



Levasseur and Carmel families

Web Capsule and Social Media



Article on the Levasseurs of Western Canada

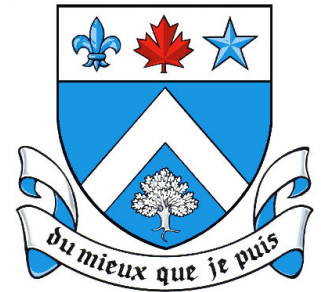
An overview of the history of the Levasseurs and Fort Kent Alberta



About the author: France Levasseur-Ouimet was part of the first group of students who went through the École de pédagogie de Saint-Jean in 1962. She obtained her bachelor's degree in Education, taught for three years, then resumed her studies at the University of Alberta: in 1977 she obtained her

master's degree in French Canadian Literature and, in 1982, her doctorate in Pedagogy at the University of Alberta. She taught at Saint-Jean until her retirement in 2004. She is now Professor Emeritus and has been appointed writer-in-residence at Campus Saint-Jean.

France has completed several projects for and with members of the French-speaking community: guided tours of historic sites, conferences, workshops, radio programs, films and brochures. One such project involved the production of a historical map of Alberta's francophone communities. France has devoted four books to this history, written a collection of short stories, numerous articles on Alberta's Francophones, and plays. She has been an active participant in French-language theatre in Edmonton as an actress and director. She has also composed and directed musical plays as well as songs that have been performed in concert and distributed. She has received recognition awards from the Saint-Jean campus and the Quebec government.



We invite you to become a member of our association and contribute through articles, to enrich our archive center on the Levasseur and Carmel families.

The Association of Levasseur and Carmel families thanks Ms. Levasseur-Ouimet for allowing us to reproduce this article.

The translation into English was done by Pierre LeVasseur. Thank you Pierre!

Written by France Levasseur-Ouimet PhD, D. Lettres (June and July 2020 - Edmonton, Alberta)
 Editing: Jean-Pierre Levasseur, text verification, Huguette Levasseur



Genealogy of the author

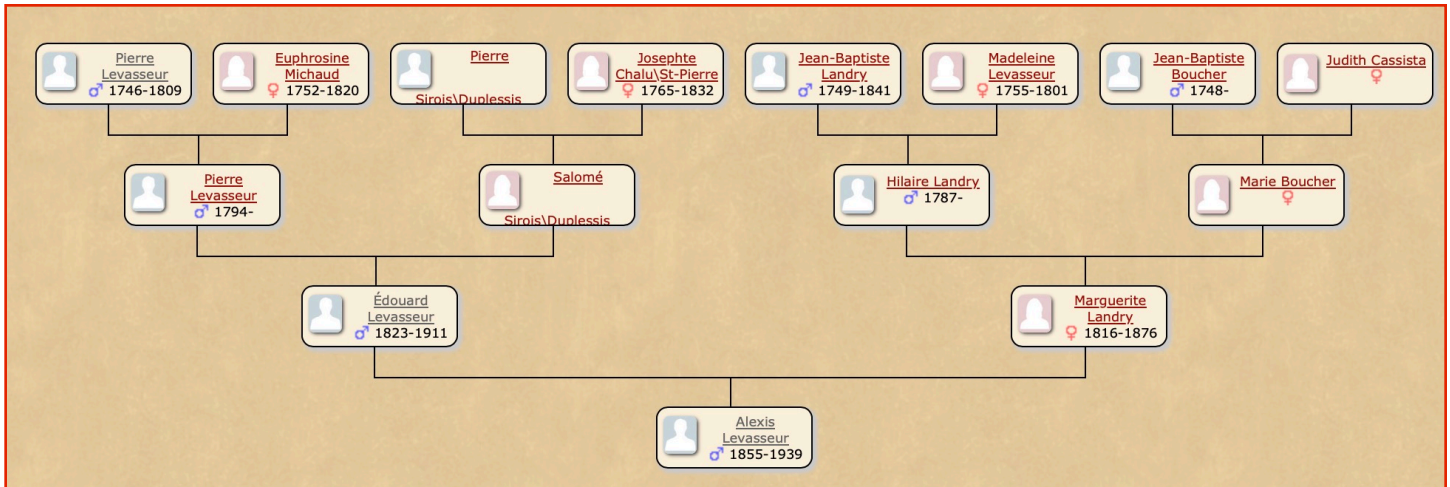


The beginning

Fort Kent's first settlers arrived in March 1910. They were the families of **Alexis and Maxime Levasseur**, Joseph Bouchard and Georges and Willie Michaud. The families of **Alexis Levasseur**, of Joseph Bouchard and of **Maxime Levasseur** came from Saint-François in the Madawaska County of New Brunswick along the Saint John River, while the Michaud family came from Clair.

