

*A Brief History of the Visits of  
Blessed Frère André  
To St. Joseph, Ontario  
& His Friendship with  
The Cantin Family*



*As told by Marc and Pauline Cantin*

## Foreward

As we have wanted to for many years, we are taking the time to put to paper the many facts and stories regarding the two visits of Frère André to the village of St. Joseph, Ontario.

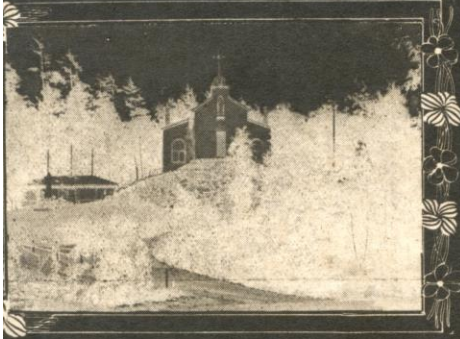
We are Marc and Pauline Cantin. Marc is the great grandson of Narcisse Cantin, who at the turn of the century was very busy promoting the idea of a deep, navigatable waterway commencing at the head of the Great Lakes at Duluth, Minnesota and ending at the Atlantic Ocean. It would not be until the year 1953 that his concept would become the St. Lawrence Seaway. That of course, is another story.

What you are about to read and enjoy are stories passed down from Father to Son and son on.

It is not known for certain how or the exact date the Cantins were introduced to Frère André. Narcisse's sister was a Sister of the Holy Cross. Her religious name was Sister Saint Claire du St. Sacrament. One story identifies her to have introduced Narcisse to Frère André. It was told that upon their meeting, Frère André explained his desire to build a grand Oratory in honour of Saint Joseph, whereas Narcisse explained to the Good Brother in detail his plans for the grand city of St. Joseph currently under construction. It was thought this meeting took place in or around the year 1910.



Family of Narcisse and Josephine Cantin 1915



## Oratoire de St-Joseph

COLLEGE NOTRE-DAME  
COTES DES NEIGES

MONTREAL

Oratoire de St-Joseph, 26 Nov. 1914

Madame,  
Conservez votre confiance en St-Joseph.  
Nous unissons nos prières aux vôtres.  
Courage au cher Olivier -

Médaille bénite

De la part du F. André

F. M. Angélique  
e.s.c.

Narcisse's son, Olivier, suffering from tuberculosis, passed away April 5, 1914. He was also a very devout friend of the Good Brother's. Brother André prayed for Olivier and sent his heartfelt care by way of a letter.

Marc's grandfather, Napoleon Cantin, along with his great uncles Jean, Joseph and Olivier attended the College of Mont St. Louis. This gave them many more opportunities to make direct visits



to and spend time with Frère André. Napoleon was sent back to the French Settlement of St. Joseph, Ontario to look after the construction of buildings and docks. He then married Valerie LaPorte March 1, 1916.

Narcisse made arrangements for Frère André's first visit to St. Joseph for October 22, 1917. He would spend a few weeks there for rest. As we all know, "rest" was not in the Good Brother's vocabulary.



Cantin Family shown with Brother Andre during his 1917 visit to St. Joseph, Ontario

Narcisse wrote a letter to Napoleon informing him of his stay. See Attachment 1.1 to 1.5, especially 1.3 which gives instructions as to how

Frère André was to be treated and protected. It goes as far as to describe what he enjoys to eat, "...feed him with our purest food. He seems to enjoy Coca for beverage better than coffee, very dry toasts which he soaks in Coca. Coffee with ample cream. He favourite meal is Beef Steaks, he enjoys grapefruit, grapes, peaches and pears, he will require to go to church several times daily, do not introduce him to anyone who is liable to make lack respect for him...".

Napoleon picked up the Good Brother at the St. Thomas terminal where they transferred trains and went on to London to meet Jean N. Cantin, who at the time would have started training at the Wolseley Barracks in London. They then stopped by St. Joseph's Hospital, where they met Father Valentine and young Napoleon Denomy.

After such a long day in London, Frère André and Napoleon then boarded the 6 p.m. train to Hensall, reaching home at 7:15 p.m., where they promptly went on to attend mass at Église St. Pierre. It was at this time that Father Rondat was introduced to Frère André.

Upon returning home that night, they ate dinner and retired for the evening. Napoleon entered the following in his journal, "Frère André slept in my own house, what a blessing from God to have him in my house. Tuesday morning got up early, went to mass with Frère André, he prayed long after Mass and we waited for him."

When Frère André arrived in October, it was bitterly cold. Napoleon gave the late Olivier's winter coat to Brother André and he wore it for the rest of his life.

One of the many comical stories handed down was of the Good Brother's first driving lesson. It is told that on their way to the train station, Napoleon questioned Frère André if he had ever driven an automobile. Of course, the answer was given as no. Napoleon, after pulling his White Steamer over, switched seats with Brother André, who then began to motor down the road leading to Zurich. Much to their surprise, the Good Brother ended up ditching the big car. That particular car, see Figure 2, was later restored in or around 1975. When I contacted the new owner, Evan Price, he told me the only part which wasn't in perfect order was the right side front lantern which had a small dent in it from the much

earlier driving lesson of the Good Brother. It was said that both Napoleon and Brother André laughed for some time about the incident.



Figure 2 White Steamer, circa 1922 driven in St. Joseph, Ontario

It was during this first visit to St. Joseph that Frère André personally chose the exact location of the statue honouring Saint Joseph. The affidavits (see Attachments 2.1 to 2.4) are Marc's grandmother, Valerie Cantin's and Uncle's accounts of the event. The land on which the statue was to be erected was donated by the Cantin family to be retained as a park. See Attachment 3.1.



Although it was always Napoleon and Frère André's dream, it wasn't until 1972 that a statue was acquired from St. Peter's Seminary in London.

