the classroom, and inscribed their names on the woodwork! Curious visitors to Craigdarroch Castle can still read several such names, including Pierre Berton’s.

Helped for a while, towards the end of her career, by Jean Farquhar, wife of a future president of the future University, Mme Sanderson-Mongin retired in 1939, from which time W. H. Hickman, who would later complete his doctorate at the University of Paris, presided in the living-room of Craigdarroch Castle over monstrously swollen classes, for all students were at that time required to complete two years of language studies. Latin and French were the only languages taught.

So French was learned under conditions which today appear "impossible". The teacher gave 19 hours of classes per week (compared to 9 nowadays, with reductions for administrative tasks) to classes of 50 and even up to 70 students (while now a limit of 30 is in effect, 15 for oral classes). In addition to all this, Harry gave a course in German beginning in 1941, at the request of students, and thus began the study of other modern languages.

During the period which ran from 1939 to about 1962 a true department slowly developed, with several teachers and an extended, modern program. In addition, after the war the college moved to the Lansdowne campus which it shared with the Normal School, which ten years later fused with the college under the name of Faculty of Education. Without neglecting the classical authors, the literary program was updated, and even got ahead of public taste at times - students read Flaubert, Baudelaire, Camus, Gide, Malraux, Mauriac, Saint-Exupéry, Anouilh, and even the controversial Ionesco.

Working conditions for the teachers improved somewhat during the fifties - they taught twelve hours per week with classes of thirty to forty students. The idea that a teacher might have a Francophone assistant to help develop

student's oral expression remained in the realm of science-fiction.

New professors left their mark. Gwladys Downes, another former Victoria College student, brought a new dimension in modern literature and culture. She was to become one of the finest translators of French-Canadian poetry, and a poet in her own right. Doctor of the University of Paris, following an early retirement, she is still actively contributing to the intellectual and artistic life of the city. "Madame Steel" also joined the faculty: it would never have occurred to most of her colleagues, let alone the generations of young Victorians who owe to this imposing personality a very correct French, to call her by her Christian name, Bérange. Gérald Moreau, originally from Manitoba, and who studied at the University of Poitiers, finally brought a French-Canadian presence to the department, where he offered the first course in Canadian literature. He also introduced Spanish to the program. Mention should also be made of Walter Riedel, who taught both French and German for a few years, until he devoted himself entirely to teaching German. He has translated many Canadian stories, in both official languages, into German. Harry Hickman remained head of this little world, adding to his titles that of Principal of the College.

Victoria College was in principle a preparatory institution, offering two years of courses. In order to obtain a B.A., students had to go to Vancouver or elsewhere. However, some areas of senior courses were developed beginning in 1959, and the college offered its first B.A. degrees in 1961, including some to French students.

If, compared to current standards, students then received a fairly rudimentary formation in the oral language, they did get a very solid formation in grammar and literature.

Several continued their studies, learned to express themselves fluently, and became French teachers in their turn. Others entered diverse careers.

### **Modern Languages**

In 1963, the University of Victoria was born from the former college. Among its core elements was the Department of Modern Languages, for French was now far from being alone. German, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Chinese and Japanese (and, for a few years, Portuguese and Serbo-Croatian), as well as theoretical and applied linguistics found a place in the program. The teaching of languages, literatures and cultures was in full expansion; French retained a dominant position through the numbers of students, the modernity of methods and the level of the curriculum.

A new campus gave the department a spacious installation that it could only dream of before. The library has a French collection that many older and larger universities envy, thanks to an intelligent policy established by administrators who understood that a fine library is the basis for a good university. The University thus had the means to support an advanced research program as well as meet the needs of its students. French titles in the library are far from being limited to literary and linguistic topics - French is a working language for researchers and students in the most diverse disciplines.

Modern technology also was brought to the aid of French studies in the form of a language laboratory under the direction of a true genius, Hans Seidel. The Sony company has imitated many of his installations in their latest computerized labs. To his absolute competence, a fertile inventiveness and a great devotion, the gnome of the labs

added an unforgettable sense of humour. One day, the practice tapes of the students were invaded by insect noises - first mosquitoes, then crickets, wasps, flies, and more and more. Two minutes later half the students were doubled up laughing, while the other half were desperately pushing every button on their machines, trying to figure out what they had done wrong...

A full four-year program was elaborated during this time, at first a traditional program marked more by quality than by innovation. The first two years were devoted principally to the acquisition of the language, both oral and written, while the third and fourth years studied the great literary works in some depth, while perfecting knowledge of the language.

Still under the direction of Dr. Hickman, the department continued to develop, with the appointment of David Griffiths, specialist in French thought of the Nineteenth Century, Max Edwards, linguist and musician, and Ralph Baldner, whose particular area of study was bibliography.

During those years, a Franco-Canadian exchange program of great importance was born: at first one, then two and as many as three exchanges per year sent a graduating student from UVic to teach conversational English somewhere in France, while a similar number of French students of English at an advanced level came to teach oral French in Victoria. These exchanges benefit students taking the classes, give irreplaceable experience to the students who participate, and create a network of contacts between B.C. and France.

It is worth mentioning at this point the impact of several Francophone secretaries, working under the direction of the principal secretary Léa Terpenning (née Desautels). It

is in large part thanks to them that the department office has been able to retain a bilingual character in the midst of a unilingual Anglophone administration.

Returning to faculty appointments, two important ones were made in the mid-sixties. The prestigious linguist, Jean-Paul Vinay, contributed mostly to the development of the Department of Linguistics, but he also taught for many years senior courses in French stylistics within the French department. He has been a well-known presence in the Francophone community of the city, and has remained active since his retirement.

Jean-Pierre Mentha, whose arrival was perhaps less noticed outside the department, nevertheless had a profound impact on the teaching of French at the University of Victoria, and eventually throughout the province. Despite the forces of inertia - conservatism (as often among students as among colleagues) and lack of resources for new initiatives - he resolutely brought about the introduction of new approaches to language teaching, which have since been accepted almost universally. Symbolic of his action is "La Maison française", of which he was the first director, an institution which merits a separate chapter.

### **La Maison Française**

At the beginning of the sixties, French was taught, more or less, just about everywhere in B.C., sometimes successfully, but nearly always with the same methods: a trusted old text, a blackboard, occasionally a few records and posters. Inevitably, before taking the plunge and giving out a sentence, it was necessary to get everything right - conjugations, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary - under threat of severe disapproval, ridicule and bad grades. Mistakes were sin, to err was inhuman. Dogma paralyzed



the vocal chords. A pitiless and radical reform of attitudes and methods was necessary.

At that time, the French researchers of the CREDIF at Saint-Cloud and their Quebec disciples were putting together the results of a new approach, based on the notion that active exchanges and expression should take precedence over passive book learning. They produced an original pedagogical material (tapes and slides) to be used in an unusual way: students were encouraged to reproduce orally, immediately, complete phrases based on their understanding of a situation.

How was it that such a revolutionary system suddenly appeared on the UVic campus? Chance encounters and individual will-power often do fine things.

In 1964, the then President of the new University of Victoria, Malcolm Taylor, decided he needed to know the "other" language of the country a little better. Having heard of a new "immersion" course offered at Laval University, he decided to take it, and returned full of enthusiasm for the idea of creating such a course in the West. Harry Hickman and Jean-Pierre Mentha were ready to meet the challenge, and in 1965 "La Maison française" was born, with a small class and the first beginnings of the creation of a French atmosphere.

Over the next few years, with the help of Claude Rochette from Laval, a system for creating full immersion with a variety of activities in a fully French atmosphere was put in place, the reputation of the program grew, and imitators appeared almost everywhere. More than a quarter of a century later, "La Maison française" is one of a large number of very successful programs, and continues on a large scale to teach French in an effective and innovative manner.

### **Alone Once More**

The late sixties saw great changes in the University. Huge increases in student numbers brought more faculty. The democratization of the administrative system saw the "Head" replaced by a short term "Chair" who worked with colleagues in decision-making. And the Department of Modern Languages was replaced by five, later six, separate entities, one of which was the Department of French Language and Literature.

