

THE SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS



— BULLETIN —

VOL. XXV NO. 1 January 1995

STAFF

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Editor | Malcolm Pearson |
| Assistant Editor | Ben MacLaren |
| Compositor/Art | Joy Linder-Nydam |
| Distribution | Donald King |

It Happened In Manchaug Ninety Years Ago

PREFACE — *The episode occurred in 1905 which instigated the BOSTON POST to dispatch a reporter to investigate rumors reaching Boston. His account as written in the newspaper dated, April 23, 1905 is transcribed verbatim. Certain areas of the original newspaper are in bad condition, but the text herewith is probably accurate in context. The memory of the affair has undoubtedly diminished in recollection of nearly a century in time. As an historical interlude in Sutton history, perhaps the justification in re-recording a contemporary account of the incident is established.* — EDITOR

BOSTON SUNDAY POST — SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 1905

MANCHAUG FRENCH CATHOLICS ORGANIZE A BAPTIST CHURCH

An incident which is almost unprecedented in the history of the Roman Catholic Church of New England and it is thought in the entire United States took place one week ago today in the little village of Manchaug, on this southern border of the State, when 42 persons, formerly French-speaking Roman Catholics, renounced the faith of the fathers and were baptized by immersion as members of the French Baptist just sprung into existence.

This action on the part of the former occupants of the Catholic Church, St. Anne, in the beautiful little mill-village in the Blackstone Valley, has been the culmination of a long series of religious differences that have existed between the pastors and flock of St. Anne's Parish extending over a period of three years.

For nearly three years the business men and mill-owners and the directors of the B. & B. Knight Manufacturing Company have fought against the religious fight that the French Catholics have started among themselves.

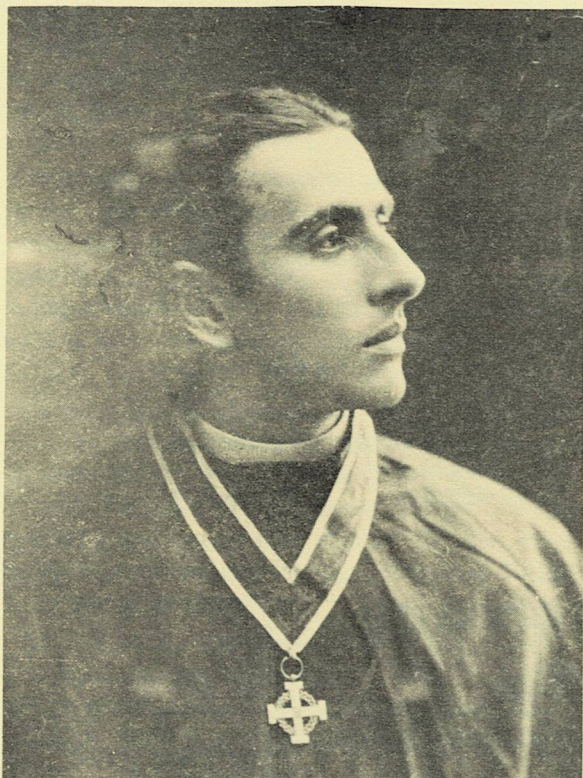
The population of Manchaug comprising a total of

nearly 2000 souls, was composed almost wholly of Roman Catholics. The mill-workers were all harmonious while of one faith, but when the first seeds of dissension were sown the mill officials discerned the impending trouble and endeavored to stay its course in order that peace might continue to reign among the help.

While the murmurings were in their infancy three years ago, a young priest of the Independent French Catholic Church, the Rev. Alfred F. Ribourg made his appearance and organized an independant church for the dissenters.

WEANED HIS CONGREGATION AWAY FROM THE OLD CHURCH

He continued to hold services in defiance of the authority of the Bishop of Springfield, and finally, as he himself said to the Sunday Post man on Wednesday last, "I gradually dropped the ceremonials of the church and practically all the ritual, until a few weeks ago I became baptized in the Baptist faith which all the while I believed to be the only true denomination."



