University of Calgary

PRISM: University of Calgary's Digital Repository

University of Calgary Press | University of Calgary Press Open Access Books

2011

Promoters, planters, and pioneers: the course and context of Belgian settlement in Western Canada

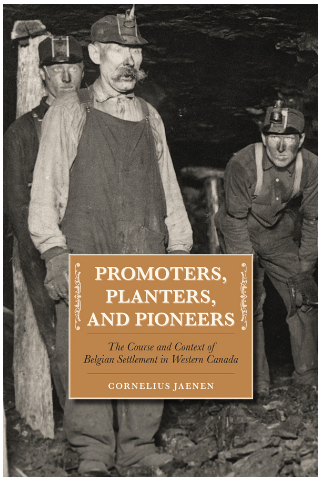
Jaenen, Cornelius J.

University of Calgary Press

Jaenen, Cornelius J., "Promoters, planters, and pioneers: the course and context of Belgian settlement in Western Canada". Series: The West series 4, University of Calgary Press, Calgary, Alberta, 2011.
http://hdl.handle.net/1880/48650
book

http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/
Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives 3.0 Unported
Downloaded from PRISM: https://prism.ucalgary.ca

University of Calgary Press
www.uofcpress.com


PROMOTERS, PLANTERS, AND PIONEERS
The Course and Context of Belgian Settlement in Western Canada
CORNELIUS JAENEN

PROMOTERS, PLANTERS, AND PIONEERS: THE COURSE AND CONTEXT OF BELGIAN SETTLEMENT IN WESTERN CANADA

by Cornelius J. Jaenen

ISBN 978-1-55238-570-8

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU **MAY**:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU **MAY NOT**:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.

Making a difference.
Making you think.

Acknowledgement: *We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher,* **re.press**, *and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy* http://www.re-press.org/content/view/17/33/

image not available

Martha and Mary Maufort, 1900. (Glenbow NA-3903-42)
Daughters of August and Aline Maufort, settlers at Blairmore and Coleman.

IX

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

Two types of nationalism emerged in nineteenth-century Europe: territorial-political nationalism and romantic-ethnic nationalism. In the case of Belgium, in the mid-twentieth century ethnolinguistic nationalism gradually replaced the mid-nineteenth century territorial nationalism of the new kingdom. This transition within the framework of the territorial nationalism was beginning to manifest itself in the second period of emigration to Canada, that is to say in the inter-war years of 1919–39. Upon arrival in Western Canada, Belgians discovered that the dominant Anglo-conformist ideology was based on assimilationist territorial nationalism. Yet in the context of large-scale immigration the demographic development was polyethnic. A majority in 1900 envisaged the nation as fundamentally British and English-speaking but the existence of a sizeable Francophone minority with strong historical roots contested this uniformist ideology. Unless Belgians could integrate rapidly into the mainstream cultures they could find themselves underprivileged.

In addition to the gradual emergence of a multicultural Canadian identity there was a sense of regional community. Regionalism was based on resource exploitation and development of the hinterland, initially in the interests of the central provinces of the Dominion, so that with the passage of time a sense of western alienation developed. All the ethnic components of the regional population, including Belgians, found a new regional identity, partly through participation in local community activities that transcended their ethnocultural diversity. In this experience of adaptation to a new environment, of transformation and integration into an evolving social, political and economic milieu, the immigrants brought their own cultural practices and values. These cultures consisted of their whole way of life, material, intellectual, and spiritual. In this way, their cultures were not only a product of the past but became creators of their future in the land of adoption. This did not mean uninterrupted cultural progress because a merging of new and old involved both affirmative and negative properties. Tradition tempered the idea of progress so that it is more accurate to think in terms of change, not continuous progress. What emerged in the Belgian experience are altered values, norms, and social relationships with concurrent continuity of aspects of traditional life and thought. Certain distinctive characteristics, habits and attitudes of "Belgianness," whether Flemish or Walloon, survived.

Ethnic Institutions

Belgian communities in Western Canada lacked institutional completeness, as defined by Raymond Breton, i.e., the structure of organizations to provide most of the services required by the group. Firstly, they did not constitute a homogeneous community but sometimes identified themselves as Flemings or Walloons. Secondly, they found in mainstream society many of the services and amenities they desired. Within Francophone settlements and parishes, Walloons found a congenial environment that precluded any need for particular Walloon institutions. They utilized and supported the educational, socio-political and cultural institutions of Francophone minorities throughout the Western provinces and territories. Flemings, whether settled in Anglophone or Francophone districts, on the other hand, on occasion made ethnic distinctions. Two Flemish institutions emerged to meet this cultural need – Sacred Heart parish and the Capuchin monastery in St. Boniface and the Scheppers Institute or College in Swan Lake. In 1905, both Flemings and Walloons desired a social centre in St. Boniface. Le Club Belge reflected both the linguistic situation in Belgium and the ethnic nature of Belgian immigration in Canada. It was frequented and supported largely by Flemings, but French was the language of its early records and proceedings. The Belgian communities in Manitoba were sufficiently concentrated in St. Boniface by 1900 to feel a need for a centre to give themselves a better sense of community and the possibility of offering practical assistance to newcomers. Le Club Belge, its official name since its incorporation in 1905 under the Manitoba Joint Stock Companies Act, was founded by Louis de Nobele and his father-in-law Theophile Elewaert to assist incoming immigrants. This Belgian club had as its objectives:

> To provide and maintain a social intercourse between the members of the Company; to consider and discuss all questions affecting the interests of the Belgian residents in Manitoba, to procure delivery of lectures on any subject of interest to the Company; to form and maintain a library; to render voluntary aid or otherwise to any member of the Company or to any Belgian residing in Manitoba; to purchase, hire or otherwise acquire for the purposes of the Company any real or personal property, that is, land, buildings, furniture, books, household effects, musical instruments, apparatus, appliances, conveniences and accommodation.[1]

The first club room for the forty-five charter members was in a large Belgian boarding house at (84) Lombard Street (originally Post Office Street because at the eastern extremity was the wharf on the Red River at which the steamboats from Minnesota tied up) at the hub of commercial activity. The charter members represented an interesting cross-section of the Belgian population, including twenty-two labourers, three farmers (one a widow), four florists, two carpenters, two bakers, two masons, a butcher, and a restaurant owner. In 1906, there was need of more spacious quarters close to the small concentration of Belgians settled in St. Boniface, first near the Dubuc Block then at the east end of Provencher Avenue, where construction of a single storey clubhouse was begun by Wynant and De Leeuw. In 1911, Theophile Bockstael was awarded a contract for the addition of a second storey, followed in 1914 by another addition on the east side of the clubhouse. This completed the building program, with a post office located at the rear of the building. There were about two thousand members, Flemings and Walloons, who were enrolled upon arrival in Manitoba for a $2 fee, one half going to membership according free entry to all events and the other half a share in the company. There were also associated members, mostly French Canadian businessmen interested in socializing and familiarizing themselves with the Belgians, their talents, needs and aspirations. From the beginning, observance of Independence Day on 21 July was accompanied by a dinner, free refreshments and a band concert. In 1915 the club adopted the policy of reading all reports in both French and Flemish. The majority of the members were Flemings and a few may have had some difficulty understanding official statements in French. Although the club remained non-political, in 1916 the executive strongly supported those politicians who spoke out against the abolition of the bilingual school system. Again, in 1938, a formal protest was sent to the Canadian National Railways because of lay-offs at their Transcona marshalling yards which affected many Belgian workers.[2]