Under Dr. Griffiths at first, then again under Dr. Hickman, a dozen new faculty arrived, of whom six remained permanently. Elaine Limbrick, a well-known specialist in Renaissance studies, has become an important figure in the research establishment in Canadian universities. Jennifer Waelti-Walters, a specialist in contemporary literature and women writers, has a world-wide reputation for her many books and articles. Both now combine part-time teaching in French with other responsibilities (Dr. Limbrick is Associate Dean of Research, and Dr. Waelti-Walters is Director of the Women's Studies Program.)

Barry Beardsmore, first graduate of U.B.C.'s doctoral program, teaches medieval literature and the history of the French language, and introduced the study of phonetics. Jeanne Adam, now retired, was the first to study the literatures of the Francophone countries of Africa. Derek Turton, a specialist in Nineteenth Century literature, has contributed strongly to basic language courses and the library collection. John Greene teaches poetry and science-fiction, and has worked extensively on the language laboratory program.

Over the years, this group, with the cooperation of those colleagues already present, built the most flexible and

varied curriculum in French in B.C. post-secondary education. Many of the graduates have gone on to win major honours and post-graduate scholarships elsewhere.

The seventies began with the arrival of a new chair, Olivier Abrioux, and some important initiatives under his direction. In terms of personnel, it was a period of stability; no new permanent members were to arrive until the end of the decade.

A Master's program was created, allowing post-secondary study in French on Vancouver Island for the first time. The program was small, and there was no significant financial aid for students, so that only a handful of graduates completed the program before the cutbacks of the early eighties brought about its closing.

The Honours program was rethought and in its new structure became the vehicle for small numbers of students to obtain a first-class education, as evidenced by the very high proportion of valuable scholarships for advanced study at other institutions won by its graduates.

The third major development of the period does not, strictly speaking, concern the Department, since it is the major expansion of non-credit courses offered by University Extension to adult education. Two separate facets merit separate presentation.

### **The French Language Diploma Program**

By the late forties Victoria College was already giving evening French conversation classes to interested adults. The popularity of these courses was such that in 1970, Dr. Abrioux, with the help of Larry Devlin of University Extension, planned a series of courses at five

levels, culminating in a diploma in the French language. Gérald Moreau was the first director of the program.

The success of the program was so great that by 1978 it became necessary to divide the French programs in Extension into two groups; Gérard Gougé took over the Diploma program, to be followed in this role by Jean-Paul Mas, Terry Cox, Lucie Daigle and the current director, Didier Bergeret.

The success of the program can be attributed to many factors - the devotion of the teachers (Monique Cléban, Régine Bérubé and Debbie Ruttan merit special mention), the inclusion of cultural elements drawn from Quebec civilization in the higher classes, and sensitivity to the needs of students. Under Didier Bergeret, new methods are being adopted, and more flexible timetables being introduced.

### **Special Programs**

The humour, energy and ambition of Monique Cléban are the principal reason why a few socio-cultural activities designed to supplement the diploma program have become a whole series of programs known as "Special", perhaps because their diversity defies attempts to find a more descriptive title, or perhaps just because the word seems appropriate. They address adult learners, whether enrolled in the Diploma or not, and teachers.

The first activities developed were weekend immersion sessions, the "Club Alouette" (the only Francophone Toastmaster's Club), the "Club Gastronomique" (surely no translation of this typically Gallic organization is required!) and a system of cooperation with the Student Society's Cinecenta, which assures a regular presence of French cinema in Victoria.

More recent, and somewhat more ambitious, projects include a post-diploma course for maintenance and development of advanced French skills, study trips of one month duration to France and to Quebec, and a high-tech course using computer-driven video to teach language.

Teacher training courses are centred on three-week immersion courses which combine French instruction, methodology workshops and cultural activities; they are held on Vancouver Island and in Quebec or New Brunswick. A myriad of other workshops and courses are designed in conjunction with school boards to bring updating in teaching methods and development of language skills to teachers in every corner of the province.

### **End of Obligatory Language Courses**

The last major event under Dr. Abrioux's chairmanship was the abolition of the university requirement that all students take two years of language study. The popularity of French had greatly suffered because of this requirement; even the students who wished to learn were affected by the negative atmosphere created by those who had been dragooned into the classes. During the two years following the abolition, enrolments in French dropped catastrophically, but the atmosphere in the classroom improved notably and students made much better progress.

The task that confronted the new Chair, Elaine Limbrick, was hard, but she succeeded very well in reestablishing the fortunes of the department. Throughout the remainder of the decade, enrolments in French grew at 10% per year, among the fastest in the university. For the first time, courses for beginners were established, allowing not only Canadians who had heretofore neglected French (in surprising numbers) but also new immigrants who had not

previously had the opportunity to study the country's first official language.

The higher level courses were not neglected either. Under the direction of Dr. Limbrick and of Dr. Waelti-Walters, who succeeded her in the chair, the whole range of senior literature courses was reviewed and strengthened in order to offer a wide range of choice to senior students. Advanced courses in translation and phonetics were introduced at the same time, and the basic first year course was also reviewed - it would henceforth be given completely in French and give a considerable place to Canadian texts.

The department's success gave Jennifer Waelti-Walters a sizable problem: how to find the human and other resources necessary in a period of stable budgets, and competition among universities for qualified personnel.

Of some seven first-rate appointments made in the late seventies and early eighties, only two have remained in the department on a permanent basis, the others having gone on to other opportunities elsewhere. The first is Danielle Thaler, who serves the department in multiple roles: the formation of teachers, teaching translation, theatre and children's literature - in the latter field she is recognized on a worldwide scale. The second is Emmanuel Hérique, a talented young linguist who has published a major study of interjections.

Another facet of department activities inaugurated by Dr. Waelti-Walters and continued by her successors is the strengthening of links with other programs; the department offers courses which form part of degrees in Women's Studies, Medieval Studies and Canadian literature, and will participate in future developments in Canadian arts and film studies.



Students have also shared in the opening of French studies to other areas - more now go on from degrees in French to post-graduate studies in public administration, law and business than in French studies, often succeeding in obtaining important scholarships in these areas. And more and more students in such areas as political science, music, sports or sciences are studying French to advanced levels.

When John Greene took over direction of the department in the mid-eighties, funding cutbacks were making themselves felt in a serious way; record numbers of students were being taught by fewer and fewer faculty, and outside funds were necessary to fill the gap. Cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Secretary of State's office at the federal level allowed the department to obtain money for teacher training and for student assistants - even so courses had to be cut, and at one time almost three hundred students were turned away.

Nevertheless, the resources were found to inaugurate a short-lived program in retraining teachers for French immersion with funds from the Ministry of Education; if the program did not continue, it was due to lack of qualified students.

The end of the eighties and the first years of the nineties give hope for a new blossoming of French studies in Victoria. Five new appointments to faculty and a new chair, Barry Beardsmore, have infused considerable creative energy, and new initiatives are following a positive review of the department by a team from other universities.

The first of the new faculty, Yvonne Hsieh, has published extensively on Franco-Chinese literary relationships, and adds to the department's expertise in contemporary literature, as does Marc Lapprand, a specialist in literary theory. Two of the other appointees are

experts in French Canadian literature, Marie Vautier having particular interest in post-modern writers, and Mary-Ellen Ross in writers outside Quebec. These last three all came to Victoria in 1989, as did Claire Carlin, whose research interest is in Seventeenth-Century literature.

Another vital development is the transformation of the language laboratories into what is very probably the most technically advanced language centre in North America. Computers, video-discs, electronic dictionaries, and a host of more familiar audio-visual resources are available to students in pleasant surroundings with devoted, knowledgeable staff.

The department is now planning the reopening of its Master's program, and the financial and human resources necessary to accomplish this goal are the major challenge facing Barry Beardsmore.

