History of the French-Speaking Settlement in the Cottonwood Valley

ALBERTA PANTLE

PART TWO—CONCLUDED

MADAME GOST: FLORENCE MILLNER

SOMETIMES after 1870 Bernard Gost and his wife, Victoria, moved to a farm in Doyle township, Marion county. Both were natives of France but they came to Kansas from Massachusetts where they had lived for a short time. They did not stay on the farm long, however, and in January, 1874, Madame Gost started a millinery store in Florence, featuring the latest Paris fashions. The advertisement announcing the opening of her store listed a great variety of articles other than hats. She carried practically everything one would find in the present day ladies' ready-to-wear shops, a stock of clothing for children, together with socks, gloves, shirts and scarves for men. For a few weeks Mr. Gost did tailoring in the shop then we hear no more about him.

In 1876, Madame Gost sold her entire stock of goods to Gustave Caze but remained in the store as clerk. In April, 1878, she bought the store back and we learn that she “is now sole proprietor of the largest and most complete millinery in this [Marion] county and is selling goods at prices that are lower than the lowest.” She was in a new building of her own and her “French waiting room” was in order for all visitors who deigned to call upon her.

From that time until after 1890, Madame Gost was an important factor in the business life of Florence. In 1882, when she planned to erect a two-story building on her lots at the corner of Fifth and Main streets, the local newspaper stated that “Madame has more business tact and mania for improvements than half a dozen extra good men.” Madame Gost made trips to New York every fall and spring buying merchandise for the store. Before each trip she inserted a notice in the newspapers of Florence and Marion offering to give special consideration to any special orders that ladies of the community might wish to give her.

Madame Gost seems to have been a very successful business woman. When times were bad and money was scarce she often

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ran a notice in the paper stating that she would accept corn or other
produce in lieu of cash for merchandise bought from her.

On June 29, 1885, Madame Gost was married to James B. Crouch,
then editor of the Florence Herald, later editor of the Florence
Bulletin. Thereafter Mr. Crouch often referred to himself as a
Frenchman by marriage. During the time he owned the Bulletin,
news items about the French people occupied a prominent place
in his paper. After he left Florence, the French colony activities
were less frequently noted.

In March, 1892, J. B. Crouch sold the Florence Bulletin to Jay E.
House. He worked, for a short time, on a newspaper in El Dorado
then the Crouchcs moved to West Virginia, his native state. Mr.
Crouch published a newspaper there for seven years then came
back to Kansas. For a few months in 1900 he edited the Chase
County Courant, Cottonwood Falls, but was forced to give it up
because of ill health.

Mr. and Mrs. Crouch again left Kansas. On August 1, 1901,
the Marion County News Bulletin carried a short item to the effect
that J. B. Crouch and his wife had both been seriously injured when
the porch of their home at Rich Hill, Mo., had collapsed. On April
2, 1903, the same newspaper reprinted an article from the South-
west World, Guthrie, Okla., stating that, "J. B. Crouch has just re-
ceived his credentials from the district clerk of Marion county, Kan-
sas. He will soon appear before Judge Burford and enter into the
active practice of law. Mr. Crouch has ripe experience as a lawyer
being recognized among the leading legal lights of central Kansas.
Every case intrusted to his care will receive prompt attention."
The Bulletin added, "J. B. Crouch was editor and publisher of the
Bulletin up to 11 years ago. Since leaving Florence, Crouch has
traveled over considerable country and has had many ups and
downs of life. He seems to be now on the upgrade."

In addition to Madame Gost, there were several other French
people in business in Florence at various times. In 1879, there was
a first-class wagon maker in the person of Etienne Bliecq. He had
been sent to this country by the French government in 1876 to dem-
onstrate the art of wagon making at the centennial exposition at
Philadelphia. In February, 1879, E. Bliecq was established in
business at the manufacture of W. F. Aves at Third and Main streets.
Later he equipped a wagon works at another location. Associated
with him was another Frenchman by the name of Ernest Gendarme.
The greater part of their work was resetting tires and other repair
work but they did find time to make several very elegant buggies and
carriages in the short time they remained at Florence.

Petrus Guillen ran a billiard parlor in Florence for a number of
years. Part of the time he was located in the basement of the opera
house. In 1887, he moved to Arkansas City but later settled at
Osage City. He frequently visited in Florence for many years.

G. E. Baillod and M. A. Cuenod established a jewelry store in
Florence in 1885. Two years later they moved their store to Ar-
kanas City. Baillod was in business there for several years. The
Cuenods left Arkansas City and lived in Colorado for some time.
In 1889 they stopped in Florence to visit the Ginettes and were, at
that time, on their way back to France to live.

**The Tamiet Family**

During the years Madame Gost had her millinery store at
Florence, Marion Centre also had a French milliner. In 1874, the
Tamiet family, consisting of F. Tamiet, his wife, Elizabeth and
stepdaughter, Victoria Bataille, came to Marion Centre to live.
Stephen Marcou is given credit in the paper for inducing the family
to settle in Marion Centre.

In a short time the Tamiets had erected a building on Main street
and Madame Tamiet had opened a millinery shop. She, like
Madame Gost, seemed to stock a great variety of articles of wearing
apparel in addition to her hats. M. Tamiet ran a tailor shop in
the same building but he did not stay long. By 1880, Madame
Tamiet had married Peter Toomey, a carpenter from Pennsylvania.
Mrs. Toomey operated her store for a number of years. She
maintained a close relationship with the families in the French
colony east of Florence.

Victoria Bataille grew up to be a very beautiful and talented
young lady. She was an accomplished musician. She taught piano
for several years and always sang in all the concerts given by the
French people at Florence. On October 2, 1889, she was married
to Laurent DeBauge who lived near Reading in Lyon county where
there was a settlement of French people. They had a religious
ceremony at the Catholic church at Florence and a civil ceremony
that evening at the home of Judge Foote, probate judge of Marion
county. Following the latter service an elaborate wedding dinner
and reception was held at the Elgin Hotel at Marion. The guests
included many of the French people from that section of the country
as well as residents of Marion.

We know little of F. Tamiet after he left Marion. He came back
for a visit once or twice. Shortly after he left he was editing a French newspaper in California.

Francis Soyez: Santa Fe Trail Freighter

Francis Soyez moved to a farm in Grant township early in the 1870’s. He was born in Paris, France, August 10, 1818. His father served with the French army during the Napoleonic wars and for several years afterwards. When Francis was 16 his father advised him to come to America. Just when he came is not known, but it was quite early. He landed at New Orleans but eventually went to Missouri. For several years he worked as a freighter on the old Santa Fe trail, making many trips between present Kansas City and Santa Fe, N. M. In 1856 or 1857, he was married in Mora, N. M., to Frances Schlineger, a young girl from Alsace Lorraine. She had come to America with her parents in 1854. They lived in St. Louis for a year then traveled overland by way of the Santa Fe trail to Mora. After the Soyez’s were married they lived in New Mexico several months then moved to Missouri. About the close of the Civil War, in which Francis Soyez served for a short time, they came to Kansas. They lived near Topeka and Mr. Soyez worked as a mason on the statehouse. In 1872, they moved to Marion county and took a claim north and east of Florence. Francis Soyez died July 9, 1906, and his wife on June 17, 1913. They had a large family. Many of their descendants live in Marion county today and one of their children, Mrs. Emilie Lehmann, was living near the town of Marion until her death on February 25, 1951.

The Artistic Ginettes

Ernest Ginette was born in Paris, France, September 1, 1831. He was married to Camille Caroline Bouzenot on May 10, 1859. Mr. Ginette was engaged quite successfully in business in Paris until the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. At that time he sustained such heavy losses that he decided to bring his family to America. The Ginettes, with two of their sons, Gabriel and Ernest, settled on a 160-acre farm five miles northeast of Florence in 1873. The third son, Maurice, stayed in Paris to take advantage of a scholarship which had been given him. He came out to Kansas by himself two years later.

Charles Ginette, a nephew, came from France to make his home with his uncle’s family in 1876. He lived in or near Florence the remainder of his life but made several quite lengthy visits to France. He died April 8, 1928.
City born and bred, the Ginettes did not like farm life. After a few years on the farm, they moved into Florence. The boys, as well as the parents, were well educated and began working, when quite young, as bookkeepers and salesmen. One time Ernest acted as interpreter in a lawsuit involving two French families which was tried at Cottonwood Falls. He was highly praised by the presiding judge for his scholarly translation and interpretation during the trial. 33

Ernest Ginette, Sr., had considerable talent as a painter. Several times he made sketching tours over the state. In 1888 he made a very "natural and pleasant view of Mr. Firmin's farm and improvements in crayon." 34 The Bulletin commented that he had been devoting much time and study to painting the past year and his work exhibited a high degree of artistic ability.

The Ginette family contributed much to the musical life of Florence. Ernest Ginette, Sr., and Mrs. Ginette were in charge of the music at the Catholic church for many years.

