

September 9

Franco Festival Sunday

Veilleux/Vigue family reunion, food will be some highlights

BY DAVID ROBINSON Staff Writer

WATERVILLE -- They came to this area shortly after the American Civil War from Quebec, in some cases with little more than what they could carry or drag in a cart.

They came to work in mills and make a better life for their children.

But almost 150 years later, it is now clear that French Canadians helped to build a city, populate Maine and even played a role in shaping the country.

To honor this American story of one of the countless mass migrations, hundreds of people are expected in Waterville this weekend to celebrate Franco-American heritage.

Many will be attending the eighth annual Franco-American Family Festival at Head of Falls on Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Organizers are hoping to repeat last year's estimated record attendance of close to 500, according to Pearley Lachance, an event organizer.

A family reunion Saturday is a new addition to the annual event. It will highlight one family tree; and each year organizers hope to pick a lineage that provides the perfect example of how a single family can create ripples that transcend time.

This year, the Veilleux/Vigue Family Reunion is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. John School cafeteria, 15 S. Garland St., Winslow.

Lachance, 75, of Winslow, and his wife, Alice, have worked to gather stories and take reservations for the reunion, which they said is not like a typical family backyard barbecue.

In keeping with the festival's focus on promoting the culture, the reunion will feature presentations by standout family members, access to a Franco-American genealogist and proclamation readings by local, state and federal officials.

When they started, the couple didn't know what to expect.

Their initial plan was to search all of New England for descendants, but a quick look at the city phone book put an end to that idea.

"There were 250 (Veilleux/Vigue) in the Waterville phone book," said Alice, whose maiden name is Veilleux. "We said whoa, let's concentrate on Maine," her husband added quickly.

Despite the in-state focus, members are still attending from as far off as Texas and California. About 150 people reserved \$25 seats for the reunion.

Admission is free to the Sunday festival, which features a variety of specialty foods, music and dance, and children's activities and games. The city provided \$4,500 to fund the festival, according to Pearley.

Families can also put one of mémère's recipes to the test in a competition to find the best tourtière pie, a traditional Franco-American meat pie that features pork, pastry, mashed potatoes and a combinations of spices.

Other foodies in attendance are drawn to a dish known as "dynamite" that, according to Lachance, is a Waterville exclusive. The combination of ground beef, tomato sauce and soup, green peppers, onions, and red pepper flakes, all served on a hamburger roll, is a local favorite, he said.

There is also a bean supper Saturday from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at St. John School cafeteria, at a cost of \$7 for adults, \$4 for children and \$20 for families.

A Franco-American Memorial Mass, dedicated to the Veilleux/Vigue family, is at Notre Dame Church, on Silver Street, in Waterville, at 10:30 a.m. Sunday

Organizers said anyone interested in volunteering can call 873-0358.

David Robinson -- 861-9287

drobinson@centralmaine.com

Find this article at:

http://www.onlinesentinel.com/news/franco-festival-sundayveilleux_vigue-family-reunion-food-will-be-some-highlights_2010-09-08.html?searchterm=franco+festival

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



Clear High: 67° Low: 49° Sunrise 6:24 AM Sunset 6:37 PM 55°

Subscribe today



Tuesday, September 21, 2010

News Sports Opinion Real Life Community Obituaries Entertainment Connect With Us

Classified Ads

Simware.customButtonCode(\$destID)

