

*French-American Heritage Foundation of Minnesota*

# ARTICLE DU MOIS

## ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

**PREMIÈRE ÉDITION SPÉCIALE**

March 2021



*La Bénédiction du jour de l'An* - Edmond-Joseph Massicotte, 1912

*Le*  
*État du*  
*Blond*

French-American Heritage Foundation of Minnesota

Mission Statement: To preserve and promote the French-American heritage in Minnesota through education and community events.

Website: [www.fahfminn.org](http://www.fahfminn.org). YouTube: FAHF Minn.



*A French-Canadian tradition*



# LA BENEDICTION DU JOUR DE L'AN



---

Beautiful illustration isn't it? This drawing was made in 1912 by the French-Canadian artist Edmond-Joseph Massicotte (1875-1929). It is titled "La Bénédiction du jour de l'An," which translates to "New Year's Blessing." This print is part of a famous collection by the same illustrator called "Nos Canadiens d'Autrefois."

Since as long as I can remember, it has been my task, as the eldest child of my family, to gather my siblings in the living room on the morning of January 1st and ask my father to bless us for the new year.

My brother, sister and I would kneel in front of him and he would pronounce the Blessing to wish us good health, kindness and wisdom along with the "Au nom du Père, du Fils et du Saint Esprit, Amen." My parents had this tradition with their parents, then my grandparents with theirs, and so on. My dad told me that they would also visit the other side of the family to get the paternal blessing as well.

Therefore, last New Year's Day, thanks to the Internet video technology, I kindly asked my father to bless my family. My parents are still living in my hometown of Kiamika, Quebec, and I am now in St. Paul, Minnesota. It is a tradition that we will continue with my husband and our children and, hopefully, they will continue this with their own children.

Mr. Pierre Girard, another FAHF board member, sent me this recollection:

*"My dad used to tell us kids about going to both his grandparents' homes on New Year's Day to receive the New Year's Blessing on the family from his grandfathers. I am sure his father also pronounced the Blessing on his own family that day too. Their whole family would kneel before their Grandpa Solomon Girard to receive his blessing. Then they would walk a few blocks away to receive the Blessing from Grandpa Louis Lamothe.*

March 2021

*Since he had been injured in the American Civil War, he was bedridden. The entire family would then kneel around his bed as he pronounced the Blessing upon them. Because I am now the only son left in our family, I would like to pronounce a New Year's Blessing to my family and friends that the new year will be a blessing to all, that it will be prosperous, healthy and a wonderfully happy time in which you live. Dona Nobis Pacem."*

I thought that this New Year's paternal blessing tradition was very French-Canadian, but I found out that it is way more ancient than that. It is said to come from the Bible where the father figure looks over his family. Then it crossed the ocean with the pioneers to New France up to this day.<sup>1</sup>

**Do you have memories of this tradition in your own families?**

---

### *A bit more about Edmond-Joseph Massicotte*

Edmond-Joseph Massicotte was a renowned Quebecois artist and illustrator. He was born in a parish of Montreal in December of 1875 (Sainte-Cunégonde). Actually, the parish itself was born that same year.

Edmond-J. was the second son of Édouard and Adèle Bertrand. The Massicotte family only had three children: Edouard-Zotique, Edmond-Joseph and Marie Antoinette.

He embraced the *art nouveau* genre in his illustrations. He is mostly remembered for his series of 12 prints (1923) titled "Nos Canadiens d'Autrefois." Six more prints came later to complete the series of 18, about which Mrs. Courtemanche-Roche spoke so fondly in her letter. He also collaborated with his brother Édouard-Zotique who is remembered also as an archivist, squire, lawyer and more.

To view the prints series, visit the Musée national des beaux-arts website at [www.mnbaq.org](http://www.mnbaq.org). It might trigger similar memories for you as well. To learn more about Mr. Massicotte, visit the Dictionary of Canadian Biography online.