In November, 1884, a group of the young men of Florence met at the Ginette home to organize a band which was called the Florence Brass Band. The elder Mr. Ginette was chosen as leader of the band and his son, Maurice, was elected president and treasurer of the group. This band was quite an active organization in Florence for a number of years.

Mrs. Camille Ginette was a cousin of M. Casimir-Perier who became president of France in 1891. She is remembered as a very charming woman and an accomplished pianist. The entire family took prominent parts in the musical entertainments which were customary at all of the Bastille day and other French celebrations.

Ernest Ginette, Sr., died after a short illness February 24, 1898. His widow survived him many years. She was almost totally blind for several years before her death December 29, 1914.

Maurice Ginette, the oldest of the sons, married Dora Cox of Atchison in 1893. They settled in Florence where he was cashier of the Marion County State Bank. He continued in the employ of the bank until his death September 24, 1925.

Gabriel and Ernest Ginette left Florence many years ago. Ernest eventually settled in Kansas City. Gabriel located in St. Louis, Ill., where he had an interest in a company which manufactured sashes, doors and blinds. For many years he was the leader of the Sixth

34. Ibid., February 9, 1888.
Illinois regiment band which has been described as “one of the crack musical organizations of the Sucker State.”

**The Mercets and the Lambels**

Two of the French families in the colony came to the Cottonwood valley after a residence of several years in other states. The first were the Mercets who came in 1873. August Mercet was born in northern France on April 8, 1841, the son of Julius and Julia Mercet. They left France when August was eight years of age and came to America, settling in Perry county, Missouri. August was married to Elizabeth Cerkie, a native of Switzerland, in June, 1861. He served with the Missouri troops during the Civil War and, about 1867, both father and son moved their families to Minnesota. They came to Kansas in 1873 and settled on a farm in Doyle township. After a few years on the farm they removed to Florence. Mrs. Julia Mercet died before 1880 and her husband on March 28, 1887. He was 81 years of age, a native of the department of Doubs, France.

August Mercet died July 4, 1884, leaving a family of six children. One daughter, Louisa, died the year previously. Mrs. Mercet was a kindly woman who raised not only her own large family but had to assume the care of several of her grandchildren who were left motherless at an early age. She died January 7, 1918.

Andre Lambel, the father of Mrs. Julius Mercet, was born in the village of Therondelle, department of Aveyron, France, May 20, 1847. He served through the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 and 1871 and in March, 1872, he went to Winnipeg, Canada. On September 28, 1873, he was married to Marguerite Mager at St. Boniface, Manitoba. The new Mrs. Lambel was born in Metz, province of Lorraine, on October 14, 1854, and had come to Canada in 1872. After their marriage the Lambels took a timber claim at Pembina, Dakota territory, and lived there until they moved to Kansas in March, 1879. They homesteaded a farm three or four miles east of Cedar Point. During the latter part of 1895, Andre Lambel

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35. Ibid., August 26, 1892.

36. Three of the Mercet children married into French families. Josephine, the oldest daughter, married Joseph B. Rossillon, and Julia Mercet married Francis Rossillon. The Rossillons, Joseph, his wife, Mary Perrier Rossillon, and the two boys mentioned, came from Sevoy, France, to America in 1873. Another son, Alphonse, was born after they came to Kansas. They settled near Madison, Kan., and lived there until 1877 when they moved to Rock Creek where the parents died. The Rossillon boys came back to Lyon county and were frequent visitors at Florence. Francis Rossillon and his family lived east of Florence from 1880 to 1885. Later they moved to California where some of the family still live.

Julius Mercet was married first to Mary Fisher who died within a year of her marriage. He was married to Caroline Lambel on October 11, 1892. They lived in or near Florence until his death October 16, 1897. Adeline Mercet married Francis Green. Alma married William G. King in California in 1887. They both died young as did Mrs. Josephine Rossillon. The younger son, Emil, married Grace Edna Wright. He and his wife died many years ago.
decided that a warmer climate would be beneficial to his health and prepared to move south. At this time certain companies in the Southern states were sending out quantities of boom literature accompanied by rosate letters describing the cheap lands and the abundant crops to be grown thereon. Having no doubt that he could find a farm to his liking, Mr. Lambel sold his livestock and farm implements and rented his farm for three years. He went south to find a place to locate. He took his time and investigated farms in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and several other southern states. There was plenty of cheap land but he found that it was also low in fertility. Nothing looked so good to him as his farm in the Cottonwood valley so he came home. He paid his renter $150 to break the contract and, in a short time, was established on his own farm again. Mr. Lambel estimated that the experience had cost him over a thousand dollars.

In 1908 the Lambels retired and moved into Florence. In 1907 Mrs. Lambel made a trip to France to visit her parents and other relatives and in 1909 both she and Mr. Lambel went to France. Mrs. Lambel died December 13, 1925, and her husband on January 9, 1941, at the age of 93 years. They had four children, Caroline, who married Julius Mercet; Andrew J., who married Amy Crawford; Anna May, who married Albert R. Kruse, and Paul. Paul lived in California for many years but the others lived near Florence and Cedar Point.

Louis Nicholas Mager, a younger brother of Marguerite Lambel, also came to America but at a much later date. He lived at Pembina, N. Dak., the former home of the Lambels, for 18 years then, in 1900, he moved into Florence where he lived with his sister’s family. A few years after Louis Mager came to the United States, he returned to France for a visit. While he was there he was impressed into the army and forced to serve his military duties which he had missed by coming to America. He died at Emporia December 29, 1911.

THE INGENIOUS MR. PERAULT

With few exceptions the French settlers in the valley were thrifty, hardworking farmers who, although they were handicapped by a difference in language and background, got along well with their neighbors of other nationalities. One of the exceptions was a young man by the name of Perault. He devised an ingenious scheme for making an easy living but it didn’t work out exactly as he had planned.

At this time Marion county, being largely crop land, had a herd law requiring anyone who had cattle to keep them fenced in. Chase county, stock country, allowed the farmers to let their herds roam at will. Shortly before 1882, Perault settled on a farm in eastern Marion county just across the Chase county line. He built extensive corrals surrounded with stone walls from 18 to 24 inches thick. The farm consisted of 40 acres of gravel, situated on a high bluff over the Cottonwood river. On the east line he planted a few rows of sod corn and pumpkins, as a bait to the cattle on the Chase county range.

According to the Marion Record for March 22, 1889:

These cattle often tasted of the forbidden fruit and were, in consequence, taken up by his Lordship, J. Perault. It is claimed that oftentimes they were driven through this field to the corrals by Perault in order to obtain damages for destruction of crops. This procedure continued for some time, tribute being exacted by the Frenchman. The price asked varied according to the extent of the damage claimed.

As time went on, the Frenchman grew more and more abusive. In June, 1882, he shot a Mr. Seaman who was seeking to recover some horses which Perault had taken up. On August 7, one of his neighbors missed two of his cows and found them in Perault’s corral. Perault demanded $10 for the release of the cattle. He was offered 50 cents a head. Perault became angry and used threatening language. Finally arrangements were made with Mrs. Perault for the release of the cows for one dollar. The neighbor had no money with him so he had to go home to get it. When he returned he brought his hired man with him. While the hired man was paying Mrs. Perault the sum agreed on, the neighbor went out to the corral for his cows. When he opened the gate Perault, who was standing by the wall, struck him on the head with a club (some called it a stick) from the effects of which he would have fallen to the ground but for a barrel across which he fell. As Perault was raising the club to repeat the blow the hired man fired at him, the ball striking Perault in the hip. A few days afterward, Perault died of blood poisoning.

Immediately after the shooting the two men surrendered themselves to the authorities and, a few weeks later, a preliminary examination was held and they were discharged, the examination showing clearly that the killing was self-defense. Normally this would have been the end of the affair but the case was revived seven years later and the two men were indicted. The hired man was tried and acquitted and the other case dismissed.
The only other Frenchman I have heard of who had any unorthodox plans for earning a livelihood was one who came much later. On the way to America he had an opportunity to buy a Scotch bagpipe. Thinking that he could stand on the street corners and play his bagpipe if he couldn't make a living farming, he bought it. He proved to be a very good farmer so he didn't need the bagpipe.