It is clear that other needs remain to be met, a reliable supply of competent teachers for the schools for one. The creative resources of the French department of the University of Victoria will remain an important part of the French community of the city, and will continue to evolve with the changing face of the community.

## French at Camosun College

Starting in 1969 Claude Desmarais, former pilot and instructor in the Armed Forces, taught French at the Institute for Adult Studies.

Communication was always the watchword in the classes of this committed humanist, and many of his students remain grateful to him to this day. Mr. Desmarais devoted himself for many years to establish his courses on a solid basis, still the foundation for courses today; in particular, he is to be credited with creating a Living Languages laboratory where people in flesh and blood are used instead of machines to help students in their language studies.

When Camosun was inaugurated on September 16, 1971, as attested by a commemorative plaque in the entry hall of the College, Claude continued his courses and remained on staff until 1986. He died on May 16, 1986 after a long illness. Brigitte Augeard is now Head of the department. She was born in North Africa of French parents; following her studies at the Sorbonne, she came to Canada in 1980, and obtained the Teacher's Certificate at the University of Victoria. Involved in numerous forms of French education, she is full of enthusiasm.

In fall and winter, courses at four different levels are offered for credits. All the elements of language are studied, as well as some literature. Students in the program benefit from Francophone assistants, and have help and individual counselling available in the lab if so desired. These assistants are true representatives of worldwide *Francophonie*, usually coming from Quebec or France, but also from time to time from Switzerland, Belgium, Martinique or Africa.

Another division of Camosun, CIES (Community and International Education Services) offers courses in oral French, beginner's level, in the evening - these are not credit courses.

In the oldest building of Camosun College, known as the Young Building, French is a living reality.

### **Royal Roads Military College**

There are three military colleges dispersed across Canada. One is at Saint-Jean, Quebec, another at Kingston, Ontario and the third at Victoria. All three are under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

These three colleges constitute the university of the Armed Forces. They offer a complete university program; the various disciplines offered reflect the needs of the Armed Forces. The university orients the majority of its students towards engineering and sciences, but the study of the second language is not neglected, English or French depending on the individual.

#### **Procedures for Learning the Second Language**

The purpose of second language training at Royal Roads Military College is to allow students to attain the level of functional bilingualism established by the language test of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Upon arrival, each student must take a test to determine his or her level of knowledge of the second language. The exam has four parts: oral comprehension, oral expression, written comprehension and writing. The results give the profile of each student on a scale from 1 to 5 for each test. A student whose total for the four tests is 10 or

higher, including 3 on each of the oral tests, is considered as having achieved the "functional" level. If the total is 14 or better, including 4 on each of the oral tests, the student has achieved the "integral" level; as an integral profile is considered permanent, the student will no longer have to take further tests.

These profiles permit the constitution of small, homogenous classes in which students can progress at their own pace towards a functional profile, after which each student is encouraged to continue on to the integral level.

The timetable allows for five 45-minute periods of second language per week in each year of study. In addition, each student takes an intensive course of ten weeks, six hours per day, at the end of the first year.

The accent during the whole year is put on the need to communicate with military personnel. Following these courses the students should be able to express themselves in both the official languages of the country.

### **The Campus**

Hatley Park was rebaptized Royal Roads after an anchorage of the same name in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century James Dunsmuir bought this 650-acre property and decided to build there a new residence for his retirement. He gave the task of designing the "castle" to Samuel Maclure, an architect specializing in the Victorian style. In 1910, he sold his mines and all associated businesses and retired to this magnificent property, where he died in 1920 at the age of sixty-nine. His wife remained at Hatley Park until her death in 1937; their daughter died six months later.

For the next three years, the property was kept by a curator. In 1940, the Dominion government bought it for \$75,000 with the intention of establishing a naval training base. By December of the same year the HMCS "ROYAL ROADS" became an official training establishment for officers, and enrolled the sublieutenants of the Voluntary Reserve of the Royal Canadian Navy for a short course.

Soon thereafter, in 1947, the Royal Canadian Naval College became the RCN-RCAF Joint Service College. One year later, with the admission of Army cadets, Royal Roads became a college for the three branches and took the name Canadian Services College Royal Roads. In 1968, the college became the Royal Roads Military College we know today.

### **French at the Esquimalt Military Base**

In August 1980 the first continuous French courses were born at the Canadian Forces Base in Esquimalt. By virtue of the law concerning official languages, National Defence took on the teaching of its officers and non-commissioned officers.

The linguistic training centre began with a small group divided into two classes; they had three teachers recently arrived from Quebec. The students took classes each day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., from August to December; they were supposed to be able to speak French by the end of the first session. From January to June, they spent six months in Quebec at the Canadian Forces Base in Saint-Jean, where they followed a second course designed to make them fully bilingual. In Canada, between 1980 and 1986, French was taught to Anglophones in other military centres as well.



Some twelve groups of students followed courses at 939 Esquimalt Road. However, even though students had been examined as to their attitudes and had had their I.Q. evaluated, they were not for all that motivated to learn. The second phase was therefore modified and rescheduled several times to satisfy the largest possible number of students and personnel.

The teaching was theoretical; the method in use, "*DialogueCanada*", enchanted some and terrified others.

In 1985 the wind changed; more communicative and functional methods appeared and various novelties came on the scene: trips, visits, lectures, interviews, exchanges, demonstrations. In August 1986 the number of centres across Canada was officially set at six. The Esquimalt centre was to have three classes and six teachers. The course would last ten months, after which students were to be capable of functioning in French.

The current program is thus completely different. Based on the Canadian Armed Forces system of individual instruction, the new program is conceived according to an approach centred on communication and aiming at the development of three aptitudes: oral comprehension, oral expression and written comprehension.

Teaching is given in a military context, and is adapted to the needs and demands of the job and its classifications. It is as yet too soon to judge the results of the change. It can be said that students show more enthusiasm for language study; they like to practice it and have more chances to do so.

Possibilities exist in Victoria, but they have to be better exploited; intrinsic motivation has yet to be developed and the selection of students must be improved. Some

students are just not meant for classrooms. *Qui vivra verra*, as the proverb has it.

As of August 1987 the French school was moved to the base and thus was better integrated. As experience grows, improvements can be seen.

### **"Ecole Victor Brodeur"**

On August 1, 1973, one month after arriving in Victoria, Captain Jean-Guy Comeau gathered together the Francophone military personnel who desired to provide instruction in French to their children.

Captain Comeau and his wife Anita had four children. They had been taught in French in Ottawa and Halifax, but on their arrival in Victoria, no school in that language was available. Far from being discouraged and accepting defeat, the Comeaus decided to resolve the problem themselves.

With the support of Lieutenant Commanders Bernard Derible and Gilles Patenaude, also fathers, Captain Comeau knocked on the doors of the three school districts in the region, but none wanted to set up programs for Francophones in their districts.

During the month of August, several studies were undertaken at the federal and provincial levels, but they led nowhere. It was not until September 10 that the Ministry of National Defense gave the Base Commander permission to establish a French school.

Thanks to hard work and devotion on the part of the Francophone military community, the French school of Esquimalt Military Base was opened on September 17, 1973, with 33 students from kindergarten to Grade Six. A principal, Andrée Johansson, was named to get the school

off the ground; she hired two other teachers, Claudette Pilon and Dolorèse McLean. In February a fourth teacher, Jean-Claude Drouin, was named.

The building chosen by Mrs. Johansson was the former official residence of Admiral Victor-Gabriel Brodeur, and official "heritage building". As the years went by, the school grew. By 1976, when Admiral Brodeur died, the school had eighty students and eight teachers.

On October 5, 1977, the new French school was "baptized"; it was henceforth to be known as l'Ecole Victor G. Brodeur. The sons of Admiral Brodeur, Philippe and Nigel, both naval officers, were present at the ceremony.

In May 1984, as Building No. 20 at Naden had become much too small for the number of students, the base decided to move the school. The Ministry managed to obtain the former harbor View School building at 637 Head Street, and the school moved in September.

