

Le Journal du Madawaska microfilm, 1903-1905

MCC-00013

Finding Aid

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Acadian Archives / Archives acadiennes

University of Maine at Fort Kent

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***Le Journal du Madawaska* microfilm, 1903-1905** **Summary Information**

Collection Title: *Le Journal du Madawaska* microfilm, 1903-1905

Citation: *Le Journal du Madawaska* microfilm, MCC-00013, Acadian Archives / Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Accession Number: MCC:93-00013

Shelf List Numbers: SF-0001(master + negative copies), SF-0002 (master + negative copies)
UF-0001, UF-0002 (use copies)

Provenance: This microfilm edition was produced from two bound volumes of *Le Journal du Madawaska* which currently belong to the Madawaska Historical Society.

Date Range: 1903-1905

Physical Characteristics/Condition: microfilm master negative, 15x reduction

Quantity: 2 rolls totaling 836 images

Access: There are no restrictions on this collection.

Prepared by: Lisa Ornstein, July 1997

Historical Note. *Le Journal du Madawaska* was a weekly newspaper founded in Van Buren, Maine in 1902 by Dr. Thomas H. Pelletier and his son-in-law, lawyer Lévite-V. Thibodeau. The newspaper was administered by the Compagnie du Journal du Madawaska. Thibodeau acted as business manager and Pelletier was the paper's chief editor. The *Journal* made its debut as a six-page, 36-column weekly on 16 December 1902, with the motto "Pro Deo et Patria" and a mission to educate and instruct the local French Population¹.

Le Journal du Madawaska appears to have achieved considerable success during its first year of publication. The owners established their own printing press in Van Buren during the summer of 1903.² By August, According to the editor's circulation statistics, the paper had 2,000 subscribers.³ Pelletier reiterated this statistic in his first anniversary editorial, adding that the *Journal's* overall readership totaled 10,000⁴.

For the first year of its publication, *Le Journal du Madawaska* contained one to two columns of editorials and twenty to twenty-five columns of regional, national and international news, serial novels, letters, humor, and advertisements. Although most of the editorials and local news items were in French, the *Journal* also included up to two pages of English-language articles.

On 23 December 1903, the *Journal* expanded to eight pages with six columns per page. This format was maintained through the end of the 1905, except for the issues between 26 July and 27 September 1905 when the paper returned temporarily to six pages.

The latter part of 1905 was difficult for *Le Journal du Madawaska* and its editor. Pelletier repeatedly reported problems with the late payments and diminished subscriptions.⁵ He alluded to an internal power struggle, although this problem seems to have rapidly resolved.⁶ Pelletier solicited his readers for assistance in editing the paper, citing declining health and old age as reasons.

In November 1905, stricken with rapidly increasing blindness, Pelletier sold his interests in the newspaper and its publication to Thibodeau. He edited his last issue on 13 December 1905 and

¹ "Quelle est notre Mission?" *Le Madawaska*, 16 September 1903, p. 2.

² *Le Journal du Madawaska*, 19 August 1903, p. 1.

³ *Le Journal du Madawaska*, 19 August 1903, p. 6.

⁴ "Premier anniversaire." *Le Journal Du Madawaska*, 16 December 1903, p. 2.

⁵ "A nos Abonnés et Patrons." *Le Journal Du Madawaska*, 19 July 1905, p. 2. "Encore le Journal." *Ibid.*, 30 August 1905, p. 2. "A nos abonnés retardataires." *Ibid.*, 11 October 1905, p. 4.

⁶ "A tous mes amis lecteurs." *Le Journal du Madawaska*, 28 June 1905.

was succeeded by Dr. Avila Oscar Boulay in the following issue. The paper ceased publication sometime the following year. The causes of the paper's demise are as yet unclear. One fairly contemporary source cited Pelletier's ill health as the primary factor, and reported that the paper's circulation at the time of its suspension was 3,500 copies.⁷ Another source suggested financial failure was the primary cause.⁸

Scope and Content Note. "*Le Journal du Madawaska, 1903-1905* [microfilm]" consists primarily of French-language editorials, international news, serialized novels, and local news addition, most issues include English-language columns featuring news items and humor. "*Le Journal du Madawaska, 1903-1905* [microfilm]" is a valuable resource for researchers interested in local history and genealogy, as well as those interested in the history of the Franco-American press.