World War I gave the club prominence as a centre for Belgian military affairs and headquarters for the Belgian Relief Fund. But membership dropped significantly because of prohibition legislation in 1916 that curtailed business to the point that by 1917 Le Club Belge was virtually bankrupt, telephone service was cut off, annual taxes were unpaid, and some employees were laid off. In 1918, a Congress of all Belgians in Western Canada was held with twenty delegates in attendance to promote business enterprises and to promote club membership but conditions did not improve. A Belgian Veterans Association was formed in 1920 but it could not provide much financial aid. In March 1921, the club was closed and did not resume its activities until 1925 with the imposition of annual fees on the members. Four years later, the Belgian Veterans Association and its Ladies Auxiliary affiliated with the Royal Canadian Legion, assuring the veterans a measure of financial security. Women were admitted during the war years if they were escorted by a member. In November 1926, a Ladies Auxiliary was formed to provide clothing to destitute families and to visit the sick and elderly. They put on an annual banquet at the clubhouse for senior citizens, distributed Christmas and Easter parcels to the aged and shut-ins, and organized a "Christmas Tree" or concert for the children. Significantly, St. Nicholas did not come on the eve of December 6 like in Belgium, but the customs of the host society were adopted in order not to confuse the children who at school, at church and in the wider community were exposed to the gift-giving and Santa Claus on December 25.

The end of prohibition in 1928 enabled the club to recover from its indebtedness and to survive the Depression rather well as activities expanded. The proclivity for beer drinking led to "regular suspensions of members for gambling, drunkenness, brawling, obscene language and unbecoming behaviour." A ladies committee attempted to "further the moral and material aspirations of the Club," as did the Flemish parish priest in 1938. In 1955, the club issued a number of regulations with the same objective, and the following year decided to pay the local police to patrol its parties and dances. The Belgian community did not attract the attention of the law enforcement agencies for violent crimes, only for overly exuberant club activities and house parties.

On the more positive side of the ledger, club services expanded greatly. It had to deal with some social problems because the urban governments failed to intervene effectively, the business community was preoccupied with economic returns and investment, and the elite in St. Boniface and Winnipeg were often self-made men who resented any limits on their laissez-faire habits. There was an incentive, therefore, for the Belgian community to pursue its own social program. In February 1928, the Belgian Mutual Benefit Society of Manitoba was organized with membership open to "any Belgian by birth (male or female) and the children of such Belgian and the lawful wife or husband of such Belgian" on the payment of a fee ranging from $3 to $6 on an age basis and a nominal assessment on the death of a member. It was a distress fund as well as a death benefit. Membership soon reached just under five hundred by 1960. Over a period of forty-five years, benefits were provided for 271 members. In 1939, the club expanded its activities to a branch clubhouse in Ste-Rose-du-Lac and Father Damas of the Flemish parish succeeded in organizing the Belgian Sacred Heart Credit Union Society with the support of area dairy farmers and a few more prosperous parishioners at Holy Cross parish in Norwood. In 1951, the Club Belge invested some of its funds in this credit union and assumed much of its direction under the name of the Belgian Credit Union. By this time, the Club Belge had 2,600 shareholders and five hundred associate members. In February 1939, women were accepted finally as regular members and shareholders, a source of financial gain because over a number of years the club was able to offer about $15,000 in scholarships to children of members to enable them to continue in post-secondary studies. This indicated the progressive steps from early generations that had little interest in educational pursuits, to a generation in which sons generally followed the father's trade or occupation, to a generation interested in higher education.

The language question never became a public issue. In 1928, the by-laws were printed in English only, although all notices to meetings were issued in Flemish, French and English. The Varlez-Brunin report (1929) on Belgian communities contained a revealing comment on linguistic balance:

> A Mr. Perroton, master cabinetmaker from Liege, expressed the wish that the library [of the Club Belge] should be made up of seven-tenths books in Flemish and three-tenths books in French and English, the latter being easier to purchase in Winnipeg. The members of the Belgian club who take very scrupulous care to prevent the language question to arise among them, have asked me to support this request to you.[3]

By 1943 all club business was conducted in English, while at social functions three languages were still heard. By 1969, at the ephemeral Council of Belgians in Ottawa the discussions were in English "with Flemish and French translations available on request." The Belgian Club had originally provided a bonding network for Belgians but it later provided a bridging network to other groups for mutual benefit.[4]

Belgian Sacred Heart parish was erected on Plinquet Street in response to Flemish requests for services in their own language apart from the masses, confessions and catechism classes offered in uninspiring facilities at the St. Boniface cathedral. The Sacred Heart parish boundaries were coterminous with those of the cathedral parish so did not include the Flemings of Norwood, St. Vital, Transcona and Fort Garry.[5] In 1928, Capuchin monks established a monastery in the vicinity and assured regular services in Flemish until the parishioners, especially the Canadian-born, indicated a preference for English services. Through a daughter house, the Capuchins provided multilingual services in Ste. Amélie and Ste. Rose-du-Lac for a couple decades, until the Archbishop of Winnipeg transferred all missionary work to the Oblate order. They also provided services in Flemish in Dugald, where a number of Belgian families who found employment in the CNR yards in Transcona resided.

The role of Scheppers Institute (Sacred Heart College), located in Swan Lake, in serving the Flemish community is not well known. It represented an important attempt to provide a practical education to rural youth in a traditional Flemish setting. In 1919, Sister Angêle, a Ursuline on a home visit to Thildonck in search of support for a school for senior boys to complement the convent for girls in Bruxelles, met a Brother Amadeus of the Brothers of Our Lady of Mercy who were involved in educational work overseas.[6] Although Rome preferred they would direct their efforts to the Congo, the Brothers were attracted to the prospect of working in Flemish in Manitoba. In August 1919, two brothers sent to scout out the situation and report on the climate and customs bought a half-section farm (325 ha) from George Couch, a pioneer who had farmed there near the village of Swan Lake since 1887.[7] Four brothers soon joined them at the farm and they all spent the winter cutting wood as farm machinery, lumber, cement, door and window frames, and bricks arrived at the village destined for the Institute. They bought nine work horses, milch cows, pigs and chickens, and when spring came they planted the fields in wheat, barley and oats. Their objective, in line with the philosophy of the Canadian Agricultural Instruction Act of 1913, was to inculcate values and build character through a "spiritualizing of agriculture."[8] There was some debate about the size of the building to be erected, but it was resolved to build an imposing Belgian-style two-storey brick-faced edifice with large high-ceiling rooms on a raised basement that proved to be inadequately insulated and too costly to heat in winter.[9] Firmin Wyndels contracted to build the college for $70,000 but raised the price to $80,000 as modifications were added. The brothers eventually spent over $120,000 on the project which included two reception rooms, two refectories, a pantry and kitchen, a music room and two classrooms on the main floor; a chapel, two infirmaries, two dormitories, a concert hall and a lavatory on the second floor; a manual training room, recreation room, provisions room, boiler room, laboratory, etc. in the basement. Unfortunately, the day the main building was completed the farm buildings, with the furniture, personal belongings of the staff, and school equipment, burnt down.