On April 25, 1985, during an important meeting of the Greater Victoria School Board, the trustees voted to establish a French regional school in Victoria. Access to the school was no longer reserved to the children of military personnel alone, but to all Francophones of the region. In September 1985, Brodeur School, now part of School District 61, had 207 students and ten teachers, and offered classes from kindergarten to Grade Seven.

At its official opening in May 1986, in the presence of the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, and the trustees and administrators of the School District, Mrs. Andrée Johansson, still principal of the school she had founded in 1973, described the role of the French community and school in these terms:

"The French school is at the service of the Franco-phone community. It is associated with the families, the

Church, the associations and other cultural, social and community institutions of the French speaking citizens. The school's program is thus oriented toward the transmission of French culture(...).

"Parents and teachers must work to make our French school the best school possible, attractive, lively and vibrant. That is our goal and our hope."

From 1986 on, another year of instruction was added each year. The first French school on Vancouver Island, Brodeur School is also the largest French school in British Columbia. It is a great step for French language and culture in Canada and particularly in British Columbia.

### **Biography of Admiral Victor G. Brodeur, 1892-1976**

Victor-Gabriel Brodeur, born at Beloeil (Québec) on September 17, 1892, was one of the four sons of the Honorable Louis-Philippe Brodeur, Minister of the Navy and Fisheries. It was under this title that the father had in 1910 sponsored the bill creating the Canadian Navy; he was in fact the first Minister of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Victor Brodeur's naval career began in October 1909 when he joined the crew of the government ship *Canada* in preparation for the formation of the Canadian Navy; he was one of the first seven cadets to join the navy.

On October 21, 1910, the navy became a reality with the arrival at Halifax of the cruiser *Niobe*, which, with the *Rainbow*, had been sent by England as Canada's first warships. Victor Brodeur served on the *Niobe*.

As lieutenant and later captain, Brodeur distinguished himself on several warships in two world wars: HMS *Dreadnought*, *Caradoc*, *Champlain* and *Sheeva*. He was,

during his long career, commander of the naval base at Halifax, and later twice commander of the Esquimalt base.

In 1915 he married Doris Béatrice Fages. They had two children, Philippe, born in England in 1921, and Nigel, born at Victoria in 1932. Philippe distinguished himself as an officer in Canadian aviation, and Nigel followed in his father's footsteps, eventually becoming an admiral himself.

Mrs. Brodeur died at London in 1936. Victor Brodeur remarried in 1938, at Bradford, England, to Dorothy Whitfield, who raised Nigel.

Just before the Second World War, as commander on the Pacific coast, he was promoted to the rank of Commodore. In that role, he was involved in the planning of the defense of the Straits of Juan de Fuca.

In 1940, Commodore Brodeur was named attaché at the Canadian Embassy in Washington D.C. In 1942 he was promoted to Vice-Admiral and worked on naval protection in the North Atlantic. At the end of the war, President Harry Truman awarded him the Order of Merit.

In June 1943, Vice-Admiral Brodeur received the Order of the British Empire. In September of the same year, he was once again named commander of the Pacific Coast, a post he occupied until his retirement in 1946. In January 1946, he was named a Companion of the Order of the Bath.

At his retirement on July 30, 1946, he had completed nearly thirty-seven years service with the Royal Canadian Navy, of which sixteen at sea. After his retirement, he and his wife settled in Vancouver, and devoted much time to charity and church work.

Victor-Gabriel Brodeur died at Vancouver on October 6, 1976, and his wife Dorothy followed him to the grave just six weeks later. Both are buried in the Veteran's Cemetery near Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver.

Admiral Brodeur loved young people, and he worked all his life to make better relations between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. He would have been very proud of the school which bears his name, and would have been charmed to know it began in the building that was his residence at Naden in 1932-33.



## **French Immersion**

The provincial government policy gives the parents the privilege of choosing one or the other of the two official languages of Canada for their children's education. For the past years, the Victoria and Saanich School Boards have been offering a number of French language programmes to allow the children to acquire competence in the French language: Early Immersion (EI); Late Immersion (LI); Secondary Immersion (SI); Elementary Programme-Cadre de français (EPCF); Secondary Programme-Cadre de français (SPCF). The Programme-Cadre de français is designed for those children who have at least one Francophone parent. The programme is the same as the English programme, but courses are taught in French. The Ministry of Education assumes its financing, with the help of Federal Government subsidies.

### **Origin:**

In 1970, the Secretary of State was responding to a royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism, and was in the process of negotiating various education programmes with the provinces. The Federal Government allocated subsidies to the provinces in order to facilitate the implementation of education programmes for linguistic minorities. In the province of Quebec, these subsidies were aimed at enabling an English education, and in the other provinces, they would implement a French education system.

A five-year plan was established in 1970, renewed in 1974, and ended in March 1979; in 1981, no renewal was yet granted. Negotiations were started as early as 1977 in order to continue this plan; in August that same year, during

a prime ministers' conference, it was decided that they would do everything they could to offer English or French education when the number of students was sufficient to justify such project, but no long-term provision was passed. Only in 1980-81 was a partial accord reached with the School Boards.

However, British Columbia received between 1976-77 and 1977-78 enough funds to implement special projects that were called "*French Immersion Programs*". In 56 schools among the 75 B.C. School Boards, the number of Immersion students reached 4800. (1)

In Victoria, no less than ten schools offer French Immersion Programmes, distributed as follows: EI (starting from Kindergarten) is offered at *Campus View Elementary*, *Doncaster Elementary*, *Macauley Elementary*, *Margaret Jenkins Elementary*, *Quadra Elementary*, *Sir James Douglas Elementary*, *Willows Elementary*; LI is offered at *Oaklands Elementary* and *Sir James Douglas Elementary*, SI is offered at *Lansdowne J.S.* and *Mount Doug Secondary*. The 1989/90 Enrollment Report from the Ministry of Education indicates a total of 1571 students enrolled in French Immersion in the Greater Victoria area. It may be interesting to note here that, despite the geographical distance from Quebec and other larger Francophone areas in Canada, Vancouver Island has the highest proportion of Immersion Schools in all English Canada.

### **French Immersion in the Saanich**

#### **School District:**

The "*Canadian Parents for French*" Association (CPF) was born when a small group of parents expressed their wish that their children receive a bilingual education. The association was officially founded in 1977. It was

difficult for them to recruit enough students in the beginning, in order to justify the opening of these classes, but eventually they were able to convince the School Board that there were enough applicants to implement French Immersion.

This is how the *Saanich Parents for French* started. An article in a journal caught the attention of a teacher, Mrs. Yvonne Rolston, and triggered in her the will to make young students acquainted with the French language. At home, with her child, Yvonne started the first immersion course given in the Saanich School Board. As she was trying it, she became convinced that this project would be of a high educational value, and she wished to see it implemented so that her child could benefit from it. Immersion courses already existed in Canada, it was a new way of teaching French. The courses were designed specially for the students who did not know any French, and they were given almost entirely in French by a native or near-native speaker. This programme enabled the students to express themselves easily in either language. The curriculum was the same as that of the native English speakers, so that when they graduated from high school, their academic knowledge would be exactly the same as that of their English counterparts.

Immersion started at Kindergarten level, and for the first years, it was to be totally French. The study of English and other subjects were added at different course levels, and when the students reached grade 6, 40 to 60% of the courses were taught in French, the rest in English. Such courses started in Ontario about 25 years ago, then spread throughout Canada. In British Columbia, over 30 School Boards provide this service today.

It may be asked why did so many parents insist that their children have an education in the second official

language. The reasons may vary of course, but primarily, it is felt that to know French will provide children with more opportunities for better jobs; that knowing a second language will further develop their capabilities at large; that, for some, a bilingual Canada is a desirable thing, therefore their children should adapt to this new concept; finally that the knowledge of another language implies the understanding and appreciating of another ethnic group.

