

Informants: Hermine (Rondeau) Paquin, ~~March~~
Bertha (L'Allier) Eder
Fernende (L'Allier) Johnson

Fieldworkers: Robert Savanac & Matthew Gallmann

Place: Cable, WI & Centuria, WI

Date: February 10, 1979 - interview
November 1, 1979 - notes written

ETHNIC HERITAGE
SOUND ARCHIVE & RESOURCE CENTER
NORTHLAND COLLEGE, ASHLAND, WI

These accounts are written after the fact, months later. The interview was an introduction for me in many ways. This is written with a small amount of data from the interview and a lot of conjecture from memory.

The correlative recordings were taped on a small, portable Panasonic cassette recorder. There isn't any or a minimal amount of ethnographic data on the tape. The tape consists mostly of songs. The tape has material from this interview and a preceding interview.

Robert and I drove from Ashland to Cable where we stopped to see Cecilia (Rondeau) Metusic. We met C.M.'s daughter "Frenchie" who has had this nickname all her life. "Frenchie" doesn't speak French but does recall her mother singing French songs. "Frenchie" is presently residing in Dekalb, Illinois.

It was a short visit with Cecilia but every visit with the Rondeaus seems valuable and almost timeless. Here is an excerpt from notes R.S. wrote later that day:

"Cecilia has been more than welcoming to us. She insists on sharing coffee and cookies and is delighted to share her rock work with us. 'You have to have something to remember me by,' she urges as she gives each of us, M.G. and R.S., a Brazilian agate keychain and worry-stones. Her enthusiasm in our work is almost overwhelming, we are more than delighted to share songs and past histories."

After our visit with C.M. and Frenchie, R.S. and I headed for Centuria to meet H.P. She had just shoveled the snow from her front walk and was ready to prepare crepes. We ate a fine breakfast and then headed to B.E.'s home.

B.E.'s home was once the schoolhouse of the French community she grew up in. We met her husband, who's name I can't recall and another friend. The house was heated by wood, very neat, and exceptionally cozy.

B.E. suggested that we go over to her sister's home. I'm not sure but if I remember right, we went to her sister's home because there is an organ there.

B.E.'s sister, Fernende Johnson (F.J.), lives in a large more modern looking home than B.E. The house F.J. lives in is the house where the L'Alliers grew up. Now it has a large addition, new siding and a new interior.

Hermine (Rondeau) Paquin
Bertha (L'Allier) Eder
Fernende (L'Allier) Johnson

February 10, 1979

We found that B.E. and F.J. have some old handwritten songbooks. Many of the songs were written down by B.E.'s mother who, incidentally, was a school teacher from Canada.

We also found out that the L'Alliers were the first family to settle in the "Georgetown" community which, of course, was a French community. The Rondeaus moved into this community three years later.

Fortunately B.E. has written a small family history which she gave us a copy of. They have traced their family back to the 15th century.

The first song that B.E. learned in French, as she remembers, was "Un Canadien Errand."

Apparently the L'Allier family sang a lot when they were milking cows and churning cream. They had 57 cows. The story goes that about five girls would be milking and singing at once and the singing could be heard for miles! Whoever was in the barn working would be singing. "Singing the songs gave us more energy," said Fernende.

Perhaps they sang everyday and thus have a large repertoire of folksongs, deep in their memories.

The problem with this interview was one of recording technique. Obviously, we should have left the machine running throughout the recording session instead of constantly turning it off and on. The material is good though and the indication of a strong song tradition obvious. But unfortunately the tradition seemingly hasn't lasted to our generation.

I'll just note here that C.M.'s granddaughter, Sherry Fletcher, has some tapes of the Rondeaus. She lives in Ashland or Washburn.