

# teachers

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# news

## THE FLOW OF HISTORY

Winter 2004

a history education network along the Connecticut River watershed

**Coming to America** is the theme of our second round of book study groups, exploring the topic of *US Immigration 1840-1930*. Discussions about the history of immigration are timely, given recent federal legislation and a political focus on defining who can enter the United States and under what conditions they will be allowed to stay.



Marcotte-Blanchette family member poses on a train in Berlin, NH. c. 1940.

### Book Study Groups to be held in March - April 2004

Teachers who are interested in pursuing the question "How has US policy toward immigration changed over the last two hundred years?" are invited to participate in book study groups to be held in March and April, 2004. Led by Nick Boke of the Vermont Reads Initiative, the groups will use a mix of adult non-fiction, adolescent fiction, and primary resource materials to discuss the topic of *US Immigration from 1840 to 1930*.



Canadian relatives of the Marcotte-Blanchette family pose for a special event in Quebec. US immigration to Vermont & NH often went through Canada.

Beginning with a whole group meeting on Thursday, March 11, 2004, from 4-6pm (location to be announced), smaller groups will continue to meet for an additional three sessions. These additional sessions are scheduled for Wednesdays (March 17, March 31, April 28) or Thursdays (March 18, April 1, April 29). Enrollment is limited to 30 participants from schools along the Connecticut River watershed, on a first-come, first-served basis.

The exact location of the study group meetings will depend upon enrollment. Flow of History will offer a \$250 stipend to teachers who attend all sessions and write a short reflection upon completion. Books will be provided. For more information, e-mail Fern Tavalin (tavalin@sover.net) or call 802.463.4280.

### In this issue:

Flow of History Book Group	1
A Look at My Family's Past	2
Immigration to the Americas	
<i>Some Overall Themes</i>	3
US Policy on Immigration and Naturalization Timelines	3
Windham County Historical Society Open House	7
Summer Institute	8

# At Look at My Family's Past

By Amanda Pudvah



I am a student in the Spaulding Community Service Learning/English as a Second Language Partnership. Before we begin tutoring, we take a class in cross-cultural communication. As part of understanding other people's immigration to the United States, we looked into our own family's background.

I wanted to gather as much information as I could from both sides of my family. After a few days of research, I learned that on my dad's side I'm English, Dutch, French, and Scottish. On my mom's side I'm French and Canadian French. As I asked questions, I realized that I didn't have a lot of information from my mom. So I decided to research as much as I could about my mom's side of the family. Finding new stories, I became really interested in the project.

We should begin with the Blanchettes and the Marcottes' family background. My grandfather Napoleon Blanchette's family lived in Canada as far as anyone can remember and were probably of Native American origin. My grandmother Antoinette Marcotte's ancestors immigrated from France during the 1600s to Ste-Monique, Canada.

Eventually, both families immigrated to the United States, but kept ties with their French Canadian relatives and heritage. We still call our grandfather by the French name 'pa pere,' The Blanchettes immigrated to Gorham, New Hampshire between the early 1870s and 1880s where my great-grandfather Napoleon Sr. was born in 1889. The Marcottes went to Berlin, New Hampshire in 1912 where my grandmother's father Philius opened a shoe business and worked as a cobbler.

My grandfather Napoleon (a.k.a. Paul) Blanchette, Jr. was born in Berlin, NH on May 2nd. Out of ten children he was the seventh. Their family was affected by many events of their time. For instance, during the year 1918 (before Paul was even born), he lost four siblings due to the influenza epidemic. Like many other French Canadians, Paul's brothers Louis and Henry worked for the Brown Company paper mill. Paul's father, Napoleon, Sr. was present to photograph the Connecticut River Flood of 1927, showing the devastation that occurred in downtown Berlin.

As Paul got older, he took on jobs during his high school years to help with his family's income. His first job was being a hall monitor, which earned him \$25 a month. Later on, he

started fixing airplanes for the army. One day, there was a spot detected in his lung. His employers thought that he had tuberculosis, so he was sent to the sanitarium in Woodsville, NH for four months. Later, he found out that it had been a misdiagnosis.

Besides working many jobs to help out his family, Paul was also an artist, a pianist, and he played the organ. During air raids in the Depression, he would play piano in the basement of the shelter. My family still has some of the pictures that he painted.