At a time when the Canadian Confederation is in crisis, and Quebec threatens to opt out, the very concept of bilingualism is put to trial. Whatever our inclinations are, all the Anglophone parents that have devoted so much effort and energy into the viability of the French Immersion Programs for the past twenty odd years, and made them work, will probably feel betrayed if bilingualism is scrapped. Only history will tell the consequences for Canada.

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**Notes:**

(1) *Canadian Parents for French* National Newsletter, Issue #12, January 1981.

## French Survival in British Columbia

There is no doubt that the linguistic situation of the Francophones in the Province is quite precarious. At the 1981 census, 45,620 people declared having French as their mother tongue, meaning their first acquired and still understood language. Back then, out of 2,744,465 inhabitants of British Columbia, that represented 1.66% of the total population. (1) A more recent census published by the *Maclean's Magazine* (based on a *Statistics Canada* report) indicated that there were 1.3% of the province that was French-speaking in 1986. What looks like a slight fall may be explained by a greater immigration from Asia, since 3% of the Province was Chinese-speaking. (2)

Although it is largely ignored by most Canadians, the French had a significant role in the colonization and the exploitation of the Pacific Coast, as was explained in the historical section of this book. In 1838, they accounted for 60% of the white population of the Coast. These pioneers and explorers, who were called the "Voyageurs," recruited for the most part from the Saint-Lawrence Valley, represented a group of French Canadians, accustomed to the woodmen hardship, to living in the forest, and to portages. Despite their important part played in the early days of the Province, nowhere is to be found a place where there is some kind of a concentration of Francophones, either in an area, or in a town district. However, one thing is undeniable, and is quite miraculous: the fact that this dispersed culture has survived in a sea of English and Canadian culture, and has somewhat resisted what seemed like an eventual assimilation. Whether we like it or not, there still is a French community in Victoria. It is likely that the

assimilation is to some extent counter-balanced by the constant arrival of native French-speakers from other Canadian provinces, and even in some cases by French immigrants.

There is nonetheless a new and unexpected factor in British Columbia, so paradoxical that nobody could have foreseen it, a factor that has completely redefined the survival chances of the French language in this Province: it is the spectacular change of attitude towards French from non-Francophones, an attitude which historically was negative, let alone openly hostile. One has to remember the violent reactions that were spurred by the 1968 promulgation of the Official Languages Act. "They want to force French down our throats," was an often recurring headline in the press. These reactions were based on a lack of understanding of the true aims of the Official Languages Act, but it was spontaneous and sincere. At the time, the French language was a relatively rare phenomenon in British Columbia. The few Francophones of this Province could safely use their language in public without fearing being understood. This changed in the 80's, at a time when an important proportion of the population changed their attitude towards French. However, today, after the Meech Lake Accord failure, it is possible that the French become a renewed target from some western radical groups, who advocate more independence from Ottawa.

The strong interest in French that has established itself in the Province is largely due to a large number of English-Canadian parents, whose enthusiasm for French immersion programmes had baffled all forecasts. In 21 years, immersion enrollment has steadily increased: in 1968, there were only 47 students enrolled, in 1989 (latest data available from the Ministry of Education), there were



26,510. In 1989-90 and 1990-91, Immersion enrollment was indicated to remain stable. The *Canadian Parents for French*, the national institution that was created in 1977, has certainly had an influential role in B.C. They have contributed to changing public opinion about Bilingualism. According to *Language and Society*, the official publication of the Commissioner of Official Languages, it is said in the Spring of 1991 issue that Bilingualism has had a slow but increasing support over the years, despite counter attacks from "English only" movements, who have somewhat obscured real facts. In the same line and closer to home, the APEC (*Association for the Preservation of English in Canada*) did not succeed in their goal to halt immersion: "In the municipal elections for School board members, APEC representatives were not supported by the public. Not only were they not elected, they saw the election of the first Francophone, Nicole Hennessey, to the Nanaimo school board, where APEC had proposed to eliminate the immersion program." (3)

If we are to cast an eye into the future, it is not exaggerated to say that the conditions of survival and expansion of the French fact in British Columbia largely reside upon the constant and tremendous interest that the English Canadian population has in it.

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#### Notes

(1) *Canada Census*, 1981, Catalogue 92-902, Vol. 1.

Bibliography: Presentation by Bernard Saint-Jacques, Royal Society of Canada, 1985-86, pp. 153-63.

(2) *Maclean's*, April 22, 1991, p. 18.

(3) *Language and Society*, No. 34, Spring 1991, p. 35.

## "Nos Librairies Françaises"

### **Librairie Française, 1951-1956**

Over the years French books stores in Victoria have come and gone. Following a chronological order we will begin with *La Librairie Française* which existed between 1951 and 1956. It may seem paradoxical that you would find a French book-store in the most British city in Canada in the 1950's, and yet, this is true in part; in those years, there was a French book-store in Victoria. The motto of one of their publicity documents read as follows: "A little bit of the Left Bank." One could not imagine a better name than *Librairie Française* to catch the eye of Francophones and Francophiles in British Columbia's capital city.

A French lady, Mrs Rose-Blanche Arcens-McBride, studied at the University of Barcelona, in Spain, during her youth in order to perfect her knowledge of Spanish. One day, being lonely in this foreign city, she walked in the streets and noticed a store sign saying: *Librairie Française*. What a golden opportunity to go into the establishment and speak French! She thought the sign was heaven sent because from then forward Rose-Blanche was able to speak her language to French speaking compatriots. It should be noted as well that the book-store owners came from the same province in France.

Mrs Rose-Blanche McBride emigrated to Victoria in 1949. When she arrived she joined *L'Alliance Française* and *Le Club Canadien-Français*. It was at a meeting of *L'Alliance Française* that she met a French lady who would become a very good friend and it so happened that this lady had the same first name, Rose. She was called Mrs Rose-Marie Walsh. If it is true that when people have

many things in common they are drawn together, both Mrs McBride and Mrs Walsh fit the pattern; both were French, both were lonely, both had a bit of capital to invest and both had an Anglophone husband. Their minds were soon made up, they would call their enterprise: *Librarie Française*.

The opening of their new book store, at 610 Courtney Street, coincided with the royal visit; upon this occasion many reporters of the French Canadian Press visited the new establishment and bought articles from Quebec. Besides books, one could find other articles in the book-store such as masterpieces from France plus paintings and crafts from Quebec.

Something totally unexpected happened on opening day. The first customer who entered the store was a small, thin, unshaven man. What he was interested in was not books but a job. He came from France and spoke no English; he needed a room and was looking for employment. He was a chef. Rose-Blanche McBride was taken aback by this individual, she was not in the business of finding work for the unemployed, but because of the goodness of her heart, Rose could not leave a compatriot stranded and decided to take him to the *Empress Hotel* where he might be hired in the kitchen. (1)

#### **New location**

In 1953, Mrs Rose-Marie Walsh decided to leave the business and sold her share to Mrs McBride who then moved her book-store to 1239 Broad Street. It is strange how one thing can lead to another in life. A client of the book-store, who was the principal of a school, approached Mrs McBride one day and asked her if she knew anyone who could help her students learn French. Mrs. McBride, always generous with her time and willing to help, offered to

see the students in her store. She taught them French so well that the young laddies passed their exams with flying colours. The principal of Saint Margaret's private school was impressed by this achievement and proceeded to offering Mrs. McBride a teaching position. It was obvious to her that she could not do both, work in her book-store and teach in a school. Thus, in 1956 she liquidated her business and began teaching during the day at the school; in the evenings she taught French for the *Victoria School Board*.

Mrs. McBride later took a teaching position at the *University of British Columbia* in Vancouver and moved to their city with her husband. At her retirement in 1971, she published a book for the students of French, entitled: *Nouvelles du Québec*. She also co-authored a book of French Canadian texts with her colleague Mrs. Katherine T. Brearley.

Mrs. Rose-Blanche McBride, B.A., M.A., U.B.C. retired professor contributed immensely to French culture in British Columbia: the first book-store, the first radio programme in French and the first reader of French Canadian authors for the University of British Columbia.(2)

#### **Au Coin du Livre, 1978-1985**

Nicole Cadorette attended *La Fédération des Franco Colombiens'* convention in Vancouver in May 1978; this is where she made up her mind to go ahead with her project for a French book-store in Victoria on behalf of *Le Club Canadien-Français*.