In 1910, **Alexis Levasseur** was looking for a place for his boys to settle down. Georges Michaud would also like to set up his sons on a large, fertile farm. But this kind of land is in short supply in New Brunswick and people aren't rich. So it was important to look to the future.

Now at the time, leaders of Alberta's French-speaking community were looking to attract settlers from the East. The French-speaking clergy had been the primary promoter of French Catholic colonization in the West, and between 1905 and 1914 it remains its most important agent. Members of the clergy work extensively as missionary-colonizers throughout the province.



Father J.-A. Ouellette organizes train trips to Edmonton and distributes information on opportunities to settle in the province, such as the information contained in the brochure « L'Alberta région centrale » published in 1911 (Hart, 1981, p. 80)

Alexis Levasseur received the brochure from Father Ouellette, missionary-colonizer for the St-Paul and Bonnyville area. Father Ouellette points out that a lot of land is available for settlement in that region of Alberta. But he warns his readers that life as a settler in Alberta is not without difficulties as much hard work is required to make a new home and to endure living conditions unique to the Canadian western provinces. « However, to every sober, hard-working, thrifty man we promise a comfortable lifestyle, prosperity and happiness » (Ouellette, 1910).

Alexis Levasseur is not the only one interested in this kind of project.

He is living with his 89-year-old father **Edouard**, and **Alexis** dreams of founding a second home in this far away land of the Canadian West. « Perhaps a question of adventure », writes **Alphonse Levasseur** in March 1957 in a letter to the representatives of all the Levasseurs in the country, who were meeting in Quebec on August 18, at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré.

At the time in Alberta, land was divided into square parcels of one square mile (640 acres or quarter section). The provincial government gives away a quarter-section of land to anyone wanting it in exchange for \$10 and registration at the Land Office. Over the following three years, the settler is required to a) build a house (shack) out of logs and beams, b) live in it for six months of the year, c) fence off the entire homestead, and d) work a few acres of land (cut trees and brush, grub and uproot, plow, harrow and seed the land). If progress is deemed sufficient by government inspectors, the pioneer receives his letters patent and the land belongs to him.

All this beautiful land available at such a good price must have made Alexis dream, for on February 20 he travels to Edmonton for more information. He gets a room at the Richelieu hotel, owned at the time by J.-N. Pomerleau. It is interesting to note that during this period, French-Canadians owned or managed at least nine hotels in Edmonton.

Delighted, **Alexis** returns home and shares his information. Several friends and relatives are also interested. On March 20, 1910, they sell their property, pack up the furniture as well as the farm machinery, paint, nails and even the hay rack, and Alexis with his wife Philomène and their family set off on their adventure out West. His sons Octave, Félix and Joseph then aged 15, and his brother Alphonse, aged 17, accompanied him as well as the families of Maxime Levasseur, Joseph Bouchard, Georges Michaud and his sons Willie and Cyprien.

The first part of the journey from the East is made by train. In those days, you could travel by Canadian Northern from Edmonton to Vegreville, a distance of 75 miles, and from there undertake the 65 mile road trip to St-Paul-des-Métis. From St Paul you would travel to Moose Lake as best you could, either on foot or otherwise.

On March 29, 1910, our group of travellers arrives in Vegreville, a first stop for settlers going west at that time.

The journey has not been easy with small children and a paralyzed mother walking with the help of one arm.

They are taken to an immigration house. In early April, it is still cold. The doors of the building do not shut, windows are broken and there's no heat.

During their brief stay in Vegreville, the settlers buy three work oxen and a small herd of cows as well as supplies for the journey north.

A week later, the wagon of furniture arrives in Vegreville, and they set out for Bonnyville right away to find suitable land. With the oxen, the one-hundred-and-fifteen-mile journey from Vegreville to Bonnyville takes eight days, as they get a bit lost from time to time. But we must recall that Bonnyville didn't really exist at the time even though there were already a few inhabitants and houses there. Passing through Duvernay-Brosseau, the settlers meet Father Therrien o.m.i. and Willie Michaud asked him, « Do you have good land? » The father answers « Do you have money ? » « If we had no money we wouldn't be here » answers Willie. (Bourgoin, s.d., p. 31)

They finally arrive at Mr. Bellemare's home, where they are warmly greeted. In the evening, they make their beds on the floor. They take up the whole house.