As Paul grew up, he was always sick. He was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, an eye disease that causes its victims to lose their sight little by little. Paul was able to function pretty well (as long as it was day, or a room was lit



**Top of page:** Antoinette Marcotte and Napoleon Blanchette Jr. Complete wedding photograph on page 7.

**Above:** Mary Ann and Napoleon and Mr. and Mrs. Beaudry pause in the NH countryside near Berlin.

**Left:** Flood of Berlin, NH 1927. Photo taken by Napoleon Blanchette.

# At Look at My Family's Past

continued from page 1

really well) into his 50s. As long as I can remember, he's been able to play piano and organ, despite his loss of sight.

My grandmother, Antoinette Marcotte, was born April 6, 1919 (strangely enough, also in Berlin, NH!). She was the ninth of ten children (she was also a twin to her brother, Antoine). Her mother passed away when she was about four years old, so her father had her and her siblings sent to convents in Canada because he wasn't able to take care of them by himself. As the years went by, the older siblings got back together to help take care of the younger siblings.

During Antoinette's high school years, she loved to sing, and sometimes sang on the radio. My grandmother also acted in a few plays. One day in 1947, she met my grandfather (who was bringing his sister, Jeanette, to visit her). He told her about his eye sight problem, but she didn't care about that. They dated for about a year before they were married on April 12th, 1948. Their wedding followed typical French Canadian customs of the time. The couple married at 7:30 a.m. The day began with Mass, then a wedding ceremony, followed by breakfast. This left the whole day to celebrate and the new couple went from house to house, opening gifts. They left for a honeymoon, stopping in Gilbertsville, MA where they had many friends and then on to Boston. Soon after their marriage, my grandparents moved to Vermont where they raised four children: Gloria, Raymond, my mother Denise, and Pauline.

**Windham County Historical Society  
Newfane, Vermont  
Open House and New Video Release  
Thursday, May 6, 2004  
4-5:30 pm**

The Windham County Historical Society is offering a special invitation to Windham County teachers to attend a release of its new video created by Michael Hanish of Guilford, VT about the early settlement of Windham County. Teachers attending will be given a free copy of the video to use in their classrooms. After the screening, Joan Marr, the museum's curator, will be on hand to introduce the museum's current exhibits.



*A Blanchette family postcard shows the St. Louis Gate of Quebec City.*

## Marcotte-Blanchette Wedding

April 12, 1948 at 7:30 am.

Back Row:

Napoleon Sr. & Onil Marcotte

Middle Row:

Antoine Marcotte, Lillian

Talbot, Antoinette Marcotte,

Napoleon Blanchette Jr.,

Louis Blanchette, cousin

Georgette Croteau,

Front Row:

Pauline Talbot, Jacqueline Croteau

The day began with Mass, then a wedding ceremony, followed by breakfast. This left the whole day to celebrate and the new couple went from house to house, opening gifts. They left for a honeymoon, stopping in Gilbertsville, MA where they had many friends and then on to Boston.



## IMMIGRATION TO THE AMERICAS SOME OVERALL THEMES

By Elise A. Guyette

For many thousands of years people have been settling the Americas. The earliest hunted, gathered, fished, and raised families in small communities.

The old tradition holds that people first entered the Americas over a land bridge from Siberia to Alaska about 14,000 years ago. Recent finds, however, put the date of the oldest human remains somewhere between 25,000 and 40,000 years ago. These earliest people were not really migrants in a strict sense because they simply widened their hunting areas over many generations, gradually moving into new territo-

ry as the population expanded and the animals they were tracking moved into new habitats.

The concept of migration involves more complex aspects than a gradual widening of one's territory. Migrations involve two major factors: push & pull. People are pushed out of where they are by forces such as cultural conflicts, inability to make a living, natural disasters, human rights violations and the like. They

are also pulled toward another place by factors such as economic opportunities, adventure, religious freedom, or being kidnapped into slavery or servitude. All of these various factors involve some degree of choice – from total freedom of choice to no choice at all. So all migrations are chosen or forced to varying degrees.