Classes began in October 1920 with forty residents and fifteen day students from the village. Archbishop Beliveau insisted that the teaching be in French and English, but the staff felt unable immediately to satisfy this requirement so some students returned to their former schools. When the Superior of the brotherhood visited the school in 1921, he opined that the Institute was financially unstable and religious exercises were inadequate. The director resigned and left the brotherhood, and he settled in nearby Mariapolis. The new director transformed the school into an agricultural institute to the satisfaction of the Archbishop, who was of the opinion that the Manitoba Agricultural College in Fort Garry was an Anglophone Protestant institution, 85 per cent of whose graduates did not actually farm. He observed: "Our students are all sons of dirt farmers who will have to help their parents on the family farm. Educate them in theory and practice. Thus you will instill in them a love of the soil, and our countryside will remain Catholic."[10] By 1921, there were sixty boarders at the institute, good relations had been established with the local Belgian communities, four novices were received, and the farm buildings were moved close to the institute. Students were anxious to have their studies meet provincial standards and grant them credits therefore the brothers eliminated courses in agriculture and the use of French as a medium of instruction. When a priest-inspector visited the school and reported these changes to the Archbishop, strained relations ensued.[11] In August 1926, two more brothers arrived from Belgium to initiate a commercial course and a science course similar to those in the program of studies of the Jesuits at St. Boniface College. A bountiful crop on the farm enabled the brothers to buy new textbooks and equipment for the chemistry and physics laboratories. When St. Boniface College burned down, many of their students in commerce wanted to attend Scheppers Institute but Msgr Beliveau instructed the clergy not to permit such a transfer. By 1927 the Superior in Huberdeau, Quebec assessed the deteriorating economic situation at Swan Lake and concluded that the farm and its equipment should be rented out to a local Belgian farmer. The number of students declined sharply and maintenance costs mounted sharply. In October 1932 an order arrived to liquidate the assets and to have the institute equipment and furniture accompany the brothers to the orphanage at Huberdeau. The empty building was left in the care of the parish priest and a certain M. Goethals, who purchased the farm land. The local Belgians gathered to thank the Brothers of Mercy for their devoted service to their youth and community, but it was evident that the Institute had outlived its purpose and that the depression made any continuation of such a project impractical. The buildings remained vacant for years as negotiations with the federal government to open a training facility failed to mature. Only the faint outlines of foundation stones remain on the outskirts of the village of Swan Lake as a memorial to an experiment in Flemish education.

Ethnic Behaviour

The Flemish community retained several markers of folk culture, while the Walloons found it easy to adapt to French-Canadian folkways.[12] Pigeon racing and bicycle racing were equally popular among Flemings and Walloons but also very popular among the British-origin population with the result that pigeon racing became a trans-national competitive sport and bicycle racing took on a community character in which the entire city of Winnipeg became involved. Pigeon racing was formally introduced in 1917, when Theophil Nuyttens, Camille Van Drissche and Charles Van Cauwenberghe organized the St. Boniface Racing Pigeon Club, associated with the Club Belge in 1921, to compete with a Winnipeg club organized by English breeders. The pigeons that were popular were a cross-breed between the smerle and tumbler breeds of the Low Countries and the English carrier pigeon. The Belgian system of allotting a prize for every ten pigeons in the races held every weekend from mid-May to mid-September was adopted. There was a special 400 kilometres Young Bird race and an 800 kilometres Old Bird race in late July. The longest west-east race recorded was from Banff to Winnipeg in 1924, and the longest south-north race was from Oklahoma to Winnipeg in 1935. As many as three hundred pigeons were entered in a race. Finalists often went on to compete at an international race in Detroit.[13] Omer Van Walleghem, who specialized in long-distance racing pigeons, imported his stock from West Flanders. Adolph Van Walleghem made enough prize money in 1930 to pay his fare and his wife's fare for a trip to Belgium.[14] Constituent clubs were organized in Winnipeg and Norwood which eventually amalgamated in 1976, when interest was still keen but participants were fewer. In 1949, André Gobert, who played hockey for the Detroit Red Wings, was stricken with polio and he decided to return to an earlier interest in pigeon racing which he shared with his father Remi Gobert. He was hired by Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, to manage its pigeon loft and participate in a research project on the homing instincts of pigeons.[15]

The Flemish settlers in southern Manitoba do not appear to have had the same interest in pigeon racing as their urban compatriots. On the other hand, Walloons in the Crowsnest Pass region showed some interest in this traditional sport. In the late 1930s, Antoine Cornil organized a Homing Pigeon Flying Club in Coleman. The birds were imported from England and a number of interested persons set to work building the appropriate lofts. Cornil left an interesting description of the special timing device required to record the flight time:

> Each of us had to have special clocks to ascertain the arrival time of our birds from the race. This clock is almost eight inches in diameter and near the top is a little hole about ½ inch by 1 inch where you place the little tin box in which you place

> the ring taken from the leg of your bird which is registered in your name. This is clicked in the apparatus and it registers on your clock the time in hours, minutes and seconds. From the time you clock in, nobody can open it during the race except the secretary at the end of the race. If anyone tampers with it he is disqualified.[16]

Immigrants from France introduced bicycle racing to Western Canada. Belgians quickly took up the sport and A. De Cruyenaere, J. Cortvrient and Camille De Buck organized the St. Boniface Cycling Club in 1916, which by 1933 had no fewer than fifty active members. Races were held throughout the 1930s in a dirt track velodrome on Wilkes Avenue in Tuxedo. Beginning in 1932, there were a number of highly competitive races in which a number of ethnic groups participated. The local papers published photographs of these races and posted the names of winners, especially for the races from the city to Winnipeg Beach.[17] Theophil Dubois was the winner for successive years, setting a record equal to the best European racers. By 1940, Viv Nuytten had emerged as the equally successful champion. The longest race in which Belgians participated in significant numbers was from Winnipeg to Kenora. They had a particular velodrome race in which the last rider of each lap was eliminated until only two final riders remained to contest the prize, a handsome sum of money. In 1934, five members of the St. Boniface Club went to Detroit to compete in the American North-Western Amateur championship. Dubois won in every race he entered. Thousands of people from all over the continent lined the streets of Windsor and Detroit during the six-day competition for significant cash prizes. Races ranged from novices to seniors and women. Astride feather-light frames of steel tubing, cyclists reached speeds of 65 kilometres an hour. Back in Manitoba, the old Tuxedo velodrome was no longer considered adequate, so a new velodrome was officially opened on Des Meurons Avenue in St. Boniface on 6 July 1935, accompanied by all the appropriate municipal fanfare. The Belgian Club now made the Letellier-St. Boniface race its annual event and this was interrupted only by the advent of World War II. Cyril Raes, internationally renowned racer in the Tour de France, settled in Deloraine in 1927, where he quickly organized a local racing club.[18]