By Caroline Meilleur

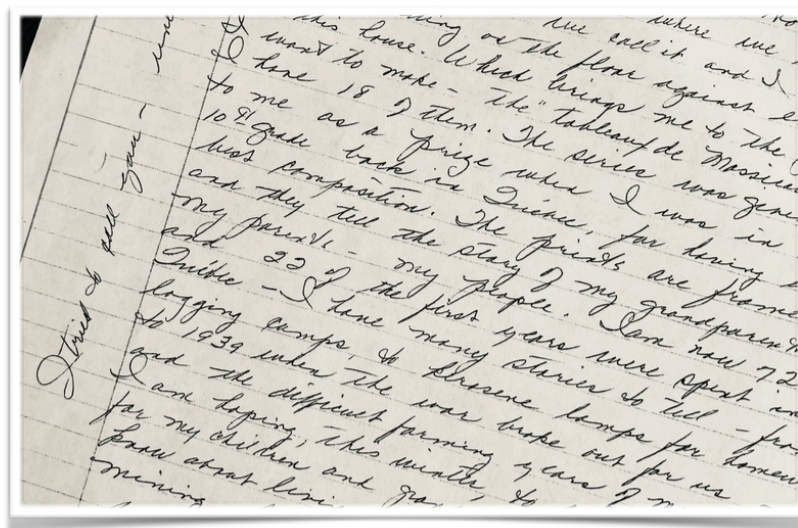
3

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://dianejoly.ca/la-benediction-paternelle-de-rituel-collectif-a-pratique-familiale/>

## Inspiration

This first article was inspired by a letter written in 1999 and sent to one of our FAFH board members by Mrs. Madeleine Courtemanche-Roche, Quebec-born, who lived most of her life in the Twin Cities area. In her letter, she said that she wanted to present the prints that she received, as an award for a writing contest in her youth, to her fellow Société members (sort of a show and tell). Madeleine's letter also speaks fondly of her homeland and how her attachment to Quebec grew with the years.



Madeleine Courtemanche-Roche ([startribune.com](http://startribune.com))

Mrs. Courtemanche-Roche was born on October 2, 1927, in the town of St-André-Avellin, Outaouais region, Quebec.<sup>2</sup> She was the daughter of Emile Courtemanche and Eva Cyr. Her father was *chef cantonnier*, a chief road mender, at the time of her baptism. Later, she married Joseph Henry "Joe" Roche, son of Joseph William and Margaret Ruth Henry, on October 15, 1949, in Duhamel, Papineau, Quebec.<sup>3</sup> They met while working on the Goose Bay military base in Labrador, Newfoundland. Joe was an American naval officer from Robbinsdale, Minnesota. They moved to the United States that same month to go to Patuxent River, Maryland, where Joe would work at the Naval Air Station.<sup>4</sup> Together they would raise eight children and were foster parents as well. Mrs. Courtemanche-Roche passed away on July 13, 2020, at the age of 92, in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota.<sup>5</sup>

By Caroline Meilleur

4

<sup>2</sup> "Quebec, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1967," digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed January 23, 2021), baptism entry for Marie Madeleine Mère Alice Courtemanche, 23 October 1927, St-André-Avellin (image 45 of 49); citing original data: Gabriel Drouin, comp. Drouin Collection. Montreal, Quebec, Canada: Institut Généalogique Drouin.

<sup>3</sup> Genealogie Quebec, Drouin genealogical Institute online database (<http://www.genealogiequebec.com>: accessed January 25, 2021), entry for Madeleine Courtemanche (image 49-128431).

<sup>4</sup> "Detroit, Michigan, U.S., Border Crossings and Passenger and Crew Lists, 1905-1963," digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed January 23, 2021), entry for Marie Madeleine Roche, October 25, 1949, Ambassador Bridge, Detroit, Michigan (image 4434 of 6401); citing original data: Selected Passenger and Crew Lists and Manifests. The National Archives at Washington, D.C.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/0000362254/>

 *Article extra - Song*

You have just learned that Mrs. Courtemanche-Roche's father, at the time of her birth, was a "chef cantonnier" (road mender). Perhaps you remember an old French song with that word *cantonnier* in it? Moi, oui [me too]! Here's a YouTube link from *La Soirée Canadienne*, a TV show recorded back in 1976 in the town of l'Ancienne-Lorette, Qc: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSwa9HWnZCQ>.