Napoleon's son and his cousin Antoine (Anthony) LaPorte brought the statue from London and erected on the exact location Frère André had chosen. The unveiling of the statue along with the dedication was well attended. See Attachment 4.



BROTHER



ANDRÉ

MEMORIAL TO BROTHER ANDRÉ OF ST. JOSEPH'S ORATORY ON MOUNT ROYAL AT MONTREAL, WHOSE VIRTUES AND GOOD WORKS, KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, INSPIRE THIS DEDICATION TO ST. JOSEPH, PATRON SAINT OF CANADA.

THIS EXACT SPOT WAS CHOSEN FOR A MEMORIAL BY BROTHER ANDRÉ IN OCTOBER OF 1917 DURING HIS FIRST VISIT AT THE HOME OF NAPOLEÓN-A. CANTIN, THE SON OF NARCISSE-M. CANTIN, FOUNDER OF THIS VILLAGE. AT THAT TIME, BROTHER ANDRÉ EXPRESSED THE WISH THAT SOME DAY A MEMORIAL BE PLACED HERE TO HONOUR ST. JOSEPH. THIS STATUE WAS DONATED BY FATHER A.-A. ROBERT, PASTOR OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH, NEAR ST. JOSEPH. ERECTED BY THE FAMILY OF MRS. VALÉRIE-M. LA PORTE-CANTIN IN MEMORY OF THEIR LATE FATHER, NAPOLEÓN-A. CANTIN.

BUILT AND LANDSCAPED BY ANTOINE LA PORTE, OCTOBER 1972.



FRÈRE



ANDRÉ

A LA MÉMOIRE DU FRÈRE ANDRÉ, FONDATEUR DE  
L'ORATOIRE ST-JOSEPH À MONTRÉAL.

LE FRÈRE ANDRÉ, DONT LA SAINTETÉ ET LA  
RENNOMÉE SE SONT FAIT CONNAÎTRE DE PAR LE  
MONDE, AVAIT CHOISI LUI-MÊME CET ENDROIT  
POUR UN MONUMENT À ST-JOSEPH, PATRON DE  
L'ÉGLISE CANADIENNE, LORS DE SON SÉJOUR  
EN 1917 CHEZ M. NAPOLEON-A. CANTIN, FILS  
DE M. NARCISSE-M. CANTIN QUI FUT FONDATEUR  
DU VILLAGE DE ST-JOSEPH.

LA STATUE EST LE DON DU PÈRE A.-A. ROBERT,  
CURÉ DE LA PAROISSE ST-PIERRE-AUX-BOULEAUX,  
PRÈS D'ICI.

LA FAMILLE DE MME VALÉRIE-M. LA PORTE-CANTIN  
DÉDIE CE MONUMENT À LA MÉMOIRE DE M.  
NAPOLEON-A. CANTIN, LEUR PÈRE.

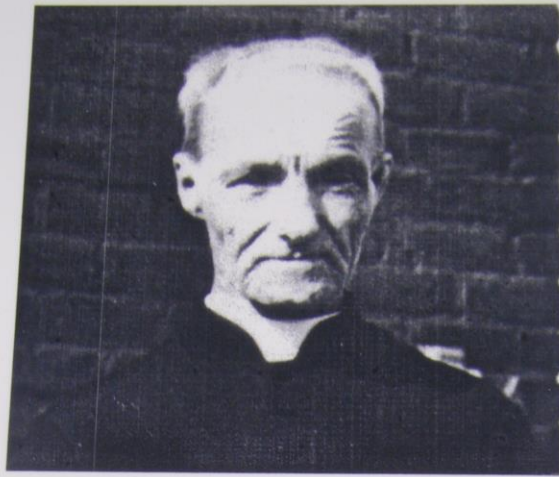
EXÉCUTION, M. ANTOINE LA PORTE, OCTOBRE 1972.



The park also contains a memorial walkway and many historic plaques. See Figure 5. Recently, Marc's father, Jean-Paul Cantin, built a niche dedicated to the Good Brother in which persons can light candles in vigil for people in need and for the cause of Frère André.







#### Brother André and The Religious Life of St. Joseph

In 1849, the first mass was celebrated by a priest from Goderich named Sneider in Jean Baptiste Ducharme's log shanty which was also used as a school. In 1873 St. Pierre du Lac Huron was finally built replacing a log building which served as a school and church. On October 22, 1899 the newly enlarged church, well furnished, heated and with some new windows was blessed by Bishop McEvoy. Brother André from the Oratory of St. Joseph in Montreal had become a friend of Narcisse Cantin and visited the family in St. Joseph on October 22, 1917. His last visit was on October 22, 1922. Brother André proposed that a statue honoring St. Joseph be erected at this exact location. This finally happened in October, 1955. \*Brother André has been nominated for canonization. He was beatified on May 23, 1982.

\* The statue, however, was placed in the parish church yard; the statue you see here was erected in 1979.

#### Le frère André et la vie religieuse à St-Joseph

En 1849, la première messe était célébrée par un prêtre de Goderich nommé Sneider, dans la cabane en rondins de Jean Baptiste Ducharme qui était aussi employée comme une école. En 1873 l'église actuelle de St. Pierre du Lac Huron a été enfin bâtie, remplaçant un bâtiment qui servait d'école et d'église. Le 22 octobre, 1899 l'église nouvellement agrandie, bien meublée, chauffée et avec certaines nouvelles fenêtres, a été bénie par L'évêque McEvoy. Le frère André de l'oratoire de St-Joseph à Montréal, est devenu un ami de Narcisse Cantin et a visité sa famille à St-Joseph le 22 octobre 1917. Sa dernière visite remonte le 22 octobre, 1922. Le frère André a proposé qu'une statue honorant St.-Joseph soit érigée à cet endroit précis. Cela arrivait enfin en octobre 1955. \*Le frère André a été canonisé puis béatifié le 23 mai, 1982.