The next day, Mr. Bellemare takes them out to see the land. Passing through Durlingville², they notice a small store run by Mr. McLeod for the First Nations.

It's not an easy trip. As historian Henri Bourgoin explains so well, « there isn't even a road but more like trails, lines that have been traced and cleared by surveyors through the forest. In rainy weather, you can imagine how muddy and rough these trails get. Sometimes, when driving along the marshes, wagons get stuck in the mud. They have to be unloaded before they can be pulled out of the muck and loaded up again to get back on the « trail ».

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But there's also flat, rich land with no rocks and lots of wood. Having crossed a large marsh, they arrive at the spot where **Maxime Levasseur** chooses his piece of land: rich soil for **Maxime** and also a piece of land on the other side of the line for Willie, his cousin by marriage. But **Alexis** wants to go further because he needs a section. Finally **Alexis** finds his land and says, « This is my home » (Franco-Albertain, 1972)

Once the land is chosen, they return to pick up family and luggage, and the next day the whole party sets off again for the new land. On April 21, 1910, they arrive at the site that was to become Fort Kent.

Upon arriving, the furniture is unloaded near a small forest and covered with a tarp. Later on **Joseph Levasseur** will have to make three trips to Vegreville with his oxen to cart the entire household.

The location is well chosen, as there is a "shack" abandoned by the First Nations. The women and children sleep inside, and the men outside. Without any doors or windows and no floor, that's how they lived for the first two months.

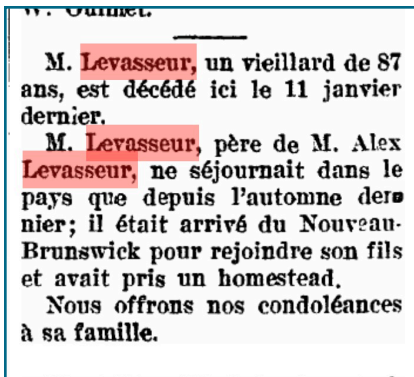
But something more sturdy must be built. So, on what is to become Paul Laplante's property, there is a clump of spruce trees, and after cutting several and loading them onto the wagons, they are pulled by oxen 25 miles away to Mr Baril's sawmill near Moose Lake. Three weeks later, they have everything required to build the first house, **Maxime's** house, since he has young children.

Choosing the site is only the first step. The next step is to clear and break up the soil. Eventually **Joseph Levasseur** will be able to earn a living by clearing and breaking land for himself and for others. He also will made firewood for everyone.

His brother, **Alphonse Levasseur**, describes how he was assigned to dig the wells. He vividly recalls one well in particular, as it nearly cost him his life. At a depth of 35 feet, there was still no water. But Alexis asks his son to remove a large stone from the bottom of the well and water gushes out. So fast, in fact, that he's knee-deep in water in a matter of moments and within a few hours the water has reached the surface. Far from being discouraged, **Alphonse** will dig five more wells that autumn.

And then there's the question of food. So a large spruce tree is thrown into the creek and, a pitchfork is used for fishing. There are so many fish that in 20 minutes there is a six month supply already caught. The fish will be smoked, salted and dried. The pitchfork is also used to kill rabbits. ducks and prairie chickens are also killed for food. So there is enough meat for the winter, but no fruit, vegetables or potatoes. It will take a few years to produce the garden crops.

Six months after **Alexis Levasseur's** arrival, his father Edouard, 89 years old and left behind in New Brunswick, decides to come and reunite with his family. He arrives on September 1, 1911. He had made the last portions of the trip on board the post wagon, one of the very few means



On arrival, he says he has come to die with his family. In early December, he takes possession of a plot of land. According to publications he was the oldest settler in the entire province. On December 10, he announces: « I've been with you long enough. It's time for me to move ». (A. Levasseur, n.d.) He then goes to his bed, makes a shirt out of his blankets and lies down on his mattress, on his back, arms stretched to the sides, and stops moving. Worried, **Alexis** approaches the bed and discovers that the old man has died.

The newspaper *Le Courrier de l'Ouest*³ of January 26, 1911, announces the passing of Mr. **Edouard Levasseur**, who died on January 11th. He was the father of Mr. **Alexis Levasseur** and it is said he had only been here since last autumn. He had arrived from New Brunswick to join his son, and had settled on a homestead.

The Levasseurs and the Bouchards

Alexis the patriarch

The April 7, 1937 edition of *La Survivance*⁴ informs its readers that the good old Alexis Levasseur has been in hospital for a few days. But in 1939, death strikes on the morning of December 11, as reported in the January 17, 1940 issue of the newspaper.