Save This Story E-mail This Story Print This Story Large Type SHARE

September 12

Waterville Franco fest draws crowd

By Amy Calder acalder@mainetoday.com Staff Writer

WATERVILLE — Richard Poissonnier looked out over the sea of people at the Franco American Family Festival Sunday and remarked how glad he was to have heard about it. "We came up to a family reunion last weekend of the Michauds and Poissonniers on China Lake," said Poissonnier, 68, of San Antonio, Texas. "We went to Quebec and we came back from Quebec and this festival was going on." It had been five years since Poissonnier visited his home town of Waterville, where, as a child he delivered newspapers on First Rangeway and Cool Street. "I graduated from Waterville High School in 1960," he said. "All my family's still here." Poissonnier was attending the annual festival for the first time. "I love it," he said. "There are things here we can't get in Texas, like toutiere pie. My sister, Betty Leung, sends it down to me. She lives in Winslow." Poissonnier joined more than 200 people at Head of Falls on the Kennebec River Sunday for the 8th annual festival. While the sky was overcast, the air was warm. The crowd listened to live music, danced and ate everything from toutiere pie to hot dogs. They bought handmade quilts, homemade whoopie pies, molasses cookies and other treats. Everywhere, people were speaking in both French and English. Most had a story to tell. "We live in California," said Marie Paule Bernard Kalevicoglu, who grew up in Beauceville, Quebec. "I left Beauceville to go to Montreal (many years ago) and I met my husband and he is from Turkey and he is Greek," she said. Kalevicoglu and her husband, Lefter, were sitting under a blue and white striped tent in front of a stage Sunday with her sister, Laurette Bernard, of St. Georges, Quebec. "My mother was a Veilleux," Marie Paule said. "I really enjoyed the reunion (the Veilleux-Vigue reunion Saturday). And the Mass (at Notre Dame Church) this morning — I just loved it. It reminded me of when I was young." As the bluegrass band, Wilf Clark & The Misty Mountaineers, warmed up, Waterville resident Roger Hallee entertained the crowd by telling jokes. Organizer Pearley Lachance welcomed everyone. "Enjoy yourself," he said. "Have a good time." Sarah Sirois, French teacher at St. John Regional Catholic School in Winslow, and her students, sang Bonjour Mes Amis (Hello, My Friends), Soyons Amis (Let's be Friends) and John & El Parlent French (John and El Speak French). "We've been practicing during our French classes," Sirois said, several minutes before they performed. The band, Blistered Fingers, also played bluegrass music. Children danced in the grass on the fenced-in riverbank by the historic Two Cent Bridge. Old and young alike admired a dozen or so classic cars on display, including a deep red 1931 Model A Ford, a 1947 Mercury coupe and an orange 1953 Mercury Monterey convertible.

Amy Calder — 861-9247 acalder@centralmaine.com

My toast? [toaster icon]

Were you interviewed for this story? If so, please fill out our accuracy form

Send Question/Comment to the Publisher

9 COMMENTS

Hide Comments >

maewestgg said... How I miss the Franco festival - it must of been a wonderful time or memories and joy.

Want to comment on this story?

Please login to comment. If you have not logged in before, you will need to register with our site.

Most...

READ SHARED

COMMENTED

The weapon was an SUV, police say Morning Sentinel police log: Sept. 21, 2010 Fundraiser for LifeFlight Cindy Blodgett's contract extended

Shemekia Copeland October 9th, Unity, ME Unity Centre for Performing Arts Shawn Colvin October 24th - Skowhegan, ME Skowhegan Opera House Cherryholmes November 5th - Waterville, ME Waterville Opera House www.sweetpeopleproductions.com

Local Experts CLICK TO VIEW YOUR LOCAL EXPERTS

John Deere advertisement with image of a field and a green button 'SEE MORE ACTION'

Be the first to know. Morning Sentinel advertisement with image of a smartphone

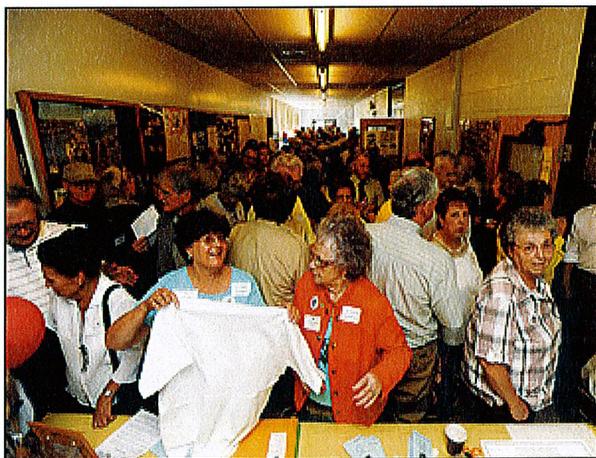
The State v. Daniel Fortune Daniel L. Fortune, 22, of Augusta, is one of two men accused of invading the home of the Guerrette family in May 2008 and maiming a father and his daughter in a machete attack.

September 12

[Family reunion highlights Franco-American festival](#)

By [Amy Calderacalder@mainetoday.com](mailto:Amy_Calderacalder@mainetoday.com)
Staff Writer

WINSLOW -- Becky Veilleux Gilbert hoped to leave St. John Regional Catholic School Saturday finally having met relatives she had never seen before.



[click image to enlarge](#)

BIG CROWD: Anna Wilber, left center, of Skowhegan and Lucienne Velleux, right center, of St. George, Quebec, purchase a family reunion t-shirt at the Veilleux/Vigue family reunion at St. John's School in Winslow Saturday. Approximately 175 family members were in attendance from as far as California.

Staff photo by Michael G. Seamans

Select images available for purchase in the
Maine Today Photo Store

Franco-American Family Festival

Where: Head of Falls, Waterville

When: Noon to 5 p.m. today

Admission: Free

Features: Food, music, dance, children's activities; toutiere pie contest; also, a memorial Mass for all deceased members of the Veilleux-Vigue family, 10:30 a.m., Notre Dame Church, Silver Street

Veilleux, 55, of East Vassalboro, was attending the Veilleux-Vigue Family Reunion, a daylong event that was part of the Franco-American Family Festival.