The Rev. Alfred F. Ribourg

“While I was myself preparing for all of this I was acting ...(pastor for) my congregation of 200 persons much as the great Apostle would do, for St. Paul, while with the Jews and was a Jew, and when with the Romans was a Roman, to conquer the Romans.”

The climax of the proselyting that Mr. Ribourg, the former Roman Catholic Priest, carried on during those years came on Sunday last, when he himself performed the ceremony that converted the 43 persons to Protestantism from the Catholic faith.

When each one of the French speaking people were dipped in the water of the temporary tank that had been built in the rear of the auditorium of the former Independent Catholic Church, henceforth to be the place of worship of the new Baptists, they were admitted to full privileges and enjoyment of the Baptist Church and became members of the Protestant community to which they were previously a passive antagonism.

Three years ago the entire village was one great family of peaceable people all working in unity and all using the same religion. Natives of the Province of Quebec, they like the rest of their country, married into each others families, until the relationships through the village became somewhat complex.

Since the occasion of the baptismal last Sunday the feeling has become intense between the two factions and because of the close associations that the baptized

persons had with the people of the Catholic Church before the disruption, some expressed fear that serious trouble may rise in the village.

Scores upon scores of persons in the village are not on speaking terms with each other on account of the trouble and it looks as if a peaceful period would elapse before the last of the ruffled feelings would be soon over.

The Rev. Mr. Ribourg may be proud of the record he has made in taking away more than 100 persons from the Catholic Church.

St. Anne's Church, which these persons left to join the Baptist faith, has a regular membership and attendance of nearly 1500 souls, and has its pastor, the Rev. Father A.G. Brusseau, but the trouble that culminated in the secession of the Baptists took place during the ministry of a former priest, the Rev. J. A. Campeau, who had been engaged in a law-suit with one of the parishioners, the leading physician of the section.

Many of the friends of the doctor in the congregation were with him, and determined to withdraw from attendance at services of the priest they made of Bishop Beavens of Springfield that the Rev. J. A. Campeau be transferred, was not complied with.

It was not complied with at the time and while the dissatisfied members of the church were still in their angry mood the Rev. Ribourg came on the scene, locating in the city of Worcester. While there he learned of the trouble in the parish of St. Anne's and came to the village to look the field over for the purpose of starting an independent Catholic Church, as he then planned.

Mr. Ribourg had received a full education in France, where he had graduated from the Little Seminary and the Greater Seminary of the Paris as they were known, and was ordained a priest.

He later came to America, and somewhat in the nature of a missionary of this church visited the West before arriving in Worcester. In July of 1902 he first became identified with troubles of the Manchaug Church followers and came to the village for the first time.

He was engaged by the protesting faction of the Catholic Church to hold independent services in the open and afterward in St. Jean de Baptiste Hall, which was rented to his followers for a year, during which time they began the foundation of the church they now occupy as members of the Baptist faith.

In the Fall of 1903 the Rev. Mr. Ribourg and his

followers for the first time held services in the new church and there all of the pomp and method of ritual employed in theme as the Rev. Ribourg says he began to wean the members of the independent body away from the old faith.

How well and thoroughly this has been done has been shown in the fact of the conversions that were made on Sunday last.

Speaking of the treatment he had received from the villagers who have been opposed all along to his efforts in the way of proselyting the Catholics, the Rev. Ribourg declared that he has been persecuted in various ways, going into minor detail only, but has persevered until the present situation came about.

With the surprise of baptisms of last Sunday there came the knowledge to the residents of the village that for several weeks past the movement preparatory to affiliation with the Baptist denomination had been going on and that the leader of the Baptists in the city of Worcester had made arrangements to receive the former priest into the church and have a committee visit the village and receive the professions of faith from each of the 42 that were converted on last Sunday. This was done, and after the Rev. Mr. Ribourg was baptized he was united with the First Baptist Church of Worcester and given a license to preach, although not ordained as a minister of the denomination.

Now that the fact of the conversions has been

accomplished the Baptist Missionary of Boston has notified the pastor, Mr. Ribourg, that next week he is to be relieved of his labors in Manchaug and another French-speaking minister sent here to care for the new flock. At the present time it is said that nearly as many more members of the new church are preparing for their baptism which is to take place on the arrival of the new minister of the church.