Figure 5 Plaque on Memorial Walkway depicting Religious Life at St. Joseph



It was thought that on one of his visits home to Montreal, Narcisse's son Joseph L. Cantin had befriended a Brother of the Holy Cross by the name of John Woodcock, who also shared a room with Frère André. Woodcock eventually ended up leaving the order to marry Narcisse's daughter Josephine. However, he still kept his friendship with the Good Brother. Woodcock continued to drive him on many occasions to visit the sick and also would frequently invite him over for dinner. John and Josephine's daughter Georgette still resides in St. Joseph and remembers sitting on Brother André's knee. A picture of her brother playing with Frère André was on the cover of "Annals of Saint-Joseph Mount Royal" dated July-August 1943. See Figure 6. The same picture is hung in the Oratory as well. He so loved the children.

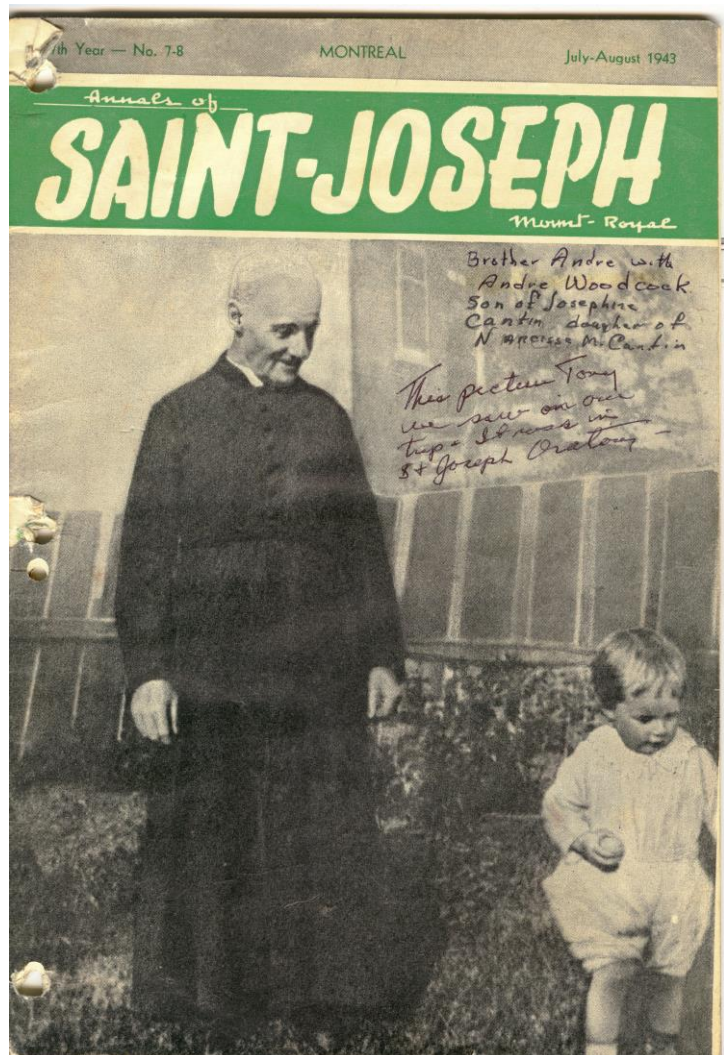
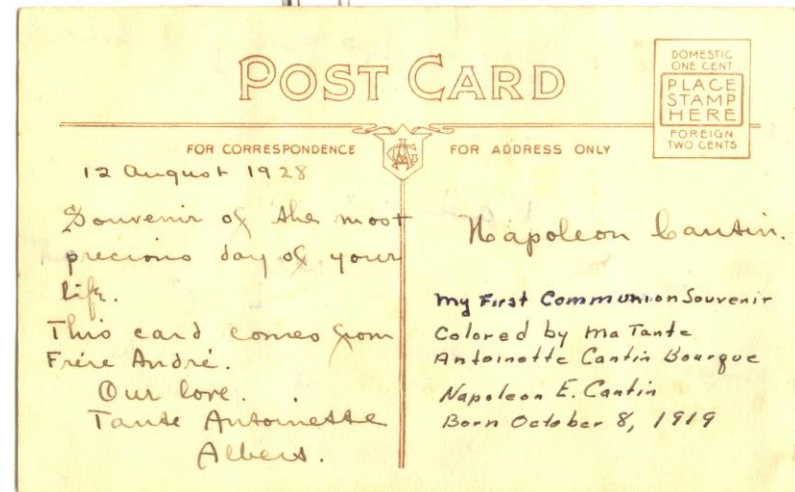


Figure 6 Annals of Saint-Joseph Mount Royal dated July-August 1943. Brother André playing with young André Woodcock.

Narcisse and Josephine had ten children and each one of them shared a special devotion to Brother Andre and his work at the Oratory. Antoinette, one of the youngest of these children, would frequently visit with him and send prayer cards and special messages to the family back in St. Joseph.



Front of post card sent from Antoinette to Napoleon



Message written on reverse of post card



4 p.m. Dec 21- 1936  
 Rev Frère André took  
 this picture in  
 his hands for me  
 along when he sign  
 both infant Jesus  
 pictures also took  
 St Joseph medal Madeline  
 died with & special  
 favors were attached  
 to all these at my  
 own discretion &  
 ardent prayer then  
 wished for. This was  
 the last day I saw  
 him alive. St Joseph  
 will bless my wishes  
 through him J. L. Cantin

4 p.m. Dec. 21 – 1936 Rev. Frère André took this picture in his hands for me along when he sign both infant Jesus pictures also took St. Joseph medal Madeline died with and special favors were attached to all these at my own discretions and ardent prayer then wished for. This was the last day I saw him alive. St. Joseph will bless my wishes through him. J. L. Cantin

Joseph L. Cantin was also a close friend of Frère André. On February 13, 1926, Joseph Cantin bought a large statue of St. Joseph. Brother André carried the large statue in his arms from the Oratory to the Cantin family home in Montreal. Joseph then took him around visiting the sick, and brought Frère André back to the Oratory around midnight. Brother André wanted to make the Way of the Cross, and Joseph said, "Frère André, you're too tired, go to bed." He answered, "It is when we do things tired that we gain merits."