The Flemish communities retained a number of folk games, "traditional, local, active games of a recreational character requiring specific physical skills, strategy or chance, or a combination of these three elements." Researchers have wondered if Flemings had an anachronistic perception of their homeland as a unitary nation in which their rural ancestors had little or no cultural identity or socio-economic prestige? What is evident is that among Belgians, the folk games are almost exclusively Flemish.[19] Pole archery is the most prominent of these sports and has its roots in mediaeval popinjay shooting. The Manitoba version of pole shooting requires a thirty-metre pole pinned by two posts so that a tree of five branches can be lowered when necessary to have a full rack of thirty-nine birds on the perches (thirty-four one-point small birds, two two-point *kalle* birds, two three-point side birds, and one four-point high bird) attached. The archers shoot at the perch that is slightly angled toward them from a distance of twenty metres using blunt arrows. Bows with sights and mechanized bows are not permitted. The game appears to have been introduced in St Vital in the 1920s at the farm home of Theophile Gelaude. The St. Sebastien Archery Club was formally constituted in 1926 and had a companion club in Ste. Amélie that met at the farm of Ernest Beyt from 1925 to 1945, when activities were moved to the farm of George Verhaegen under the presidency of Albert Pauwels. In March 1929, the Manitoba Pole Archery Association was formed, bringing in several English archery groups, to standardize the rules for the game. In 1929, the Robin Hood Club was added with a branch in Ste. Rose-du-Lac, presided by Pierre Brabant. The Ste. Rose and Ste. Amélie clubs amalgamated in 1934, under the presidency of Jules Catyn, with over fifty enrolled members, including a few in St. Louis. World War II saw a lull in activities, and although the annual tournaments were revived in 1946, the sport never regained the popularity it had experienced in the inter-war years. By 1974, four archery clubs were associated with the Belgian Club – the Manitoba Pole Archery Association, the Robin Hood Pole Archery Club, the St. Sebastien Archery Club, and the Seven Dwarfs Archery Club.

Belgian bowling, or *rolle bolle*, did not attract the same public attention as pigeon racing or bicycle racing nevertheless it remained quite popular in scattered Flemish communities. The men's game resembles curling. In fact, Omer Van Walleghem, an expert lawn bowler, won twenty curling championships, including the Silver Bowl in the Manitoba Curling Bonspiel in 1964. Unlike curling, the losing competitor keeps on leading until he has a winning bowl, and then his opponent leads. It is played on a *trage*, a dirt alley about eleven metres long and four metres wide, slanted slightly to the middle. The object of the game is to roll a flat, oval, cheese-shaped hard bowl as close as possible to the feather peg at the far end of the alley. The women's game is played on a six-metre-long flat alley with a metal hoop at each end in which each player rolls a five-pin bowl.[20] P.J. Hallemans of Swan Lake introduced the game to southern Manitoba communities. Soon there were clubs in Holland, Cypress River, Glenboro, Baldur, Mariapolis, St. Alphonse, Bruxelles, Somerset and Deloraine.[21] There were even some in non-Flemish communities and in North Dakota.[22] When the Deloraine Community Centre was opened in 1973, it was equipped for the usual games but also for Belgian bowling and a new game called "Dobbelaere 9-pin bowling" in honour of René Dobbelaere, who arrived in 1930 and served as president for many years of the Deloraine Belgian Bowling Club.[23]

In rural Manitoba, Flemings from East Flanders played *bak schiaten*, box shooting, a game not unlike toss the bean bag. The object is to pitch a round metal slug through a small opening in a square board, along a three-metre wooden board. It is a game for two players, each having two slugs to shoot. The Flemish dart game requires a special board with five concentric coloured circles of 25, 20, 15, 10, and 5 points respectively and a bull's-eye in the middle that counts for 50 points. Each player has four darts and they play ten rounds in singles in turn. In 1948, an annual international tournament was started in Detroit to which the Belgian Club in St. Boniface sent entries each year.

Card playing was a common pastime at family and neighbourhood gatherings. Belgian Whist was popular, but the most ethnically specific game was *bien*, which required a special deck of cards from which all cards from two to six had been removed. The game is played by two sets of partners, each of whom is given sixteen match points to commence and then the object of the game is to get rid of these points in order to win. In the pioneer era, there were also a few pipe-smoking contests. The contestants used imported long-stemmed clay pipes and fine-cut cigarette tobacco. The object was to keep the pipe continuously alight for as long as possible. The alleged North American record was 106 minutes of continuous smoking.

Initially, upon arrival in the west, Belgians participated within their own community to sustain collectively a part of their traditional recreation. This would appear to be a normal ethnic maintenance strategy.[24] It is more likely that the continuation, or introduction, of such recreational activities as pigeon racing and bicycle racing were "subcultural recreational norms," not particularly related to social class differences or to under-participation in mainstream leisure. Nor were these activities restricted to members of the Belgian community. This complementary approach postulates that if members of an ethnic group find the host culture lacking certain activities, or not sharing them generously, they organize their own association to fill the gap. This would seem a better explanation of the situation in St. Boniface and Ste. Rose-du-Lac.[25] Alongside these recreational pursuits, individuals in the group also participated in community leisure – baseball, hockey, and curling thus there was never a deep sense of marginality expressed because of the lack of accessibility or opportunity to participate in the recreational activities of the wider community. In rural areas, activities centred on the school and/or village were always comprehensive. Finally, one may ask if André Gobert as a professional hockey player, or Omer Van Walleghem as a champion curler with a city club, had compromised his ethnic identity. The question appears no more valid than asking an English person who won the St. Sebastien archery tournament, or a German who won at *rolle bolle*, if he had compromised his ethnic identity.[26]

Ethnic identity also expresses itself through traditional dishes and preparations in the home and at family and community gatherings. What are these traditional foods? Belgian pastries, spice cakes, chocolate and waffles readily come to mind. Flemish farmers and labourers ate ham or bacon and eggs, cheese, strong coffee and thick cereal bread for breakfast. Their Walloon compatriots were satisfied with fresh-baked bread dunked in a large *jatte* of strong coffee. The other meals might feature rabbit with prunes, or *vlaamse stoverij*, stewed meat in a sauce fortified with dark beer. A thick chicken soup was sometimes augmented by the addition of *trippe*, a kind of choice lean pork sausage. The favourite vegetables were red cabbage cooked with apples, and *jut*, a preparation of cooked cabbage and mashed potatoes seasoned with cream and salt. Another favourite was *cassette*, a home-made cottage cheese pressed into balls, put into crocks to cure, and then eaten spread on bread like butter, seasoned with salt and pepper, or else with sugar and cinnamon. Desserts ranged from crème caramel, rice pudding, applesauce, or thick fruit pies to a variety of sweet waffles. In Western Canada, Belgians were able to find most of the ingredients for their traditional dishes.

Apart from the food prepared and consumed in the home, the connection with ethnic identity is largely spacialized, i.e. located at particular events such as the *kermess*, buildings such as a church hall or club, enclaves such as a "Belgian Town."[27] Most Belgian immigrants were classed among the "common people," characterized by the Flemish stereotype of hefty drinkers and hearty eaters in convivial groups. This social behaviour was not always understood by the more rigorous Anglo-Celtic host society. Belgian families could be the objects of police investigations for the brewing of domestic beer (which was generally legal if not offered for sale), and a few were believed to engage in illicit distilling. The social setting of communal drinking was quite different in Western Canada from the camaraderie of the local café or bistro in Belgium.[28]

In Belgium, each town had its annual festival, usually following the harvest thanksgiving mass, known as the *kermess*. It was not unlike a country fair with its sports competitions, food shows, street dancing and parades. In general, there was abundant food and drink, folk music, and singing as people visited relatives, neighbours and acquaintances expecting generous hospitality. Evelyn Simoens Baltessen organized the Kermess Week activities of the Belgian Club for many years. The Flemish communities in southern Manitoba did organize a few *kermess* but the custom did not became entrenched because the fall fair and the community fowl supper intervened.