The reunion brought together about 160 Veilleux and Vigue family members from mostly Maine and Canada but also from as far away as Texas and California.

Gilbert, her father, Florian Veilleux, 88, of Waterville, and her sister, Anna Veilleux Wilber, 62, of Skowhegan, were excited to be there, Gilbert said.

"We decided we really wanted to see the extension of our family because our Veilleuxs all moved to Connecticut for work," she said. "Dad's brothers moved there in 1945-46. My mother's mother remarried a Veilleux as well. So there have been Veilleuxs on both sides of my family."

Organizers of Saturday's event found through research that all Veilleuxs and Vignes are related through a common ancestor, Nicolas Verieul who was born in France in 1636 and immigrated to Canada in 1658.

In 1665, he married Marguerite Hyardin, also of France. They had children, and thus started a family tree that would include all the variations of the Verieul name, including Veilleux and Vigue.

Sitting at tables adorned with little American, Canadian and Maine flags, those who attended the reunion listened to stories about their ancestors who traveled from Quebec to Maine, some walking more than 100 miles with little more than the clothes on their backs, to find work.

Saturday's attendees sang the national anthems of both Canada and the United States, and listened to event organizer and chairman Pearley Lachance, talk about how important their presence was to the reunion.

"Please note that I said 'family,' not 'families,' Lachance said. "You're all one big, happy family and that's why we're all here today."

Waterville Mayor [Paul LePage](#), who is running for governor, welcomed the families and offered greetings from the city.

He spoke in both English and French. He said that Ku Klux Klan members many years ago tried to prevent French Catholics from entering Maine to find work in the mills, but their efforts were not successful.

"We came down, we made it, we're here and now's our time to take over," he said.

Sen. Lisa Marrache of Waterville, a third-generation Franco-American, also spoke. Marrache is the founder and was first president of the Franco-American Heritage Society of Kennebec Valley.

Lachance read a proclamation from U.S. Rep. Michael Michaud, also of Franco-American descent. His proclamation notes the hard work and dedication to family that is the mark of the Veilleux and Vigue family.

"The Veilleux-Vigue family history is a story of hard work and significant achievement,"

Lachance read.

The reunion, Michaud wrote, is a great cause for celebration.

"This occasion is a chance to honor the past generations for their sacrifice to give their children a better life today."

Yvonne Veilleux-Lefebvre and her husband, Raymond Lefebvre, formerly of Waterville and now of Colchester, Conn., attended the reunion with their daughter, Danielle Carpenter, and her husband, Jim, of Oakland.

"I want to see my two sisters from Montreal I haven't seen in about four years," Yvonne Lefebvre said.

She and her husband moved to Connecticut in 1964. Danielle said that after she married Jim Carpenter, she learned that his father also was a Veilleux -- so she and her husband were actually already related. Jim's great-grandfather, John Veilleux, walked from Beauceville to Waterville.

"I love our heritage," Danielle said. "I'm always looking at our background. I'm always trying to teach my family our heritage."

The reunion was more popular than anyone imagined.

"We were supposed to have 140 and I think we have 160 people," Lachance's wife, Alice, said at the registration desk. "It's been really incredible. People have such interest in this."

Today's Franco-American Family Festival at Head of Falls in Waterville is being dedicated to the Veilleux-Vigue family. Music, dancing, food, a classic car show, toutiere pie contest and children's activities will be featured.

Amy Calder -- 861-9247

acalder@centralmaine.com

Find this article at:

http://www.onlinesentinel.com/news/veilleux-viguefeatured-eventfamily-reunion-highlights-festival_2010-09-11.html?searchterm=franco+festival

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

reunion Saturday). And the Mass (at Notre Dame Church) this morning -- I just loved it. It reminded me of when I was young."

As the bluegrass band, Wilf Clark & The Misty Mountaineers, warmed up, Waterville resident Roger Hallee entertained the crowd by telling jokes. Organizer Pearley Lachance welcomed everyone.

"Enjoy yourself," he said. "Have a good time."

Sarah Sirois, French teacher at St. John Regional Catholic School in Winslow, and her students, sang Bonjour Mes Amis (Hello, My Friends), Soyons Amis (Let's be Friends) and John & El Parlent French (John and El Speak French).

"We've been practicing during our French classes," Sirois said, several minutes before they performed.

The band, Blistered Fingers, also played bluegrass music. Children danced in the grass on the fenced-in riverbank by the historic Two Cent Bridge.

Old and young alike admired a dozen or so classic cars on display, including a deep red 1931 Model A Ford, a 1947 Mercury coupe and an orange 1953 Mercury Monterey convertible.

