

Don Levesque oral histories

MCC-00050

Finding Aid

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Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes
University of Maine at Fort Kent
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Accessioned 1991
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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Collection Title: Don Levesque oral histories

Citation: Don Levesque oral histories, MCC-00050, Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Accession Number: MCC-00050

Shelf List Numbers: AA0050 (1/2, 2/2)
UA-050 (1/2, 2/2)
UM050

Introduction: The Don Levesque oral histories collection consists of oral history collected by Don Levesque from older residents of New Brunswick in 1974. Donated to the Archives in 1991, the collection comprises two sets of papers and an audiocassette recording.

Provenance/Chain of Custody: Don Levesque created this collection as part of coursework for a class with Roger Paradis at the University of Maine at Fort Kent in Spring 1974. Prof. Paradis kept this collection in his personal custody until March 1991, when he brought it to the Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes.

Date Range: 1974

Language: French.

Physical Characteristics/Condition: The collection consists of papers (a set of four single-sided 8x5 1/2" sheets of manuscript and a set of seven single-sided 8x13" sheets of manuscript) and a cassette recording. The papers were apparently exposed to excess humidity, but are in good condition; the original 120-minute cassette was exposed to mold contamination prior to its arrival at the Archives. Because of the contamination, Archives staff re-mastered the original tape onto new tape stock, splitting the 120-minute recording over two 60-minute cassettes in order to provide better durability.

Sound Quality: The sound quality on the original recordings ranges from fair to poor. The interviewer's voice is consistently audible, but the interviewees were apparently seated at less than optimal range for the microphone and at some times their voices are quite faint.

Access: This collection is available to researchers without restriction. With the permission of the Archivist, and in accordance with existing archival photocopy policies, researchers may make one copy of the manuscript material for their personal use for research purposes. They must quote "Don Levesque oral histories, MCC-00050, Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent" as a source if the item is used in papers or publications.

Arrangement: The Archives staff arranged this collection in order to maximize its usability by researchers into two series organize by genre:

- I. Audio material
- II. Papers

Preservation Actions: This collection is one of a number of student collections which Professor Roger Paradis brought to the Archives in 1991. At some point prior to their archival at the Archives, these student collections were exposed to excessive humidity; this was readily evident by the rusty staples and paper clips which held together the papers and by the fact that several of the audio recordings exhibited visible mold. Archives staff undertook a number of preservation measures to both salvage these materials and to ensure that they did not pose a contamination threat to other materials in Archives' collection.

Archives staff cleaned and dried out the papers, removed staples, and surface-cleaned them to remove dust and loose rust. The papers were placed into archival-quality folders and placed in archival-quality enclosures. Archives staff worked in collaboration with staff at the Public Archives of Canada and the Canadian Department of Agriculture to properly identify the mold on the audio recordings. The original cassette shells and boxes were discarded, appropriate cleaning agents were used to decontaminate the tapes, and the original tapes themselves were re-housed in new cassette shells and boxes. Archives staff then re-mastered the audio tapes onto new cassettes.

The original audio recording in this collection consisted of one 120-minute cassette. Because 120-minute tape stock is thin and prone to breakage, tangling, print-through, and other problems, Archives staff split the re-mastered recording onto two 60-minute cassettes.

Biographical Note:

Don Levesque (collector, donor). Don Levesque was born in 1947 in Grand Isle, Maine, the son of Gilbert Levesque and Lauraine Ouellette. He attended high school in Van Buren. From 1967 to 1969, he served in the military where his tour of duty took him to Vietnam. In 1974, he completed a degree in Social Sciences Field. Following graduation, he taught English as a second language at a community college in Edmundston, N.B. for two years. He subsequently served for a year as a regional director for a provincial bilingual program for hospital workers in northwestern New Brunswick. From 1979 to 1985, he worked in advertising as well as other capacities at *La Cataracte*, a bilingual newspaper in Grand Falls, New Brunswick.

