A young girl stares into the camera, one arm hanging by her side, another prop- ping her up against a loom. She wears a dirty smock and no shoes.

Addie Card, the young French Canadian featured in the photo, was part of a vast wave of immigrants from Quebec who moved to Vermont and New England in the late 1800s and early 1900s.
Addie moved to North Pownal in southern Vermont with her mother and father in 1906 as they took jobs in a textile mill. To make ends meet, mother, father and children went to work. The conditions were hard, but they had left Quebec because life there was more difficult.

Addie stayed in the area, married twice, had one biological child, and one adoptive child, both of whom had children of their own. Her descendants are disseminated into the cultural fabric of the Northeast, perhaps unclear of their French-Canadian descent and the tremendous impact they had on a region starving for labor and new life.

The story of Addie is a story that played out tens and tens of thousands of times. French Canadians immigrated to Vermont and New England in search of work, and their heritage is now an essential part of our state’s ethnic diversity.

**Franconnexions**

While the majority of these first generation immigrants worked low-paying unskilled jobs, now the Bouchers, Cla-
velles and Paquettes are the farmers, business owners and political leaders that make Vermont the unique state that it is today.

French-Canadian emigration to New England began as a trickle in the 1830s, Burlington and Winooski being the first communities to receive sizeable populations. Burlington’s own St. Joseph’s church of 1852 on the hill overlooking Winooski was in fact the first French-Catholic parish church on U.S. soil with a priest who spoke French. Winooski’s St. Francois Xavier parish would follow suit in 1868.

The trickle became a floodtide after the end of the Civil War, with the majority settling further south and east, in Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. When the Great Depression put a brake on the exodus, some 900,000 French Canadians had made the journey and stayed. How large is this number? The Canadian Census of 1931 indicated 2.8 million people in the entire province of Quebec. So by the time the wave of emigration had broken, an astounding one-third of the population of Quebec had uprooted to New England.

**Reason for push and pull**

The basic motive on the Quebec side, the “push,” was a lack of work. In the Quebec countryside, settled since Samuel Champlain’s time, there were now too many children for the available farmland. U.S. tariffs on Canadian produce, starting in 1866, hurt Quebec farmers trying to export their crops. And the province’s major urban center, Montreal, could not absorb the swelling numbers of landless poor. Just across the international border, meanwhile, there was the “pull” of industrial work. By the end of the Civil War, New England’s industrial sector was robust, especially in textile mills that produced cottons and woolens. And the managers of these factories welcomed new and relatively cheap labor, since French Canadians — men, women and children — worked dawn to dusk at wages considerably lower than the Yankee farm girls or Irish immigrants who had tended the spindles before.

As of 1870, wrote historian Betsy Beat tie, the Burlington Woolen Mill of Winooski paid an average of $1.09 for a 12-hour day; at roughly $20 in today’s currency, that amounts to $1.67 per hour. No wonder that children were called on to augment the family income. By 1900, 30 percent of textile workers of Massachusetts were French Canadian; 60 percent in New Hampshire and Maine.

Geographic proximity was a driving force of this exodus. The impoverished farmlands of the St. Lawrence Valley sat cheek by jowl to industrializing and urbanizing New England towns and cities. And railroad and road access between the regions, including the Central Vermont Railroad which linked Montreal to St. Alb ans and Burlington and points south and east, made it relatively convenient and inexpensive to make the trip.

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French Connections conference coming to UVM

The University of Vermont will be holding a conference called French Connections: Franconexions on March 20, International Francophonie Day. The conference will highlight the historical, cultural and economic contributions of French Canadians from Quebec into Vermont and New England. It will examine the past, the present and the future of these cross-border migrations and relationships.

This is a one-day conference starting at 8 a.m. with a continental breakfast and continuing until 3:30 p.m., with three panels and lunch provided. Following the last panel, a special flag raising ceremony and reception will take place in downtown Burlington.

In three panels the conference will examine this story, asking these fundamental questions:

» Past: How and why was Vermont and New England populated by so many French Canadians in the 19th and early 20th centuries? When, how and why did this massive influx assimilate?

» Present: How do cross-border connections with Quebec, in tourism and in trade, continue to shape the culture and economy of Northern New England?

» Future: How does the French-Canadian wave of immigration relate to current immigration trends? What can we learn from the past as we think about the future?

Speakers include:

» Mark P. Richard, professor of history and Canadian studies, SUNY Plattsburgh.