Picture of Joe Cantin and his children, Narcisse and Eva with Brother Andre

*In 1939, after Frère André's death, Joseph Cantin brought the statue to the Oratory and placed it on his tomb, where it was blessed by the attending priest asking special blessings for the Cantin family.*

*In 1940 it was shipped to Napoleon Cantin's home in St. Joseph. It unfortunately arrived in pieces. Napoleon glued it back together and it is currently on display at the Huron County Museum as part of a temporary exhibit, "Innovative Huron" which opened in June 2008 and closes in May 2009. We have received many positive remarks in*

our Guest Sign-In Book. We are fortunate to have met so many new people who have a story to share about their visit to the Oratory in Montreal. We of course are eager to share our stories of Brother André as well.




Note how fascinated this young lady appears to be with our beloved St. Joseph! On this particular day, February 16, 2009, over 700 people attended the exhibit at the Huron County Museum.



Less written documentation is available regarding Frère André's visit to St. Joseph in 1922. However, several pictures of his visits to the school and outside the home of the Cantins with various family members and friends were retained and are currently on display in our St. Joseph Archives.

OCT - 1922  
 Photo of  
 Madeline  
 Valerie  
 Josephine  
 (Gabrielle in  
 front of MÈRE)  
 MARIE holding  
 Godchild NAPIE.  
 ANTOINETTE  
 ANNE  
 PIERRE DENOMY  
 NAPOLEON A.  
 FRÈRE ANDRÉ  
 ARTHUR STÉE  
 NAN, GOZAGUE

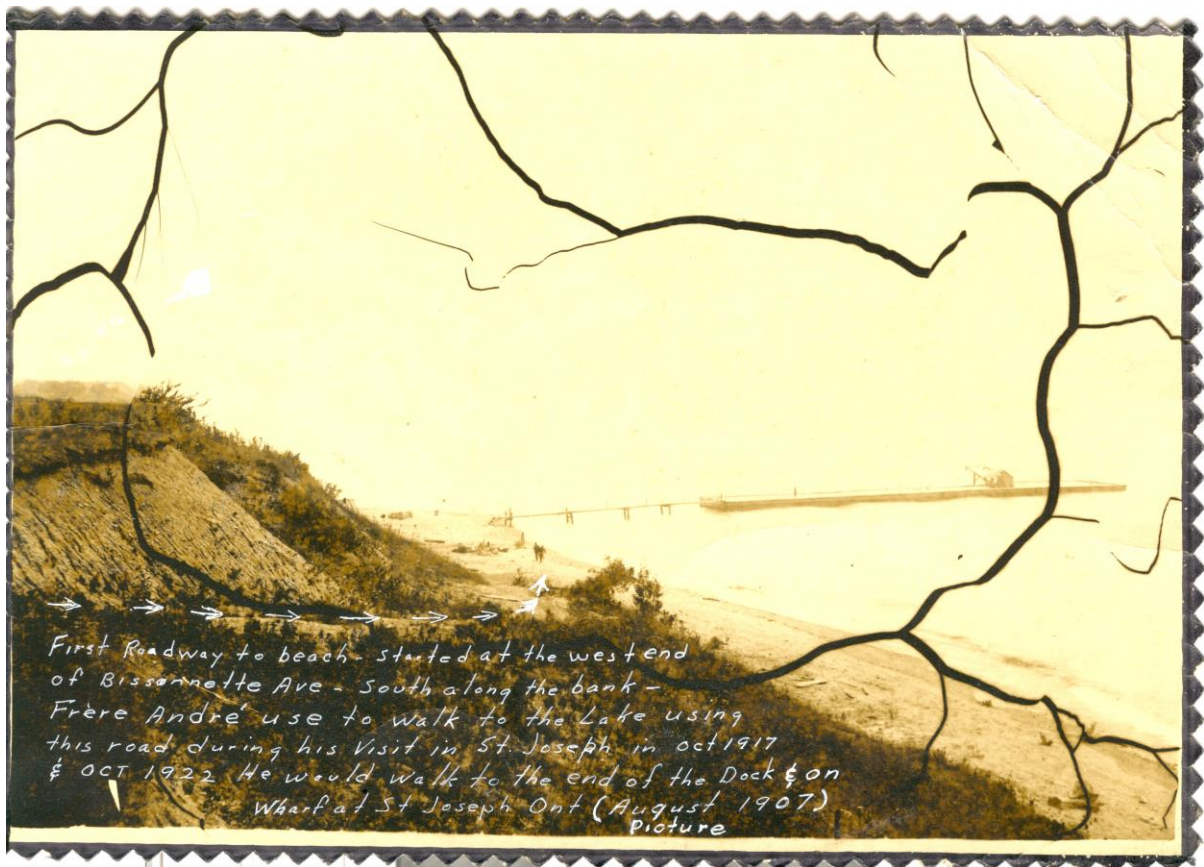


*Brother Andre  
 came to St Joseph -  
 Oct. 1917 -  
 20 Jan - Oct. 1922  
 Narcisse M. Cantin  
 dies Jan 15 - 1940*

Brother Andre  
 died at  
 12:50 AM.  
 6 Jan. 1937

The last time Sad. (Napoleon A. Cantin) saw  
 Brother Andre de l'Oratoire St Joseph  
 du Mont. Royal alive was at 11: A.M. 24 June, 1936.  
 He visited Brother Andre in his Room at the  
 External Classique Ste Croix, 3820 Sherbrook St.  
 East Montreal.  
 During this visit Brother Andre presented  
 Sad with a St Joseph medal and a  
 black silk Cordon belonging to his  
 garment. (shown attached to medal above).  
 Napoleon A. Cantin

During Brother André's visits, he would walk to church every day, a distance of approximately one mile. He also frequently took walks down to the lake and out to the end of the dock, as shown in the picture below.