**THE COMTE DE PINGRE**

With the possible exception of Louis Ravenet, whose noble birth is largely a matter of hearsay, the early settlers in the valley were farmers and tradesmen of the middle classes of France and Belgium. They came to America because of their belief in a democratic form of government and a desire to better their economic and social condition. In 1877, a Frenchman of another class came. He was Adrien Thimotheon Victor, Comte de Pingre de Guimicourt. The manner of his coming and the reason for his traveling to Kansas are best described in an article which appeared in the Kansas City (Mo.) Times for January 13, 1877:

On Thursday morning there arrived in this city on the Missouri Pacific train a strange looking individual and three dogs. The stranger was a foreigner of very distinctive appearance, and seemed to be at a loss where to go and what to do with his dogs. He wore a beard, grizzled and grey, falling in luxuriant profusion upon a massive breast, which gave to the owner a bearing which stamped him at once with military antecedents. Upon his left breast he wore several ribbons, all of the tri-color of La Belle France, and in the center of all was noticed the renowned cross of the "Legion of Honor." While the stranger was chattering away in his French patois to his dogs, endeavoring to keep them together, he was noticed by Count Smissen, the agent of the Santa Fe road, who approached him, and accosted him in German, then in French. The stranger was at home in a minute, and entered into conversation at once. He appeared to be delighted to find some one to converse with and who could assist him in his embarrassing troubles. His troubles were as follows:

His name is Count de Paingrie, and he is Colonel of the famous second regiment of Chasseurs d'Afrique, one of Napoleon's favorite regiments. His only son is now a resident of Florence, Kansas, and the veteran soldier was on his way to visit him on a six-months' leave of absence. The dogs he had with him were full-blooded hounds, raised by himself in Algeria, and are the offspring of a pet dog which his son (now a Kansas granger) loved very much when a boy at the garrison at Toulon. The old man thought that he could not bring his pet boy a better present than these three dogs, which he had cared for and attended all the way from Marseilles to Southampton, and from thence to New York, and from there to Kansas City. It was quite refreshing to see the noble Frenchman rejoice in the meeting of one man who could speak his language and could help him with his dogs. He told of his history which dated back to the coup d'état of 1851, and the old man puffed out perfect volumes of smoke...
while he talked of the campaign he made with his regiment with Marshals St. Armand and Canrobert in the Crimea. His ideal appeared to be the young man at Florence, Kansas, who left Paris at the overthrow of the empire in 1870 and fled to escape the Commune. He says he wants his boy to come back to France, but cannot induce him to do so. So, finding his boy so decided in his desire to stay in America, he had concluded to come and see him and bring him a present of three full-blooded Algerian hounds. The old French Colonel was every inch of a soldier in appearance. He was a perfect type of the old Imperial Guard, and seemed to be a fish out of water—so to speak—and found no consolation except in his pipe and conversation with his imported dogs. The Count de Paimrie was escorted to the proper train by Mr. Smissen, and started west to find his lost boy on the prairies of Kansas.

Count de Pingre was born April 14, 1827, so he was not as old as this entertaining account would lead one to believe. The family de Pingre, originating in Picardy, may be traced back to very ancient times. Through a series of distinguished marriages they became owners of a large number of lordship-estates. Among these estates was that of Guimicourt which designated the branch of the family to which Count Victor de Pingre belonged. Various members of this distinguished family were noteworthy for their military services as well as services in the court and in the church. The name figures among those of the founders of the abbey of Premy in 1180. For a long time the nuns of Premy had to pray for the souls of Florent de Pingre and his wife, Jeanne de Lavin, and for that of their daughter, Jeanne de Pingre, who had been a nun of that abbey.

In the year 1476 Arnault de Pingre lost his life in the slaughter of Cambrai while defending this place which belonged to the Duke of Burgundy against the forces of King Louis XI. From this time on, the family split into two factions, those who were loyal to the king and those whose sympathies were with the Arnault branch.

Presumably the count belonged to the former because it was to his father, Adrien Pierre Paul, Comte de Pingre de Guimicourt, that King Louis XVIII entrusted all his personal papers during the “Hundred Days” in 1815. The count’s mother was Louise de Grouches de Griveauval. He had only one sister, Adrienne, who married Philippe d’Entend, attorney-general during the reign of Louis Philip.

Count de Pingre was graduated at an early age from St. Cyr, the West Point of France. During the insurrection of 1848 he served as a sub-lieutenant in the national guard. On July 21, 1848, he received a promotion and was decorated with the Chevalier de la Legion d’honneur. Count de Pingre received many other decorations during his long military career which included services in
the Crimean war, the Franco-Prussian war, and the French campaigns in North Africa.

Count de Pingre was married to Marie Clara Victorine Adele de Lagrene on July 24, 1854, in Arry, department de la Somme. They had four children, two daughters who married and remained in France, one son who died young, and Louis de Pingre who came to America. The mother died some time before 1877.38

No one seems to remember much about Louis de Pingre. Mrs. Alphonse Bichet used to tell about the day he appeared at their door a short time after she was married. Until that time no one knew he was in the country. He always dressed in cowboy attire and his ambition was to be a ranch owner and stockman. In 1881, he declared his intention to become a citizen but he did not stay in Chase county long enough to get his final papers. Some years after Louis left the colony he was living in Lake Charles, La., where he was running a ferry across the lake. He came back to Florence for a short time when his father died in 1892 but never came back to live.

Count de Pingre soon decided to stay in Kansas. He bought a farm on Martin creek northwest of Cedar Point. He and his son stayed at the Pike Hotel in Florence while the house was being built. On November 13, 1877, the father was married to Mlle. Ernestine Marie de Lobel, a young French woman who had come out to Kansas shortly before the date of the wedding. They were married at the home of Mrs. Tamiet in Marion Centre.

Count de Pingre and his wife lived on the farm until 1884 when they moved into Florence, having purchased the Hiram Pike residence. Just before they moved they had a public sale. Among the items listed was a herd of purebred cattle. Despite the fact that he must have lived a far different life in France, Count de Pingre apparently adjusted himself quite well in his new home. He maintained his military bearing and aristocratic manner to the end but he made many friends in Florence and seemed always ready to help out in any good cause. One time he donated some of his own handiwork to sell at a bazaar at one of the Protestant churches in town although he was a regular communicant at the Catholic church. There was only one time at which he could not enter whole heartedly into the social life of the French colony. That was on July 14 when his French Republican friends celebrated the fall of the Bastille.

38. Details of the family background and early life of the Count de Pingre were supplied by a researcher of the office de documentation of the Bibliotheque National, Paris, France.
The de Pingre home must have been filled to overflowing with beautiful furniture and family heirlooms. In 1884, an art loan exhibition was held in Florence. The greater part of the exhibit consisted of articles lent by the count and his wife. They included handmade black lace 150 years old, handmade white lace 200 years old, a French fan beautifully painted and inlaid with jewels, a violin 184 years old, two elegantly hand-carved candlesticks, a sabre used by a French nobleman one hundred years before, an idol four hundred years old and other articles, both costly and antique. Madame Cost and the Ginettes also contributed quite a number of interesting items for the exhibition.

Some of the de Pingre furniture is still in Florence. Mrs. Amelia Ullman has a chair elaborately carved and upholstered in what was once very beautiful brocade. Count de Pingre's clock which was made in France about 1750 is now in the possession of a Florence family.

The count stored his collection of arms in the loft of his barn. Some of the little boys in town learned of its existence and "playing soldier" became a favorite pastime. As soon as a new member was added to the gang he was taken to the de Pingre barn and outfitted with swords and pistols. Eventually the count discovered that his precious collection of firearms was diminishing. The countess interviewed Mrs. Bichet and the mothers of some of the other boys whom they suspected of "borrowing" the weapons. The arms were promptly restored and a certain group of small boys "ate off the mantel" for several days.

The de Pingre's entertained many guests in their home and very often visited friends in Reading, Emporia or Kansas City. The Debauges of Reading and the Jean Perriers of Emporia visited them quite frequently. In September, 1888, Madam de Medou, a celebrated Italian pianist, who was on her way to Newton to give a "Soirée Musicale," stopped to see her old friends, the de Pingres. Another time, M. Jules Ruleaux, consul-general for Belgium in the United States, came to Florence to consult with Count de Pingre concerning the feasibility of sending colonists from overcrowded Belgium to the Cottonwood valley.

Madame de Pingre was an accomplished pianist and very frequently played in public. The only time there is any mention of her taking part in a Bastille day concert was in 1889. At that time the count was president of the Union Francaise and both he and the countess took a prominent part in the centennial celebration of that
year. Probably by this time the count had forgotten his loyalist tendencies to a large extent.

Count de Pingre died November 20, 1892, and was buried in Mt. Calvary cemetery west of Florence. His tombstone bears the simple inscription, “Victor de Pingre, 1827-1892.”

The count bequeathed all his family letters, papers, and books from his library to his son, Louis. Louis also received his father’s pistols, swords and other arms. The family portraits were divided equally among his three children, Louis, Adrienne de St. Victor and Yolande Chenolt. The remainder of his estate was willed to his wife. At one time he is reputed to have been quite wealthy but had apparently lost his money before he came to America.39

Mrs. Marie de Pingre was married to Dr. J. Hammond Lovatt 40 on September 29, 1893. After his death in November, 1901, she made a visit to France. She returned to Florence to dispose of her property and went back to France to live in less than a year after the doctor’s death.

THE FAGARD FAMILY

The story of the Fagard family may best be told in the words of Paul Fagard, of Emporia, who was a boy of 11 when he came to Kansas.