Carnivals marked the advent of the Lenten season, and sometimes a mid-Lenten break as well. These celebrations were marked by colourful parades of mythological beings such as the plumed giant Gilles of Binche and Ros Beiaard, the huge horse of Dendermonde, marching bands, and general merriment. Religious processions such as the Precious Blood in Bruges and the Penance Procession at Veurne drew large crowds of pilgrims and the less devout. In Western Canada, the carnival saw itself reduced to a family celebration and the religious processions, controlled by the clergy, eliminated the secular celebrations. The Procession of Our Lady of Flanders was restricted to Ontario. The Corpus Christi procession wound its way through the streets of St. Boniface each year, led by the La Verendrye brass band, but it was more a French Canadian event than a Belgian one. In Canada there were none of the more secular parades such as the Procession of Cats in Ypres. Another common Belgian custom was the maypole celebration, quite distinct from the English maypole dance, to celebrate a person elected or appointed to an important office. The community gathered to congratulate the office-holder, expecting some refreshments, usually in the form of making available a keg of special beer. Belgians quickly learned not to attract attention, especially of the police, or to upset wider community standards.

The activities surrounding the feast of *Sint-Nikolaas* on 5 December originated in the Dutch/Flemish region of the Low Countries and spread into the Walloon areas and northern France. In Belgium, St. Nicholas in his red episcopal robes and mitre, riding his faithful white horse Amerigo, brings presents to the good children who have left their shoes by the stove or fireplace with carrots and sugar cubes for Amerigo. He rides high in the sky, accompanied by black helpers in Moorish dress, the *Zwarte Pieten*, or Black Peters. At one time, a lump of coal might be left instead of presents to indicate St. Nicholas's displeasure with the behaviour of certain children. In the Francophone region, St. Nicholas is accompanied by *Père Fouettard*, the flogger who carries a bundle of sticks to punish naughty and disobedient children. These customs were observed in Canada during the early years of settlement, but they rapidly gave way to the customs of the host society. Globalization has reversed the flow of customs from North America to Europe with the popularization of the Christmas tree, Santa's reindeer including Rudolph, the giving of presents on 25 December, etc. becoming part of the Belgian celebrations.

Cultural Activities

Belgians reached out very rapidly to the wider community after their own successful implantation. The Belgian-Canadian Association of British Columbia, for example, had as its dual objective "encouraging social contacts between Belgians and organizing cultural activities" with appeal to the general public, although not to the same extent as in Quebec, where they provided leadership in higher education, music, theatre, art and sculpture.[29] Nationally, Nicholas Goldschmidt, whose father was Belgian, directed the CBC opera and the Centennial choir and organized the musical celebrations of Canada's centennial in 1967. César Borré, a Walloon who conducted the Royal Flemish Orchestra, taught choral singing and Gregorian chant throughout Canada. Watson Kirkonnell commented that although Belgians engaged mostly in agriculture in Western Canada, "they have shown unusual talent in drama and music and have been prominent in Le Cercle Molière and La Société Lyrique de

Gounod, at St. Boniface."[30] The Cercle Molière, Canada's oldest theatre company, founded in 1925 with Belgian-born André Castelein de la Londe as its artistic director, quickly won national recognition. Arthur Boutal succeeded him from 1928 to 1940, at which time Pauline Le Goff Boutal became artistic director, as well as continuing as actor, set designer and costume designer. The Cercle Molière continued to provide the best of French theatre to appreciative audiences and eventually had its own concert hall in the Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain in St. Boniface.

In Flanders most rural villages had amateur drama groups, a tradition exported by the Onder Ons drama club which tried to keep language and music flourishing. In December 1916, the Belgian Club in St. Boniface accepted a locally organized Onder Ons group, which presented plays in Flemish in St. Boniface and a few rural communities. In the 1930s, Vlanderen's Kerels, a group from Chatham, Ontario, visited Manitoba communities to raise enthusiasm for the preservation of Flemish culture. After World War II, the association Flemings in the World, led by Arthur Verthé, took up the cause. It organized a few chapters in the west, working through the Belgian Club and some local Belgian-Canadian business associations. Apart from keeping alive a sense of ethnic identity, it did not succeed in Manitoba in rekindling the same interest in Flemish culture and language as it did in southwestern Ontario.

The Belgian Club in St. Boniface had its own concert band, and in the 1970s it sponsored the Belgian Folkdancers of Winnipeg which performed at various civic functions. Brass bands, the *fanfare*, existed in virtually every village in Belgium in the early twentieth century. A brass band was organized in Holland, Manitoba in 1894 and in St. Alphonse in 1897. In May 1899, the Société de Musique de Bruxelles was formed by Gustave Hutlet, Jean Agarand, Benjamin Haegerman, Emile Hutlet, and Alphonse Bacchus. In June of the same year, a second band appeared, a parish band known as the Fanfare Paroissiale, also known as l'Union de Bruxelles, which became the leading band and over the years included members of the founding families of the parish – the Hutelet, Hacault, Schumacker, Poncelet, Nicloux, Sauvelet, François and Fifi clans. It provided music for special events throughout the province. The St. Boniface *fanfare*, known as the La Verendrye Band, was organized in 1912 by Joseph Vermander, bandmaster from 1921 to 1943. It played at civic celebrations, community events and religious processions, invariably including in its repertoire a special Belgian processional march.[31] The tradition continued as Gustave

Hutelet organized a brass band in Swan Lake and Adolph François did likewise in Holland in 1949.

Every parish had its choir, and there was usually a soloist expected to perform at Easter and Christmas services. Joseph Hutelet started the first choir in St. Alphonse in 1892 which sang in Latin, French and Flemish. Music was an essential part of community gatherings. Nicolas Rondelet and three members of the Capron family, for example, were the community musicians in the Falher and Girouxville area of northern Alberta. Victor Capron taught music and his wife was an accomplished pianist, Fernand Capron played the violin, and his cousin Victor Capron played the clarinet, saxophone and trumpet.[32]