Migrations always involve encounters between the people moving and the people

### A BRIEF TIMELINE OF U.S. POLICY ON IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION

- 1790:** Congress adopts uniform rules so that any free white person could apply for citizenship after two years of residency.
- 1798:** Alien and Sedition Acts required 14 years of residency before citizenship and provided for the deportation of "dangerous" aliens. Changed to five-year residency in 1800.
- 1819:** First significant federal legislation on immigration. Includes reporting of immigration and rules for passengers from US ports bound for Europe.
- 1846:** Irish of all classes emigrate to the United States as a result of the potato famine.
- 1857:** Dred Scott decision declared free Africans non-citizens.
- 1864:** Contract Labor Law allowed recruiting of foreign labor.
- 1868:** African Americans gained citizenship with 13th Amendment.
- 1875:** Henderson v. Mayor of New York decision declared all state laws governing immigration unconstitutional; Congress must regulate "foreign commerce." Charity workers, burdened with helping immigrants, petition Congress to exercise authority and regulate immigration. Congress prohibits convicts and prostitutes from entering the country.
- 1880:** The U.S. population is 50,155,783. More than 5.2 million immigrants enter the country between 1880 and 1890.
- 1882:** Chinese Exclusion Act. First federal immigration law suspended Chinese immigration for 10 years and barred Chinese in U.S. from citizenship. Also barred convicts, lunatics, and others unable to care for themselves from entering. Head tax placed on immigrants.
- 1885:** Contract Labor Law. Unlawful to import unskilled aliens from overseas as laborers. Regulations did not pertain to those crossing land borders.
- 1888:** For the first time since 1798, provisions are adopted for expulsion of aliens.
- 1889:** Jane Addams founds Hull-House on Chicago's Near West Side.
- 1890:** Foreign-born in US were 15% of population (14% in Vermont); more arriving from southern and eastern Europe ("new immigrants") than northern and western ("old immigrants"). Jacob Riis publishes *How the Other Half Lives*.
- 1891:** Bureau of Immigration established under the Treasury Department. More classes of aliens restricted including those who were monetarily assisted by others for their passage. Steamship companies were ordered to return ineligible immigrants to countries of origin.
- 1892:** Ellis Island opened to screen immigrants entering on east coast. (Angel Island screened those on west coast.) Ellis Island officials reported that women traveling alone must be met by a man, or they were immediately deported.
- 1902:** Chinese Exclusion Act renewed indefinitely.
- 1903:** Anarchists, epileptics, polygamists, and beggars ruled inadmissible.

women's rights and abolition of slavery. All of this activity, of course, has made America what it is today – a marvelous stew of peoples and ideals from all over the world.

Elise A. Guyette (M.Ed., M.A.) is president of the Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies and has been researching Vermont's immigration and African American history for over twenty years. She is the author of the multicultural history text *Vermont: A Cultural Patchwork* and dozens of articles and curricula concerning Vermont's ethnic groups.

#### Resources

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#### Would you like to study this further?

#### How has US policy toward immigration changed over the last two hundred years?

**Who:** Teachers of grades 4-8 in schools along the Connecticut River Watershed.

**What:** Local book study groups, led by Nick Boke of the Vermont Reads Initiative, looking at the theme of US Immigration 1840-1930. Emphasis on general themes, Chinese immigration, and Jewish immigration from Russia.

**When:** First meeting on March 11th from 4:30-6:00. Three additional meetings scheduled for March 17, March 31, and April 28 or March 18, April 1, and April 29.

**Where:** First meeting to be held for everyone in White River Junction. After that, smaller groups will meet locally.

*Enrollment is limited to 30 people across our geographic area on a first-come, first-served basis. We hope to run one group in the northern section and one in the south. Exact location will depend upon who enrolls. Flow of History will offer a \$250 stipend to teachers who attend all sessions and write a short reflective statement. Books are provided.*



Napoleon Blanchette, Sr. photographed this 4th of July parade in Berlin, NH, in 1928.

being moved toward. At the points of encounter, cultural diffusion takes place in both directions—both groups change as they borrow ideas and material culture from each other—and a new culture is born out of the mix.

The effects of migrations are like the “break” at the beginning of a pool game—except the balls never come to rest. They constantly move and affect the positions of all the others. All those who arrived in the Americas created change for the original people, as all immigration continues to do today. And, as always happens, the original people created change in the new arrivals. This change might be through violent means, such as conquest and colonization or through peaceful interactions. The old image of a melting pot doesn’t fit the reality—it is more like a stew with some blending of old and new, but with many elements of both cultures still recognizable.