“Auguste Fagard, his wife Virgina, two children, Virginia 10, Auguste 8 years old, sold their home in Lassigny, France, to emigrate to the United States in 1848. They sailed from LeHavre en route to some place in Tennesse where they intended to purchase a farm to engage in farming. Unfortunately cholera broke out on board the vessel a few days after sailing. Over 100 passengers contracted the disease and died, my grandfather among them. He was buried at sea.

When they arrived at New Orleans the disease had disappeared. They were allowed to land without being quarantined so my grandmother decided to go on to Tennessee. Arriving at Louisville, Ky., where they had to lay over for a few days grandmother was contacted by some French people residing there and persuaded to try to make a home. She remained a little more than two years, her children attended the schools and learned the English language. Then she decided to return to France.

On the vessel going over she met a business man by the name of Mercier, a maker of artificial flowers. He persuaded her to apprentice her son to him. So she and her daughter proceeded to Lassigny, my father was left in Paris.

39. Count de Pingre’s will is on file in the office of the probate judge of Marion county.
40. Dr. J. Hammond Lovatt was born in Manchester, England, in 1841. He studied surgery and practiced in England for a number of years. He was a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and various other British medical societies. After the death of his first wife in 1879, Dr. Lovatt accepted an appointment as surgeon in the British army and served in India, Africa and Australia. He retired from the army and came to America in 1885. For a time he was chief surgeon in the City Hospital in St. Louis, but his health had been so impaired by his army service that he was forced to give it up. He came to Florence in 1887 and bought the Sherwood drug store. Later he practiced medicine in Florence. He is remembered there as a well-educated and well-read man and an accomplished musician.
with this M. Mercier. He remained and worked for this man until 1861 when he decided to go to Africa. He resided in Algeria somewhat over two years, contracted the malaria fever and became blind. In 1863 he returned to France, some months later he regained his sight to a great extent but always had difficulty guiding himself after dark. He served in the national guard in the war of 1870. He and his family were besieged in Paris in 1870 and 1871. Seeing the devastation and horrors of war he decided to move back to the United States. In 1881, he sold the little home he owned in Bois de Colombes, a suburb of Paris, and he and his family sailed on the French line S. S. Labrador, December 30, 1881. They were five, the father Auguste Fagard; mother Pauline Cailliard Fagard, three boys, Auguste aged 14, Paul 11 and Eugene 5 years old. Landed in New York January 14, 1882. After the usual examination by the immigrant officers we were allowed to proceed to Kansas. We landed in Florence January 24, 1882. My father had been directed to Kansas by a Mr. Reverend, a neighbor of ours, who owned land in Marion county. His oldest son was farming that land.

Soon after we had settled in Florence a Mr. Horner opened up a quarry, having secured a contract from the Santa Fe Railroad to ballast the tracks from Kansas City to the Colorado line. We (my father and me) worked in this quarry for two years when for some unknown cause the shutting down of this quarry caused the town to have a depression. There were no other industries except the Santa Fe which employed a few men.

Mrs. Fagard died in January, 1884. In May of that year, Auguste Fagard took his three boys and settled on a farm in Chase county. Andre Lambel had induced him to file on a homestead of upland. It was necessary for Mr. Fagard to amend his first filing because part of the tract he desired had been taken by Louis Duehn as a timber claim. The land office approved his amended filing but it was discovered, after having the land surveyed, that an Amos Varner had built a small cabin on one corner of the land and was justified in claiming the quarter section of land on which the cabin was located. Varner later did file suit against Mr. Fagard. The case was not settled for 12 years. Finally in 1896 the land was awarded by the court to Auguste Fagard but, in the meantime, the expense of hiring lawyers and paying the other expenses incidental to the case had worked a great hardship on the family.

In 1907, Auguste Fagard sold out and he and his son, Eugene, moved to Whitechurch, Mo. They farmed there until 1920 when they died within a week of each other during the influenza epidemic.

Auguste Fagard, Jr., never married. He died in 1925 and is buried in the Cedar Point cemetery. Paul Fagard was married to Bertha Lalouette, daughter of Joseph and Marie (Marchal) Lalouette, on June 3, 1900. She died June 20, 1909, leaving one daughter, Mignon. Paul Fagard is now living at Emporia and is one of the few remaining native Frenchmen of the old colony.
Settlers From Belgium

The colony was composed almost entirely of French people until after 1870. The only Belgian to make a permanent settlement before that time was Alexander Louis. By 1875, several Belgian families had settled in Doyle township. The census for that year lists the following: Alfred de Smet, Ivan Balcaen, Théophile and Marius Philibert and their families, Francis Goffinet and his wife, Victoria, and a relative of hers, Henry Maillot. Of this group only Ivan Balcaen and the Goffinets stayed to make permanent homes. The two Philibert families left within a few years and settled elsewhere in Kansas. Alfred de Smet left before 1880. While he was there Ivan Balcaen worked for him. One time while he was working for de Smet the two got into an argument over wages. The case was brought to trial in Marion Centre and the newspaper there reported that practically the entire French population accompanied them for the trial. By this time the people of Marion Centre had become accustomed to hearing German on the streets but a group of Frenchmen speaking their native language never failed to amuse them. The newspaper commented on their “peculiar talk.”

After Alfred de Smet moved away, Ivan Balcaen worked for one valley farmer and then another until he finally settled on his own farm up Bruno creek in Grant township. In 1890, he was married to Laura Huguenin, the daughter of Henry and Adèle Huguenin who had come from Switzerland a few years before. Ivan Balcaen died in 1903, and his widow married Henry D. Soper. She lived at Florence until her death June 19, 1934.

The Goffinets also lived in Grant township. Victoria Goffinet was a Maillet, probably the daughter of Henry Maillet who was living with them in 1875. They had several children. Some of the family still live near Florence.

Francis Goffinet returned to Belgium to live about 1907. At the time of the first World War Alphonse Bichet received a letter from a man in a small French village stating that a Francis Goffinet had escaped from Belgium into France ahead of the German army. He had asked the Frenchman to get in touch with Mr. Bichet in the hope that he could help him get to America. This was not possible and nothing further was heard about him. Mr. Goffinet was nearly 80 years of age at this time. Mrs. Victoria Goffinet died at the home of her son, Ellis, in Lubbeck, Tex., in March, 1929.

The Rensen family came to Florence in 1876. The family consisted of Joseph Rensen; his wife, Petronile; his son, Joseph, Jr., and
three daughters, Frances, Josephine and Matilda. They had arrived in the United States at Portland, Maine, February 15, 1871, and had lived in Chicago before coming to Kansas. When they came to Florence they bought a farm on Martin creek. Here Joseph Rensen died May 3, 1885, at the age of 56. Mrs. Rensen lived on the home farm until her death January 25, 1914.

Joseph Rensen, Jr., was born at Liege, Belgium, December 8, 1859. He lived on a farm at Florence until his death November 18, 1931. In January, 1891, he was married to Augusta Gaymay, a French girl whose family had come to Kansas late in the 1880's. The Gaymays lived at Florence for a short time but eventually settled in Wichita county. The Joseph Rensens had two daughters, Alice and Mrs. Oscar Branson who live near Florence, and a son, Albert, who died in 1938. Mrs. Augusta Rensen died August 13, 1949.

Frances Rensen, daughter of Joseph Rensen, Sr., married Joseph Martinot. He was the son of Rosalie Dumartinot who had married Peter Martin. Frances Martinot lived less than a year after her marriage. On August 31, 1878, Joseph Martinot married Josephine Rensen, a sister of his first wife. Mrs. Martinot is still living at Florence, one of the few remaining members of the French colony born in Europe. She frequently visits at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Louise Crawford, near Clements. One day during the summer of 1949, she came to Clements by bus from her home in Florence. She waited for an hour or so at the post office for some one who was going by her daughter's house a mile and a half away. When they did not come she set out to walk there. The writer overtook her after she had walked over a mile. This 87-year-old woman, her bundle of clothes in her hand, trudging along the dusty road, seemed to typify all the strength and stamina of these foreign pioneer women who settled in the French colony. Theirs was not an easy life. Many of them helped their husbands in the fields. They did all their own housework and raised large families. Tied down at home, they had little opportunity to meet other people or adjust themselves to their new environment. These women must have been lonely, and yet, with few exceptions, none of them regretted that they had come to America to live.

Joseph Martinot was for many years before his death, October 13, 1932, the oldest of the pioneer settlers in Marion county. As early as 1924 he was presented with a bouquet at the old settlers' picnic in Marion as the oldest person in point of residence in the county.

Matilda Rensen, the youngest of the Rensen children, married
H. J. Reverend, making the fourth of this Belgian family to marry French members of the colony.

Henry Julius Reverend, or Jules as he was usually called, was born in New York City, October 11, 1859. In 1873 he came with his father, Henry Reverend, to the French settlement. They took up a timber claim four miles east of Florence in Doyle township. After four months in Kansas they left and went to Paris, France, the father's native city. The family established there, Jules was placed in school.