This Quebecois arrangement made by the French-Canadian Catholic priest Charles-Emile Gadbois (1906-1981) was borrowed from the French song "Sur la route de Louviers."<sup>6</sup> Father Gadbois is known for the creation of the music publishing company: La Bonne Chanson to promote French songs and French-Canadian songs.



30

*Sur la route de*  
**BERTHIER**

(Chanson de route)  
Allegretto

Arrangement par  
Chs-Emile GADBOIS

1. Sur la rou - te de Ber - thier, Sur la  
2. Un' grand' dam' vint à pas - ser, Un' grand'


rou - te de Ber - thier, Il ya - vait un  
dam' vint à pas - ser Dans un beau car -

can - ton - nier, Il ya - vait un can - ton -  
ross' do - ré, Dans un beau car - ross' do -

nier Et qui cas - sait Et qui cas - sait des tas d'caill -  
ré, Et qui lui dit: Et qui lui dit: "Pauvr' can - ton -

loux, Des tas d'caill. loux Et qui cas - sait des tas d'caill -  
nier; Pauvr' can. ton. nier Et qui lui dit: "Pauvr' can - ton -

loux nier, Pour mettr' sous l'pas - sag' des  
Tu fais un fi - chu mé -



roues, roues, roues, roues. Ah! que la route est bel - le, bel - le,  
tier, tier, tier, tier. Ah! que la route est bel - le, bel - le,

que la route est bel - le, bel - le à Ber - thier!  
que la route est bel - le, bel - le à Ber - thier!

3  
Le cantonnier lui répond: (bis)  
"Faut que j'nourriss' mes garçons, (bis)  
Car si j'roulions (bis) carross' comm' vous, (bis)  
Car si j'roulions carross' comm' vous,  
Je n'casserions point d'cailloux,  
Iou, iou, iou".

4  
Cett' répons' fut remarqué' (bis)  
Par sa grand' simplicité: (bis)  
C'est c'qui prouv' que (bis) les malheureux, (bis)  
C'est c'qui prouv' que les malheureux,  
S'ils le sont, c'est malgré z'eux,  
Z'eux, z'eux, z'eux.

<sup>6</sup> Les origines de la chanson "Sur la route de Berthier," Blog Les Quatres Saisons, Jean Provencher, April 27, 2017. <https://jeanprovencher.com/2017/04/27/les-origines-de-la-chanson-sur-la-route-de-berthier/>; accessed February 10, 2021.



## Article extra - Genealogy

Un peu de généalogie... Here's the Courtemanche paternal line of Mrs. Courtemanche-Roche. We took the line back to this New France pioneer, Antoine Courtemanche dit Jolicoeur, who was born in the parish of Bannes (Dissay-sous-Courcillon, Sarthe, Pays de la Loire, France) in 1640. He was first mentioned in New France in 1659 as an "engagé" towards Jérôme Le Royer de la Dauversière (contract Demontreau, La Rochelle). He boarded the ship the Saint-André on July 2, 1659, with Jeanne Mance and Marguerite Bourgeois.<sup>7-8</sup>