This was indeed a humble beginning for she purchased from the book-store of *Le Centre Culturel Colombien de Vancouver* two boxes of books. This is how the book-store in Victoria began.

*Le Club Canadien français* board of directors approved Nicole's undertaking and a market study revealed that there was in Victoria an important need for French publications especially at a time when French immersion programmes were seeing the light of day.

Nicole Cadorette's project represented a challenge of such proportions that a great deal of motivation was needed in order to bring it to a successful conclusion. Problems were numerous: the book-store had to be implemented without financial means, space was limited to a sixteen by sixteen foot space. It had to present some credibility to the suppliers and above all, reverse a trend by which customers ordered their books directly from eastern Canada. Obtaining books from the east presented so many difficulties that quite often clients just simply read the book in English.

At this point in time, one might recall, bilingualism and French immersion classes met some opposition. As founder and manager, Mrs Cadorette became Director of a book-store committee in which she brought together people who loved books just like herself and who resolved to give of their time towards her undertaking's success. The committee quickly set a list of objectives which were:

1. use the book as a tool to promote the French language and culture;
2. satisfy existing needs and regroup Francophones;
3. give the Francophone community a viable organism capable of establishing a cultural centre.

The objectives being defined, it was then necessary to reach them. Numerous means were taken to insure the expansion of the new book store: visits in the schools, book



fairs in cities on Vancouver Island and Victoria, workshops, open-houses, book prizes to the Victor Brodeur school and many more.

Countless hours of volunteer work, of efforts and sacrifices were deemed necessary over the years to make this business venture succeed. At certain times much energy was spent trying to convince certain reluctant directors in *La Société-Francophone de Victoria* who did not see the importance of the project. But the challenge was met since the book-store never ceased to develop. It became profitable in 1985; it was also the most important French business of its kind. That same year *Au Coin Du Livre* did more than \$100.000. of business. No one doubted its success.

### **Les Librairies Colombiennes Incorporées and La Librairie Française de Victoria - 1986**

After Mrs Nicole Cadorette's departure in December 1985, the book-store *Au Coin du Livre*, which had been surprisingly successful, especially when considering the disappointment encountered by other French book-stores in British Columbia, began to look towards new goals.

When Mr. Pierre Geoffrion succeeded Nicole Cadorette as manager, events unfolded rather rapidly so much so that *La Société Francophone de Victoria* was given a very special mandate on March 27, 1986 at a meeting of the presidents of *La Fédération des Franco-Colombiens*.

*La Société Francophone de Victoria* was asked to accept a project consisting of establishing a network of French book-stores in British Columbia. The success of such a network of book-stores implied setting up a distribution centre to supply it. A new corporation called *Les Librairies Colombiennes Inc.* was created. According to its mission, this corporation would try to convince Quebec



and Ontario suppliers to cooperate in building stocks of books in British Columbia, stocks that would be redistributed in *Les Librairies Françaises* network and supply to the 75 school boards throughout the province.

By September 1986, six months after receiving the mandate, the network established three book-stores which were called: *Librairie Française de Prince-George, de Vancouver et de Victoria*. The directors hoped to add two more by the spring of 1987.(3) Moreover, *Les Librairies Colombiennes Inc.* succeeded in obtaining orders for pedagogical books from 24 School Districts in British Columbia.

Thanks to this new beginning, one could foresee the future with optimism. (4)

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#### NOTES

(1) See the article entitled: *La Librairie Française de Victoria* (1951-1956), first French Book-store in British Columbia, published in *le Soleil de Colombie* on January 29, 1982, compiled and written by Catou Lévesque.

(2) Writing this article was made possible due to the courtesy of Mrs McBride who lent a personal album which comprises a collection including an interview granted to *La Société Historique Franco-Colombienne* and clippings from newspapers and magazines: *The Province, Victoria Daily Colonists, Châtelaine*, which relate social and commercial activities of the book-store, and finally numerous cards and testimonials of appreciation. Mrs. McBride lives in Vancouver and is always interested in the French cause.

(3) The present directors are Gérard Ricard, président; Serge Vallée, vice-president; Gérald Moreau, secretary; Robert Beauvais, Treasurer; Claire Ouimet, Director. Pierre Geoffrion was General Director and Claire Ouimet succeeded him in this post. For many years Gérard Vincent played a major role as secretary of the board of directors

(4) *La Librairie Française de Victoria* which was situated on Pandora Street moved in July 1991 to a new location at 690 Somass Drive, Victoria.

## Arts and Health

Different organizations provided activities where Francophones could meet and enjoy being together. The Arts, in different forms, created a special interest. *Le Club Bonne Santé* helped them to remain in good health; hotels and restaurants gave the "gourmet" an opportunity to satisfy their appetite.

### "L'Artisanat"

After the founding of *Le Club Canadien-Français* the Francophones felt that they wanted to meet in groups according to their interests and their needs. The ladies, who particularly liked needlework, formed their own club; they met on a regular basis and the products of their activities helped in collecting money for the future French Parish. Occasionally their works prepared either at the meetings or at home were sold at bazaars held annually; the profits were deposited in that special bank account for the purchase of a church building.

The Crafts Committee had its ups and downs. At some points it seemed that the enthusiasm was lost, other times the membership had doubled. The members met in a variety of places and even the nature of the meetings changed. At times, courses were offered on numerous types of crafts - from weaving to ceramics. In spite of some adversities the members of the group managed to produce some masterpieces. It was an excellent opportunity to meet, to chat on family topics and to exchange ideas.

### **"Les Cornouillers"**

*Les Cornouillers*, a troupe of French Canadian folk dancers in Victoria takes its name from the British Columbia Emblem. Marie-France Bérubé founded and directed this troupe while she was a student at the University of Victoria. The Montreal Arts Council sent an excellent dance instructor, Mr. Serge de Maisonneuve, who gave the young people their first lessons in gigs and reels.

With the parents' help the dancers sewed their own costumes, the girls wore blue, white and red whereas the boys appeared in black trousers, a white blouse and a red bolero. They gave their first performance to the convention of *La Fédération des Franco-Colombiens*, which was held in Victoria in May 1976. More performances were given in other cities throughout the province. The troupe continued to dance for another three years under the founder's direction. She finally had to pass her duties on to others so she could devote all of her time to her studies. Eventually, other dancers had to abandon the troupe and consequently it ceased to exist. Even though this artistic endeavor was short-lived it achieved an enviable success.

### **"Les Decibels"**

When reading about the recent history of Francophones in Victoria one becomes aware that several choirs existed. As early as in October 1975, Mr. Mario Pinho directed a vocal choir for about a year. Three years later, in 1978, Mr. Gilbert Elophe directed another group called *Les Chante-Joie*. Unfortunately, Mr. Elophe had to leave for Vancouver and the group was disbanded. All was not lost since a new director named Patrice McLean, a long



A few members of the Troupe "Les Cornouillers"



"L'Artisanat"



Choirs - Les Décibels



time resident of Victoria decided to form a choir called *Les Decibels*.

Mr McLean was endowed with the necessary qualities and talents to direct a choir. He obtained a B.A. in Musical Education at Laval University in Quebec City; he also took a course on musical direction at the School of Music in the Canadian Armed Forces where he himself later taught music.

The new singing group made up of people of all ages began rehearsing in March 1979; the members wanted to bring to the province French Canadian culture by means of a repertory of classical, popular and folk songs. In a short time their new choir performed for the *Franco-fête* in Maillardville and to the official *Saint-Jean-Baptiste* dinner in June 1979.

The choir's activities were interrupted for the summer months but come September they resumed with new singers and new projects. The choir planned a Christmas concert for December 1979 and a joint concert with *Les Echos du Pacifique*, a choir from Maillardville.