When the Sunday Post man visited the new church on Wednesday the altar and many of the ornaments used on it, including candlesticks and the crucifix used in the service of the Catholic Church, still remained used under the regular conditions, while in the rear of the seats in the body of the church there stands a goodly sized tank which was built and used for the Baptist immersions of last Sunday.

MANCHAUG, MASS, APRIL 17, (05?)

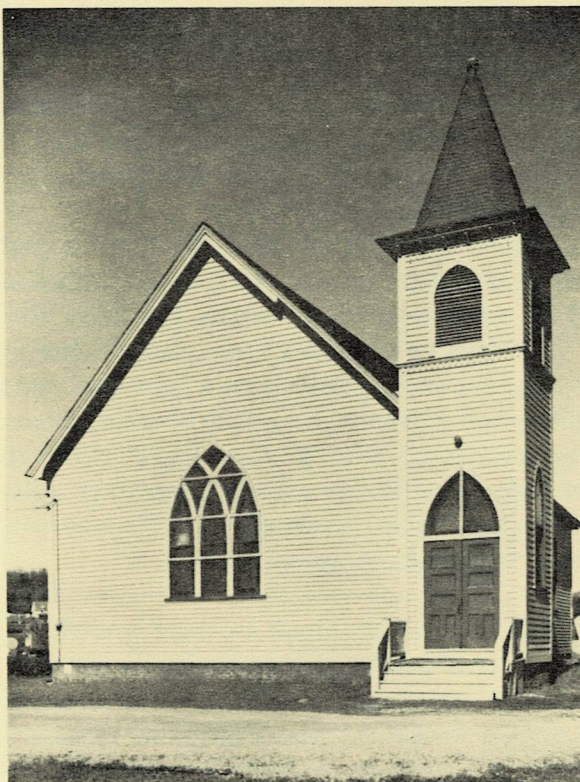
An independent French Catholic Church has become Protestant and its Pastor, Rev. A. E. Ribourg, and his 42 parishoners, have been formally received into the Baptist denomination. The 42 members were formerly commicants of the regular Roman Catholic parish here, but they withdrew from the parent church, which had 1100 persons two or three years ago as the result of differences with the Pastor, Rev. J. A. Compeau, whose successor, Rev. A. G. Brusseau is now in charge.

The dissenters built an independent church at a cost of \$3,000.00 and made the Rev. Father Ribourg, Pastor. Rev. Mr. Ribourg belonged to the Roman Catholic Church in France, but he became follower of the old Catholic movement on the continent of Europe. In Manchaug the Catholic ritual was continued, but recently the little parish accepted Protestant principles, largely through the medium of French missionaries. After an investigation by the Baptist authorities of the state denomination decided to accept the dessenters and yesterday they were baptized according to the doctrine of that church. Rev. Mr. Ribourg will continue as Pastor.

Manchaug which is a part of Sutton, is populated by French Canadians, most of whom are employed in the large cotton mills of the Manchaug Company.

REV. A. E. RIBOURG MARRIED

Pastor of Second Baptist Church, Manchaug
Manchaug, Mass., May 15 - Rev. A. E. Ribourg, Pastor of the Second Baptist Church of this village, who, with his congregation became Baptist some



French Baptist Church (1951)

weeks ago, having previously styled themselves an independent Catholic Church, is now married, according to a marriage certificate returned to the Town Clerk of Sutton. The latter official has received a marriage license which says the Rev. A. E. Riboury, 28, and Miss Mildred Reynolds, 19, were married last Monday by Rev. John M. Collins, Pastor of the First Baptist Church. The ceremony was not performed in Manchaug. The returns shows the place of marriage in Sutton. The bride is the daughter of Selectman C. T. Reynolds.

Rev. John M. Collins, Pastor of the First Baptist Church tendered his resignation to take effective August 1. Rev. Mr Riboury's friends state he is in Salem, Mass., studying rules and doctrines of the Baptist Church.