An octogenarian, **Alexis Levasseur** is a pioneer as well as a colonizer of St Joseph parish. He passed away after being bedridden for nearly three years with an old-age disease.

Born in St-François de Madawaska N.B., **Alexis Levasseur** came to the West in 1910, settling on a farm in what is now called Fort Kent. Alexis and his wife Philomène Daigle had a family of six, including 5 boys, **Alphonse, Joseph, Octave, Félix, Léville** and a daughter **Alice**, wife of Joseph Bouchard.

His generous nature was much appreciated by the early settlers. His door was always open to all, with a warm welcome.

If the local missionaries the Oblate fathers were still alive, they could express their feelings of gratitude toward the deceased. The late Father LeGoff celebrated mass in his home many times.

He is survived by his daughter **Alice**, Mme J.Bouchard of Fort Kent and five sons: **Alphonse** and **Joseph** of Fort Kent, **Octave** of Vancouver, **Félix** of Edmonton and **Léville** of Edmunston N.-B. He leaves 19 grandchildren and grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

The funeral service took place on Wednesday, December 13, 1940, with a deacon-subdeacon service celebrated by Father Connoir, assisted by Father Lapointe and Father Ricard of Bonnyville.

He was led to his final resting place by his two sons, Alphonse and Joseph, his two grandsons Thuribe and Wilbrod Bouchard, Mr. Willie Michaud and **Mr. Willie Levasseur**. It was a nephew of the deceased, **Mr. Maxime Levasseur**, who led the funeral procession.

Alphonse and Cécile Levasseur

Alexis's son Alphonse will clear his land, located 7 miles east of Bonnyville. Gradually he enlarges the cleared land and his acres of crops, and builds a fine house where he lives with his mother, who has been paralyzed for several years. He will later take a position in the management of the Central Hotel. He will also manage the "Searle" grain elevator, and later on he would return to farming.

Alphonse marries Cécile Déry of Cold Lake in 1931. *La Survivance* issue of March 4, 1936 announces the birth of a baby girl named Marie Marthe Alphonsine; the godparents will be Mr. and Mrs. N. Déry, the child's grandparents from Cold Lake.

But in March, the newspaper announces that **Mr. and Mrs. Alphonse Levasseur's** baby has been in St. Louis Hospital for two weeks. Unfortunately, Marie Marthe Alphonsine will not survive.

Alphonse and Cécile will have three more children: the eldest, Marthe Loraine, a schoolteacher and musician, Laurier, a music teacher, pianist and director of several choirs, including Les Musicos de St Paul. France would be a professor at Campus Saint-Jean for many years, a musician, a composer of choral songs, a playwright and history book author.

Cécile Déry was an enthusiast of fine music. She had a beautiful singing voice and played the piano by ear as she had no musical training. While **Alphonse** and Cécile were living in Bonnyville, the *La Survivance* newspaper announced that at Bonnyville's Christmas mass in 1932, the choir had performed Wiegand's Mass of the Immaculate Conception. The choir was under the direction of M. Chatelle, singing master, and Mrs J. Nap Vallée, organist. **Mme Alphonse Levasseur** sang the Agnus Dei.

The **Levasseur** children will be raised in an atmosphere of song and music, which perhaps explains their choice of career. But it's important to point out that all three had the chance to take piano and theory lessons with the Sisters of the Holy Cross, who were excellent music teachers. **Alphonse Levasseur** died on December 8, 1975.

Joseph Levasseur

Joseph Levasseur, **Alphonse's** brother, marries Ella Michaud in 1922. They will have two children (**Yves** and **Rita**). Following Ella's death on July 19, 1961, at the age of 56, Joseph will marry Annie Levasseur (née Collins).

Joseph will be active in the community, on the local school board, as a churchwarden, singing master and church crier. At the time, he was recognized as the « caller » of square dances and harmonica player. He was also very active as organizer and president of the Bonnyville Drop-in Centre. On February 28, 1934, he would be elected as director of the Cercle Saint-Joseph of ACFA.

Octave Levasseur

In 1929, the newspaper La Survivance announces that **Mr. Octave Levasseur**, ex-postmaster of Fort Kent, is building what is believed to be a restaurant and movie theater in Bonnyville, but will in fact be a hotel.

