INSTITUT FRANÇAIS

NOUVELLES

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Fall 2007-Spring 2008

FRANCO-AMÉRICAIN MONUMENT À QUÉBEC

A dedicated group of New England’s Franco-Americans, wishing to commemorate the city of Québec’s 400th anniversary (1608-2008) in a meaningful manner, chose to offer a granite monument to the city. Located at the Parc de la Joliette, alongside the St. Lawrence River, the monument was inaugurated on July 24th of this year.

The ceremony was attended by Québec’s Prime Minister Jean Charest, who unveiled the monument along with the French Institute’s founding director emerita. Also in attendance were Québec’s mayor, Régis Labeaume, Vermont’s governor, James Douglas, his senator, Patrick Leahy, New Hampshire’s Secretary of State, William Gardner, in addition to a large group of Franco-Americans.

Claire Quintal, who had taken the lead in fund-raising for the monument, spoke in part as follows during the inauguration ceremony:

“For Franco-Americans, the expression ‘Je me souviens’ is deeply meaningful. This monument that we are solemnly unveiling today is tangible proof that we have taken to heart the need to give shape and substance to this saying. By means of this monument, we have sought to demonstrate—in a form as solid and as durable as possible—that our fidelity, not only to this adage, but also and especially to the land of our ancestors, for we have not forgotten our origins.

This monument, placed as it is on the bank of the magnificent river that for the last 400 years has carried the dreams and hopes of those who came before us, the predecessors of us all, generation upon generation, also represents the hope of those of us from the diaspora, that Québec for its part will not forget us, that it too will demonstrate—by associating itself with us—our fidelity, not only to this adage, but also and especially to the land of our ancestors, for we have not forgotten our origins.

To remember, never to forget, these are the reasons why we have erected this monument. To remember our Québec neighbors by associating ourselves with them in commemorating the founding of the city of Québec, the starting point of a permanent French presence in North America.

The back of the monument features two bronze plaques, one listing the cities of New England where Franco-Americans settled and another naming the donors to the plaque—men and women of Québec’s diaspora, including the French Institute and many of its supporters, who made it possible to prove that they have neither forgotten their forebears nor the country their ancestors left behind.

Claire Quintal, Ordre des Francophones d’Amérique

LECTURE ON JACK KEROUAC, FRENCH, AND AMERICAN INSTITUT FRANÇAIS MONUMENT IN QUÉBEC

In March 2008, the French Institute welcomed Québec journalist and documentary film maker Gabriel Ancill in celebration of the Semaine de la Francophonie. Mr. Ancill presented the Mrs. Horner Gage Memorial Lecture for 2007-2008. In a fascinating talk entitled “Jack Kerouac, French, and Québec,” he examined the hitherto unknown French-language writings of the famous author of On the Road. Kerouac’s French works included, in addition to lettres to his mother and copies of prayers, various short stories and the drafts of several novels, most notably a preliminary version of On the Road called Sur le chemin. These manuscripts reveal, according to Mr. Ancill, “un Kerouac Canadien français drité, touché et imaginaire.” The French Institute would like to thank the co-sponsors of Mr. Ancill’s visit: the Québec Delegation in New England, the Assumption History Department, and Phi Alpha Theta.
VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The D’Alzon Library at Assumption College, working with the architectural firm Lerner + Barfet, has unveiled a vision for the future. Presented this fall by Drayton Fair of Lerner, Ladd + Barfet, the vision includes expanded space for the important collections of the French Institute and the College Archives. We look forward to collaborating with the D’Alzon Library and its partners to bring this exciting vision to fruition.

CHAMPLAIN MONUMENT IN CHATHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

On July 21st, the French and Canadian governments, as well as the Quebec delegation and some forty or so Franco-Americans gathered at the monument in Chatham on Cape Cod honoring Samuel de Champlain, who had twice set foot on the Cape in 1605 and 1606. There, each group placed a wreath at the monument commemorating Champlain’s exploration of the Commission from the late nineteenth century, and their archives are a treasure to the French Institute.

At that ceremony, Claire Quintal spoke the following words:

“This commemoration of Champlain’s superb achievements during his lifetime reminds us all of what great debts we owe to those who braved the seas in order, not only to explore this New World, but to establish on the shores of the majestic St. Lawrence—after founding the Acadia settlement of Port Royal—a whole new Francophone world on this continent.

He, who sailed along our shores in 1605 and again in 1606, giving French names to harbors, rivers, and coves, stopping only long enough, unfortunately, to prepare detailed maps of the region, deserves to be honored in this manner, in this place, on this day.

Were it not for one of those quirks of history, we might have been standing here today to honor one of our own citizens, one who embodied the attributes of all great men: foresight, courage, resilience, and the ability needed to see great things to fruition. François Corbin, La fiancée de l’Amérique. The crown of the endeavor.

BOOK SIGNING IN MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

On October 16, the Centre Franco-Américain hosted a reception marking the publication of Adélaïde Lambert’s L’Innocente Victime in English translation. The author, a Quebecer who spent some years in New England, argued in this Civil War novel that French Canadians should stay in Canada. The male characters in the novel find themselves fraudulently enlisted in the Union Army, and a woman dies as a result of following her husband to the United States. 

Author Paul P. Chassé participated in several international conferences in the past year. In Fall 2007 she presented a paper entitled “La Tournée des grands-ducs” at the annual conference of the Nineteenth Century French Studies Association in Mobile, Alabama, and in Spring 2008 she commented on “La Nouvelle-Orléans au début du XIXe siècle” at the Annual Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society in Quebec: a Presentation at the 2008 Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture in Boston. In Fall 2008 she chaired a panel on “La minorité francophone hors Québec: l’étude des communautés francophones hors Québec” at the joint conference of the American Council for Quebec Studies and the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States in Quebec.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Leslie Choquette participated in several international conferences in the past year. In Fall 2007 she presented a paper entitled “La Tournée des grands-ducs” at the annual conference of the Nineteenth Century French Studies Association in Mobile, Alabama, and in Spring 2008 she commented on “La Nouvelle-Orléans au début du XIXe siècle” at the Annual Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society in Quebec: a Presentation at the 2008 Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture in Boston. In Fall 2008 she chaired a panel on “La minorité francophone hors Québec: l’étude des communautés francophones hors Québec” at the joint conference of the American Council for Quebec Studies and the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States in Quebec.

MONTREAL FRANCO-AMERICAIN À QUÉBEC

Leslie Choquette’s national and international scholarly activities included contributions to the editorial boards of the scholarly journals French Colonial History and Québec Studies as well as on the executive boards of the American Council of Québec Studies and the French Colonial Historical Society. She also joined the Comité scientifique de l’Encyclopédie du patrimoine culturel de l’Amérique française, a bilingual encyclopedia of French heritage in North America, and the Committee for the Alfred Heyd Book Prize, an annual award by the National French Colonial Historical Society for the best book in French colonial history. She evaluated a book manuscript for the University of Alabama Press, a grant proposal on 17th and 18th century French literature in Canada, and a new edition of the New England French dictionary, La trésorerie cursive, in the edition of the John Carter Brown Library.

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