ROUND THE STOVE

WITH FRED L. BATCHELLER (1871 - 1964)

as told to Ben and Marie MacLaren

Years ago, in a more simple time, we listened to the story tellers. Thar warn't hardly no such as television. We recognized their talent, but sometimes grew impatient with the teller as advancing age increased the frequency of the telling. Would that we could go back just one time more for a day round the stove with Fred L. Batcheller.

The notes for these stories were taken in and about 1960.

Because of the restraints of space in this issue, the following is part 1 of 2 parts.



Fred L. Batcheller

To th Eight Lots School we larned spellin', readin', sipherin', grammer, ritin', and some history if it fit in with th' other. No special effort was givin to history, but if we was readin anyway th' teacher figured it may'ze well be

'bout history. Thar was hardly any history then compared to now bein we was short three - four wars and such. Th' girls larned to cook to home, so thar warn't no sence in havin' that kind'a class. Warn't no sports 'cuz our fathers expected us home for chores. School was like a privy; you went thar, did what t'was you needed, and went on with other things when you was done.

During recess we boys went up to th' dump behind Uncle Solomon Severy's barn. Ernest MacDonald (Dr David Hoyer now) lives thar now. Lets see, thar was George Freeland, Ed Welsh, Tim Cullina, — and me, a'course. Uncle Solomon had throwed out his old hey fork rope probably for bein' frayed, I suspect. Nobody throwed out a good one; 'specially Uncle Solomon; he was sure a saver; yes he was. Anyway, we dug it out figurin' we might jest have a need of it back to th' Eight Lots School whar we was scholars; — me'be a swing or th' like.

Wall, sah, woncha know? A need presented itself real quick. Thar was a two holer privy behind th' school house, and, just as we arrived, Kate Welsh went into it and shut th' door. We had a fair idea for what. Quick as scat we knowed with out tellin jest what t'was Satin had give us that rope for. We waited 'til Kate got settled and then commenced to go round and round that two holer with th' rope and tied it good and snug; — real good, we did. Kate knowed right off we was up to no good and told us of th' bad that waited for us if we didn't turn loose of what we had a notion to do. She even begged a bit. She was mad as hops when we tipped th' privy over; Kate n' all. My! didn't she holler! The teacher heard th' racket and come - a -runnin with th' switch she kept handy for just such a time and gave us boys what-for without sparin' us none. She made us stand th' privy up and take th' rope off so's Kate could get out.

Out she come with her jaw a-waggin'. You'da thought she was a bear that just backed into a bee hive. She grabbed up anything handy and went to work whailin' any body she come to; quilt or no.

That night I felt aful bad, and, after chores, walked clear down to Welsh's farm to make it right with Kate. I carried her some ginger snap cookies just fresh from th' oven. She smiled a bit which I was glad of. Her father smiled a bit, too, which releaved me a good deal, and then mentioned that I might otta learn to behave a bit more.

Some time later, whil'st to an Eight Lots School reunion, Kate told us that she was really glad of th' attention, but wish't that th' lime bucket hadn't spil't over onto her bloomers. They took a might of scrubbin.

Th' wurst Halloween prank we boys ever done was when I was 'bout sixteen. Old Squire Hovey had bought a brand spankin' new buggy. I don't think that he was a real squire, but that's what everyone called him; "Squire." He went clear to Lawrence, or there abouts, to th' factory

whar they made 'em and fetched it home. They'd of brung it to him, but th'cost was more. Squire Hovey warn't one for more cost than there was a need of. Well, sah, warn't he proud as a fresh turnip over that buggy; with proper right to be, too; t'was a dandy. But he should'a been more careful parkin' it on Halloween night. We boys snuck it out o' his shed and wheeled about some. We was about ready to go on to other things when it come to us that, with all of th' mischief about, some harm might come to Squire Hovey's buggy, and that would be a bad thing to happen to such a fine buggy. T'would certainly be a service to th' Squire if we was to put it upon th' town hall roof; there bein no harm probable thar. We took er all apart and wraped everything in burlap bags so's not to scratch anything. Then we hauled 'er up onto th' roof and put 'er back together.