Napoleon's last visit to Brother André was on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 1936 at his room at the External Classique Ste. Croix at 3820 Sherbrook St. East, Montreal. During this visit, Brother André presented him with a piece of his cordon with a large crucifix attached and a St. Joseph's medal.



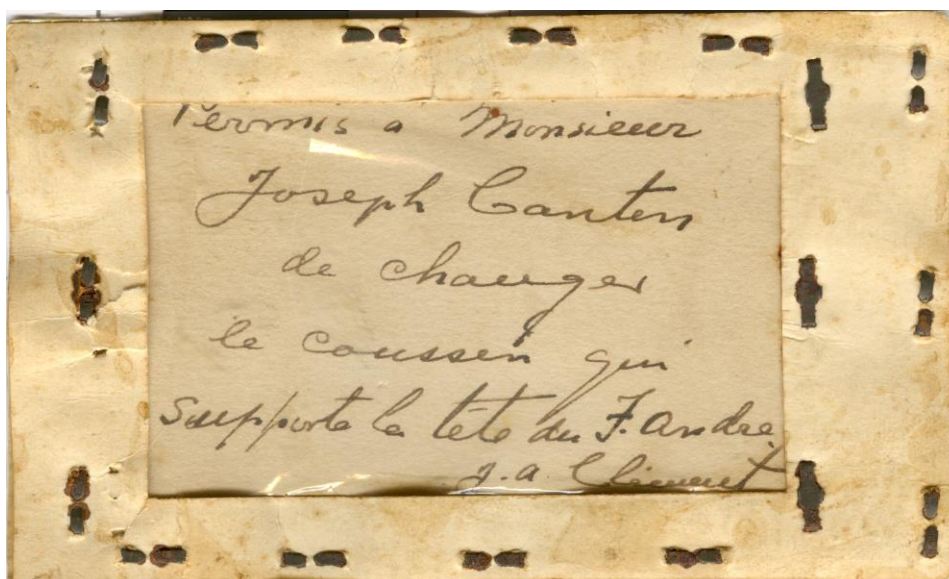


This unfortunately was the last time Napoleon saw his good friend alive. His devotion to the Good Brother never faltered and he referenced him in his diary every day starting each entry with Frère André, JMJ pray for us, and sometimes adding another saint for the day. This same, simple humble prayer appears in his journal right until two days prior to his own death on March 20, 1953. (See Attachment 6.1)

During Brother Andre's funeral, the Cantins were given passes to be close to the coffin. One such pass gives Joseph L. Cantin permission to adjust the pillow holding the Good Brother's head. Georgette remembers so many people rubbing his feet with rosaries and medals that by the end of the procession, the toes of his stockings were worn off.



This particular pass was presented to Joseph L. Cantin permitting him to approach the coffin and adjust the pillow supporting Brother André's head.



Oratoire Saint-Joseph

FUNÉRAILLES du FRÈRE ANDRÉ, C.S.C.

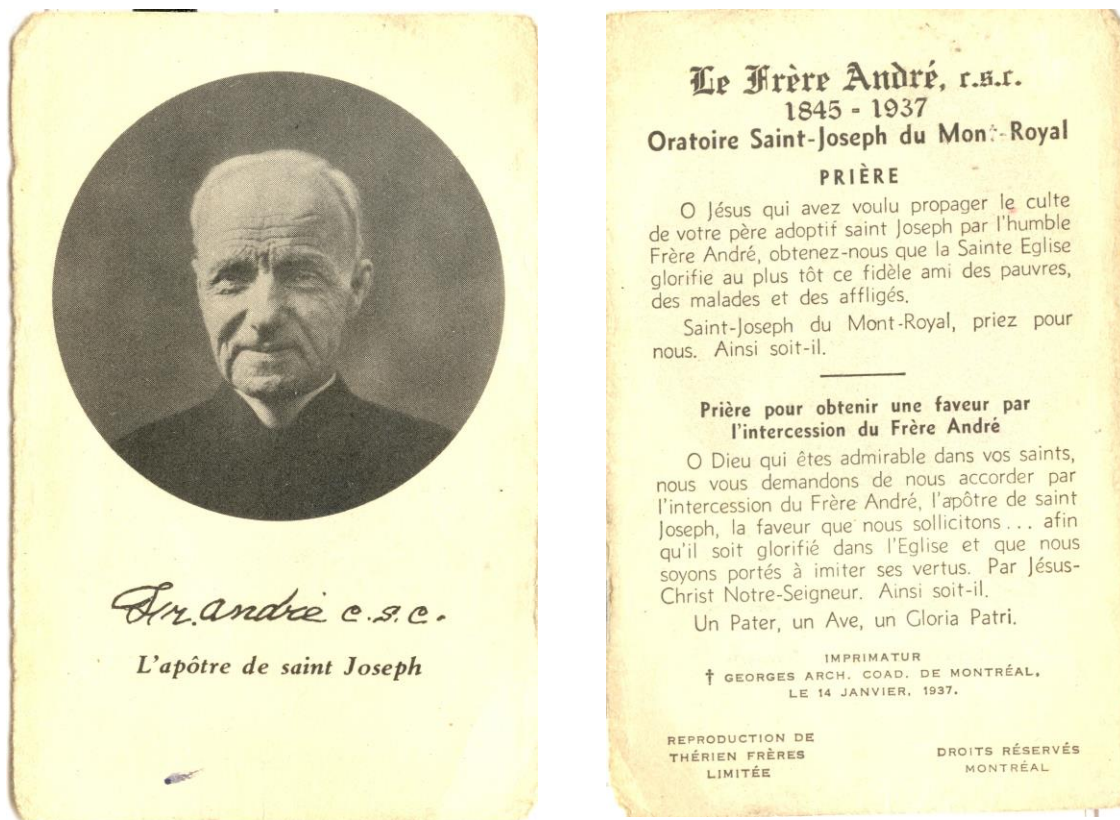
*J. A. Clément, C.S.C.*

*12 Janvier 1937*

*Morceau de la  
soutane du  
Che Frère André,  
C.S.C.*

*29-1-37*





Front and back of prayer card found in the files of Napoleon Cantin

At the end of the funeral, the Cantins were among the rare few of his closest friends given the opportunity to sign a last letter of farewell which was entombed with Frère André. See Attachment 7.1 to 7.2.