In 1985, Don Levesque began working for the *St. John Valley Times*, a regional weekly newspaper headquartered in Madawaska, Maine. After serving as a sales representative, he moved to the news room in 1988 where he served as a reporter and managing editor. Since 1996 he has served as the newspaper's publisher.

George Theriault was born circa 1888. He lived in Sainte-Anne, New Brunswick.

No biographical information for Mrs. Fred Doucet is available.

Ora Poitras Bérubé was born circa 1893. She married Maurice Bérubé and resided in Saint-Andre, New Brunswick.

Tape Label Information: The original 120-minute audio cassette tape was labeled “George Theriault, Mme Maurice Berube.”

Scope and Content: This collection consists of French-language audio oral history interviews conducted by Don Levesque with George Theriault of Sainte-Anne, New Brunswick, Mrs. Fred Doucet, and Ora Poitras Bérubé (wife of Maurice Bérubé) of Saint-Andre, New Brunswick, in May 1974, plus additional hand-written notes on the conversations and a partial transcription of one of the interviews. This collection was created as classwork for course at the University of Maine at Fort Kent during the Spring 1974 semester. Subject matter includes fiddling, life in local lumber camps, songs, legends, farming practices, traditional medicine, childbirth practices, and family history.

Series Description

Series I: Audio Recording: No tape log was provided for this collection at the time of its donation, label information on the original recording is incomplete, and the transcription included with this collection only covers a fragment of the audio interviews. As a result, it has not been possible to provide complete identification of interviewers and interviewees. The following partial identifications of interviewers and interviewees are based on audition of the tapes by Archives staff in conjunction with consultation of the manuscript notes.

UA-050 (1/2) Sides A and B:

Interview with George Theriault of Sainte-Anne, New Brunswick, conducted by Don Levesque. According to Don Levesque’s manuscript notes, Mr. Theriault was 86 years old at the time of the interview. Subject matter includes fiddling, life in local lumber camps, songs, legends, and farming practices.

UA-050 (2/2) Side A:

Interview with George Theriault, conducted by Don Levesque, continued from UA-050 (1/2). Subject matter includes traditional medicine and farming practices.

Interview with Mrs. Fred Doucet [place of residence not identified]. During the interview Mrs. Doucet identifies herself as being 96 year old. This interview appears to have been conducted in part by Don Levesque and in part by one or more unidentified female interviewers. Subject matter includes childbirth practices.

Interview with unidentified female interviewee [?]. There appears to be another unidentified female interviewee who takes over from Mrs. Doucet. The interview appears to have been conducted by Don Levesque and one or more unidentified female interviewers. Subject matter includes gardening, sewing and personal history.

Interview with Mrs. Maurice Bérubé (née Ora Poitras) of Saint-André, New Brunswick, conducted by Don Levesque. According to the partial

manuscript transcription of this interview, Mrs. Bérubé was 81 years old at the time of the interview. Subject matter includes traditional medicine, personal history, and family history. Mrs. Bérubé is apparently seated out of optimal microphone range and speaks so softly that much of this interview is barely audible.

UA-050 (2/2) Side B:

Conclusion of interview with Mrs. Maurice Bérubé. (Please see above.)

Series II: Papers:

- A. This set of papers contains information gathered by Don Levesque from George Theriault, who is interviewed on UA-0-50 (1/2) and side A of UA-050 (2/2). A comment in the margin of this document suggests that the notes were made at the time of the audio interview, but not recorded on tape. The notes focus on practices related to lumber camp life and the river drive.

- B. This is a set of papers present a transcription of part of the recorded oral history interview conducted by Don Levesque with Mrs. Maurice Bérubé (née Ora Poitras) of Saint-André, New Brunswick; a note added at the top of the first page suggests that the transcription may be an excerpt of side B of UA-050 (2/2). The transcriber's handwriting is noticeably different from that in the notes on George Theriault, suggesting that this document was created by someone other than Don Levesque. The interview excerpt focuses on traditional medicinal practices, home remedies, midwifery, lactation, and curing warts.