T'was near light and chore time when we finished. Squire Hovey looked all over for his buggy. Later in th' day th' minister saw it on th' roof. He suggested that th' Squire should give th' Lord a try with some prayer and such. Goin' along with th' joke th' Squire throwed up his hands and eyes toward Heaven preparing to fun pray. There was his buggy; right before his eyes. Every one joked that th' Squire found his buggy and th' Lord found th' Squire, all at th' same time. Th' minister said that Squire Hovey got th' best of that deal. We all pitched in to get th' buggy down.

Thar warn't no switchin wurse then when th' teacher told Father that I had done this wrong or that. He'd look at me and say, "Bob," (He always called me Bob. T'warn't my name to any but to Father, but that's what he called me all th same.) "Bob, you shun't of." Then he'd look away, and say no more. That hurt more than any switchin.

T'only time I recall using a curse was when I told Father to "go to Shell Gas with th' S and th' Gas left out." I suspect t'was th'only time. We said no more 'bout it, but I knew he was displeased. I wish't I hadn't. Father was my best friend along with all th' rest of it.

Thar warn't always things to do at recess to th' Eight Lots School lest we drempt 'em up our selves. T'was a sucker brook to th' far side of the cranberry meadow behind the school. Th' state has since made a fish pond thar. T'was a mighty pretty place, 'specially in th' spring. Th' peepers were real heavy at night and th' big frogs were real grumpers. Thar was pussy willows to bring home to your mother, cat-nine-tails for makin torches, and skunk cabbage and jack-in-the-pulpits all about. Th' suckers were thicker 'n fleas on a bear's back. You could fill a barrel with 'em if you were of a mind to. Father put them in th' corn patch for fertilizer. We et some, too.

Well sah, — we boys went thar often jess ta mess around. This one day we brung a bucket o 'suckers back

to th' school with no real need in mind. Th' teacher's boots were standing in th' entry way. They seemed a fair place to store them suckers.

Thinking on it, I recollect th' teacher's name to be Miss Bixby. I remember her bein' pretty and younger than some of the scholars. Th' older boys were alus after her to go sparkin after class. I wish't that I was old enough to join in on th' fun, but warn't.

She was at her desk when we left for home, and we boys talked about it some on the way home. Th' next day she said nary a word 'bout th' matter, nor did she any day after that. I figure mischief ain't wuth th' doing if nobody gets upset. By gurry, ain't that th' way t'is?

Old age comes hard at times, but as long as you got two teeth, one pointin' south and t'uther north, and they both meet, you ain't got it t'all bad. Ain't no sense in worryin' up somethin that ain't thar at th' get go.

Grandfather told me of a man he knew whose weddin' was arranged without him ever meetin' th' bride. All he was told was that she was homely as sin, but had a wonderful singin' voice. When he met her for th' fust time on his weddin' day he looked her over real good and then said, "Sing, Mary, for God's sake, sing".

Most days have been pretty fair. Thar was some I'd druther not repeat, but they was probably there so's we'd know th' good ones when they came along.

Time ta worry 'bout milk spillin' is when it's still in th' pail. Once it's on th' floor let th' cat have at it and go on to th' next cow.

Every summer they'd be at least one day when I et too many green apples. They'd make me sicker' rin a hatter, but t'was hard not to. By gurry, they was sure toothsome.

We young folk favored horehound candy and parriffin gum sticks rapped in wax paper twisted at th' ends. You got a whole sack full for a nickle.

Folks say I don't look old 'cuz I don't limp none. Reason I don't appear to limp none is 'cause I limp th' same ta both sides.

Best thing ta do about dandyions in your lawn is ta linger a bit and study how beautiful they are. In season I al'as wear one in my lapel on Sunday so's to remember. T'would sure be a bad thing if they was all dug up. Ain't nawthin sweeta than dandyion greens in th' spring. My son-in-law, Harold Gibson, hated em sa bad he dug em all up and turned his lawn all brown. I sposed that's th' way he wanted it, so I never said nawthin 'bout it. They're nice enough to be th' national flower. I wonda why they ain't.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

August 2 - The Society met at 6 p.m. at the Eight Lots School House for their annual potluck supper. No speaker nor program was scheduled. Contents of the fund raising letter to the membership for replacing the heating system was discussed. A nominating committee was appointed to provide a roster of nominees to the Board of Directors for election at the October annual meeting.