The effects of migrations are like the “break” at the beginning of a pool game—except the balls never come to rest. They constantly move and affect the positions of all the others.

When people first migrate, they use old ways to sustain them until the new blended culture forms. They do not arrive empty-headed but with long histories and cultural traditions to transplant. We can see this not only in the early French, English and Spanish migrations to the Americas but in the later 19th and 20th century migrations. Immigrants usually resist enculturation (except in the economic realm) and form their own villages or neighborhoods and community organizations via religious institutions,

traditional festivals, fraternal organizations, and the like.

The word immigrant often conjures up the words from the Statue of Liberty “...your tired, your poor, your huddled masses...” These words add up to an image of powerless dependents needing help to move and to survive in a strange place. Research, however, paints quite a different picture of aggressive and ambitious people who are willing to take chances, uproot themselves and begin again. John Briggs (gardener, 1983) contends that immigrants are “not chameleons totally dependent on their surroundings for their character. They contribute to shaping their future rather than receiving their destinies wholly defined and packaged by others.”

The earliest immigrants who chose to come to North America came from northern Europe, and members of this old immigrant

group were the first entrepreneurs and business owners. Many of them had indentured servants or enslaved peoples to help overcome obstacles and gain a foothold on the continent. Later in the nineteenth century, many new immigrants began flowing in from all over Europe. Many millions chose the United States from 1880 to 1920.

Cultural diffusion continued, of course. One example comes from a lumber camp in the Connecticut River Valley. Scott E. Hastings, Sr. tells of Finnish choppers welcomed in McIndoe Falls where a little bit of forest was still untouched in the early twentieth century. The Finns brought small two-pound axes with them. They were single-bitted with short handles.

“The Yankees had a laughing-fit first time they saw those little axes. But you know they couldn’t begin to keep up with them. They could strike a deeper cut w/ those little hatch-

ets than we could with the big Yankee axe. There was one Finn there, Otto. I don’t know what his name was, they always called him Otto Apple. I used to go eat with him a lot over to the camp. He gave me one of those axes. Those fellows would buy them a dozen at a time. I took the axe home. Dad was looking at it one night and wanted to try it. You know, inside of a week every man was using those axes just as fast as they could buy them off the Finns.” Here is a good example of immigrants changing the community. (*Window of Vermont*, Winter, 1985-86)

Members of the old immigrant group, however, did not always welcome these newcomers unless they were from northern Europe and looked and acted similar to their ancestors and to themselves. As a result, those from southern and eastern Europe and Asia often experienced prejudice and discrimination—similar to that experienced by the Irish. Africans

and Native Americans, of course, experienced extreme alienation in the Americas.

Eventually, there was a backlash against so many people coming from areas other than northern Europe. The old immigrants feared the corruption of their white, Anglo-Saxon ideals due to the inevitable cultural diffusion and constant blending of old and new. Congress responded with new immigration laws based on ethnicity, and businesses responded by hiring the new immigrants for only the most menial jobs.

Some from the old immigrant group responded by creating museums, especially house museums of traditional American heroes, and working for universal education to inculcate the children with their values.

Sometimes poor treatment awakened the consciousness of those who couldn’t find the ideal in the American dream. This led to the spread of *radical* ideas such as unionization,

## A BRIEF TIMELINE OF U.S. POLICY ON IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION continued

**1905:** Construction of Angel Island Immigration Station began in the area known as China Cove. Surrounded by public controversy from its inception, the station was finally put into operation in 1910. Although it was billed as the “Ellis Island of the West”, within the Immigration Service it was known as “The Guardian of the Western Gate” and was designed to control the flow of Chinese into the country, who were officially not welcome with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

**1906:** Procedural safeguards enacted for naturalization. Knowledge of English becomes a basic requirement.

**1907:** Head tax is raised. People with physical or mental defects, tuberculosis, and children unaccompanied by a parent are added to the exclusion list. Japan agreed to limit emigrants to US in return for elimination of segregating Japanese students in San Francisco schools.