Amy Calder -- 861-9247

acalder@centralmaine.com

Find this article at:

http://www.onlinesentinel.com/news/family-friends-food-fun_2010-09-12.html?searchterm=franco+festival

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

September 13

Family, friends, food, fun at Franco American Family Festival

By [Amy Calderacalder@mainetoday.com](mailto:AmyCalderacalder@mainetoday.com)
Staff Writer

WATERVILLE -- Richard Poissonnier looked out over the sea of people at the Franco American Family Festival Sunday and remarked how glad he was to have heard about it.

"We came up to a family reunion last weekend of the Michauds and Poissonniers on China Lake," said Poissonnier, 68, of San Antonio, Texas. "We went to Quebec and we came back from Quebec and this festival was going on."

It had been five years since Poissonnier visited his home town of Waterville, where, as a child he delivered newspapers on First Rangeway and Cool Street.

"I graduated from Waterville High School in 1960," he said. "All my family's still here."

Poissonnier was attending the annual festival for the first time.

"I love it," he said. "There are things here we can't get in Texas, like toutiere pie. My sister, Betty Leung, sends it down to me. She lives in Winslow."

Poissonnier joined more than 200 people at Head of Falls on the Kennebec River Sunday for the 8th annual festival. While the sky was overcast, the air was warm.

The crowd listened to live music, danced and ate everything from toutiere pie to hot dogs. They bought handmade quilts, homemade whoopie pies, molasses cookies and other treats.

Everywhere, people were speaking in both French and English. Most had a story to tell.

"We live in California," said Marie Paule Bernard Kalevicoglu, who grew up in Beauceville, Quebec.

"I left Beauceville to go to Montreal (many years ago) and I met my husband and he is from Turkey and he is Greek," she said.

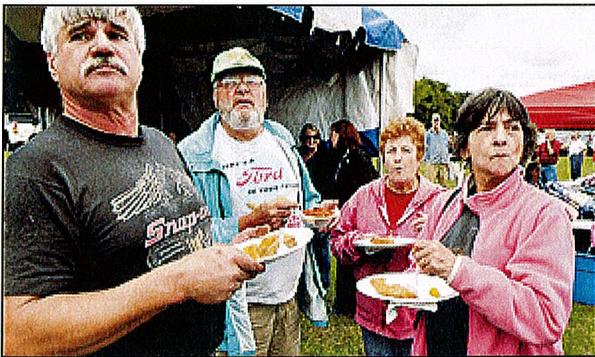
Kalevicoglu and her husband, Lefter, were sitting under a blue and white striped tent in front of a stage Sunday with her sister, Laurette Bernard, of St. Georges, Quebec.

"My mother was a Veilleux," Marie Paule said. "I really enjoyed the reunion (the Veilleux-Vigue

September 13

Celebrating Franco-Fest

Ray Morrow, left, and his wife Brenda, at right, look up with Glenn Bryon and Antoinette Gilbert while sampling food as winners of the toutiere pie contest are announced during the 8th annual Franco-American Family Festival in Waterville on Sunday. Cecile Libby took first place, second went to Janet White and third place went to the team of Muriel, Simone and Madeline Veilleux.



[click image to enlarge](#)

Ray Morrow, left, and his wife Brenda, at right, look up with Glenn Bryon and Antoinette Gilbert while sampling food as winners of the toutiere pie contest are announced during the 8th annual Franco-American Family Festival in Waterville on Sunday. Cecile Libby took first place, second went to Janet White and third place went to the team of Muriel, Simone and Madeline Veilleux.

Staff photo by David Leaming

Select images available for purchase in the
Maine Today Photo Store

Find this article at:

<http://www.onlinesentinel.com/news/Celebrating-Franco-Fest.html?searchterm=franco+festival>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

September 17

[St. John's students sing at Franco-American Festival](#)

WATERVILLE — Students from St. John Regional Catholic School recently participated in the Franco-American Festival at the Head of the Falls in Waterville. Students entertained the audience by singing in French led by French teacher Madame Sirois. The students also sold whoopie pies and molasses cookies to benefit the school.

[click image to enlarge](#)

On Sunday, September 12th, students from St. John Regional Catholic School participated in the Franco American Festival held at the Head of the Falls in Waterville. Students entertained the audience by singing three songs in French led by French teacher Madame Sirois. The students also sold whoopie pies and molasses cookies to benefit the school. Thanks to all who stopped by the table!

Select images available for purchase in the
Maine Today Photo Store

Find this article at:

<http://www.onlinesentinel.com/community/St-Johns-students-sing-at-brFranco-American-Festival.html?searchterm=franco+festival>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.