According to La Survivance, **M. Octave Levasseur** is the owner of a third hotel that accommodates travelers arriving in Bonnyville. An advertisement published on November 14, 1929 describes the hotel as having comfortable rooms, moderately priced rent, meals at all hours of the day at the Bonnyville Hotel owned by **Mr. Levasseur**. The latter is an old resident of the northern district, and a precious acquisition for Bonnyville, as reported in the newspaper of April 11, 1929.

Octave would later move to New Westminster B.C. following a serious operation on December 15, 1943. He will be visited by his two brothers **Alphonse** and **Joseph**. Octave will pass away in October 1954.

Alice Bouchard

Alexis' daughter Alice Bouchard and her husband Jos Bouchard will have several children, including : Wilbrod, Thurib, Albert, Gilles, Thérèse and Jeanne. Alice and the children will live in the village of Fort Kent while Mr. Jos Bouchard would pursue a career as a cook in the lumber camps of British Columbia. Alice was Fort Kent's first post office manager. She died on December 15, 1957 in New Westminster B.C.

Félix Levasseur

Unfortunately, we have found very little detail about the life of Félix Levasseur, son of Alexis. However, we did find an account of his funeral in the La Survivance newspaper.

On June 2, 1941, **Félix Levasseur**, son of Alexis, died at the Calgary hospital from a tragic accident. His remains arrived on the CNR convoy and were transported to Jos Bouchard's residence. His funeral service took place on a Saturday morning, and was well attended by family and friends. To mourn his loss he is leaving **Alice, Alphonse, Joseph, Octave and Léville**. Serving at the altar were his nephews **Yves Levasseur** and Albert Bouchard. His pallbearers were his nephews Thurib and Wilbrod Bouchard, cousins **Willie** and **Daniel Levasseur**, has brothers **Alphonse** and **Joseph**. His cousin **Maxime** carried the cross.

Léville Levasseur

Resté à Edmundston au Nouveau Brunswick, il vient visiter les familles d'Alphonse et de **Jos Levasseur** en août 1950. L'édition du 16 mai 1951 du journal La Survivance annonce le décès de **Léville Levasseur** d'Edmunston N.B.

Leville Levasseur

Having remained in Edmundston, New Brunswick, he comes to visit the families of Alphonse and Jos Levasseur in August 1950. The May 16, 1951 edition of La Survivance newspaper would announce the death of **Léville Levasseur** of Edmunston N.B.

Maxime Levasseur

Maxime Levasseur and his wife Odile Michaud settled on a homestead 5 miles east of present-day Bonnyville. They will have 6 children (Laurie, Willie, Henri, Danny, Rose and Harvey). Mr. Maxime Levasseur died in February 1958.

The church

In the early days, people went to church in what is now Duclos. Pants rolled up, shoes tied around the neck, the trip was 12 miles. Others went by oxcart. Mass was held in a log house belonging to Mr. Philorome Ouellette.

In 1916, Father Lapointe arrives in Bonnyville. There are already quite a few settlers there. While he is organizing the Bonnyville parish, Father Lapointe also comes to celebrate Mass in Fort Kent once a month. He requests from the locals to find him a small house so that he can come and have Mass every Sunday. Father Lapointe suggests that the time has come to build a church close to the present site, rather than in Durlingville, which is too close to Bonnyville.

In 1914, a sawmill is set up 40 miles from Fort Kent. As other settlers join the first group, Alexis Levasseur gets the newcomers organized to make lumber for construction. By the summer of 1919, everyone is cutting timber, and by 1920 the church's exterior is finished. Four months later, there's a little church on the corner of the four roads. Alexis donated nails, paint and chairs, all brought from N.B. for his own use.

There's no money for paint, but **Alexis** had some left over. He's going to paint the church white. But the church has no steeple, and that bothers the parish elders. A church without a steeple is not a church. « We had three cows » recalls **Alphonse Levasseur, Alexis'** son. So in 1921, **Alexis** donates a cow and Madame Pelland a young steer and Madame Pelland goes all over to sell raffle tickets on these animals. In the fall the steeple is erected. My brother, being a carpenter, built a twenty foot steeple, recounts **Alphonse**.

The dedication of a new altar takes place on Sunday February 22, 1931. In attendance is Mgr Nelligan, Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Edmonton, who represents the Archbishop, and who blesses the altar before Mass. Also present are parish priests Connoir and Pratt. The altar was built by Mr. Arthur Croteau. The parishioners are congratulated on the progress made in the parish as in the past few months, they have installed a furnace, a harmonium and an altar. They have also done all the necessary work on the presbytery.

On August 10, 1934, the Archbishop comes to Fort Kent for the confirmation of 32 children. Monseigneur is surprised at the growth of the parish from 34 families to 70. He finds the church much too small now. A new one must be built, he declares.