September 6 - The Society met in the Manchaug Church at 8 p.m. with 29 persons present. It was announced that the Labor Day flea market was held September 5. A generous response from the membership for the heating system fund resulted in the total amount required to finance the installation of a forced hot air, oil fired system. **THANK YOU MEMBERS!!** The museum property identification, indexing, and cataloging ongoing activity under the supervision of Nora Pat Small, curator, is progressing on a weekly meeting schedule. The nominees for the board of directors were reported and the list will be published before the October annual meeting as required by the by laws. The speaker, Wayne Tupper, presented a discourse on Sutton citizen, General Boomer's Civil War career.

October 4 - The annual meeting of the Society met at the Manchaug Church with 18 members present. The following members were elected new members to fill the Board membership quota of 21 members. Those elected are; Janet Smith, Donna Rossio, Gary Dwinell, Barbara Weaver, Leona Dona, Daniel Griffith, Mary B. King, Malcolm Pearson, Scott Bennett, Albert Martin, and Nora Pat Small. The new heating system was installed in September and is operating efficiently. The museum will be open three days during the Blackstone Valley Heritage Homecoming Weekend featuring a special Town Library historical display of rare books and documents. The 1954 celebration film was shown.

November 1 - The Society met at the General Rufus Putnam Hall with 25 members present. A report was made of the clean-up and maintenance work being completed in the basement to create a more viable area. Sale of the three propane gas space heaters previously in use helped in covering expenses incurred with the new heating system. On the program was speaker Kay Sheldon, president of the Massachusetts Society of Geneologists whose subject was "Of Course I Remember Grandma". N.B.- At an October 11 Board of Directors meeting the following Society officers were elected; Malcolm Pearson, President; Benjamin MacLaren, Vice President; Janet Smith, Secretary; Elinor Hutchinson, Treasurer; Mary Arakelian, Assistant Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary; Mary B. King, Historian; Nora Pat Small, Curator; and Ruth Putnam, Assistant Curator.

December 6 - The Society met in the General Rufus Putnam Hall at 8 p.m. After a short business opening the annual auction commenced. As usual the occasion presented some hilarious moments to enjoy. The event raised \$286 for the treasury.

January 3 - The Society met in the General Rufus Putnam Hall but as the building was cold due to a non-delivery of fuel oil, the 23 members adjourned to the nearby Town Library. Appearing on the evening program was Margaret Carroll, president of the Millville Historical Society and chairperson of their Historical Commission. She illustrated with slides some unique episodes in their local history.

February 7 - The Society met at the General Rufus Putnam Hall at 8 p.m. Malcolm Pearson, past president for several years had submitted his resignation to a Board of Directors meeting January 24 with the provision to remain in office until a new president would be elected. A nominating committee was appointed for that purpose in a 7:30 p.m. Board of Directors meeting. The speaker for the membership meeting at 8 p.m. was Richard Kenary, retired president of the Millbury Credit Union, who related about early historical events in Millbury and Sutton.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Paul Brosnihan
Timothy Brosnihan

M/M Hagop H. Malkasion

James P. Griess

John Roposo

Elizabeth West

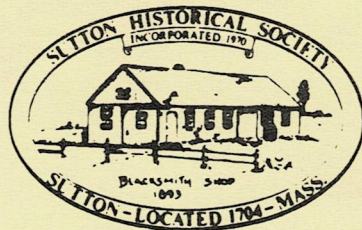
M/M John Rossio

IN MEMORIAM

Vartkas T. Bedrosian

Faith K. Hebert

Gladys R. Minor



Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Manchaug, MA 01526
Permit No. 1

General Rufus Putnam Hall
4 Uxbridge Road, Sutton, MA 01590