Across the West, there were Belgians who had higher aspirations than the "song and dance" associated with folkloric multicultural events. In 1971, a number of university professors decided to form the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Netherlandic Studies (CAANS) for the promotion of Flemish and Dutch culture, language, and literature, as well as cultural exchanges of young people. Pianist Jenny LeRouge Le Saunier came to Red Deer in 1907 and taught there until 1922, when at the request of Sir Ernest MacMillan she moved to Edmonton to pursue a brilliant musical career until 1971. Frank J. Simons came to Winnipeg in 1921, taught the harp and was a valued member of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. Both Le Saunier and Simons publicized the compositions of their fellow Belgo-Canadians César Borré, Jules Hone and Frantz Jehin-Prume. In St. Boniface, the Société Lyrique de Gounod gave well-attended concerts and provided training in choral singing. In sculpture, Marcel Braitstein and Auguste Hammerechts' artistic realizations in Quebec set a standard for young Belgians elsewhere. Brent Gelaude of Vancouver, known for his wooden images and busts of lnuit people, stands in the tradition of Pierre Hagvaert, who worked on the Quebec pavilion at Expo 67. Throughout rural areas there are artists and small galleries that remain known only locally such as the Van Walleghem art studio in Winnipeg, the Patti Hacault studio in Holland, the Leopold Simoens studio in Bruxelles. Stephanie Deleau is widely respected as stylist arbiter in the fashion world. In 1911, Henri Hoet of Antwerp, a skilled cabinet-maker, arrived in Cardston, Alberta, and within a couple years was hired to craft the intricate woodwork and honeycomb ceiling of the Mormon temple, then on the interior of the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton. He built a spectacular mansion, Cobblestone Manor, around an original log-house, featuring the finest craftsmanship in its cabinets, furniture, panelling and decorative lighting. The many windows on each side of the house, the exterior of which was covered with stones gathered at a nearby creek, were double-glazed and coated with an ammonia mixture to create the first thermal windows. Cobblestone Manor survives as a restaurant and is preserved as a provincial historic site.[33]

Before radio, television and the internet became common sources of information, people relied on oral communication and print for news and opinions. Three journalists played a role in informing Belgians in Western Canada: Louis Hacault took up the cause of Catholic schools in Manitoba; abbé Jean Gaire, in his efforts to attract immigrants and raise money for his settlements, published *Le Défenseur du Canada*.[34] Pierre Van Paassen, correspondent for a number of foreign newspapers while working for the Toronto *Globe* and *Daily Star*, lectured extensively across Western Canada from 1931 to 1938 on international affairs.[35] Most ethnic groups in Western Canada launched their own newspapers and printing establishments. Flemings depended on Flemish newspapers published in the United States such as the *DePere Standard* and the *De Volksstem*. In 1907, the *Gazette van Moline* began publication with Camille Cools as its Detroit correspondent, specializing in news from immigrants from East Flanders and those settled in Manitoba. On 3 August 1914, the Cools-Vinckier Printing Company published the first issue of the *Gazette van Detroit*, a weekly selling for one dollar for a one-year subscription. It began to surpass the Moline paper in readership, especially after Emile Bogaert submitted weekly reports, first from Bruxelles, Manitoba, then from Winnipeg over a forty-five-year period. In 1940, it assumed the subscription list of the *Gazette van Moline* and reached a peak of eight thousand subscribers. After World War II, the readership declined sharply until what appeared to be the last issue was sent out on 2 August 1974. It soon reappeared in Dutch and English format, backed by West Flanders industrial magnate René De Serrano, became a bi-monthly of reduced size in 1989 and survives operated by three elderly widows, assisted by two correspondents in East and West Flanders, from the basement of Father Taillieu's retirement home for Belgian-Americans.[36]

Walloons had access to the French Canadian press as well as papers sent from Belgium and France. Nevertheless, they felt a need to issue their own news bulletins. *L'Avenir de l'Ouest* managed a few issues only in St. Boniface, and none appear to be extant. From May to December 1888, a monthly *Le Courrier du Nord-Ouest* appeared but it seems to have attracted insufficient readers to continue publication. The weekly, *Le Soleil de l'Ouest*, founded in 1911, was taken over by Louis Baloche who owned a small printing shop in Norwood. It was financed largely by his Belgian wife, Mme Collomb, took on a socialist tone, which made it unpopular with the French Canadian clergy, and after the small Collomb fortune was exhausted the paper folded in March 1916. During World War I, two experiments in a trilingual paper – French, Flemish, English – also ended in failure. *Le Démocrate* managed five issues in 1914. *Le Fanal* survived from August 1916 to November 1918. A certain G. Lévesque had vowed to keep tabs on local St. Boniface politicians, whom he called the Clique de l'Hôtel-de-Ville. He explained the purpose of his newssheet:

> What we want is rigorous accounting in the administration of our city's finances. We want to and need to raise the financial position of our city because its future depends on it. What we want to do is show the public of St. Boniface what has been done in the past by our municipal administration and so permit our readers to judge, by giving them the facts and figures.[37]

La Petite Feuille, a French-only paper launched in August 1912, managed thirty-three issues but it too finally faltered in April 1914. There was another attempt in 1916 with *La Libre Parole*, which seems to have survived to 1919, but again there are few copies extant. This proliferation of local papers emanating from the Walloon community indicates a certain dissatisfaction with the religiously oriented French papers published in the West. There was also a specialized paper, *Le Rancher*, printed in St. Boniface whose circulation and fate remain equally elusive.

Pierre Féguenne launched *L'Union* in November 1917, which served the Francophone community in Alberta until 1932. The Association Canadienne-française de l'Alberta tried on numerous occasions to buy *L'Union*, but Féguenne continued to believe the community required an independent news outlet not subservient to a religious and educational lobby. For many years his wife was the only female Linotype operator in Canada.[38] In recent times, the nationalist organization in Antwerp, Vlamingen in the Wereld [Flemings in the World], issues an electronic newsletter for the Flemish community. Likewise, for the Walloons, the Union Francophone des Belges à l'Etranger, with headquarters in Mons, issues a bi-monthly paper, *Le Journal des Belges à l'Etranger.* Neither of these ethnic bulletins has a wide circulation in Western Canada.

Until recently, the Belgians in the West have not had their own historians. Yvette and George Brandt in Swan Lake amassed an impressive collection of documents and photographs, some of which was featured in the jubilee history *Memories of Lorne* (1981) and the Bruges exhibition guide by Marc Journée, *Go West* (2006). In the summer of 1975, a Belgian History Committee consisting of eight persons, spearheaded by James B. Wyndels and Professor Keith Wilson, began soliciting information for a history of Belgian settlement in Manitoba. The result was *The Belgians in Manitoba* (Winnipeg, 1976). Several family reminiscences followed, such as *Hutlet Heritage, 1680–1972* (Swan Lake, 1977), *Belgian Canadian Builders: De Pape–De Roo Families* (1993), and *Our Van Walleghem Roots* (2001). The only comprehensive survey remains the article "Belgians" in Paul Robert Magosci, ed., *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples* (1999). The settlement and contribution of Belgians in Western Canada figured prominently in the International Colloquium on the Belgian Presence in Canada held at the University of Ottawa in October 1999.