In April 1940, the old church is demolished and a new one started. On June 23, 1940 parishioners attend the blessing of the cornerstone. Thereafter, the construction proceeds quickly.

A few months later, on August 24, 1940, Archbishop Macdonald of Edmonton visits St-Joseph parish for the confirmation of 45 children, and he takes the opportunity to bless the new temple at the same time. Father Guy Michaud, vicar of St-Paul, sings the High Mass, having as deacon and subdeacon Father Jean Patoine,

editor of La Survivance, and Father Burke, parish priest of Vegreville. The all-male choir performs a beautiful Gregorian Mass. The Archbishop praises the dedication of the parishioners, who not only agreed to pay with their own money, but also with personal efforts to build with their own hands what would become one of the most beautiful temples in the diocese when completed, he says.

On November 27, 1940, the newspaper La Survivance informs its readers that work had begun inside of the Fort Kent church a few days earlier, and that the parishioners hoped to walk on beautiful hardwood at midnight mass, and that the cantors will be able to raise their beautiful voices closer to the vault.

In August 1941, the ground is dug up to make a base for the Sacred Heart statue. The beautiful statue is blessed by Father Lapointe at the end of October 1941.

In 1942, the church is embellished with a beautiful Communion table for Holy Thursday. It was made by the hands of parishioners Arthur Croteau and Léon Albert.

In July 1969, after a few weeks' work, the church was said to have a brand new and modern look. Special thanks to those who had the idea of repairing the church and giving it a more modern exterior.

In 1962, the church undergoes a number of renovations and a new bell tower is built. The bell was donated by Abbé Connoir, the first priest of the parish. He was pastor until 1951. Abbé Connoir died at the age of 84 and was buried in the Fort Kent cemetery.

The Presbytery and the parish hall

In 1923, the presbytery is built, and a few years later a parish hall is also constructed thanks to the cooperation of the parishioners.

On December 8, 1945, the parish hall is destroyed by fire. But there was enough time to save everything it contained. Built 23 years earlier, many improvements had been made the previous summer to celebrate Father Connoir's birthday. On top of that, on the evening of the fire, the prizes for the French competition were supposed to be handed out. Fortunately, the crowds had not yet arrived. Over 160 students were expected to participate.

A new, larger one will be built. On November 1, 1946, the official opening of the nice new parish hall takes place.

The Sisters of the Holy Cross

The Sisters of the Holy Cross will arrive in Fort Kent on August 29, 1938. The first team to work in Fort Kent is made up of four nuns. They were Sr Marie de Sainte-Raphaëla (Superior and grades one to six teacher), Sr Marie de Sainte-Constance (musician), Sr Marie de Saint-Isaïs (House Mistress), Sr Marie de Sainte-Lucie du-Sacré-Coeur (grades 6 to 10 teacher).

The nuns first arrive in Bonnyville, where they are greeted by Abbé Connoir, parish priest of Fort Kent. Arriving in Fort Kent, they discovered an old church, a wooden enclosure, a pretty little two-classroom school,

a convent under construction, a general store, a butcher's stall, two garages and two grain elevators. The parish is home to 72 families of Acadian origin, and is under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Edmonton.

Until the convent is ready, the Sisters live on the second floor of the presbytery and the priest lives in his garage. The convent will be ready on October 2.

A fifth nun, Sr Marie de Sainte-Germaine, joins the first group of nuns. In September 1947, the parish wants a boarding school for girls to be built. The building measures thirty-six by forty feet and welcomes twenty boarders in the fall.

On December 18, 1951, a convent resident inadvertently spills a dish of wax on the kitchen stove. In her agitation, she throws the dish on the floor. Sr Marie de Sainte-Raphaëla picks it up and throw it outside, but in an instant the flame spread to her clothes. She died of this accident on March 24, after three months of suffering.

The Sisters of the Holy Cross are in the process of expanding their home in Fort Kent In December 1960. Mr. Arthur Albert is in charge of this construction.

The nuns will work in Fort Kent for 33 years. Sr Marie-Raphaëla was the superior for 9 years and Sr Marie de Saint-Lucie-du Sacré-Coeur was the superior for 13 years.

In July 1969, we learn that the residence of the nuns of the Holy Cross has been sold to Mr. J.A. Kovack, a teacher in Bonnyville.

The village grows

In 1922, the parish carries the name of St-Joseph. But **Alphonse Levasseur** puts in a request for a post office and suggests the names Saint-Joseph and Fort Kent, the latter in honor of his mother, born in Fort Kent, Maine. The authorities chose Fort Kent.