### *Courtemanche ancestral line of Madeleine Courtemanche-Roche*

		<b>Marriage</b>	
<i>1st</i>	<b>Antoine Courtemanche dit Jolicoeur</b>	<i>April 26, 1633 Ville-Marie* (Notre-Dame), New France</i>	<b>Elizabeth Achin</b> <i>(Abraham &amp; Marie Descallognes)</i>
<i>2nd</i>	<b>Antoine Courtemanche</b>	<i>November 8, 1688 Montréal (Notre-Dame), New France</i>	<b>Marguerite Vaudry</b> <i>(Jacques &amp; Jeanne Vigneau)</i>
<i>3rd</i>	<b>Pierre Courtemanche</b>	<i>November 8, 1733 Longue-Pointe, Montréal, New France</i>	<b>Marie Fissiau dit La Ramée</b> <i>(Jacques &amp; Anne Monet)</i>
<i>4th</i>	<b>Pierre Courtemanche</b>	<i>November 25, 1776 Varenes, Province of Quebec</i>	<b>Madeleine Girard</b> <i>(Joseph &amp; Josette Casavant)</i>
<i>5th</i>	<b>Joseph Courtemanche</b>	<i>February 1st, 1814 L'Assomption, Lower-Canada</i>	<b>Marie Marguerite Houle</b> <i>(Thomas &amp; Marie Joseph Landry)</i>
<i>6th</i>	<b>Jean Baptiste Courtemanche</b>	<i>November 22, 1858 St-André-Avellin, East-Canada</i>	<b>Domitille Lacasse</b> <i>(Joseph &amp; Angélique Desjardins)</i>
<i>7th</i>	<b>Pierre Courtemanche</b>	<i>August 13, 1888 St-André-Avellin, Quebec</i>	<b>Léontine Bolduc</b> <i>(Pierre &amp; Philippine Roy)</i>
<i>8th</i>	<b>Emile Courtemanche</b>	<i>July 15, 1924 St-André-Avellin, Quebec</i>	<b>Eva Cyr</b> <i>(Alias &amp; Rebecca Legris)</i>
<i>9th</i>	<b>Madeleine Courtemanche</b>	<i>October 15, 1949 Duhamel, Quebec</i>	<b>Joseph Henry Roche</b> <i>(Joseph &amp; Margaret Ruth Henry)</i>

© C. Meilleur Genealogy - February 2021

\* Montréal was founded in 1642.

By Caroline Meilleur

6

<sup>7</sup> Fédération québécoise des sociétés de généalogie, Fichier Origine online database (<http://www.fichierorigine.com>: accessed February 17, 2021), entry for Antoine Courtemanche dit Jolicoeur (person 241042), updated on 2013-01-27.

<sup>8</sup> Dictionnaire généalogique des familles du Québec - des origines à 1730, René Jetté, (Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal, 1983 & Édition PRDH, Gaëtan Morin, 2003), 284.



## Article extra - Recipe

### La Tourtière (meat pie)

The famous "tourtière"! You might have eaten it, seen it or at least heard of it. It is probably the most well-known Canadian dish!

Just for the fun of it, I posted on my Facebook wall a question to my French-speaking friends asking what a "tourtière" was to them. Like I presumed, everyone who replied had a similar post, but different ingredients, sizes and ways of doing it. It almost created an emotional debate! Honestly, there must be as many recipes as there are families.



In my own family, for example, my mother calls a regular tourtière (pie with ground meat): a meat pie. For her and all her folks from the Saguenay/Lac-St-Jean and Quebec City regions, a tourtière is also a meat pie but with meat cubes and a much bigger format. It will look similar to this photo below (see next page for recipe). Attention, it's a deep dish!



Photos courtesy of Caroline Meilleur

On my father's side, those who are from the Laurentians, and to most people, a tourtière is a meat pie - in a regular pie-size dish.

There is the Acadian tourtière that adds skin-on, bone-in chicken breast in the filling. These traditional meals are usually made and eaten during Christmas time (at the "réveillon" on Christmas eve), during the holidays and throughout the winter season. Ingredients are similar but, like I said, **every family has their own recipe**. So even if I wanted to give you THE recipe, there are so many!

All tourtières are meat filled pies and common ingredients are pork, beef, veal, chicken, onions, cloves, potatoes and spices. There is also the game version with meat from deer, moose, caribou, partridge, rabbit, bear, etc. This version was the one our ancestors made. For vegetarian, there are recipes with meat-like ingredients and that tastes very good also.

One thing for sure is that the tourtière is an "**incontournable**" dish to try.

Here's the Saguenay meat pie recipe from my mother (Lou). We usually eat it with ketchup (regular or house-made) and with "salade aux câilles" which translates to a curdled milk salad (fresh and crisp green salad, chopped green onions, curdled milk, salt and pepper). SO YUMMY! This salad is typically from Saguenay also.