In 1879, however, he returned to America and settled on the old homestead. On December 15, 1884, he was married to Matilda Rensen. Although the elder Mr. Reverend never returned to Kansas to live he did make several extended visits with his son and family and it was through his influence that several of the French families came to Florence to settle when they decided to come to America.

About 1902 Mr. Reverend moved his family into town. There were two children, Henry and Amelia Fanny. In 1904 Jules Reverend's father died in Paris leaving quite a large estate. It was necessary for the Reverends to go to Paris. The whole family went and stayed for several months.

After Amelia was graduated from high school in 1905, her mother took her to Kansas City, Mo., where she studied violin and piano for several years. Mr. Reverend stayed in Florence for some time looking after business interests but finally joined his family in residence there. He taught French in the manual training high school for several terms then engaged in the real estate business with John Beymer, a former Florence resident. He was very active in the Alliance Francaise of Kansas City, serving as its president for one or two years.

Jules Reverend was a colorful figure in the business life of Florence. He was instrumental in organizing the Florence State Bank and in securing an ice house for the city when it was badly needed. He bought the Mastin lumber yard in 1907 and ran it for several years. After the family returned from Kansas City to live in Florence he invested quite heavily in real estate and, at one time, owned several business buildings on Main street. In 1923 he helped organize the Florence Chamber of Commerce and was elected its first president. Mr. Reverend died May 13, 1942, his wife having died several years previously on December 16, 1931.41

41. Amelia Fanny Reverend taught music in Kansas City until the fall of 1913 when she went abroad and studied for a year in Berlin under Alexander Fliedermann.

On August 24, 1914, she was married to Bernard Ullman at Pittsburgh, Pa. Four years later Mr. Ullman died and she was left with two small children, Gilbert and Robert. A
The Lalouette brothers, August and Joseph, were born at Geronville, Belgium. When August was 16 years of age he went to Paris, France, where he worked for 12 years. In 1867, he and his brother, Joseph, came to the United States. They arrived in New Orleans and found that city in the throes of a yellow fever epidemic. The young men worked their way to New York where August served for eight years as the head waiter in a large hotel.

On March 25, 1873, he was married to Leonie Marchal, a young French girl. Three years later they came to Kansas and settled on a farm east of Florence. Joseph Lalouette married Marie Marchal, a sister of Leonie. They came to Florence at the same time. There is a story in the family that one of the brothers wanted to settle in Virginia. The other thought they would have more chance for success in the newer west so both came to Kansas.

A short time after they settled at Florence, August Lalouette and his wife lost their two small daughters, Augustine, five, and Elvirie, three years of age. They died within a week of diptheria and are buried in the cemetery at Cedar Point.

The Lalouettes came to Kansas when times were very hard. They had never lived on farms before and many times they actually did not know how to go about their work. Their wives, however, knew a bit more about farm life so they worked with their husbands in the fields until the farm chores became a bit easier.

In spite of early hardships, both August and Joseph Lalouette became successful farmers and August, in particular, accumulated large land holdings in addition to his original homestead. Mrs. Leonie Lalouette was an invalid for many years before her death March 17, 1929. August Lalouette died December 4, 1923.

August and Leonie Lalouette had two sons, in addition to the two girls who died in childhood. Leon, born in 1879, was married October 6, 1913, to Anna Margaret Carpenter, daughter of Jerome Carpenter. He lived near Florence until his death July 15, 1945. The other son, Ernest, lives east of Florence on the home place. On October 24, 1905, he was married to Cecilia Soyez. Mrs. Lalouette is the granddaughter of two pioneer settlers of the old colony. Her father, J. E. Soyez, was French, the son of Francis daughter, Bernadine, was born February 20, 1919, four months after her father’s death. Mrs. Ullman brought her family to Florence and has since lived there.

Amelia Ullman purchased the Horner building in 1919. At that time it was arranged for a restaurant on the first floor and office rooms on the second. She and her father remodeled it into a hotel and operated it under the name of the Horner Hotel until 1927. Henry Revere, Mrs. Ullman’s brother, ran it for several years after this date.

After leaving the hotel, Mrs. Ullman established a music studio in which she taught very successfully for a number of years. An accomplished musician, she contributed much to the cultural development of Florence.
Soyez, and her mother, Mary Constance Rosiere, was the daughter of Felix Rosiere who came to Kansas from Belgium about 1880.

The Ernest Lalouette home is a treasure store of relics of pioneer days. Among the interesting articles is a hand-carved rosary brought to America by the Rosiere family and prayer books formerly used by both her father’s and mother’s people. Mrs. Lalouette also has costumes and jewelry once worn by the women of her family and those of Mr. Lalouette’s family. One of the dresses dates back to 1860. It belonged to Mrs. Frances Soyzez, her grandmother. Simply made, the dress is of black material. The most interesting part of it is the pocket. It is set inside the skirt and is over 12 inches in depth. This pocket would hold the baby’s bottle, a change of clothes for him, and anything else the pioneer mother might need when she went visiting for the day.

Mrs. Lalouette also has the wedding outfit made and worn by her husband’s aunt, Berthe Marchal, when she was married to Charles Rassat on January 9, 1887.

Berthe Marchal, the sister of Mrs. August and Mrs. Joseph Lalouette, came to Florence in 1886. She came directly from Paris where she had been working for several years in various millinery and dressmaking establishments. Her father, Nicholas Louis Marchal, and his wife came about this time to make a home near their daughters.

Berthe decided to locate in Florence and bought out the millinery stock of a Mrs. Bardwell. She was a dressmaker of unusual skill. The wedding outfit spoken of before included a two-piece dress of sheer black wool material. The color is as true today as it must have been when the dress was made although black very often turns rusty or green as it ages. The boa which reaches to the hem of the dress was made of black net with yards and yards of narrow satin ribbon sewed on it. On the collar of the boa the ribbon was arranged in such a way that it very closely resembles Persian lamb fur. It must have taken many hours of work. Berthe Marchal made a trip or two to New York to buy stock in the short time she remained in Florence so her shop must have been successful. In November, 1887, she announced her intention of closing out the business, and early in 1888 she and her husband, Charles Rassat, moved to Trinidad, Colo. After she went to Colorado Mrs. Rassat was the dressmaker in the Bee-Hive, a dry goods store owned by Henry Klein. Later, after Mr. Rassat’s death, she married Mr. Klein and they
Mrs. Ernest Ginette, Sr.  
(1840-1914)

The Countess de Pingre  
(Later Mrs. J. Hammond Lovatt)

→
July 4, 1884
Bastille Day Celebration Held in Barker's Park, North of Florence.
operated the store successfully for a great many years. Berthe Klein died April 1, 1943, at the age of 76 years.

Mrs. Klein was an artist of considerable talent. During her 50 years as a business woman she found time to paint a number of pictures. Mrs. Ernest Lalouette has several of these paintings in her home.

Joseph Lalouette and his wife, Marie Marchal, had four children, Bertha, married Paul Fagard; Jane, married John Johnson; Helen died unmarried at the age of 22 years, and Marius. Marius married Edna Cochran, a niece of Mrs. Alphonse Bichet. He lives at Hartford, Kan., at the present time. Joseph Lalouette died in 1896. His widow lived at the home of her son-in-law, Paul Fagard, for many years. After her daughter's untimely death in 1909, Mrs. Lalouette took over the care of her granddaughter, Mignon Fagard. She died in Emporia in 1922.

A third Lalouette brother, Christome, came to this country about 1900. He, too, had gone to Paris at an early age and lived there for many years. He served with the French army in the Franco-Prussian war and was decorated for valor during the campaign. After he came to Florence he lived with relatives until his death in September, 1928.

Three Rosiere brothers, Felix, August and Henry, came from the town of Rosiere, Belgium, between 1876 and 1879 and settled on farms north and east of Florence. Henry stayed for only a few years and then moved to Oklahoma where some of his family are still living.

Felix Rosiere was the oldest of the three brothers. He was married about 1880 to Frances Delforge of Luxemburg, Belgium. They had quite a large family when they came to Kansas and one or two children were born in this country. Felix Rosiere died February 10, 1901, and his wife on August 25, 1914. Two of his children are still living, Felix, of Chula Vista, Cal., and August, of Denver, Colo. Many of the descendants of this couple live near Florence and Marion.

August Rosiere was much younger than his brother. His wife was Marie Leotine Degai, daughter of Hubert and Catherine Degai who lived in the French colony. The parents were quite elderly when they came to Kansas and they died many years ago. Mrs. August Rosiere died about 1909 and her husband died in October, 1920. They had five children who were living at the time of the
father’s death. They were Elvirie, Leopold, Eugene, Joseph and Mary.

The Herzets were about the last of the Belgians to settle permanently in the colony. The family, arriving in Florence June 14, 1886, consisted of Mrs. Theresa Herzet and her four children, Robert and Charlotte Thomas and Joseph and August Herzet.