Moreover, they planned to sing two songs at a contest organized by the Greater Victoria Music Festival. The choir won the second prize in its category.

*Les Decibels* looked towards new horizons; in 1980 the choir joined with *L'Alliance Chorale Alberta*. *Les Decibels* travelled to Edmonton in January 1981 and participated in a beautiful singing experience with *l'Alliance Chorale Alberta*. The choir performed for various groups in Victoria such as Shopping Centres, homes for the aged and others. The choir no longer exists but it can be said that it brought happiness to many people.

"Elles étaient belles, nos *Décibels*"



### **"Les Farceurs de Victoria"**

The Professional Actor Training Program Course was taught at Camosun College in 1978 and 1979. The program was under the direction of Jean-Paul Destrubé and one of the professors was Lina de Guevara. Lise Guérin and Clayton Jevne were two of the students. In 1980 Lise Guérin and Jean-Paul Destrubé, wanting to obtain a better knowledge about acting, registered with "l'Ecole de Théâtre et de Mime" directed by Jacques Lecoq in Paris.

On their return in 1981, Lise and Jean-Paul together with Lina and Clayton decided to form a professional troupe for professional theater which was the beginning of *Les Farceurs de Victoria* ..

First they gave some presentations in the schools. "Les Farces Françaises" of the mid-century were played. In the school, forty-five minutes were allowed for a play, so a few "Fables de Lafontaine" were added to complete the time allowed. At the beginning, 3 or 4 presentations were given in a year. In 1983, ten presentations were given; including one at the University of Victoria and another one at Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific.

To meet school children level of understanding, a different theme was chosen. "Guignol aux Amériques", a classical personage of hand puppets, was selected to represent the arrival of Jacques Cartier in Canada. The picturesque presentation created an interest in the children. To give the audience the impression that many comedians were acting, masks and different costumes were used. The children were invited to participate in the play. The objective was to encourage the children to express themselves in French.

In 1984, with the assistance of *La Société Francophone* a grant was obtained and the play "Guignol en Mission Internationale" was presented. In 1985, the troupe performed eighty-six times in Alberta, British Columbia and the North-West Territories.

The members of the troupe could not all stay in Victoria and had to discontinue their theatrical activities for a time. What will be the future of *Les Farceurs de Victoria*? Time will tell.

### "L'Age d'Or."

A center called *Nouveaux Horizons* of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste parish was organized in 1980. Father André Dion, parish priest at the time, had the idea and with the help of Jean-Marie Fortier and Raymond Plante they arranged a meeting with Mr. Jos. Zagreski, representative of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Program "New Horizons". A grant was obtained and a permanent local was established.

The official opening of this hall took place on March 18, 1981. Bishop Remi De Roo of Victoria and Miss Noreen Campbell of the Program New Horizons were present.

Mrs. Jeannette Schiller was the first president and Mrs. Alice Maynard became the president in 1982. Miss Eliana Mathieu, now presides over this organization. The Centre is used by the Seniors and other groups. It is a sort of a "home" for Francophone organizations.

### **"Le Club Bonne Santé"**

To remain in good health it is necessary to get some kind of physical exercise. On September 8, 1986, a few ladies met at the residence of Mrs. Violette Bégin to study the possibilities of forming a new group. The following Monday some enthusiastic women and men joined together for a walk and exercises in a local of *La Société Francophone*. Realizing the advantages of such a program, the executive, composed of Marie Robillard, Raymonde Carriou, Henri Chartrand and Evangéline Boucher obtained a grant from the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Program New Horizons. With this money they were able to purchase some exercise equipment and a scale.

At the end of 1987, all participants had lost weight and felt in better health. Consequently they continue this valuable program.

### **"Hôtels et Restaurants"**

At the beginning of Victoria, French Hotels and Restaurants were places where Francophones could meet and talk in their language. Today, large gatherings of Francophone organizations still meet in French Restaurants.

### **The Driard House.**

Mr. Sosthènes Driard born in 1819 at Lachapelle, in France, arrived in Victoria in 1858. He purchased the Colonial Hotel and in August 6, 1871 he purchased the St. Georges Hotel situated between Douglas and Broad Street. One can read in the *Colonist*, August 6, 1871, that he paid \$5,500. for the building. He added 34 rooms to the hotel and each room had a fireplace. This 'plush' hotel was



Driard Hotel in Victoria, 1872 BCPA 27765





The New Driard Hotel BCPA 27716

inaugurated on May 4, 1872 and was called 'Driard Hotel'. It could accommodate one hundred customers.

On February 16, 1873, Mr. Driard died of an attack of apoplexy. He was 54 years old. His hotel was the most important in Victoria until 1910. At that time it became The Spencer House. (1)

On Broad and View Street, the construction of a corner of this Hotel has been included in the Eaton Centre Building. Near the elevator, a commemorative plaque was installed at the request of *L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria* and the cost for the installation of this plaque was a courtesy of the Eaton Centre. (2)

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(1) The daily Colonist, Victoria, 28 November 1948

(2) On the bilingual plaque one can read: "Site of the Driard Hotel reopened in 1872 by S. Driard, born in France, 1819, emigrated to Victoria in 1858. This plaque placed on the restored Driard Hotel Facade was donated by Eaton Centre to *L'Association Historique Francophone de Victoria* August 2nd 1990" .

### **Belvedere Sooke Harbour Hotel**

At the age of 17, in 1910 André Robillard came to live in Victoria with his parents and his brother Raoul.

His father was a gardener and with his two sons he contributed to the beautifying of many places in the Victoria region. In 1917, they worked in the planning of the beautiful Butchart Gardens. His mother, 'a good cook' was catering for different organizations in Victoria.

In 1923 they moved to Sooke, (1) purchased the "Sooke Harbour Hotel" and called it "Belvedere Sooke Harbour Hotel". The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1934



They also lost their parents who were buried in the Ross Cemetery. They rebuilt a smaller hotel called "Le Sooke River Hotel" on the site of the equestrian academy. Part of the stable is included in the hotel which still exists.

André Robillard built green houses on the site of the Belvedere and administered this business until his death in 1962 at the age of 56.

According to a story, he crossed the river every day to offer roses to the telephone operator in Sooke. This lady, Miss Agnès Milne, became his wife in 1946.

His brother Raoul left Victoria in 1939. He went to Vancouver and became a Landscape architect.(2)

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(1) Sooke is a suburb of Victoria located on the Straight of Juan de Fuca.

(2) *The Colonist*, Aug. 6, 1980, "Sooke Region Museum."

### **Beacon Lodge**

In 1946, Mr. J.N. Côté purchased the Beacon Cottage and after having made some repairs he called this place *Tourist Lodge*. Three years later, with his son Henri, they enlarged this building and called it *Beacon Lodge*. It was opened in 1946 and could accommodate about one hundred persons. The establishment is located at Mile 0 on Douglas Street and faces Beacon Hill Park.

At the death of his father, Henri continued to administer the establishment for another thirty years. In 1972, this hotel became an apartment building and now, Bernard Côté, Henri's son, looks after the administration of the building.

### **"Hotel Sidney."**

In 1964, Mr. Roland Paquette, born in Debden Saskatchewan, purchased the Sidney Hotel. This hotel is located on the water front in Sidney. It has been enlarged and another addition is planned for the end of 1991.

A Club of Scuba Divers occupies the basement of the building. Roland Paquette's two children, Denis and Roseline now administer the hotel.