Apart from official reports, missionary journals and travellers' tales, the Belgian community has received little literary attention. In 1907, Georges Schoeffer, using the pseudonym Forestier, published a novel depicting the disillusionment of settlers in the northern parklands. Pioneer life in this novel was depicted as utter misery at Ste. Rose-du-Lac.[39] The abbé Jules Pirot as pastor in Hungarian parishes in Saskatchewan wrote many poems and short stories in his Walloon dialect describing the natural beauty of the prairies. In three dramatic works he reflected on some of the problems of his pastorate. *Les Fils de la Sociale*, a moralistic play in three acts, highlighted the dangerous influence of atheism and bad company. *Les Martyrs*, a drama in three acts, celebrated the early Christian martyrs as a dedication to the struggles of Mgr Langevin. *Les Ouvriers trompés*, a one-act play, warned against syndicalist propaganda. Two novels touched on regional history: *Avant les Neiges* (1926) described pioneer life in a multicultural West; *Elle vit* (1949), somewhat autobiographical, was about a Hungarian immigrant family and the role of a priest in guiding and comforting them in their trials. It was a sympathetic, not realistic, depiction of life on the western prairies in the pioneer age. He confided to a friend: "Here, religion is simple and sincere; respect of persons is totally unknown."[40]

Far less sympathetic in certain respects were two novels by Hélène de Harven, daughter of an Antwerp businessman, who spent two years in the West, from 1890 to 1892. In both *L'Exilé, Histoire du Nouveau Monde* (Tournai, 1938) and *Waïada: Dans le crépuscule des Peaux-Rouges* (Bruxelles, 1949) she decried the destruction of traditional Native life-style and the disappearance of the bison herds resulting from European settlement and the advent of the railway. More representative of a well-integrated Belgian writer, Guy Vanderhaege, whose grandfather settled in Pirot's Hungarian parish, has moved beyond the pioneer age in his novels. Only in *Man Descending* do we see the utter demoralization of his father as the Depression robbed him of his self-esteem and hope. In 1920, Berthe Gusbin, accompanied by her sister Marthe and husband, left Brussels to join their older brother Edmond Gusbin in The Pas. She married a French journalist and set up a studio in The Pas, wrote poetry and taught violin. In *Au Nord du 53e* she recorded the adventures and exploits of a number of remarkable northerners but recorded few of her own observations and sentiments.[41] Less fortunate, Patricia Anne Van Tighem, in an autobiographical work, *The Bear's Embrace*, recounts a harrowing encounter with a grizzly bear and her courageous struggle with post-traumatic stress to which she finally succumbed.[42] In a sense, this closed the circle of images of Western Canada that began with European warnings about the severe climate, wild tribesmen and ferocious animals of the region. It was a region of the mind as well as a geographical region.

Integration, as opposed to the concept of assimilation, is a process of immigrant settlement that to date awaits a strong theoretical definition. It stands in contrast to the dehumanizing implications of assimilation, according to which immigrants must shed their inherited culture to adopt a new lifestyle and mentality. The American sociological model of the "melting pot" assumed there was a host society into which only the new immigrants were expected to "melt." Assimilationist rhetoric in Western Canada, under the form of Anglo-conformity, was prevalent before World War II, but it gave way to pluralistic views as the British element in society became less dominant and proportionately reduced in the total population of the region. Integration involves a sense of social justice and a desire to participate in civic affairs. In this process a new identity emerges, involving a sense of being Canadian, of incorporation into mainstream society, while retaining certain distinctive characteristics, habits and attitudes of "Belgianness," whether Flemish or Walloon.

Behind the issue of integration is the process known as socialization, or the way in which individuals learn to behave in a certain society and develop a sense of self in a new social environment. According to theorists, the chief agents of socialization are the family, the mentors, and the age peers. Belgian families were particularly effective, in the first two generations of life in Canada, a period when the family was also an economic unit, in implanting values of personal responsibility, conformity, and group solidarity. In rural agricultural communities, with a concentration of Flemish or Walloon families, internalization of this cultural transmission followed with facility. Children and adolescents in this environment shared these values with their equals, their age group. Their mentors were their teachers and members of the clergy who reinforced their traditional values.

In the more complex social environment of the towns and cities, parental influence gradually weakened because of reciprocal socialization, or the influence of competing agencies, which tended to modify some traditional views. The peer group is quite diverse in an urban setting and the mentors come from a variety of recreational, athletic, cultural, social and professional groups. There are also indirect nonpersonal sources of communication such as radio and movies, and eventually television, videos and computer networks that influence the thinking and behaviour of all persons, young and old, rural and urban. There are no available statistics to indicate whether Belgians were more or less susceptible to formal socialization than other ethnic or national groups.

School, leisure and recreation activities socialize and homogenize diverse cultures, or at least afford youth the opportunity to learn about other cultural practices and develop friendships across ethnocultural backgrounds. Adults through widened contacts through farmers' and business organizations experience a similar cross-fertilization of ideas and values. The result of these social relationships is integration and social inclusion. For Belgians, of course, schooling, sports and entertainment in Canada resembled in many respects the cultural norms of the home country. Traditionally, family loyalty, interdependence and emphasis on obligations were cherished values, yet it was easy to accept the emphasis on individual achievement and personal growth that characterized the host society in Canada. Parents wanted their children to succeed occupationally and financially, but in the first generation they did not have high educational expectations for their children. This reflected their own general socio-economic status. The school systems, public and separate, were inclusive or open to almost all children of given ages and provided a general comprehensive education that included some civic indoctrination. Catholic-oriented schools provided more insulation from competing values and mores to several ethnic communities than did the common public schools. Until World War II, the public schools had a secularized Protestant ethos not unlike the civil religion of American public schools. This ideology was based on the assumptions that British institutions were divinely blessed with high ethical standards and they had a moral mission in the world, especially towards immigrant communities that were sometimes categorized as "lesser breeds." This ideology was clearly expounded in provincial curricula and in J.T.M. Anderson's *The Education of the New Canadian*. The objectives were clearly assimilationist in an Anglo-conformist sense but there is reason to believe that the results appeared more integrationist than assimilationist.[43]

The recent development affecting integration is rural restructuration, marked first by the creation of larger administrative units and followed by a decline in rural population. This began with the disappearance of rural one-room schools and the building of larger village schools that also offered secondary level courses. Homogeneous settlement patterns were disrupted as a result. Larger school units with large centralized schools succeeded the consolidated schools and further encouraged a mixing of young people from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds. Declining Belgian rural activity, as in dairying, market gardening and sugar beet cultivation, is part of persistently declining rural population in the West. The primary cause of the disappearance of many village communities and shrinking farm population is increasing agricultural productivity that implies less need for rural labour. On the other hand, the disappearance of many villages has been accompanied by the growth of strategically located service centres that in turn indicates a continuing interdependence between rural and urban populations. This population shift is visible in the prairie landscape as the wooden grain elevators that stood as sentinels in every village have been demolished and replaced by a few concrete silos at widely dispersed locations. The new service centres offer new trades, business and professional opportunities for the sons and daughters of third and fourth generation agriculturalists. This relocation accompanied the abandonment of subsistence farming in favour of agro-business by the more enterprising farm families. For the historian and demographer this mutation implies accelerated integration and increased challenges to self-identity for ethnocultural groups.

It would be misleading to assume that there was an unopposed one-directional flow of events in favour of adopting majoritarian views and practices. The clergy in the early settlement period, for example, was anxious to set and maintain boundaries to protect shared norms, values and behaviour. Community leaders on occasion joined in opposing public dances, mixed marriages, inter-denominational services, and divisional and regional sports leagues. As we have seen, there was concern on the part of the clergy and parents in southern Alberta because the Mormons exerted undue pressure on Catholic youth to join in their cultural and recreational activities which had an avowed assimilationist motivation. This boundary maintenance never developed into a counter-culture, as was the case with the Hutterites. Belgians, however, were sometimes included among individuals and groups behaving outside the boundaries of acceptable behaviour set by conservative Protestant leaders, prohibitionists and suffragettes. These informal agents of social control did not provoke Belgians to the point of public confrontation and principled challenges. Belgians remained true to their own social norms, within the confines of Canadian law, while resisting or ignoring what was perceived as outrageous proscription. Far from being deviant, this in-group behaviour helped to maintain a sense of identity.