Theresa Counet Herzet was born April 5, 1843, at Liege, Belgium. She was graduated from a normal high school and taught school for three years before her marriage to Charles Thomas in 1864. They lived at Aywaille, Belgium, where her husband died five years later. In 1871 she was married to Peter Herzet. When he died in 1883, he left a profitable mercantile business. Mrs. Herzet did not feel that she could carry on the business because of the prejudice against women in industry and the unstable economic conditions in Belgium. A relative, Mr. Stillmant, a photographer in Florence, had written glowing accounts of prosperity in Kansas so she decided to sell out and bring her family to the state. When they arrived in Florence, they found that Mr. Stillmant was not so well-off as his letters had indicated. The first evening after their arrival he had to borrow money from Mrs. Herzet to buy groceries for supper. They were soon settled in a house by themselves, however, and two of the boys found employment at the stone quarry. In 1887, the Herzets moved to Trinidad, Colo., where the boys could work in the mines. After a year they came back to Florence and settled on a farm east of town. Mrs. Herzet died January 14, 1929, at the age of 85 years.

Robert Thomas, the eldest son, was born near Liege, Belgium, on March 4, 1867. One of his first jobs after he came to Kansas was to help in the construction of the Horner Hotel at Florence. Within a few months he began to prove up on a homestead south of Cedar Point. On June 14, 1893, he was married to Matilda Legere, the daughter of Elsie Legere, an early-day Belgian farmer of the valley. Robert Thomas died May 10, 1947. Mrs. Thomas lived near Cedar Point until her death on March 19, 1951. She was one of the early “Harvey girls.” She worked at the Clifton Hotel, owned and operated by Fred Harvey as a railroad eating house in Florence in 1880, and later worked at the Harvey House at Newton.

Charlotte Thomas was born March 31, 1865. A short time after she came to Kansas she was married to Julian Lespegnard, a young Belgian whom she had known in the old country. With the exception of a year at Trinidad, Colo., the Lespegnards lived near Cedar Point the remainder of their lives. Julian Lespegnard died August
15, 1922, and his wife on January 6, 1939. They had several children who live near Cedar Point.

Joseph Herzet left Kansas many years ago and settled in Oklahoma. He died in December, 1928, just a few weeks before his mother’s death.

August Herzet was born at Aywaille, Belgium, March 7, 1874. He was only 12 years of age when the family came to Kansas. Mr. Herzet recalls that he was very lonesome after they came. One day shortly after he arrived in Florence he overheard Count de Pingre talking in French to Mr. Ginette. To the lonely, homesick boy, the sound of his native tongue sounded very comforting. He edged closer and closer to them so that he would not miss a word. Finally the count noticed him and remarked that he didn’t see why the boy had to act so curious when he probably couldn’t understand a word they were saying. Mr. Ginette explained who he was and that French was the only language the lad could speak. The count spoke kindly to August and never missed an opportunity to be friendly with him after that.

The Herzets live on their farm north and east of Florence. Mrs. Herzet, before her marriage on January 27, 1898, was Elvirie Rosiere, the daughter of August Rosiere.

OTHER FRENCH AND BELGIUM FAMILIES

One could not, in the scope of this story, include all the French and Belgian people who lived in the valley between 1858 and 1890. Many names appear in the census, in the records of land transfers, in applications for citizenship, or in the columns of the local newspapers but little else is known about them.

The Plumbers, who came from Leavenworth to work as stone-masons on the Chase county courthouse, were of French origin. Julius Remy, a Frenchman, ran a barber shop in Cottonwood Falls in the early days, L. E. Duman was a jeweler there and Joseph Bibert a shoemaker. Joseph Beaudreau was a gunsmith at Cottonwood Falls as early as 1874, but in 1878 he was living on a farm in Doyle township, Marion county.

Among those who applied for citizenship in Chase county we find the names of Theodore Dubs, French, 1872; Gaspard Perret, French, 1873; C. M. G. Briart, Belgian, 1874; Amiel Pechin, French, 1875; Louis Maillet, French, 1875; Louis Chaban, French, 1877; Albert Prosper, French, 1884, and Charles Paquat, French, 1885. So far as can be determined none of this group stayed long enough to get their final papers.
Nothing further is known of M. Muriel who was chosen president of the first French society in 1875. Eugene Pottier and his wife, Mary, lived in Cottonwood township in 1885. His son, C. Pottier, married a daughter of Eliese Legere, and another son, Julius, married Lizzie Rosiere, daughter of Henry Rosiere. Julius lived in the neighborhood for a number of years, probably until he moved to Emporia in 1909.

Pierre Noel, a young Frenchman, applied for citizenship at Marion Centre in 1877. He never married, living in or near Florence until 1887 when he was drowned in the Cottonwood river. He must have been a person of some importance because the French consul from St. Louis came out to Florence after his death to take charge of his affairs. Ernest Bosc owned land in the valley in the 1880's and was associated in several business deals with Messrs. Caze and Firmin.

There were two Belgian families living in Cottonwood township in 1880 who apparently stayed only a short time. One of them was J. A. Broner, his wife, Anna, and their five children. All of them were born in Belgium except the youngest child, aged four years. The wife of their eldest son, Felix, was living with them and she was also a native of Belgium. The other family was that of John Francis and his wife, Rudlet. According to the 1880 census, their two oldest children were born in Belgium, three were born in Michigan and the youngest, a baby of seven months, was born in Kansas. By 1885, the two families had moved from the township and no one now remembers anything about them.

The Quiblers were closely allied with the French colony for several years. Henry Quibler was a native of Switzerland but his wife, Salena, was French. They lived east of Florence on a farm but moved to California many years ago.

The La Coss family, of French origin, was not first generation French. Joseph La Coss was born at South Bend, Ind., on November 4, 1851, the son of Charles La Coss. In 1869, he was married to Josephine Beaudon, a native of St. Rock, Canada, of French parentage. They came to Kansas ten years later and settled on a farm east of Florence. In 1890, they moved into town. Charles La Coss and two other sons also came to Kansas and lived near Florence at a much later date.

Mrs. Josephine La Coss died October 3, 1913, and her husband on February 17, 1920. They had four children, Victor, Bert, Louise who married John Louis, and Mayme who married Stearns Bloom.
Mayme still lives in Florence where her husband was in business for a great many years.

Of the few French families who came out at the time Emile Firmin was Kansas immigration agent only the Clavels remained permanently. Celestine Clavel and his son came directly from the department of Luzerne in June, 1890. In a short time they had saved enough money to send for the rest of the family. They lived on a farm in Doyle township for many years. The family was large but all of the children left Marion county after they grew up. Several of the boys are railroad men and live in the West. Celestine Clavel died June 14, 1926, and Mrs. Clavel died in Topeka, March 9, 1935.

The Reverdys lived on H. J. Reverend’s farm for a few years, then moved away. Charles Thuillot came from Paris in August, 1889, and lived on a farm north and east of Florence. In the same month A. Dumas, of Mans, France, but more recently from London, England, arrived in Florence. He was described as a gentleman of thorough education and varied experience. He planned, if he was pleased with the country, to locate there and expected that some of his relatives would come also. The Bulletin extended him a cordial welcome and predicted that he would become Americanized soon because he already knew the English language. In October his sister joined him and they lived on the farm he had recently purchased near the city. Their father and mother were expected to follow them to this country in a short time, but, if they came, it was not reported in the paper and nothing more is known of them.

Thebault Antoine came to live in Doyle township in 1889 or 1890. It is not known where he had been living just previously but some 20 years before coming to Kansas the family lived in Mexico. In April, 1890, their 21-year-old son died of consumption and Mrs. Antoine died on March 8, 1892. A second son, Ernest, married Josephine Soyez, the daughter of Francis Soyez.

**Bastille Day Celebrations**

It seems very likely that the French settlement celebrated Bastille day from the beginning although we have no records earlier than 1875. Even after this date the affairs were not always reported in the papers. In addition to the celebration on July 14, it was customary for the members of the French colony to have another reunion in the fall, usually about September 15.

In 1875, the French citizens of the Cottonwood valley celebrated
the fall of the Bastille at Florence. M. Ginette, lately from Paris, was the principal speaker of the day. He proposed that they form a society, the object of which was to help one another continuously. The society was accordingly organized with the following officers: M. Muriet, president; M. Ginette, secretary; C. F. Laloge, treasurer; Messrs. Sticker, Puhellier and Philibert, executive committee. It seems characteristic that even at this early date at least one of the officers, M. Philibert, was Belgian, not French. So far as can be determined the Belgians and the few Swiss settlers of the valley always considered themselves a part of the French colony and always participated in their activities.

We have no further record of the celebrations until 1883 when the big affair was held at Reading, northeast of Emporia. Many of the French people from Florence, including the cornet band, attended. Over five hundred were present. In the evening those of the French citizens who did not go to Reading gathered at the home of Mr. Ginette. The house was adorned with the French flag, and the “Marseillaise” and other French songs were sung.

The celebration in 1884 was held at Barker’s grove north of town. It was quite an elaborate affair. The park was beautifully decorated with American flags and the French tri-colors. A platform was erected near the center of the park with room for the speakers and the band. A large arch spanned the front of the stand with the following inscription written on a large banner: “U. S. — France — R. F. — Etats Unis.”