The village gradually grows, despite damage and misfortune. Indeed some damages are quite serious. In 1934, for instance, there are three fire calls.

On September 11, 1935, the small parish of St-Joseph is hit by a hailstorm that lasts about ten minutes and ravages all of the nice crops and many homes and gardens are also damaged.

Then there is the famous flood of April 13, 1943. As Guy Lacombe points out in his book "Capsules d'histoire de l'Alberta", the most astonishing thing is that there isn't even a lake or a river in Fort Kent. But it is said that due to rapid snowmelt, the village is completely flooded and people get around by rowboat. The waters will take three days to recede.

But there has also been significant progress over the years. For example, the construction of the Canadian National Railway in 1928 is a major development. Thereafter, the train runs regularly three times a week.

The village grows. And to mark the progress, M.A. Ducharme and M. Anatole Mercier each buy a nice car. Unfortunately, cars aren't always practical, especially when the roads are closed to cars. In 1949, a second Dodge car arrives in town. This car belongs to **Mr. Jos Levasseur**. Soon the cars would become more widespread.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to mention all the new services and businesses that come to the small village over the years. But the progress can be summed up as follows. When Abbé Connoir arrived in Saint-Joseph Fort Kent in 1922, the village had three houses and 34 families. By July 1945, there was a magnificent school with 6 classrooms and a population of 82 families coming together in a nice newly built church and a convent with 7 nuns of the Holy Cross.

The school

In an article entitled "The Fort Kent School Reunion", Edwin Collins writes that Fort Kent had never really had a school since the school had been placed in the center of the school district and Fort Kent was located near the northeastern border of the Durlingville School District (2 miles west and 2 1/2 miles south). The Ardmore school was located 2 miles east of Fort Kent, on William Chalut's farm.

At the time, **Willie Levasseur** was secretary of the Durlingville school district and Jos Levasseur was president. It was this school board that opened the first one-room schoolhouse in the Fort Kent parish hall.

The opening the Fort Kent school takes place in September 1930. It is located in the parish hall even though construction of the hall is not yet complete. Lucien Landry is the teacher for that first year. In the second year of operation, classes are held in a house owned by **Alphonse Levasseur**. Later on, the house will be moved to Bonnyville to become the residence of Omer Gingras. For the third year of the school, classes will be held in a former store west of the hôtel.

Already in 1938, when the Sisters of the Holy Cross arrive, there are 68 pupils occupying two classrooms. The school is well lit, but long pipes run across the room near the wall, on their way to the chimney, recalls Sr Alice Giroux in her book entitled "*Les Soeurs de Sainte Croix dans l'Ouest canadien*". Those near the pipe are too hot while the others shiver.

The following year, another two-classroom school must be built. By 1941, the number of students totals 130. They get to school either on foot, by caboose, dog sled or horseback.

The School Board then will rent an old restaurant where Sr. Marie de Sainte-Raphaëla settles in with 20 young beginners. The number of pupils continued to grow over the years. By September 1952, the school greets over 450 pupils. By 1955, we reach 572. In 1955, all the small schools are moved to the Highway Street. They will serve as teacherage.

Parish evenings, festivities and concerts

The people of Fort Kent love to get together not only to have fun, but also to raise funds for the parish, to celebrate the anniversary of the parish priest's ordination or of the founding of the parish or celebrating the day of the patron saint of the parish. These special evenings and parish festivities

are, more often than not, events that require a great deal of organization.. In a word, they're always "big" parties, with music, theater, dancing, speeches, sports competitions and the inevitable card games. Here are just a few examples taken over the years.

The parishioners of Fort Kent must highlight certain special events, such as the big holidays of Easter and Christmas. In 1932, for instance, the choir is practicing for the Christmas Holidays under the direction of **Mr. and Mrs. Jos Levasseur**.

Since November 1936, the parish hall has been equipped for the viewing of animated films. Every second Sunday, the evening starts with a game of bridge and 500 followed by a series of movies. Many of these films are « talking » moving pictures. All proceeds go to parish projects such as a new bell tower or for special causes such as the Red Cross.

Social activities and clubs are varied. On January 22, 1936, the Bridge Club resumed its activities and every year there's a big bazaar. Religious groups such as the Ladies of Saint Anne are very active.