The existence of a cluster of Belgians in the east end of St. Boniface did not result in the formation of a ghetto and in negative economic consequences, as some ethnic studies postulate. Instead, the immigrants integrated well because they were located near to attractive employment and they were able to learn the second official language to their benefit. Belgian Towns in Glace Bay, St. Boniface and Weyburn belied any relationship between segregation and poverty. Indeed, their existence was an indication of gainful employment and networking. Furthermore, this clustering, whether in urban St. Boniface or rural southern Manitoba communities, provided a sense of social and cultural comfort.[44]

The first generation of immigrants who settled in rural communities were too preoccupied with meeting their material needs to be concerned about problems of integration. Arthur Vermeire in southern Manitoba remembered his youth, not in terms of community events, but in terms of strenuous farm labour:

> We had a six-foot binder pulled by three horses and I drove the binder when I was eleven years old, and did the stooking also. I never went further than grade eight, even though I went to school till I was almost seventeen, but only in the winter time. In the summer time twelve-year old boys were expected to stay home to help with the work. We always ran barefoot in summer.[45]

Francis De Roo had similar memories, but he added a detail that underscored the degree of co-operation across ethnolinguistic lines that pioneering encouraged. When the father and the sons were busy cutting green poplar wood for sale in the village, the roof of their shanty house caught fire from an overheated stovepipe. A seven-year-old lad quickly enlisted the help of a couple neighbours – an Englishman and a Frenchman. The three men worked as a team: one in the well getting water, another mixing it with snow, and the third tearing sod off the roof to pour in the watery mixture. They communicated by signs only because De Roo spoke only Flemish, Le Bain only French, and Couch only English.[46]

The Walloon communities often felt the weight of the rigourist theology of the French Canadian hierarchy and clergy. They were not always in agreement with the ban on mixed marriages and public dances, nor the ruling that if a father sent his children to a non-Catholic school, he would be penalized by "no sacraments for him and no first communion for his children."[47] These directives were effective in bringing about compliance only among very devout Catholics. Even a school inspector like P. Rochon dared ignore an episcopal order to have teaching appointments subject to clerical approval. A liberal-minded prelate like Bishop Mathieu in Regina was very reluctant to join in the crusade against public dances and balls where Catholics would socialize with non-Catholics because he was very aware of the sentiments of the European-origin population in his diocese.[48]

The Walloons who integrated into the French-Canadian community participated fully in Francophone educational, cultural, and religious organizations on the prairies. Abbé Maurice Baudoux, as already mentioned, was not only an influential supporter of their initiatives but also an innovator in the movement for their full participation in the public media.[49] In Willow Bunch, for example, the St. Jean-Baptiste Society sponsored other associations such as an educational committee organized in 1913 and an independent model parliament for adults and youth to develop their oratorical skills. A musical committee was formed and soon had a twenty-six-voice male choir under the direction of Dr. Godin, accompanied by a twenty-piece band. It was fine for the clergy to sponsor events through an association like the St. Jean-Baptiste Society but there was resistance to any attempt to control all activities. In Gravelbourg, some of the laity resented clerical control and organized an Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne to initiate fortnightly young peoples' discussion groups. Beginning in 1921, it introduced drama, musical concerts, operettas and lectures. Conflict developed between the local cultural elite, consisting of the clergy, staff of Collège Mathieu and the Gravel family, on the one hand, and a large community group who espoused only popular cultural activities, on the other hand. The Walloons were divided in their loyalties. In British Columbia, where the Francophone community was relatively small, its Belgian component was quite active in organizations such as the Société française de Bienfaisance et Secours mutuel de Victoria. Joseph Haegart, for example, was a principal organizer of the Alliance Française in Victoria in 1907. The social milieu was very favourable for the development of these initiatives because the British elite of Vancouver Island was quite Francophile. This was reflected in the number who spoke French and the prominent role given to French instruction at Royal Roads College. This favourable climate continued to the World War II period, when Belgians became active in Le Club Canadien français and supported the local paper, *L'Echo de la Colombie*, in the 1960s. Their participation was recognized when Arthur Chéramy was elected first general president of the Fédération canadienne-française de la Colombie.

In the coal-mining districts of the Crowsnest Pass, the Walloons displayed some distinctive traits and behaviour. Unlike the Italians, they had no formal organizations, socializing instead by visiting and house parties around a keg of beer. In fact, they did not even frequent the saloons as did other ethnic groups. Mistaken quite often for French, they remained quite different although they shared their socialist views and even anti-clericalism. They were better educated than most of their Central European co-workers and they had smaller families than other Catholic groups.[50] In Bellegarde, a Walloon Catholic farming parish, the social pattern was not too different. A long-time teacher in the parish observed:

> The coffee drinkers, the *cafteurs*, and the drinkers who swallow their alcohol in one gulp, gather together. Among the Belgians, they like to "spread the table," that is to say to entertain, and of course they talk in patois, the language of the old Walloon hamlet in the old country.

Hospitality, in popular culture, had wider implications. Yvette Le Gal continues to explain:

> As there are no hotels, it is the rule that one welcomes those who pass by. If the inhabitants of a house are absent, the passer-by may go in, light a fire and eat. But he must put out the fire, cut and bring in wood before leaving. For this reason no one must lock the door of his house. None however fears for his safety.[51]

The concept of separate gender spheres requires closer analysis when applied to Belgian rural families, if only because men had an appreciable domestic existence just as women had. Most fathers clearly took great interest in the development of their children and felt responsible for providing them with the opportunity to fill a useful occupation upon reaching adulthood. This was in addition to a pride in being able to provide the basic necessities, and some small comforts, for the family. This was an aspect of paternal responsibility that was severely challenged during the Depression of the inter-war years. Men also experienced the need to support their wives who were primary nurturers and educators by governing family affairs and inculcating in the children the need to learn and to obey. As children grew into adolescence and became more independent, in part because of the democratic ethos of public education, fathers sometimes felt their authority challenged. Although the patriarchal position of men in society tended to support paternal authority in the home, the traditional Flemish and Walloon stratified family structure was questioned. Men, more than women, functioned in both the public and private sphere and therefore were more exposed to a larger community where the tight-knit extended family and paternal authority were less common and less valued.

Women's work took on added importance in village and farming communities during the Depression and during work stoppages and strikes in mining communities. On the farm, women provided income from the eggs, butter, cream and meat they sold, or for which they obtained credit, at the general store. In difficult economic times, a woman's workload increased as gardening, preserving, knitting, sewing and mending clothes from scraps and flour and sugar sacks became essential.[52] Possession of a traditional craft such a lace-making did not provide much income or recognition in Western Canada. Rachel Mannens in Bruxelles, Manitoba and Mariette Buydens in Hudson Bay Junction, Saskatchewan found their skill fulfilled their personal artistic and aesthetic sense but the lace-making tradition was not passed on to become a permanent aspect of Flemish-Canadian culture.[53] For women generally, relief came in winter with a round of card and house parties, a few concerts, radio programs, and the party line telephone. Men met at the livery barn, general store, barber shop, post office and railway station to discuss mutual problems. None of this was particularly ethnic in nature although it replicated to a degree the conviviality of the Walloon and Flemish village.