

Alphonse Desjardins



French Canadians have helped shape the land, government, industry and destiny of Canada, sometimes conspicuously, as in the cases of George Etienne Cartier, the co-founder of the Conservative Party, whose picture is at the top of Page 14, of Wilfrid Laurier, above, first Liberal Prime Minister, and of Louis St. Laurent, at the left, below Cartier, a more recent Liberal Prime Minister.

Louis Robichaud, center left, was Premier of New Brunswick from 1960 to 1970 and Robert Bourassa is the present Premier of Québec.

Sometimes the influence is significant but unobtrusive. Alphonse Desjardins, founder of caisses populaires, (whose story is on this page) is shown next to M. St. Laurent. Capt. Joseph-Elzéar Bernier, bottom left, pleaded at the start of the century for a chance to explore the Arctic. "France, England, the United States, Norway are currently racing each other in the discovery of the North. Why allow ourselves to be outdone? I can try to find, and even succeed in finding, the Northwest Passage as well as anybody. In the near future the North will become a strategic asset for Canada. Why wait for other nations to plant their flags there: Canada must officially take possession of the islands of the Archipelago, which were given to us by Great Britain in 1880." In 1904 he was given command of The Arctic and in 1908 he took possession of the Arctic Archipelago in the name of Canada. His trips to the far North spanned a quarter of a century.

Armand Frappier, bottom right, is Director and founder of the Institute of Microbiology and Hygiene, at the University of Montreal. He is an international authority on the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis and he organized the production of Salk vaccine.

Alphonse Desjardins, an original journalist, died in 1920 after changing the fiscal base of hundreds of thousands of future French Canadian families.

M. Desjardins was born in Lévis, in what was then lower Canada, in 1854 and he pursued an early career as a journalist. From 1879 to 1890 he published the debates of the Québec legislature and from 1892 to 1917 he was official reporter of the House of Commons in Ottawa. While listening to a House debate on interest rates, he conceived the idea of founding co-operative savings and loan institutions to serve working class families; institutions which would serve and be owned by the shareholders in a particular parish. He found the first *caisses populaires* in Lévis in 1900 and he devoted the next twenty years to the cause. There were dozens in operation at the time of his death. Today there are over 1200, with close to a million members.

Simard

The Simard family enterprises — founded in 1917 by Joseph Arthur Simard who left school at the age of 14—are of extraordinary influence in Québec.

Three of Joseph's sons, Arthur, Jean and Léon, are in controlling positions of an industrial empire which includes shipyards, steel plants and an advertising agency. A cousin, Claude Simard, has served as Minister of State for Industry and Commerce in Québec, as well as President of *Clauremiand Limitée*. The Premier of Québec, Robert Bourassa, is married to a Simard daughter, Andrée.

It all began with Joseph, who was born in Baie St. Paul in 1888, son of Capt. Joseph Simard, a river pilot. Young Joseph went to work for the Ontario and Richelieu Navigation Co. at the age of 14 and became a ship's purser. He later worked for the city of Sorel as an accountant and became superintendent of the Sorel Light and Power Co. In 1917 he and J. B. T. Lafrenière and Alide Beaudet organized the *Manseau Shipyards, Ltd.* In time he and his brothers, Ludger and Edouard, created one of the largest industrial complexes in Québec, including the *Marine Industries, Ltd.*, which built nearly 100 ships during World War II. Among other large companies the family owns *Sorel Industries Ltd.*, an armament firm, and *Sorel Steel Foundries Ltd.*, which specializes in manganese alloys and steel castings.