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# Charlotte Michaud Correspondence

Charlotte Michaud 1898-1989

Marion Cobb Fuller

*Maine State Library*

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C O P Y

April 8, 1930.

Charlotte Michaud,  
Lewiston,  
Maine.

Dear Miss Michaud:

The Maine State Library is assembling autographed copies of the works of authors born in this state, or resident here for a long time. These books are not for loan, but constitute a permanent exhibit known as the Maine Author Collection. Since Maine has the honor of numbering you among her authors, we wish to have your work represented in our collection. We do not ask you to give us your books -we are very willing to pay for them but we do ask that you autograph each one and we hope that you will add, also, an inscription or a note about the writing of it, especially if it happened to be written in this state.

To add to the collection's value as a reference source, we are collecting biographical and critical material about our authors and their works. Will you send us information about yourself -something more personal than a "Who's Who" item, please, a photograph, and, if possible, a picture of the house where you were born. Clippings about you and your work will be very welcome, and all correspondence with you will be preserved.

We realize that granting our request may occasion you some bother, but we trust that you are sufficiently interested in your native state to wish to help make a collection of the works of its writers representative and complete. The collection already numbers several hundred volumes and one of its interesting features is the diversity of the books included in it.

We hope that it will be convenient for you to send us very soon a copy of "Bagatelle" and any other books you have written, making your bill in duplicate to the Maine State Library.

Very truly yours  
Maine State Library

MCF

June 1, 1930

Marion Cobb Fuller  
Maine State Library  
Augusta Maine.

Dear Miss Fuller:

I've delayed unapardonably in replying to your flattering request, but I'm pleased nevertheless and find it quite encouraging to learn that the State of Maine is interested in books written here. In this case, the placing of my book in the State collection is an honor for me, rather than a leading acquisition for the Maine State Library, but I am grateful, and especially am I encouraged to do better a next time, so that the collection will not suffer thru my work. If we must have a collection, it should be a worthy one!

The book is coming to you under separate cover and a photograph of myself will be with it. I must get the latter from a photographer and that will cause a bit of delay. I've dallied so that I am sending this bit, and will send the other very soon.

I'm enclosing facts about myself and on my work, as you requested. I haven't duplicate clippings of all the reviews I have had on "Bagatelle", but I send what I have, and copy the others from my scrap-book giving you the date, and where they appeared, in case you want to check them.

And if you write to me again, would you tell me--if it isn't too much trouble--the number of Lewiston and Auburn authors now represented in the collection. It might serve for a story for my paper, --the Lewiston Evening Journal. And if they didn't reach too high a number, would you give me their names, and then I would dig out the facts about them here. I'm sure many here would be surprised to learn of this collection.

Chances of my getting to Augusta on a week-day are slim, but if I ever do, I'm coming to see that collection,

Truly yours,

*From Charlotte Michaud  
(consigned)*

113 College St.,  
Lewiston Maine

I was born in Lewiston Oct. 14, 1898 and was christened Marie Ursule, but my parents began calling me Charlotte when I was about one and by that name I have always been known. It has been added on the City Hall records and also on those of SS. Peter and Paul church, Lewiston, where I was christened. It also appears as Charlotte Michaud on the voting list. I am the daughter of Amanda Simard and the late Joseph Louis Michaud, both of whom were born in Canada, and are of French descent. Both came to Lewiston as children and my father became a naturalized citizen in 1897, a few months before he married my mother.

My father was a reporter the greater part of his life for "Le Messager", a tri-weekly newspaper of Lewiston which recently observed its 50th anniversary, and which is printed in French. That language is always spoken by us at home. In April 1901, when I was 3½ years old, I was placed in a convent then operated in Lewiston by a religious order of nuns called the Ladies of Sion. I lived at the convent and when I became of school age, I went to school there too because the nuns also maintained the parochial school which was housed in the convent. Being the youngest in the convent, I was taught to read and write very early. I liked school and was generally near the top in rank. This order of nuns left Lewiston when I was 5 yrs. old and another order came, the Dominican nuns, who are still here. The convent in Lewiston was a new one for them and the personnel had been recruited from their various convents in Europe so that there were some from all parts of France, one at least from Switzerland, some who had studied in Spain, and nuns of another order who had been borrowed to teach English to us. These came from England.

I remained with these nuns until I was eight. They were to discontinue the boarding school soon as the rooms occupied by us for living quarters were needed for class rooms. I then lived at home, attending the same school, but as a day pupil. Graduated in 1912 from grammar school which had nine grades then, but I had gained a year, by completing the 6th and 7th grades in one year. Instruction was all in French except English grammar and U.S. history, as I recall it. It was before the new State ruling. I graduated with third highest honors.

