AMERICANIZATION AND THE FRENCH CANADIANS

"Whoever speaks two languages is a rascal"

(Old English saying, quoted by de Nevers: L'Ame Americaine)

"Un homme qui parle deux langues en vaut deux"

(France-American saying)
Martha Bossavy Papers

Creator: Martha (Marthe) Bossavy

Abstract: Documents from the French researcher and professor concerning her Franco-American research.

Language: French and English

Extent: 4 linear inches

Access: Materials are available to researchers without restriction.

Separated Material: N/A

Source: Unknown

Preferred Citation: Bossavy Papers, French Institute, Assumption College

Scope & Content: There is very little known about this small collection. However, its contents could be useful to researchers interested in Woonsocket or Rhode Island Franco-Americans as well as the Franco-American ethnic group in general. To the best of our knowledge this collection of papers contains the only copies of Americanization and the French Canadians a manuscript looking at the Franco-Americans of New England.

Biographical Note: Details about Martha (or Marthe) Bossavy remain quite difficult to obtain. There is however an interesting article printed about Mrs. Bossavy in the Vassar Miscellany News October 13, 1926.

OUR IMMIGRATION PROBLEM INTERESTS MISS BOSSAVY
French Professor Studied Foreign Community in Woonsocket, R. I.
When Miss Martha Bossavy, visiting assistant professor of French, came to this country two years ago, it was with the express purpose of studying our immigration problem, and our methods of solving it. and so being able to throw some light on the pressing immigration situation which France is now facing. She was especially interested! in the sociological, rather than the economic side, in our ideas of "desirable and "undesirable" races, and in the efforts made to help the groups adjust themselves to their new environment. It seemed best to concentrate upon the study of one particular group, and so Miss Bossavy established herself iii a community of French Canadians at Woonsocket. Rhode Island. She was influenced in her selection of this group by the fact that French Canadians have not been very Carefully studied before, and by her own community of language and tradition with them.
She found, first of all a very tense situation I'll the question of parochial schools, and the relative amounts of English and French which should be taught there. These French Canadians are, of course, strongly
Catholic, and the parochial schools are to them both a means of preserving the French language and culture, and of giving their children a Catholic education. Their churches have come to be social as well as religious centers, and so a very dominant factor in the life of the community. The whole situation is resented by the Americans, who claim that unity, political, educational, or social, is impossible under these conditions. However, the French Canadians have definite ideas of their own as to what their place in America can and should be in a carefully elaborated system of arguments proving that they can remain French in language and culture, and still be good Americans, speaking English, and fulfilling the duties of citizens.

Miss Bossavy was struck by the amount of open mistrust and prejudice which divides these communities, not only between Americans and Canadians, but between the Canadians and Irish. Concerning the French-Irish situation, it was observed that the same condition exists in Canada, and also between the Irish and other groups. This is mainly due to the fact that the French and Irish are in constant contact in the Church, and the Irish, who hold the offices of greatest importance in the Church hierarchy, seem to be trying to do away with the teaching of foreign languages in the schools.

Miss Bossavy found the community as a whole an excellent example of the entire problem known as Americanization, the chief puzzles being the relation of each cultural heritage to the others, and the difficulties of their amalgamation, the question of unity or diversity of languages, the attitude of the Catholic group to other groups, and of the parochial schools to public schools.
Collection Contents:

1  Americanization of the French Canadians
2  Second Copy of Manuscript
3  Notes on Woonsocket Heritage
4  États-Unis 1925
5  Interviews with French Canadians
6  Miscellaneous French Canadian Notes
7  Translation of *L’Âme américaine*
8  Incomplete Manuscript