Although Joseph, Jean and John Woodcock were present during the funeral days, Napoleon was unable to get to Montreal. Therefore, his

brother-in-law, John Woodcock, sent him several letters describing the events just prior to Brother André's death, as well as the funeral. See Attachments 8.1 to 8.5, Attachment 9.1 to 9.5 and Attachment 10.1.

Later on, Joseph L. Cantin and family friend, Dr. Josef Hilpert, a renowned artist of the day, designed and created a unique statue honouring Brother André. Through the generous help of the



parish, the statue was unveiled in 1955. Father Rondat blessed the statue. He was the residing pastor during the visits of Brother André.

Dr. Josef Hilpert,  
Self-Portrait

Western Ontario Edition

# The London Free Press

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1955—SECOND SECTION

200 Attend Service

## Statue Honoring Brother Andre Is Unveiled At St. Joseph Rite



**STATUE OF BROTHER ANDRE UNVEILED**

ST. JOSEPH, Oct. 17 — More than 200 attended a service and ceremony at St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church here to witness the unveiling of a memorial statue in honor of Brother Andre.

Brother Andre founded the Oratory of St. Joseph at Montreal. Thousands went there to be healed and the Oratory is known internationally.

Brother Andre visited this community north of Grand Bend in 1917 and again in 1922.

Some who recall these visits say several residents were helped by him.

The statue, which commemorates the visits, shows Brother Andre kneeling before St. Joseph.

When he visited here Brother Andre stayed at the home of Narcisse Cantin. Mr. Cantin's son, Joseph, organized the campaign to provide funds for the statue which was made in Montreal.

The Rev. Father Henri Bernard, of the Oratory of St. Joseph which Brother Andre founded, was guest speaker. Father Bernard said the Oratory attracts 2,000,000 visitors per year.

The Rev. Father A. A. Rondot blessed the monument. Father Rondot was parish priest here from 1913 to 1924 and now is retired at Stoney Point. The Rev. Father I. J. Poisson, parish priest here, unveiled the monument.



*It is of some interest to note that Dr. Hilpert originally approached the Oratory with his design however, due to the timing, it wasn't pursued. The following letters describe a bit of the history behind the sculpture.*



Montreal, October 4, 1946.

Rev. Father Alfred Charron,  
Ste-Croix Congregation,  
St. Joseph's Oratory,  
MONTREAL, P. Q.

Reverend Father Charron:

I recently had the privilege of reviewing the interior of St. Joseph Oratory and thereby become acquainted with some of the plans towards its completion and beautification.

The thought struck me that I can perhaps fit in the designs of Providence to contribute to the beautification of your church in a manner which will also develop the knowledge of our faith, a greater interest in ~~its~~ history and an ever increasing reverence and piety for the great Saint you are honoring in St. Joseph.

I believe you will find this preliminary information sufficiently interesting to look into the proposition I have to make to you.

First of all, my reputation and work as an artist and portrait painter are already well established, as is borne out by copies of the letters hereto attached for your perusal.

Secondly, it would seem that the idealism which has guided my artistic life was a sort of predestination for this moment when you are in search of some outstanding material religious expression to enhance the devotion to St. Joseph.

In that respect, I seem to have available for that purpose the exact means which you are looking for, that is, a display of religious subjects in your church which will be of ever increasing interest and which will add to the already far reaching fame of the Oratory in a manner that will express and expand this devotion amongst the most learned as well as the least informed of people of our faith throughout the world, and through which a great many who do not share that privilege can be reached and influenced-- I am referring to my life work, hereinafter explained in more detail.

To start off, if might be of interest to know that I was born on the banks of the Danube on the 16th of March 1893 and was baptized on the 19th of March,



St. Joseph's feast: thus my name Josef.

My education and early guidance were under the supervision of an uncle of mine who was a priest in my home town. He inspired such faith and belief in me in the Christian religion that I undertook to give expression to that faith by a study of the characters and physical features of the twelve Apostles, as represented in Holy Scripture as much as could be derived from same and to convey that composite knowledge through character paintings, a work which has already been completed on black steel, which, by its very nature, is practically indestructible.

This work of art can only be fully appreciated when seen, and I should be privileged if I were given the opportunity of showing you these creations of mine.

In the further development of this religious theme, I painted a large canvas descriptive of Our Lord's mission on earth through the establishment of His church, and for this work I was awarded a special recognition by having conferred upon me the Holy Golden Cross of Jerusalem ( 1937 ).

I am attaching hereto a certain number of clippings for your perusal as well as certain photographic reproductions of some of my portraits, to which I have added copies of letters of appreciation from persons whom you no doubt know.

In conclusion, may I be granted the privilege of an interview with you or any committee or designated person to whom I could make known the conception I have in mind of the manner in which I can contribute to the greater glory of your Oratory?

I remain,

Yours very respectfully,

JOSEF HILPERT.