In September of 1912, I entered Jordan high school, my first attendance at a public school. Had learned just a year before that there was in Lewiston a public library where one could obtain books to read at no cost. Didn't bother with children's books, but picked out anything that appealed to me in the adult section and read voraciously. In that way, I had acquired quite a vocabulary, but didn't know how to correctly pronounce many of the words. When forced to ~~xxx~~ pronounce them in class, I often guessed wrongly and this amused English speaking pupils, but Miss Affie Weymouth, who was my English teacher that first year, always defended me against their laughter and encouraged me.

Imagined that to go to college meant that you must be a school teacher, and didn't care for that profession, so chose the commercial course. The courses have been changed since. Now, I would take the "general" course which is a happy blend, and better still I would go to college. At that time however, the four extra years of school it would have meant would have been a financial strain at home. Mother urged it nevertheless and when I refused suggested instead that I go to normal training school, but I cared for that even less. And the commercial course it was. I graduated in 1916

If this is to be exact, it must be added that my father and mother separated when I was very young. There are attenuating circumstances, but the fact remains. That is why I was placed in convent so young. Mother took sole care of my upbringing, financially and otherwise. There was a reconciliation at the time I was taken out of the convent, but they again separated shortly before the birth of a boy, Charles, who is now 22. Another boy, only 18 months younger than myself, Avila, died a few days after his first birthday. There were no other children, and no other reconciliation. My father died in 1922

With mother alone to care for us, she confided in me as I was the oldest. Ever since I can remember I have been aware day by day of what our financial conditions were, and they weren't always of the best, but mother managed without help from anyone ever. Conditions were such tho, that I was not apt to lag at school or waste time. I always gave my best effort conscious that soon I must work to earn and lighten mother's task. Did not work outside immediately upon graduation. To provide a home and earn at the same time, mother rented rooms and served meals as a means of earning the money needed for all of us. Instead of paying a salary to a stranger to help with the work, I remained at home, saving that salary and at the same time giving better assistance than a stranger would.

Visited at high school and a teacher remarked that I should be doing something better than that. Thru her recommendation I was offered employment at Atherton's, a Lewiston furniture store. Began as office assistant, was soon named cashier and after a while, became in charge of a stock-keeping department then maintained. Left with a girl friend to study in Boston. Mother's desire that I become a teacher was still mentioned and when this girl left, mother suggested that I leave with her. I agreed only because I was permitted to study dancing. I had had instruction in Lewiston for many years, first with a nun who came from Switzerland, then with Prof. George T. Wilson, now of Portland; with Mrs. Annie T. Heth of Lewiston, and Miss Bernice Ham, now Mrs. Henry Lumbard of Auburn. Mother agreed and I spent the better part of a year in Boston, studying with ~~the~~ Lilla Viles Wyman, well known teacher there.

Lived at the Berkeley street Y.W.C.A. and worked part-time as office assistant at Franklin Union which maintained a rehabilitation school for disabled veterans. When I returned to Lewiston, mother, my brother and I moved to Old Orchard where mother had rented a cottage and meant to continue her same business there during the summer, and possibly in Biddeford, winters. We didn't like Biddeford and so remained in Old Orchard during the winter also. My brother went to school there and I gave private instruction in dancing. The second winter I opened a dancing school in Old Orchard and the third winter, I resumed my classes in Old Orchard and also opened one in Sanford. At the same time, I studied dancing with George Herlihy of Portland. We remained in Old Orchard the following summer, but in the fall, we returned to Lewiston. Mother opened a restaurant, my brother went to school, and I helped at the restaurant.

Industrial conditions had changed however and we decided that I could earn more outside and mother could hire someone at small cost to do the work I did. Entered the business office of the Lewiston Evening Journal, but informed City Editor D.S. Dexter, that I wanted to be a reporter. For nearly a year then, I had been correspondant for a French newspaper printed in Montreal so that I had some knowledge of newspaper writing. There remained to learn the English way of doing it. Mr. Dexter suggested that I bring him all the news I could and he would see. I had entered the business office day after Labor Day in 1925 and was transferred to the news staff late in December of the same year.

Soon after my transfer a page of the "Journal" magazine, published once a week was turned over to Miss Alice Frost Lord for the printing of stories concerning Lewiston and Auburn only. She asked everyone on the staff to contribute, and I did with a vengeance. She edited my stories, made suggestions on how they could be improved, but best of all, she published them. I think that's the best encouragement any writer can receive--to see his stuff in print. Hardly a magazine was published in which I didn't have at least one article, and some times I had as many as four. I was greedy for assignments and took everything that came my way, even tiresome ones, because even if the time spent there was boresome, I at least learned to write about it.

