

[Additional Personal History Ovide Morin]

Maine 1938-9

Maine

Livin Lore

Old Town - 1 Dup.

ADDITIONAL [PERSONAL?] HISTORY OF OVIDE MORIN, [ST?].,

FRENCH CANADIAN

David's brother, Ovide, said he came here in 1831 although he came when David did. He was nineteen then and is seventy six now. He said that he went right to work in a saw mill at a laborer when he got here. The mill was in Milford. He hasn't worked anywhere since about 1924. That leaves 43 years unaccounted for, but I think he did as well as he could in telling about that period. He said he worked in saw mills, in the woods, on the boom, and as a brick mason. [??] continually changing jobs - never staying long in one place. That in itself contituted a career, I'll ask him if he can remember any dates, but it seems most unlikely that he can.

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Mr. Morin: "The first time Father Trudel preached a sermon in that church he told the people, 'I didn't build this church for myself - I could get along with a pretty small one. I built it for you. It was you your money that built it, and it will always be [yours?].'"

"That old church wasn't in a very good place down there by the railroad, and it was a wooden one. If it ever caught fire when a service was goin' on, some of the people might not have got out. A wooden church is just as dangerous as a wooden school."

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"Some times we had a hard [time?] to get to church in the winter time when we lived in Canada. We had to go through drifts or else go on snowshoes. They always kept the sidewalks plowed here and now they plow the roads, too. People that live away out in the country can get into a warm car and drive to a warm church and they don't have to worry about snow or cold." Mrs. Morin: "We sent all our children to the convent. Nearly all the French children went there then, but now a lot of them go to the public schools. There is quite a large one over here. Of course the children have to go to the public school if they go to the high school for ther there is no Catholic high school here. The convent was not so big when we were [carried?], and the sisters lived in one part of it. They built a big piece on about forty years ago and when they built the new priest's house, they moved the [old?] one up for the sisters to live in. That gives a out twice as much space in the school.

"None of our children went to college, but two of the boys went to the business college for a while. Ovide, Jr. worked in his uncle's store for a few years before he started his own. Two of the boys 3 work with him and he has two clerk besides. They have a good trade because they really like people. They aren't friendly just because they [think?] people are going to buy something." Mr. Morin: "Mister, I think I made a good change when I came to Old [Town?]. If I stayed in St. Epphane my boys would have had to start just where I did. I'm glad they didn't have to go through with that. If they had stayed on the [Farm?] they would never have any money and no clothes to wear. It was plenty of hard work and nothing for it. Now they can dress well and they can live in a good house."

"My oldest boy owns that [house?] next to me where he lives, and it's a good one. Do you know what I paid for the first house I bought here? \$100.00. I'm glad we don't have to [live?] in it now. None [of?] us ever went into [politics?] here - we never had time. If a man attends to his own business right, he don't have much time to work at anything else."

"I didn't work in the [sawmill?] when I first came here - I worked on the boom. I worked out around the farm in Pushaw (French Settlement) for nine months before I worked anywhere else. That old man, my father's cousin, lied to my father when he came up to Quebec. He

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told him that the farm in Pushaw was a good one and that it was big enough for all of us. He was gettin' too old to work it and he wanted us to help him. The ground was no good; it was all clay. Some places on that farm hadn't been plowed in fifty years. The hay grew some places [only?] as high as that (one foot). The next spring I went [u?] on the boom at Pea Cove and from there I went to Argyle."

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(The logs at Pea Cove were always [rafted?] first. Then the crew was transferred to Argule Argyle , where logs from the last drives [accumiated?] while the work was progressing at Pea Cove. When Mr. Morin worked there the rafters had a long season. They started late in the spring and worked until late in the [?]. The rafting season gradually shortened as timberlands approached exhaustion, and finally work was stopped altogether about fifteen years [ago?].

"When the work stopped on the boom I went to work in the sawmill. I worked there just one year. I told you my father was a mason. I went to work with him after I left the mill and I never went back. Of course some winters when there wasn't much work, I went up to the woods.

"I didn't know much about laying brick before they built that church (St. Josephs), but I was a good stone mason. When they got through with the stones there, I went inside on the brick. I really learned the trade there with Valentine (the boss). My father and I took a lot of jobs [?] that - all big ones. When we got done on one job we never wasted a day - we started lookin' for the next one. We never went out of the State, but we did work in Lewiston, Portland, and places like that. Once we went up to Van Buren on a job. What really made O. G. Morin was the Bangor Fire. We had work there for five years. That fire pretty near wiped out the business section and they wouldn't let them build with anything that wasn't fireproof. It's hard for me to remember where I worked any certain year. It's not like workin' in a mill - you're changing all the time. I can't remember what year the Bangor fire was, [but?] I think it was in 1911.

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"I couldn't tell many good stories about layin' brick. When anybody's workin' at that job, they don't see much of what's goin' on, and when they got through at night they're tired and they just go home and sit around awhile and then go to bed.

