

PEOPLE LIKE MARCEL LAMANQUE MADE A LASTING CONTRIBUTION

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All of us here in the North Country are well aware of the contributions of our French Canadian neighbors have made to our communities. They were some of the earliest settlers and they left their presence indelibly in ways that will never be changed.

Their transition was normal and expected, given their close proximity to the area and the similarities in climate, terrain and industry. Woods work and its many facets was the prime mover for a large majority of the group. They were already skilled woods workers, eager to find work in a field with a dearth of local labor. Excelling in the profession, many stayed, expanded their horizons and became permanent residents.

My work in forestry was my introduction to many who I have come to know and admire. A strong work ethic and keen business sense insured their success in related fields as well. Steve Bick, my business associate's great-grandfather, was a typical example.

He was Marcel LaManque who was born in Canada in 1870, a time when the stock market crash of '29 would have looked like boom times.

When he was seven, Marcel's father took him by the hand and declared that he was old enough to work. He pushed small train cars loaded with coal through tunnels that the older men hacked from the earth. His efforts helped his father and mother to support the children. It was a service children were expected to participate in at the time.

When he was 15, the family moved to an area near Utica to work in the cotton mills. Marcel came north to the mountains where he worked as a lumberjack. Once a month he left the logging camp to visit home and leave money for the family.

This continued until he was 32 and he left the woods to settle in New York Mills. At the same time, Marcel along with his two brothers and six sisters purchased a small home with a garden near Montreal for their parents. They continued to support them until they passed on.

Marcel married Alice Bilodeau in April 1900 and subsequently the couple had and raised 12 children. All told, Marcel spent 17 years in lumber camps around Forestport, McKeever, Speculator and Tupper Lake, to name a few. A river diver, he

sported the traditional tattoo on his forearm as a means of identification should he perish in a log drive. (After many weeks in the water other features were often indiscernible.)

The balance of his days, until his death in 1950, were spent working in the New York Mills area on road construction. He remained active until he was 78. The couple became citizens in 1940, and were praised at the ceremony for the distinction of raising such a large family without having to resort to welfare.

During the Depression, Mrs. LaManque would feed many of the family's friends who were out of work with nutritious soups, casseroles, homemade bread and plenty of milk. She lived to be 87.

I am indebted to the 11th child of the LaManque family, Mary Doris Crussella, for the information on her father and mother. She fondly remembers her father as a gentleman who never failed to tip his hat and say good morning.

Edgar Nadeau, a friend of mine, basically followed in Mr. LaManque's footsteps but at a much later date. He was born in Lake Baker, New Brunswick, in 1921. He has been an Old Forge resident since 1954, when he came to the area with his wife, Nelida. The couple raised two children who reside with their families in the Utica area.

When I queried Edgar on what lead him to be a logger, he displayed his sense of humor and candor in his answer: "There was nothing else to do; if there had been I would have done it."

One thing all French Canadian lumberjacks had in common with the rest of their counterparts was Marcel LaManque's belief that hard work was good for the soul.