---

### **Tourtière du Saguenay**

Recipe courtesy of Lou Gilbert

#### **Ingredients**

- 5 lbs. of potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1.5 lbs. of pork filet, cut into small cubes
- 3 chicken breasts (skinless and boneless), cut into small cubes
- 1.5 lbs. of stewing beef, cut into small cubes
- 2 medium onions finely chopped
- 200g of pork dripping (roast pork fat)
- Salt and pepper
- Water
- 2 large rolled-out short crust pastry

#### **Preparation**

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. In a large bowl, combine the meat, onions, potatoes and pork dripping. Season with salt and pepper. Mix well.
3. Take a roasting pan and line the bottom of the pan and sides with one of the pie crusts.
4. Add the meat, onions and potatoes and fill the pie with water to cover the mixture.
5. Add the second pie crust on top and close the sides together.
6. Cook uncovered at 400°F for 1/2 hour, then put the cover on and reduce the heat to 300°F and cook for about 5 to 6 hours.

Louise Gilbert and her grandson preparing the dough for the tourtière (2018).

Photo courtesy of Caroline Meilleur



---

I went through the archives of the Chez Nous/Nouvelles Villes Jumelles newsletters, published between 1980 and 1995 and I found some recipes for the traditional meat pie.

#### **Tourtière (meat pie)**

(Chez Nous newsletter of La Société Canadienne Française No. 1, Vol. 1 - April 1980 - p. 3.)

### **Recette**

Traditional Meat Pie \* Tourtiere

- 1 lb. ground pork (not lean)
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 small garlic toe
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. celery salt
- ¼ tsp. cloves
- ½ cup water



Combine all ingredients and bring to boil. Set on low heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat, skim excess fat. Cool mixture. Pour into pie shell and cover with crust. Bake in oven at 500 til crust is golden brown. Serve hot. These pies can be frozen and easily reheated.



### Tourtières

Not long ago I read, somewhere, that there were as many Tourtière recipes as there were French-Canadian families. I'm beginning to believe it, as I have 9 different recipes already. ( No, I haven't tried them all. ) I could publish those I have, one at a time, or maybe if all you readers out there have a favorite tourtière recipe to send to me, maybe we could come up with some sort of a "Tourtière Recipe Book". The following recipe comes from The Ford Treasury of Favorite Recipes from Famous Eating Places, Vol.2, (dated 1954) and this famous eating place is called Chantecler, located at Ste-Adèle-en-haut, Quebec. Whether it is still in existence is unknown to me.

1 1/2 pounds fresh pork shoulder,  
medium ground  
2 medium onions, chopped  
Melted butter  
1 bud garlic, chopped  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
1/2 bay leaf  
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg  
1 1/2 tablespoons cinnamon  
4 9-inch pie crusts

Toss onions lightly in melted butter, then add the meat. Cook slowly on top of stove 2-1/2 to 3 hours. The meat should not be brown; the pink shade will turn light gray. Add the seasonings and mix well. Line pie plates with pastry and fill with meat filling and cover with top crusts. Bake in a medium oven 45 minutes or until pastry is a golden brown. This makes two 9-inch pies.

The recipe above is taken from the Nouvelles Villes Jumelles newsletter of La Société Canadienne Française du Minnesota - November 1986 - page 4.

This third one is from the Chez Nous newsletter of La Société Canadienne Française - February/March 1987 - Vol. 8 No. 4 - page 6.

**Bon appétit!**

I was fortunate enough to be able to visit with Lillian Labbé and Don Hinkley at the Twin Cities concert last fall. Lillian promised to send me some recipes for use in the Chez Nous. The following recipe, from Lillian, is called St. Georges de la Beauce Tourtière, and is a little different from what we make in this area because it also uses veal.

3 pounds ground pork      Salt and pepper  
1 large onion chopped      to taste.  
1 pound ground veal  
4 large cooked potatoes  
Small amount of garlic  
1/4 teaspoon cloves

Simmer all together for about 35 minutes. Cool and then put into a double crust and bake at 400 for 30-35 minutes. Slit crust before baking.

The recipe does not indicate, but it appears that it should make two pies.