**1910:** Dillingham Report from Congress assumed inferiority of “new immigrants” from southern and eastern Europe and suggested a literacy test to restrict their entry. (William P. Dillingham was a Senator from Vermont.)

**1917:** Immigration Act provided for literacy tests for those over 16 and established an “Asiatic Barred Zone,” which barred all immigrants from Asia.

**1921:** Quota Act of 1921 limited immigrants to 3% of each nationality present in the US in 1910. This cut southern and eastern European immigrants to less than 1/4 of those in US before WW I. Asians still barred; no limits on western hemisphere.

Non-quota category established: wives, children of citizens, learned professionals, and domestic servants not counted in quotas.

**1922:** Japanese made ineligible for citizenship.

**1924:** Quotas changed to 2% of each nationality based on numbers in US in 1890. Based on surnames (many anglicized at Ellis Island) and not the census figures, 82% of all immigrants allowed in the country came from western and northern Europe, 16% from southern and eastern Europe, 2% from the rest of the world. As no distinctions were made between refugees and immigrants, this limited Jewish emigres during 1930s and 40s.

Despite protests from many native people, Native Americans made citizens of the United States. Border Patrol established.

**1929:** The annual quotas of the 1924 Act are made permanent.

**1940:** Provided for finger printing and registering of all aliens.

**1943:** In the name of unity among the Allies, the Chinese Exclusion Laws were repealed, and China’s quota was set at a token 105 immigrants annually. Basis of the Bracero Program established with importation of agricultural workers from North, South, and Central America.

**1946:** Procedures adopted to facilitate immigration of foreign-born wives, fiance(e)s, husbands, and children of US armed forces personnel.

**1948:** Displaced Persons Act allowed 205,000 refugees over two

years; gave priority to Baltic States refugees; admitted as quota immigrants. Technical provisions discriminated against Catholics and Jews; those were dropped in 1953, and 205,000 refugees were accepted as non-quota immigrants.

**1950:** The grounds for exclusion and deportation are expanded. All aliens required to report their addresses annually.

**1952:** Immigration and Nationality Act eliminated race as a bar to immigration or citizenship. Japan’s quota was set at 185 annually. China’s stayed at 105; other Asian countries were given 100 a piece. Northern and western Europe’s quota was placed at 85% of all immigrants. Tighter restrictions were placed on immigrants coming from British colonies in order to stem the tide of black West Indians entering under Britain’s generous quota. Non-quota class enlarged to include husbands of American women.

**1953:** The 1948 refugee law expanded to admit 200,000 above the existing limit.

**1965:** Hart-Celler Act abolished national origins quotas, establishing separate ceilings for the eastern (170,000) and western (120,000) hemispheres (combined in 1978). Categories of preference based on family ties, critical skills, artistic excellence, and refugee status.

**1978:** Separate ceilings for Western and Eastern hemispheric immigration combined into a worldwide limit of 290,000.

**1980:** The Refugee Act removes refugees as a preference category; reduces worldwide ceiling for immigration to 270,000.

**1986:** Immigration Reform and Control Act provided for amnesty for many illegal aliens and sanctions for employers hiring illegals.

**1989:** A bill gives permanent status to non-immigrant registered nurses who have lived in US for at least three years and met established certification standards.

**1990:** Immigration Act of 1990 limited unskilled workers to 10,000/year; skilled labor requirements and immediate family reunification major goals. Continued to promote nuclear family model. Foreign-born in US was 7%.

**2001:** USA Patriot Act amended the Immigration and Nationality Act to broaden the scope of aliens ineligible for admission or deportable due to terrorist activities to include an alien who:

- (1) is a representative of a political, social, or similar group whose political endorsement of terrorist acts undermines U.S. antiterrorist efforts;
- (2) has used a position of prominence to endorse terrorist activity, or to persuade others to support such activity in a way that undermines U.S. antiterrorist efforts (or the child or spouse of such an alien under specified circumstances); or
- (3) has been associated with a terrorist organization and intends to engage in threatening activities while in the United States.

*\*This timeline has been assembled by Elise Guyette, Fern Tavalin, and Sarah Rooker. For a list of sources, visit <http://www.flowofhistory.org>. Some excerpts are directly drawn from the history section of the Office of Homeland Security website.*