It was Miss Lord who discovered I could write verse. A few thoughts which had bothered me for some time didn't seem to make a story, but I wrote them out and passed them to Miss Lord having given the whole ~~title~~ the title which I thought best expressed its nature "Just Words". It was in prose and intended for the magazine, to fill up an odd corner, possibly. Miss Lord brought it back to me to say it was poetry and would I write it in verse form. This was most amusing to me because I had never been able to write limericks even. Miss Lord scanned a few lines for me and told me to work it out and bring it back to her again.

I tried it, but found it hard, so went to Mrs. Lila N. Flint, whose office was only across the hall. She was always willing to help and did this time also, praising the article besides. Both she and Miss Lord urged me to write more, and I began to write everything that way. Some of it was bad, some less so and some of it I thought was good, but everyone who read any of it told me it was nothing short of wonderful. I lost confidence in folks about me, tho usually newspaper folk are not ~~to~~ to praise unduly, but to learn if the verses were really of any worth, I decided to print them in book form. The book had naturally to be small, because printing costs more money than I could dispense with. I had 200 printed at the Auburn Free Press and distributed them to book reviewers, my friends and relatives. The last two groups were all pleased, of course, but the former disappointed me. They were all very polite and what serious criticism there was had to be guessed from the way they worded their praise. To read them, tho, they are flattering.

Miss Lord and Mrs. Flint (she died last July) both urged me to try the true form of poetry, but I have no patience with it. I have tried it, but to me it looks stilted, forced, unnatural many times, tho I have read poetry written by others that did not seem that way. The best I have written in measured tread and with some attention to rhyme is that called "Popular Song" and which is included in "Bagatelle". I found the result as empty as the usual popular song lyrics, and so named it that.

I never had the patience to work over my writings. I think them out and when they are written dislike to go over them. When I do, I think I make them worse. Miss Lord insists tho, possibly thinking I am mentally lazy, but I think I lack the eternal fire. A spark or two is probably all I possess. Everyone on the staff here tho is willing to help the other, by the staff I mean the "Journal" staff. Those of us who had been on the "old paper" as we call it, meaning before the Lewiston Daily Sun bought the "Journal", feel a sort of closer bond, and tho I came on the paper only a few months before the sale, I'm happy that I knew the paper then. That is why "Bagatelle" is dedicated to the "old Journal crowd". It is signed "by the Cub Reporter" because some of my early magazine stories had that for a by-line.

For over a year now, I have been writing brief bits under the general head of "Local Tales". These are published in the "Journal" magazine and seem to please the readers. My intention when I began to write these was to train myself to write a fact briefly and with a punch. Miss Lord made a column out of it, and they are published every week unless they are crowded out by long stories.

When I feel I can do the subject justice, I want to write about my people, that is French-Canadians who came to live in Lewiston and Auburn particularly, and Franco-Americans, that is children of these who were born here, but retain their French heritage of language, custom and character. Being of the latter group, I can understand them and my work gives me opportunity to see the American or Yankee viewpoint. I think it would be interesting reading for the English speaking residents here and the French-speaking citizens would be glad to have many false impressions refuted. It wouldn't do to write the book too soon, tho, my own people think I may show promise, but they are not apt to accept me as their mouthpiece, probably, until the years have given me more weight in this world.

If I ever write the book of course, you will receive one of the early copies.

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Copy of the reviews will follow in another mail. If I don't send this off now, I'll be delayed so that I'll have to make another start.

C. Michaud



C O P Y

June 10, 1930

Miss Charlotte Michaud,  
113 College Street,  
Lewiston, Maine.

Dear Miss Michaud;-

I have delayed acknowledging your letter and very interesting biographical sketch waiting for Bagatelle to arrive so that I might thank you for all three at one time. I appreciate the trouble that you have taken in answering our request for your book for our Maine Author Collection, and we are delighted to have it and the picture and the biographical sketch. I am very grateful to you for showing such interest in our collection.

I have been glancing through Bagatelle since it came this morning and I find that it entirely merits the praise of it which I have read. The verses have spirit and charm as well as interest. I like them very much!

I will answer your question about the number of Auburn and Lewiston authors in the collection when I have time to look up a few of the birthplaces. I think that there are not many of them; Mr. Staples is the only one whom I recall just now but I think there must be others who have had books published. Of course there are many Maine writers who have not yet published books who are doing excellent work. We try to keep in touch with all our Maine authors and we are always interested when we hear of a new one.

I have almost neglected to mention your picture. Such a pleasing picture and quite the youngest one we have in our collection.

Thank you very much.

MCF