### **Rocabella**

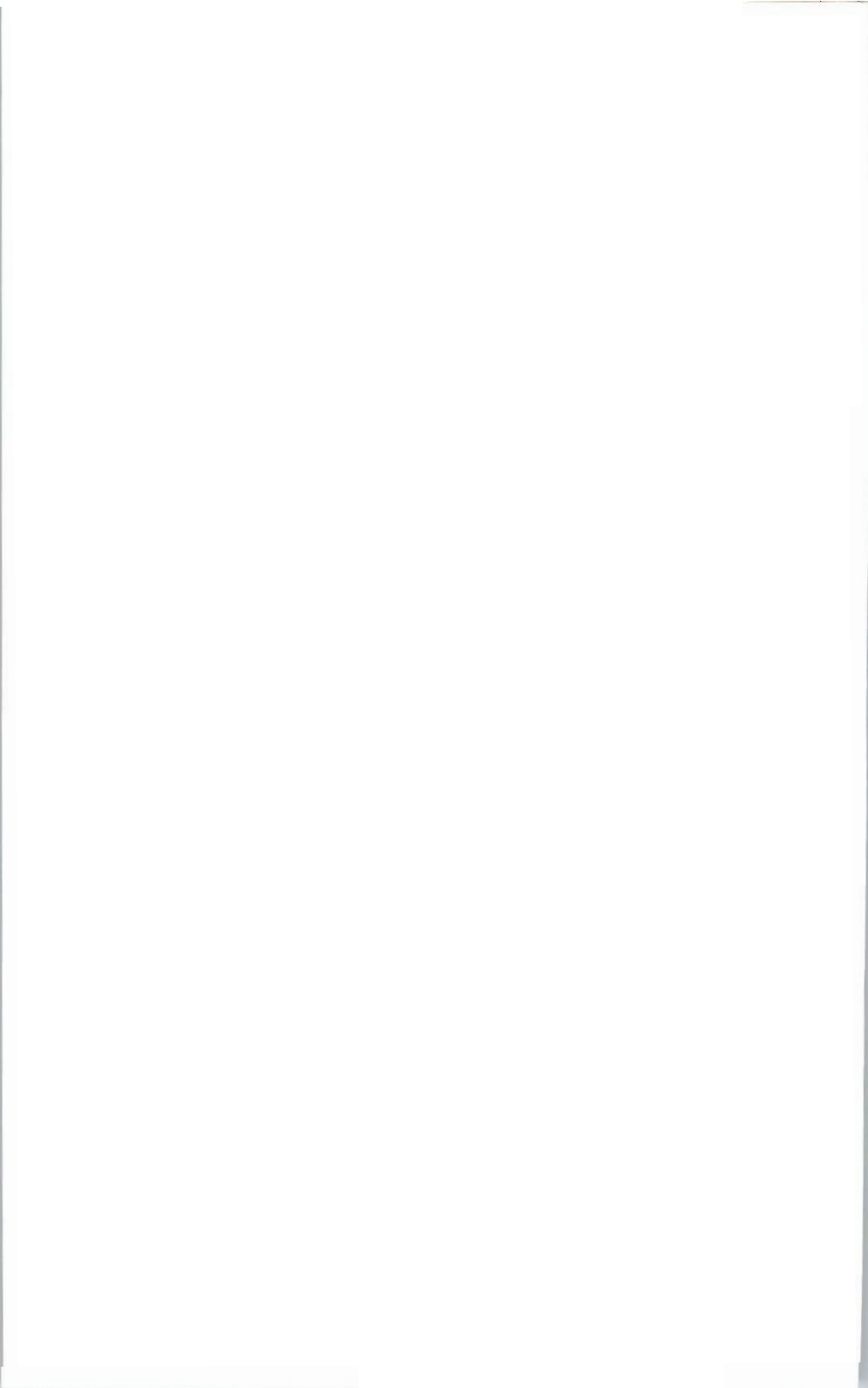
In 1970, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Lamy owned a boarding house. and the restaurant " C'est si bon". Delicious meals were served and the members of *Le Club Canadien* were regular customers. It was located at the corner of Blanshard and Fairfield and the building was eventually demolished.

### **"Un Hôtel flottant"**

From 1971 to 1979, Mr. Claude Lacerte owned a boat called " M.V. Mirabelle" and tourists were making fishing excursions around the Island in this boat. The "cuisine québécoise" was excellent. On that boat, *Le Club Canadien-Français* had many enjoyable meetings.

### **"Restaurants"**

Many French restaurants are located in Victoria. Also French chefs work in restaurants with English names but the "French Cuisine" is on their menu. It is up to everyone to locate them.



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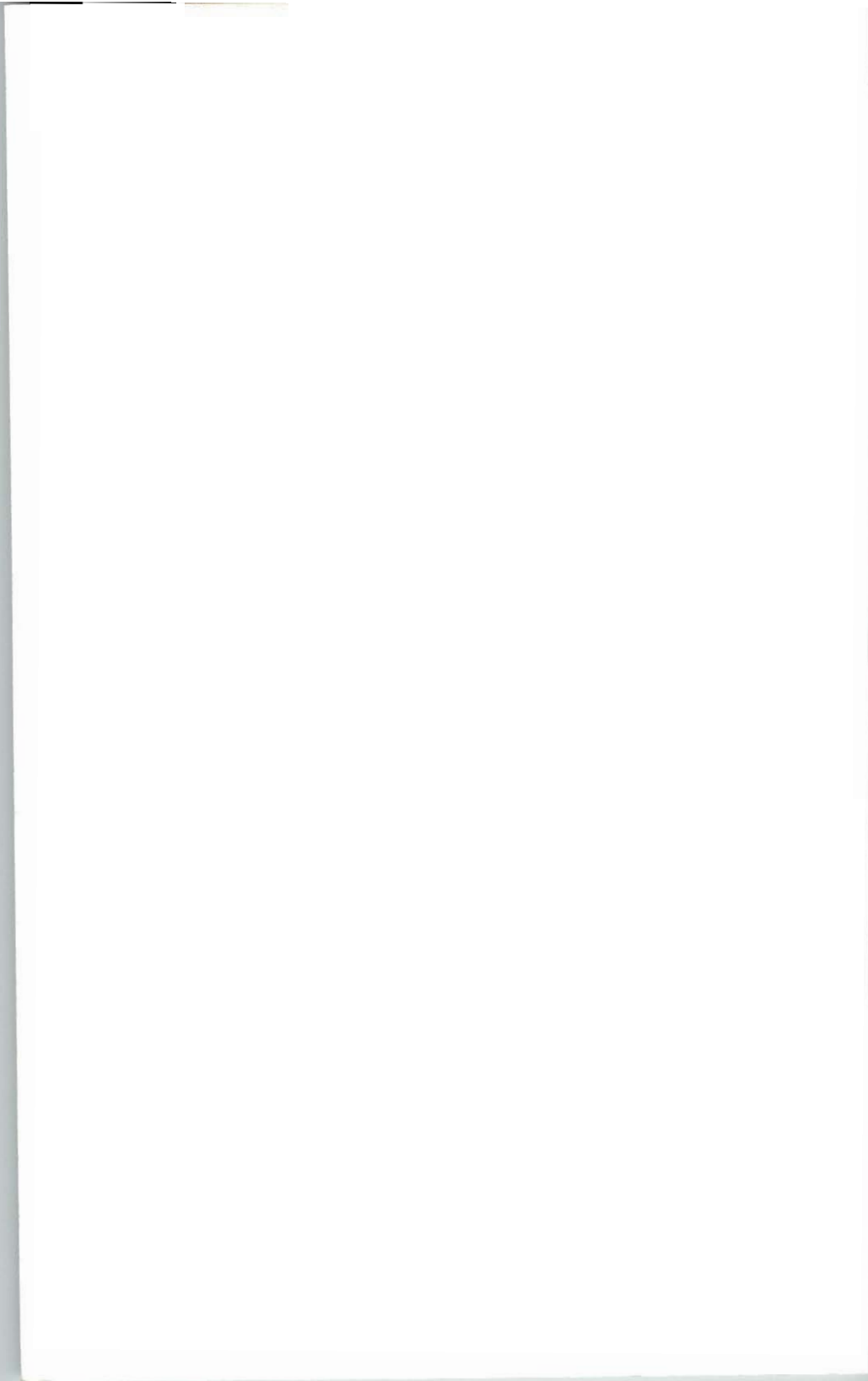
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FOLD-OUT MAP

Showing Route taken  
by Bishop Modeste Demers



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