Biographical Notes.

Dr. Avila Oscar Boulay was a medical doctor who practiced in Waterville, Maine. In 1897, he founded the French-language weekly *La Sentinelle*, which lasted about one year. Sometime after 1901 he relocated to Wallagrass, Maine, and in October of 1905 he set up practice in Van Buren, Maine. He appears to have left Van Buren by 1910.

Lévite-V. Thibodeau was born in St-Léonard, New Brunswick on 14 April 1868, one of fourteen children of Vital F. and Méthaïde (Dupléssis) Thibodeau. After attending Ricker Classical Institute at Houlton, Maine, he studied law in Caribou, Maine and set up practice in Van Buren. Admitted to the bar on 9 December, 1896, Tibodeau was the second Franco-American attorney from the St. John Valley to achieve this professional distinction.

Thibodeau was married in Van Buren on 10 January 1898 to Miss Alma Pelletier, daughter of T. H. Pelletier. In addition to his professional interests in law and journalism, Mr. Thibodeau was one of the promoters and directors of the Van Buren Trust Co. He was also one of the chief promoters of the First National Bank of Van Buren Water District and a promoter of the Van Buren Light & Power Co, where he served as president.

Thomas H. Pelletier was born in St-Basile, New Brunswick in October 1845, the youngest of eleven children born to Celestin and Justine (Aubut) Pelletier. He completed his college studies at Ste-Anne-de-la-Pocatière (Quebec) and his medical studies at Laval University (Quebec), where he obtained his diploma in 1867. As a medical student in 1865, he spent sometime at a military hospital in Philadelphia taking care of wounded Union army soldiers. Dr. Pelletier began his practice in Grand-Sault, New Brunswick in 1867. Two years later, on 16 September 1869, he married Malvina Chénard and moved to Van Buren, Maine, where he practiced medicine for forty years. He died in Van Buren on 19 July 1921.

⁷ R. J. Lawton, *Franco-Americans of the state of Maine, U.S.A., and their achievements: Historical, Descriptive, and Biographical* (Lewiston, ME.: H. F. Roy, 1915), p. 189.

⁸ Alexandre Belisle, *Histoire de la presse franco-américainne* (Worcester: Ateliers typographiques de "l'Opinion Publique," 1911), p. 177.

Provenance. The bound volumes from which this microfilm edition was produced were originally deposited by legal requirement of the Aroostook County Courthouse in Houlton. In 1978 while visiting the Houlton Courthouse, Madawaska lawyer Joel Leblanc learned that the Courthouse's old newspaper collections, which had been relegated to the attic, were going to be destroyed. He passed along this information to Madawaska Historical Society members Bernette and Renaud Albert, who retrieved the *Journal du Madawaska* volumes on behalf of the Madawaska Historical Society.

Madawaska historian Guy Dubay made arrangements with the University of Maine at Fort Kent to make a preservation microfilm of the bound volumes of the *Journal du Madawaska*. The microfilms were produced by Northeast Reprographics in September 1978 and the master negatives were deposited at UMFK's Blake Library. In August 1992, the library donated the master negatives to the Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes.

Order and Arrangement. *Le Journal du Madawaska* microfilm edition is in chronological order from 5 August 1903 through 27 December 1905.

Sources Consulted:

Books:

Belisle, Alexandre. *Histoire de la press franco-américaine*. Worcester: Ateliers typographiques de "l'Opinion Publique, 1911.

Lawton, R. J. *Franco-Americans of the state of Maine, U.S.A., and their achievements: historical, descriptive, and biographical*. Lewiston, ME.: H. F. Roy, 1915.

Paré, Paul. "A History of Franco-American Journalism." *A Franco-American Overview*. Volume 1. Cambridge, Ma.: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1979: 237-260.

Pelletier, Martine and Pelletier, Stevens A. *Héritage Pelletier Heritage*. Vol. III. [Madawaska, Me.]: Northern Graphics, 1987.

Newspaper Articles:

"Van Buren." *Le Madawaska*. 5 August 1921, p. 4.

Public Documents:

United States Census, 1880: Aroostook County, Maine.

United States Census, 1900: Aroostook County, Maine.

United States Census, 1910: Aroostook County, Maine.