The program commenced with the “Marseillaise” played by the Florence cornet band, followed by “Hail Columbia.” During the rendition of these numbers the French tri-colors and the Stars and Stripes were prominently displayed by Alphonse Bichet.

Emile Firmin was the speaker of the day. At the conclusion of his remarks, Mr. Stillmant, the photographer, took a number of pictures. At noon refreshments were served and after that a program of music was given. The program was under the direction of Mr. Ginette. The band played instrumental music and there were vocal pieces in both French and English. Victoria Bataille, of Marion, with her “cultivated voice and clear enunciation,” won favor with the audience. Petrus Guillon and Louis Guyot sang, the former was encored again and again for his presentation of French comic songs.

At four o’clock the platform was cleared and dancing commenced. The dancing continued until twilight at which time the French
chorus formed with flags in hand and marched from the park singing the “Marseillaise” and “The Red, White, and Blue.” After dark a “grand pyrotechnic display” was given from the eminence east of the Cottonwood. It was witnessed by practically all of the citizens of the town.

This concluded the festivities of July 14 but it did not conclude the celebration. A grand concert was given in the Florence Opera House the next evening. The French musicians of Florence were assisted by talent from Emporia, Reading, Osage City and Marion. Mrs. Ginette presided at the piano. The French chorus sang. There were solos by Miss Bougere of Osage City, Miss Debage of Reading and Victoria Bataille of Marion. Messrs. Guillion and Guyot again sang duets.

During the next few years the celebrations did not receive much notice from the press. The centennial anniversary of the fall of the Bastille in 1889 called for a special celebration. The several committees of the newly organized “Union Francaise” planned an elaborate affair. It was attended by the entire French and Belgian population of Marion and Chase counties and guests from all over the state as well as some from Missouri. On the evening of the 13th at least 200 people gathered in the opera house, “where a banquet, such as only our French friends can prepare, was partaken of.” After the dinner the president welcomed the guests and made a short speech, then the auditorium was made ready for the concert which was to follow. A very select program was given. It consisted of:

**Part First**

No. 1. Grand Medley of popular and patriotic French airs, arranged by Chas. Leonard, by complete orchestra.

No. 2. Romance from Giralda (Adam) accompanied by Mrs. Ginette, pianist, Mrs. Louis Guyn.

No. 3. Aria from Domino Noir (Auber) piano accompaniment, by Prof. Ginette, Mrs. De Pingre.

No. 4. Grand Fantasia for Piano, from Haydee (Auber), Mrs. Ginette.

No. 5. Salut a la France, patriotic air, Mrs. [?] Bataille and Louis Guyot.

No. 6. Air from Noces de Jeannette (Masse), E. Ginette, Sr.

**Part Second**


No. 2. Aria from Les Dragons de Villars (Maillan) Miss Victoria Bataille.

No. 3. Selection from Il Trovatore (Verdi) Louis Guyot.

No. 4. Grand Quatuor, arranged by Leonard: Orchestra Quartette.

No. 5. Duet from Les Noces de Jeannette: Mrs. De Pingre and Mr. Ginette.
No. 6. Grand Concert Waltz for piano (Hertz) Mrs. Ginette.
No. 7. Duet from Le Mascotte Miss Bataille and E. Ginette, Jr.
No. 8. Grand Finale Marseillaise by complete orchestra.

After the concert, the chairs were removed and all joined in dancing until the close of the evening. On the afternoon of the 14th, a grand picnic was held in Bichet’s grove. At the business meeting Mr. Bernard was chosen president; Frank Laloge, treasurer, and Alphonse Bichet, secretary of the French society for the ensuing year.

In 1890, the French society put forth special effort to make the annual reunion on Bastille day a success. The program for the day was announced in advance in the Bulletin for July 11 as follows:

<table>
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<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
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<td>1. Recreation</td>
<td>1. Divertissement</td>
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<td>2. Dinner</td>
<td>2. Diner pique-nique</td>
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<td>3. Speaking</td>
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<td>5. Games</td>
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The Bulletin commented, “A people in distant lands, who remember with annual celebrations the achievements of liberty in their native country, can never prove unworthy of the land of their adoption.”

On the day of the picnic the exercises began with the address of welcome by Francis Bernard. He concluded his remarks with this comment, “The young Republic is already established in France, like it is in the United States. Let me join the two countries—our two fatherlands—in one sentiment of love and recognition. Long live France and long live the Union.”

Mr. Lang, the French consul in Kansas City, favored the society with an excellent speech in which he said:

The colony of Marion and Chase is the elite of the French in Kansas. It numbers among its members the generous philanthropist, Mr. Bernard, the erudite philosopher, Mr. Firmin, men of mind and heart like Mr. Caze, the fearless pioneer like Messrs. Laloge and Bichet, the artistic and versatile like Mr. Ginette, the representative of our military in the person of Mr. de Pingre, the best specimens of laborers in the honorable and industrious farmers of French origin, and chief among them all the charming group of graceful womanhood who are known throughout this valley for their pleasing hospitality. I am happy indeed to be with you, and in the name of the country I have the honor to represent, permit me to congratulate you upon the flavor you have given to the French name, and for your achievements in winning the esteem and admiration of representative Americans.
We do not know how much longer the Bastille day celebrations were held regularly. The last time the paper mentioned one of them was in 1892. In that year the Bulletin reported that “Many of our townspeople participated in the festivities which were held in Bichet’s grove east of town.” This explains, in part, why the celebrations were discontinued. Bastille day lost its meaning when so many people attended who did not understand nor appreciate the reason for its celebration. Then, as a former member of the colony explained, some of the young men of the county took advantage of the hospitality of the French and Belgian people by attending and turning the celebrations into exhibitions of rowdyism.

Cultural Contributions

The French people love music and those who settled in the Cottonwood valley contributed much to the cultural life of the community. There were many talented musicians whom we have already mentioned: the Ginettes, Madame de Pingre, Victoria Bataille and others. Another family who lived there only a short time is worthy of mention.

Caesar Moutonnier, his wife and three children, Laura, Mary and Paul, were all graduates of the Paris Conservatory of Music. Early in 1875 they were living on a farm near Cedar Point. The Catholic church at Cottonwood Falls planned a festival for May 27 and asked the Moutonnier family to give a concert in the evening. M. Ferlet, of the Union Hotel, was asked to prepare a real French dinner in honor of the occasion. The affair was attended by practically all of the residents of the French colony as well as many French people from other parts of the state. The concert was enjoyed by a large and appreciative audience. In July, the Moutonnier family moved to Emporia where they expected to teach music and French. Later that year they went Lawrence to live. M. Moutonnier held a professorship in the conservatory of music. We have no further record of this talented family but it would be interesting to know what became of them.

Many of the French had excellent voices and they enjoyed singing. To those who are old enough to remember the reunions in the Bichet grove, the mighty oaks still seem to reverberate with the stirring “Marseillaise” and the other French songs they so loved to sing. Apart from these special occasions, it was customary for the families to meet in the evenings and spend the hours talking and singing. Love of companionship, of good music and dancing, more than any other characteristic, set these people apart from their American
neighbors who had little time for recreation. Life on the frontier was serious and rugged but these French pioneers were seldom too tired after a hard day’s work to enjoy a few hours of leisure with their friends.

French weddings were special occasions. The ceremony itself was usually held at the county seat, either at Marion or Cottonwood Falls, or at the Catholic church at Florence. After the service a celebration was held at the bride’s home. The festivities often lasted three days. All the French and Belgian people for miles around attended at least part of the time. If the house had two stories the lower floor was used for visiting and dancing. A room or two on the second story was cleared and big tables put up there for food. There seemed to be a never ending supply of good things to eat.

One wedding in the colony was a bit unusual and caused a great deal of merriment. The wedding was to be held in the home of the bride’s parents. On the afternoon chosen the guests arrived and the bridegroom put in his appearance just a short time before the hour set for the ceremony. He was dressed in his best but his best was none too good. He had laundered his own shirt and had done a very poor job of it. When the bride saw him she ordered him to take off his shirt. Then while the guests and the bridegroom waited the bride washed and ironed the shirt. As soon as she had it done up to her own satisfaction the groom put it on and the ceremony proceeded.

French Cookery

The people of the valley were famed for their hospitality and the women were noted for the wonderful food they set before their guests. They all had favorite recipes brought from the old country and there is no doubt that the food they prepared differed considerably from that of their American neighbors. They were handicapped by a lack of variety in the foods available on the frontier and inability to buy condiments easily obtainable in France.

The following recipes were among those used by the French and Belgian housewives:

La Pomme de Terre avec la Viande.

Cut fat meat into inch squares and brown in deep iron kettle. Add flour and water to make gravy. Salt to taste. Pare potatoes and cut into inch cubes and add to gravy. Add one large onion, cut fine. Cook slowly on the back of the stove, stirring frequently.