"People got \$14.00 a month in the woods when I came here, but if they lost a day on account of rain, they'd get the some pay. They get more money now, but if they lose any time, they take it out of their pay. People got \$1.25 a day then in the mills. There wasn't much change in workin' conditions until just before the war. He worked twelve hours a day in the saw mill, and just before the war I think they had a nine hour day. They kept cuttin' the hours down from twelve until they got them down to nine, but the pay didn't go up very much until the war. We never worked more than nine hours layin' brick, and generally we worked only eight. That's long enough. They say a man will lay as many bricks in eight hours as he will in twelve and I believe it. They got better pay during the war, but it cost more to live. You could save money though if you weren't foolish enough to throw it away like a lot of them did. Some people [bought?] houses then or put their money in the bank, but some of them bought a car and in five years they didn't have anything. They thought good time would last forever, but I'll bet they're sorry now.

"When I started to work in the sawmill, I moved over here (French Island). We had five rooms and we paid \$3.00 a month rent, but of course that was just a shack." Mrs. Morin: "It was not a shack! It was a good house. It would cost \$10.00 a month, now." Mr. Morin: "Well maybe it wasn't a shack, but it wasn't very good. Do you know, sister, a [woman?] used to go across the river and pick up waste slabs from the saw mill to build houses. There was a saw mill right across there." (On the Old Town side of the river about opposite Mr. Morin's home). "Yes sir, they built shacks with those waste slabs to live in. That, of course, was before I came here - I just heard about it. The sawmill's don't throw away those slabs now - they cut them up into four foot lengths and sell them for wood. You [used?] to be able to get a cord of gray birch when I came here for [?] a cord. It would cost \$6.00 now.

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"I guess conditions have changed a lot. In the first [?] we had here we didn't have a table like this. We had some boards hinged to the wall for a table with just one leg to hold it up. The children had boxes to sit on. I tell you, mister, I rather be dead than go back to those days. It was forty nine years ago when we got the water here. I can't remember when we got the lights. They got them on the other side (Old Town) [first?]. I think it was about 1908." Mrs. Morin: "They used to have hand pumpers here. When there was a fire the man would come running over with that little pump and a lot of them would get ahold of the handles and start working them up and down. I used to see man that came down from the drive over there on the street with no skirts on. They wore those red flannel underclothes." Mr. Morin: "I remember that. They never wore a tie - just a handkerchief around the neck.

In those days the best flour used to cost \$3.50 or \$4.00 a barrel. Sometimes we had twelve barrels in the house." Mrs. Morin: "I can remember when I paid 8 cents a dozen for eggs. Milk was four and five cents a quart, butter was 15 cents a 7 pound, and lard was 3 1/2 cents. That was forty years ago. Sugar seemed to stay at about the same price all the time except during the war, and it was hard to get them. Once I had to pay 40 cents a pound for it while the war was going on. I used to get the best cotton - Lockwood - for five cents a yard. If you bought a whole cut - 50 yards - you could get it for 3 1/2. It is 21 cents a yard now.

"We were married forty years ago, and I'm sixty five now. I've never been able to get my birth records -" Mr. Morin: "You ought to take a few years off [your?] age then." Mrs. Morin: (Not minding the interruption) "There wasn't any resident priest in Old Town then. A priest went around to four different towns: Orono, Old Town, _____, and _____." (She named the two others places, but I have forgotten them.) "When a child was baptized the parents had to take it to wherever the priest was at that time. I don't know where they took me. It might have been in any one of those four places. I never could find the records anyway. I think that priest was Irish. (Father Ouellette said he thought there was an Irish priest here

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before Trudel). He couldn't pronounce the French names very well, and they said when he got one he couldn't pronounce at all, he baptized the child something else.

"When I was about two years old they had black diptheria here. That was sixty three years ago. Doctor Norcross was the doctor then. There were four children died in our family (not the Morin family), and _____(I can't remember the name) over here, lost six. My mother got Doctor Norcross one night for one of my sisters. He put some white powder on the end of knife and poured it down the child's throat, but in the morning she was dead. There wasn't much sanitation over here then, and alot more children used to die. It wasn't 8 black cholers that time - it was black diptheria. That's what the doctor called it. If they had black choler here, it was before my time. It must have been terrible to see so many children die. Once when I was six years old I got a sore throat and my mother was afraid it was diptheria. She got Doctor Norcross and he asked if I ever had black diptheria and my mother told him I had it. 'Well,' he said, 'don't worry them - this is just a sore throat.'

"I lost just one of my children - my little girl. She was eight years old, and she was a dear. For a time I hated everything because she was taken from me.

"I used to have dreams. I would be sitting here in the kitchen and I would see her. She would walk by me carrying that great, heavy cross, and I couldn't help her."

"One day the priest said to me, "Mrs. Morin, you feel bad because you hate your child! She is happy in heaven, and if you really loved her, you would be glad that is so. A time will come when you will be glad that she is dead! Then you will really love her!"

"It was nine years after that when I was in that room (the living room) that I fell on my knees in front of her picture, and looked up at her dear face and cried. I felt glad that she was dead. I know that she is happy - far happier, perhaps, then if she stayed with us. I know I will see her again, for we all must die. I think of her often, now, but I never feel hate because she was taken from me. God knows best, and now I know that I really love her.

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“A traveling man that one of the boys brought over to dinner once sat right in that chair and told me with tears in his eyes how 9 he had lost his little boy. He said he had kept all the childs clothes. He felt so bad I felt sorry for him. How much better it would be to give those clothes to some poor child who had none. I knew that he didn't really love his child, or he would have felt glad.”