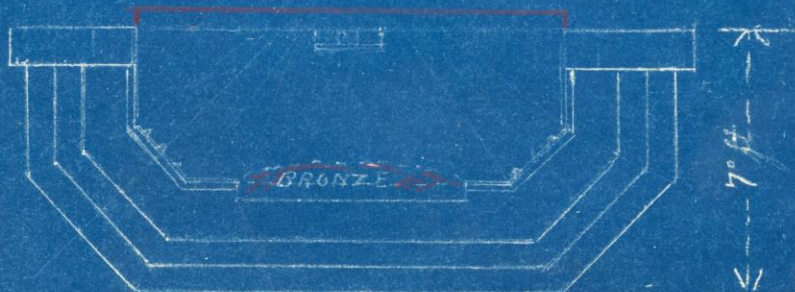
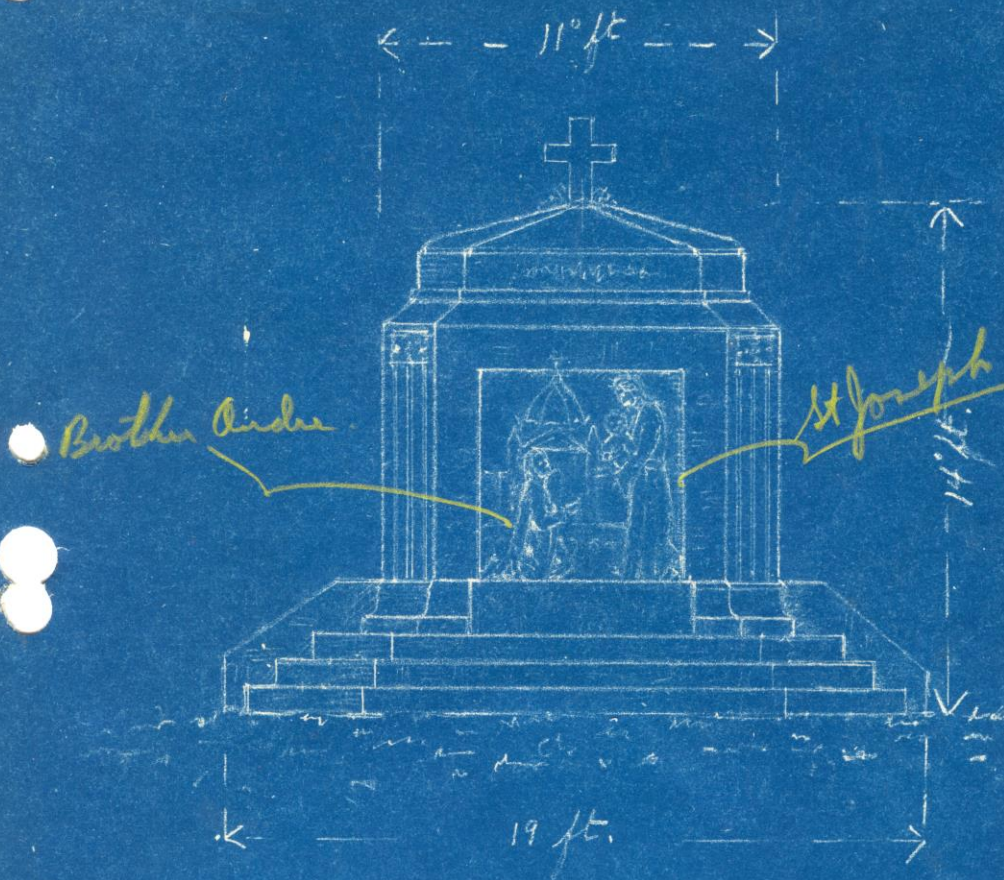
ENcls.



FROM

1619 Sanguinet St.

L.A. 9577



Scale 1/4" = 1'



Montreal, October 20, 1946.

Reverend Father Alfred Charron, C.S.C., Sup.,  
St. Joseph's Oratory,  
Côte des Neiges, Montreal, Que.

Reverend Father:

I am very happy, in compliance with your expressed wish, to outline a plan by means of which I may contribute, through my ability as a portrait artist, to the embellishment of St. Joseph's Shrine and thus dedicate my talents to the extension of greater devotion towards St. Joseph meanwhile vivifying the living memory of Brother Andre.

My letter of the 4th instant imparted to you certain personal facts about myself while at the same time it informed you of my qualifications as an artist. It also contained a personal recommendation from His Excellency, Monseigneur Joseph Charbonneau, Archbishop of Montreal.

Following this first letter, here are, briefly disclosed, the main lines of the plan which I submit for your consideration.

1. Recognizing the value which scenic and saintly portraits in God's temples have in creating an atmosphere of religious inspiration, I am convinced it would be very appropriate to have in the interior of this Basilica on Mount Royal a magnificent series of paintings recalling the principal events in the life of St. Joseph.

2. Considering the fact that the contacts and relationship of St. Joseph with Our Lord preceded the association of the Apostles with Him, while all are so intimately and so closely connected, I believe it would be advantageous to emphasize this wonderful affinity by characteristic scenic portraits of the Apostles painted according to the very delineations of Holy Scripture.

3. To this series of scenic portraits it would be possible to add others of particular interest to this national sanctuary, for instance: a scenic portrait showing Brother Andre kneeling in a cleft of the mountain, before a statuette of St. Joseph mediating and interceding for suffering humanity who has appealed to his powerful intercession; or perhaps of other scenic portraits of this humble and venerable servant in the different phases of his religious and thaumaturgic life once the Church has recognized him as a saint. Whilst awaiting this great day, preliminary studies could be effected in view of the creation of these masterpieces.

4. All these scenic portraits could then be reproduced photographically in various dimensions, as per attached samples, with biographical notes, and put together in booklet form or sold separately for framing in religious institutions, Christian or even pagan homes, as instructive subjects of religious inspirational value.

5. There is a possibility of considerable revenue to be

.....



forthcoming from the sale of these photographic reproductions. No doubt it will interest you to know that I already have in my possession all the modern equipment necessary for the contemplated photographic reproduction and enlargements. The specimens you will find attached give you a good idea of the perfection of these instruments and of the artistic work which can be produced with this equipment.

6. Every artist, in the execution of his works, has his own particular note of originality. In this connection I believe I am the first to make use of black steel plates for my work. The result is marvelous and I can assure you that this material, in addition to giving a better effect, allows the artist to obviate certain handicaps which are encountered in the use of wood, paper or canvas.