Rabbit.

Dress and cut rabbit into pieces. Salt and pepper to taste. Cover with water. Add two tablespoons of vinegar and let stand over night. Wipe
pieces of rabbit and brown in hot lard in skillet. When rabbit is brown remove from skillet and add flour and water to make gravy. Add browned rabbit to gravy and cook slowly until tender.

*Chicken with Sour Cream.*

Cut up young chicken. Have skillet hot with plenty of butter. Place chicken in fat and fry slowly until brown (Do not flour the chicken). When tender, and just a few minutes before serving, pour a cup of good sour cream over the chicken. This will thicken up in a good rich sauce. Serve immediately. Sweet cream will thin out and get watery. Be sure the cream is sour.

*Pig’s Feet in Brown Gravy.*

Make a gravy in a heavy skillet by browning flour in several spoonsful of meat fryings. When brown add cold water, stirring slowly to make a smooth gravy. Add salt to taste. Put the scraped and split pig’s feet in a deep kettle and pour the gravy over them. Cook slowly over a low fire for several hours, until the meat is tender and dropping from the bones. Add a little hot water as the gravy gets too thick. Stir often as it sticks easily.

*Turnip Kraut.*

This is made about the same way as cabbage kraut but has a different flavor and is much better if the turnips are tender and juicy. Pare the turnips and shred in narrow strips. Pack tightly into jars and add salt to each layer (about a heaping teaspoon to each quart). Cover with cloth and weighted lid. Set in cool place and let ripen. When ready to eat the kraut may be boiled or drained and fried.

*Fried Noodles.*

To make the noodle dough break an egg into a bowl of flour. Add pinch of salt and half an egg shell of water. Form into a ball and roll very thin on a floured bread board. Dry this thin sheet of dough for several hours (Grandmother used to hang it over the back of a chair). When dry but not brittle roll like a jelly roll and cut crossways about ½ inches wide. Shake apart and drop in boiling water. When tender, place in collander and drain. Fry in skillet, stirring often like fried potatoes.42

Prepared yeast was not available in the early days so it had to be made at home from wild hops, corn meal and water. It was made into cakes and dried, then used when needed. Sometimes the bread was not ready to bake by noon. In this event they would take part of the dough and roll it out about an inch thick. It was then cut into strips an inch wide and six or seven inches in length and fried in deep fat. The bread sticks were sprinkled with sugar and eaten while hot.

About the only salads they had in pioneer days were lettuce and other greens grown in the garden. Usually the lettuce was wilted. It was cut into pieces, a few green tops of onions, sugar and seasoning

42. The recipes given were used by the women of the Rosiere, Sovez and Bichet families. They were furnished through the courtesy of Mrs. Ernest Lalouette and Mrs. Fred A. Bichet of Florence.
added. Bacon grease and vinegar were poured over it and a tight lid put on for a few minutes. Wilted lettuce was a standard dish for spring whether in an American or French home.

Potatoes and wild game, of necessity, had a prominent place in the menu. The French were very fond of pork. It formed the basis for the innumerable soups they made and was used in many other ways. Blood sausage was a favorite. When butchering time came they made quantities of it. Mrs. Toomey, the French milliner of Marion, was especially fond of blood sausage and each fall when the Bichets butchered she always made it a point to be on hand to get her share.

The French, in particular, liked their wine. Each farmer had his vineyard and some of them were masters in the art of grape culture. When the grapes were ripe, they were picked and washed and turned into the large stone vat provided for that purpose. The juice was pressed out and bottled or put in a barrel. It was customary to add a bit of water and press the juice out a second time. This wine, which was not as good as the first run, was given to the hired help or used when company was not present. The count, according to tradition, never drank plain water. If he couldn't have wine he insisted on adding vinegar to the water to kill the germs. Coming from a country where drinking water was traditionally impure and wine was used freely, it was not remarkable for him to feel about it as he did.

Religious Life

The settlers in the colony were predominantly Catholic but there was no church close enough for them to attend until several years after the Civil War.

It was not until 1866 or 1867 that a priest visited the Cottonwood valley. At that time Father Louis Dumortier, located at St. Mary's Mission on the Kansas river, extended his missionary district as far south as Council Grove, Diamond Springs and Bazaar. He established a station for the French people on the Cottonwood. Father Dumortier tried to cover a very large territory. He had stations north and east of St. Mary's, up the Republican valley, the Smoky Hill valley as far as Salina, as well as those settlements south through Dickinson, Morris and Chase counties. He could not visit each station more than once every five or six weeks because of the long distances and difficulties of travel. In the summer of 1867, cholera broke out among the soldiers at Fort Harker and Father Dumortier went there to aid in caring for the ill. He contracted the disease and died on July 25.
The next year Father Paul Mary Ponziglione, working from Osage Mission in Neosho county, extended his missionary "parish" beyond the settlements on the Verdigris and Neosho valleys and visited Father Dumortier's newly established stations on the Cottonwood. In his "Western Mission Journal" he wrote that on August 17, 1868, he "went to visit a French settlement on Cedar creek and stopped at Mr. Bernard's." 43 On August 18, he made this entry, "From Mr. Bernard's house this morning the Father went in company of Mr. Bernard himself to visit another French family." They found the father of the family "a confirmed infidel, who acknowledged that he used to be a Catholic, but now claims to have no religion of any kind. Unlike to a Frenchman he received the Father with . . . contempt so that Mr. Bernard felt very much ashamed for having brought the Father to such a house." Father Ponziglione would have been very gratified to know that this same Frenchman who claimed to have no religion, worked very hard to organize a Catholic church in Cedar Point a few years later.

Father Philip Colleton, also from Osage Mission, visited the Catholic settlements in that section in 1869. He reported a "station put up in favor of the French settlers at Mr. Bernard's house."

There was no Catholic church in Chase county until 1871. It was made possible through the generosity of Judge Samuel N. Wood who, although not a Catholic himself, offered Father Ponziglione some land and a donation of money for the erection of a church at Cottonwood Falls. The church was built and dedicated to St. Francis Borgia on March 26, 1871.44 There were few, if any, Catholics at Cottonwood Falls but it was planned that this church would serve the Catholic families at Union, Cedar Point and Bazaar. In February, 1873, a meeting was held at the school house in Cedar Point "to provide means for the steady erection of a church building, and to secure the services of a fit person (conversant with both the French and English languages) to officiate therein, on every Sunday, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic religion."

On March 1 another meeting was held for the purpose of formally organizing a Catholic church. A charter was adopted, signed and ordered to be filed with the secretary of state in Topeka. The incorporation was under the name of the Cedar Point Catholic Church.

43. The notebooks containing Father Ponziglione's "Western Mission Journal" are in the archives of the Missouri province of the Society of Jesus, St. Louis University. Excerpts from the "Journal" were copied through the courtesy of Father Robert Kraus of St. Louis University.

44. The church of St. Francis Borgia was in existence only a few years. Later, in 1881, St. Anthony's church was built at Strong City, a mile north of Cottonwood. It is doubtful whether any of the French colony attended either of these churches regularly because of the distance from their homes, although the baptismal records show that some brought their children there for baptism.
Francis Bernard, Francis Laloge and Stephen Marcou were chosen trustees for the first year. Apparently the church was never built.

During the next years, church services were held in the homes of the settlers by visiting priests. The church was moving west quite rapidly and the location of the priest administering to the French people at Cedar Point, changed from time to time. Father Joseph Ferrier became resident priest at Emporia in 1874 and he was expected to take charge of a mission district extending from Carbondale to Cedar Point on the Santa Fe railroad and from Council Grove to Hartford on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railway. Father Perrier 45 had an assistant, but with such a large territory to cover, it was not possible to reach each settlement very frequently.

A small stone church was built in Florence in 1878. By this time there was a large Irish settlement west of town so the church was built as much for them as for the French and Belgians. They did not have a resident priest until 1882.

Practically all the Belgian settlers and a large number of the French became communicants of St. Patrick's parish at Florence. Occasionally the newspapers announced that services would be conducted in French. Ernest Cinette was, for many years, the music director at this church. A new and larger building was erected in 1883 and the present church was dedicated on December 11, 1923. Many of the descendants of the French and Belgian pioneers are members of this parish at the present time.

45. Father Joseph Ferrier was born March 23, 1839, at Savoy, France, and was ordained May 30, 1865, at Chambery. He came to Kansas as a missionary priest in June, 1866, starting his work from Lawrence. After serving the church at Emporia where he went in 1874, he was transferred to Concordia in 1880. He was the first resident priest of this parish and through his efforts the cause of the Catholic church in this region was advanced materially. Father Joseph was made Monsignor at St. Joseph's church, Concordia, June 24, 1911. He died December 31, 1917. Sister M. Joseph Ferrier, for many years mistress of novices of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Concordia, was a cousin of Father Ferrier as was Jean Ferrier of Emporia. Mrs. Rossillion, the mother of Joseph and Francis Rossillion, was a relative of Father Ferrier.