

The beginnings of *Sou de l'Écolier* (the Educational Fund)

By Paul-M. Paré

It's at l' Association Canado-Américaine's 13th Convention held in Manchester on September 30 and October 1 in 1924 that ACA launched a new account to help young Franco-American students. And they are words filled with passion that welcomed the motion to create an account called *Sou de l'Écolier*, motion that would be accepted unanimously.

In reading the minutes of that Convention again, we get the impression that the survival of the Franco-American group depended on the creation of a fund dedicated to education. We can also see the special affinity that founders of the *Sou de l'Écolier* had for Québec institutions. "To ensure the survival of our presence in this country, one of the best methods consists of the formation of the elite. We will obtain this elite by the education in Canadian colleges where our children will be in contact with... a teacher who relates to our traditions, our beliefs and our aspirations." As pronounced by Dr. Gaspard Boucher of Woonsocket, RI, a delegate of the Convention. "I do not see an Association like ours doing a better service," he added. Nine other delegates voiced their approval of the motion.

The delegates' enthusiasm was continuous in the months following. One of the delegates, Joseph Dumont of Berlin, NH, returned his \$12 check to the Association (part of his Convention participation fee) with a note to deposit it in the *Sou de l'Écolier* fund. This amount became the first donation to the Educational Fund.

At the Executive meeting of October 15, 1924, the President General Elphège Daignault, the Treasurer General J.-A. Boivin and the Doctor General Damase Caron each deposited \$100 in the *Sou de l'Écolier* fund. We also received a \$100 contribution from the Priest W.-A. Prince of Woonsocket. At the beginning of November the Villa des Alliées of Manchester made a "humble offer" of \$100, thus becoming the first Chapter to contribute to the Educational Fund. Not long after came a \$100 donation from the Napoléon Chapter of Woonsocket. These donations were added to the financial base of the fund that came from a contribution of \$0.25 per year per member payable in December of each year.

In July 1925 we accumulated a sufficient amount to distribute the first scholarships. The rules published in *Le Canado-Américain* stipulated that the candidates had to be at least 11 years old, be of male gender* and child of an ACA member for a year. Members of the High Court added that ACA should be in favor of Classic Colleges of Québec.

That first year, there were 64 scholarship requests. The Directors only had money for 17 scholarships, which is what they did. A year later, it was reported in *Le Canado-Américain* that members of the first "class" of the ACA Educational Fund had all passed their year-end exams with success, that the 17 scholars had received a global amount of \$3,155.88 for scholarship and housing expenses, for their traveling and even for some, medical expenses – in all averaging \$185 per student. They concluded that it was a good investment.

A few years later this investment started to produce results. In 1932, Paul-Emile Doyon of Grand-Mère was ordained priest for the Trois-Rivières diocese. He was part of the first “class” of ACA Scholars and he became the first ACA scholar to be a priest. He was followed by Valmore Marceau of Somersworth, NH, in 1934 who was ordained for the Manchester diocese and became the first Franco-American scholar to be ordained priest.

In 1936 the first lawyer amongst our scholars was Philippe Biron of Manchester. In 1941, two ACA scholars became our first doctors: Paul Fortier of Lewiston, Maine who also became Vice-President General of the Society and Eugene Vachon of Manchester.

* It's only in the early 50's that women's names starting showing up amongst ACA recipients.