7. To be able to accomplish my masterpieces I have had to follow many religious and secular studies in order to know and bring out the characteristics of the physiognomy and personality of each of my subjects; and this method of procedure, which I especially put into practice in the picturization of the Leader and each of the members of His Apostolic selection, has contributed greatly towards the potent manifestation of my artistic talents and life. I am pleased to add that if my portrait of Mother Cabrini was a prize-winner, among so many others, it is that the very people who knew the Reverend Mother admitted to me that I had succeeded in capturing in my portrait the most faithful expression of her natural traits.

8. At the present time I own an extensive collection of scenic portraits which I have created since the beginning of my artistic career, and without going into any further details I can assure you that they are appraised as of very great price. As it is not the lure of gain which fascinates me, but rather the ambition of putting to profit the talents of my genius for a purpose as sacred as that which is now in progress at St. Joseph's Oratory, I do not hesitate to turn over to you all these resources of my creation which I have just referred to as well as the resources from works it will be possible for me to accomplish in the future, and all this in exchange for the simple assurance of a humble subsistence.

9. Last March, I already conceived the idea of doing something great on Mount Royal; but I was then far from thinking that providential circumstances would one day bring me at St. Joseph's feet to offer him the plan which I have just submitted to you. In so doing, I am firmly convinced I am responding to the wish of my patron saint who has led me here, believe me, by mysterious means. For some time now I have thought of a colossal artistic production which I meant to realize and now the great Model of workers has come to modify my conceptions so as to make me the humble instrument of the marvelous designs of Divine Providence.

I conclude, Reverend Father, with the certainty you will bring to my proposition all the attention it deserves. I am happy to offer you my most loyal and sincere collaboration within the outlines and limits you will be good enough to delineate for me.

Very devotedly yours,  
1441 Drummond, Montreal, Que.

Josef Hilpert



Translation

Brother Andre used to say:  
the many conversions  
there will be on the Way of  
Cross on the mountain! I  
even think there will be  
more there than in the  
Basilica." The smallest  
contribution from you will  
help to realize this dream  
of the Founder of the  
Oratory.

A corner of the  
WAY OF THE CROSS  
presently under construction  
on the mountain.

St. Joseph's Oratory  
Montreal  
Montreal, October 23, 1946.

Mr. Joseph Hilper,  
1441 Drummond St.,  
Montreal.

Dear Sir:

The Council of the Oratory has studied your  
proposition and has taken cognizance of your works. I  
am happy to inform you that the Council highly appreciates  
your work and extends its most sincere felicitations.

Insofar as the proposition which you had the  
kindness to submit is concerned, we regret that we are not  
in a position to consider it as possible for the moment.  
Here is the reason: We must in the first instance study  
our future construction plans. We have to make our choice  
from many suggestions which all offer different possibilities  
and so we cannot tell actually what space may be available  
for decoration.

We appreciate the interest which you have evidenced  
with regard to our sanctuary and we remain most grateful for the  
offer which you so kindly made to us. Please accept our most  
respectful homages and all our gratefulness.

Obligingly yours in J.M.J.,

(Signed) Alfred Charron  
Rev. Father Alfred Charron, Sup.

BROTHER ANDRE NEVER COUNTED IN VAIN ON HIS FRIENDS . . .

It is a unique sculpture which is enjoyed by all. Small sculptures in the form of an embossed plaque were produced in St. Joseph by Joseph L. Cantin. Only a few remain in existence today. One of the sculptures of Brother André kneeling was placed in front of Joseph L. Cantin's house in St. Joseph facing Lake Huron and is still present today after fifty-five years.

We can't begin to describe how important Brother André has been in our lives. We have loaned out the statue of St. Joseph to terminally ill friends, or those who feel they need special intercession. Sometimes we weave a small piece of the silk cordon into a braid and attach a medal of Frère André and this brings them much relief and hope.

As a guest in Napoleon's home, Frère André had the chance to sit on each of the dining room chairs. These chairs were distributed to each family member, passing on the memories of those visits the Good brother made. Many people have experienced a sense of relief by sitting where he sat many years ago.





Napoleon and Valerie's home in St. Joseph where Frère André stayed during his visits in 1917 and 1922.

*Today, one can still find the presence of Frère André when they visit Église St. Pierre in St. Joseph. Every Tuesday, the community holds a dedicated devotion to his cause which is very well attended.*



Niche at the entrance of Église St. Pierre, St. Joseph, Ontario

The Cantins cherish the memories they have of Frère André, who was known to enjoy a good joke and almost always be smiling. His good nature was infectious and spread to all those he encountered. It is for this reason his story has continued to live on in the small French Settlement of St. Joseph. We, the Cantin family, persevere in spreading this unique history in any way we can. We currently have a large portion of our Innovative Huron display dedicated to Frère André. We continue to order the books "According to Witnesses" from the

*Oratory to pass out to family and friends. Pictures of his visit to St. Joseph are shown in there as well.*

*In closing on behalf of the Cantin family, we sincerely wish all who continue to work for the cause of Brother André all the best and we continue as a community to pray for his cause.*





## Acknowledgments

If it wasn't for the chance meeting between Narcisse and Brother André in 1910, the friendship that grew into such a wonderful relationship which was followed by the wonderful visits to St. Joseph. This of course was all knitted together by their common devotion to the Good Saint Joseph, the enduring devotion of Narcisse's children, especially Joseph L. Cantin and John Woodcock.

We were fortunate that Napoleon's devotion and love for Brother André was passed down to his children and they in turn instilled that faith in their children, and so on.

What made this small culmination of history possible was the wonderful recollections of my father, Jean-Paul Cantin and Georgette (Woodcock) Firlotte, along with my Uncle Napoleon Edward Cantin's passion for retaining and preserving the family history.

We dedicate this book to them.

Marc and Pauline Cantin



NAPOLEON E. CANTIN FROM



St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church  
St. Joseph, Ontario.

R. R. Sallows, Goderich.