» Christine St-Pierre, minister of International Relations and la Francophonie, Government of Quebec.

» Leslie Choquette, director of the French Institute at Assumption College.

» David Massey, professor of history and director, Center for Canadian Studies, University of Vermont.

» Susan Pinette, director of the Franco-American Centre, University of Maine.

» Ernest Pomerleau, French honorary consul in Burlington, Pomerleau Real Estate.

» Carole Salmon, chair of World Languages and Cultures, University of Massachusetts, Lowell.

» Adeline Simenon, director, Paul, Frank & Collins.

» Chris Louras, mayor of Rutland.

» Jack Jedwab, executive vice president of the Canadian Institute for Identities and Migration

» Vermont Gov. Phil Scott.

The University of Vermont French Connections conference will offer a special discount to Burlington Free Press readers. You can get this discount when you fill out the registration form or when you register at the website by using the special promo code: FREEPRESS

International flag-raising ceremony downtown

March 20 is International Francophonie Day, which is observed in 77 countries and political entities the world over.

There will be a ceremony starting at 4 p.m. at City Hall in Burlington. The celebration begins with a short concert by Va-et-Vient, Vermont’s French traditional music trio, in Contois Auditorium. There will be French and Quebecois top diplomats serving New England. Participants will move outside to the flagpole in front of City Hall for the ceremonial raising of the flag of the international francophonie by Burlington’s Police and Fire Color Guard. It will be hosted by the Alliance Française!
“Petits Canadas” sprout up

Proximity to the homeland helped to keep Quebec traditions alive. So did the fact that so many of the immigrants lived in neighborhoods, or ghettos, and that the language of the factory floor could be French. By 1900, “little Canadas” (“petits Canadas”) dotted most Northeast cities, including Burlington and Winooski, complete with their own parochial schools, newspapers, churches, snowshoe clubs, festivals, and the like.

As late as 1967, the historian Mason Wade could describe “the Franco-American’s remarkable resistance to assimilation in the general population, which surpasses that of any other American immigrant group.”

French Canadians’ ability to retain language and culture — in combination with old-fashioned racism in the host community — fostered nativism in New England. In Vermont, one scholar described them as “an abominable crew of vagabonds, robust, lazy men and boys, slatternly women with litters of filthy brats….The character of these people is not such as to inspire the highest hope for the future of Vermont if they should become the most numerous of its population.”

In Connecticut another asked: “Is our good old fash...
The history space

French
Continued from Page 7C

ioned New England to pass into a middle age of mediocre brain and body; are we to become so foreignized that our [Puritan] virtues and culture are to become extinct?"

In the end, French Canadians did become Americans, of course. The cauldron of the Second World War undoubtedly played a role, as did the closure of New England’s mills in the postwar period (Winooski’s mills closed in 1954), and the drive for upward mobility among Franco-Americans themselves. Nor should we dismiss the homogenizing effects of television and the Cold War.

The legacy remains

Still, the legacy remains. In Vermont, nearly one in four families trace its ancestry to these farmers-turned-factory-workers who settled here between the 1830s and 1930s.

Among these families are the Clavelles: Former Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle grew up in Winooski, and his family lived there through the 1990s. His grandfather had been a mill worker and his parents both spoke predominantly French.

The Franco-American influence can also be seen in local events.

Winooski’s annual French Heritage Day, begun in 2015, provides an opportunity for Franco-Vermonters to celebrate their identity. So does the Flag Raising Ceremony that takes place during Francophonie Month to honor the connection between the city of Burlington and French culture. Similar celebrations have been cropping up across the state, in New England and beyond.

Today we are justly proud of our French-Canadian heritage. We are a region—and a nation—of immigrants. And we are richer for it.

David Massell is the director of the Canadian Studies Program and Richard Watts is the director of the Center for Research on Vermont at the University of Vermont. Greer Cowan is a research intern and UVM senior. Information on the upcoming international conference at UVM can be found at French Connections/francoconnections or at http://www.uvm.edu/~crvt/

While Addie lived a modest life, the image of her at age 12 became the face of the child labor movement. The Lewis Hine photo and collection of photos of child workers led to the creation of child labor laws. The image was printed as a 32-cent stamp, has a place in the Library of Congress, and inspired Elizabeth Winthrop to write the novel “Counting on Grace” that is used in elementary schools across New England.

The Lewis Hine photo and collection of photos of child workers led to the creation of child labor laws.