Saint John the Baptist Day is also celebrated in style. For example, on Sunday June 29, 1941, there is a banquet in the parish hall following mass. After lunch, the parish priest leads the parade, with the little Saint John the Baptist and his guards and altar boys. Next comes the horse-drawn carriage containing a large number of "The Future of St-Joseph" children. This wagon is followed by the winners of the softball teams and then a cavalcade of automobiles, all covering the half-mile distance to the ballpark.

Saint John the Baptist Day of June 27, 1943 is celebrated with the same panache. After the high mass, there is a lunch with 250 people in the parish hall, followed by a float procession. In the lead is the cross carried by Louis Collins, followed by the Knights of Columbus. Next comes the little Saint John the Baptist, Pierre Gamache, followed by the parish priest and the altar boys. Next in line we have "The Future of St-Joseph" children., the Évangéline orchestra, the Children of Mary, a painting representing "Family Prayer", the Ladies of Ste Anne, the Métis, followed by the first pioneers represented by Mrs. George Michaud and **Alphonse Levasseur**. Then come the pedestrians and countless automobiles. After the parade, there is singing, speeches and orchestral music in the parish hall. Proceeds for the day total \$235.00. According to the June 26 issue of Le Franco albertain, Saint John the Baptist Day is still celebrated in Fort Kent. In 1974, some 250 local people celebrated Saint John the Baptist Day.

For many years, the French Canadian Association of Alberta (ACFA) organizes a French contest for the province's French-speaking students. In many villages and parishes of the province, French prizes are distributed. It is one of the important parish events. Quite often they are attended by leaders of Alberta's French-speaking community.

For example, on Sunday, October 4, 1942, the distribution of French prizes is presided by Father Connoir. Inspector J.-L. Sylvestre and the school Commissioners are in attendance.. The school choir performs a three-part chorus entitled "Le Clocher Natal".

On September 22, 1948, a music recital is given by artists from St-Paul, Bonnyville and Fort Kent. Father Connoir, music teacher Mr. Eaton and school inspector Mr. Sylvestre, address the packed audience. Founded in 1936 by Léo Belhumeur, general secretary of the ACFA, the group Avant-Garde is very active. The Avant-

Garde is a group of young people whose aim is to develop a filial attachment to the Holy Church and an enlightened patriotism.

A lot of girls belong to the Children of Mary group. There is also the Crusaders, La Relève, Catholic Action and many other groups that meet and contribute to the vitality of St. Joseph's parish in Fort Kent.

The CHFA radio station, founded in 1949, broadcasts news from the various francophone parishes. The March 15, 1959 newspaper announces that Fort Kent will have its own one hour transmission on the following Saturday. Everyone is invited to tune in.

Over time, the needs of the Fort Kent community will change. In 1953, a movie club is created. Jean-Paul Campeau devoted himself to this worthy cause. On March 18, 1958, a meeting takes place in the school gymnasium, with the goal of creating the Fort Kent Athletic Association. This association will see to the organization of sports in the locality. In November 1960, the club will make a nice ice rink behind the school.

The newspaper of February 28, 1965 gives thanks to **Laurier Levasseur** and his St-Paul choir for the magnificent concert presented on April 11.

We also take the time to celebrate the history of the village. On November 21, 1962, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the parish. All of the pioneers were invited in a special way. On this occasion the parish acquired an organ, which was blessed by Father Guy Michaud o.m.i. Father Connoir, the founding father, donated a bell to the parish.

The conclusion

One hundred years of history in the life of a community is a vast subject. Since we could not tell the whole story we chose to present several examples picked here and there over the years. In our way of looking at it, this has enabled us to recall not only many important historical facts but also to discover the richness of the environment and the way of being and wanting to be people of Fort Kent.

We hope that our little historical overview, incomplete as it is, has also demonstrated the extent to which the first settlers showed a lot of courage, perseverance and vision. In order to survive, they had to believe in the future and they had to have a dream. That is why we think it is appropriate to end our little story by recalling **Alexis Levasseur's** vision.

In the summer of 1911, **Alexis** decided to plough a few acres of land with the help of his son **Alphonse**. Working with oxen and in the hot weather, this can be very hard labor. As they stop to rest for a few moments, Alexis looks at his land and says to his son:

«...here on the corner of the four roads there will be a church, a convent and the railway will pass here on this little clearing where we are sitting... There will be a railway station, markets for our animals and a grain elevator ». (**A. Levasseur** n.d.)

And so, in 1957, on the corner of the 4 roads lies a church, a parish of 125 families, a convent of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, teaching nuns, a village with a population of 200, a public school with 325 pupils, a market

and two grain elevators, all surrounding the small clearing where **Alexis** and his son **Alphonse Levasseur** sat in 1911.

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