sugar making, and other native devices. Of this, Peter D. Kalm, the Norwegian naturalist, visiting Canada in 1749, was quite aware, as he made the following observations (translated from the French):

"Whereas many nations imitate the French customs, I notice that here, it is the French who, in various respects, imitate the customs of the Indians with whom they are in daily contacts. They smoke, in Indian pipes, tobacco prepared in the native way; they wear shoes in the Indian fashion, and *garters* and *sashes* like the Indians. . . They borrow the bark canoes of the Indians and use them just as the Indians do" (*Voyage de Kalm en Amérique*).

Should finger weaving and its ramifications be accepted as having existed in prehistoric times both in Scandinavia and in parts of North America, the next step in the study of this highly interesting technique is to explore fully the respective areas of diffusion of each, and find out whether—with more data possibly still available— it is possible to bridge the gap between them; for this earliest stage of weaving may go back to a single origin, then for ages may have covered vast expanses which have now fallen far apart, and may have become isolated, in the form of mere survivals.

ARROW SASHES

When the Assomption or Achigan sashes were no longer made for the Montreal fur traders and bourgeois, and after the Hudson's Bay Company had begun, over 50 years ago, to purchase imitation sashes made on looms, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild of Montreal exhibited a dozen old sashes at the Art Gallery, in March 1907, to draw attention to the disappearance of the interesting Canadian handicraft that they represent. And the Guild, on that occasion, brought over from St. Jacques de L'Achigan old Mme. Françoise Venne, who was photographed when working at a sash (Plate III). Nothing more at the time seems to have been done in recording the facts or trying to preserve the ancient technique of sash weaving.

But Dr. E.-Z. Massicotte, who at the time saw the sashes on exhibition at the Art Gallery and consulted Mme. Venne, was so deeply impressed that he eventually took the initiative for their preservation. As early as 1885 he had joined the L'Etoile snow-shoe club whose members wore woollen sashes, and he owned, like many others in the club, a sash which presumably had been manufactured for the Hudson's Bay Company in England. In a verbal account of the circumstances, which the writer has recently taken in shorthand, Dr. Massicotte said (translated from the French):

"It was fashionable (*chic*) to wear an arrow sash (*ceinture fléchée*), as the merchants, the lawyers and the *bourgeois*, wearing sashes on short

woollen overcoats, walked far more in those days than they do now. Those who had only manufactured sashes did not all know the difference, although the manufactured article was sold for $1 or $2, whereas the best Assomption sashes were worth from $15 to $25, and were often made to order. It was at that time (1885) that the buyers of sashes were first 'cheated' with substitute goods. Among many others I saw wearing sashes was the famous Dr. Mignault, whose father was a well-known bone-setter (*rebouteur*) of l'Assomption or neighbourhood; the Michauds were related to the Lord family, makers of arrow sashes.

"The exhibition of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild at the Art Gallery (Phillips Square), in 1907, gave me an idea of the great beauty and value of the arrow sashes. More than half a dozen sashes, of 6, 7, or 8 inches wide, bore large initials (about 1½ inches), those of the owners, sewn in bead-work or applied on the sashes. And I was so struck (*éberlué*) at the sight of Mme. Venne making a sash before the people that I began to inquire about the makers. But for many years no one showed much interest in the subject.

"Our *Veillées du Bon Vieux Temps* [folklore evenings which M. Massicotte and myself organized, in 1918, under the auspices of the Société historique de Montréal at Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice] caused a revival of interest in the Assomption sash, as we had several specimens on exhibition on the concert stage, and from the profits of the evenings, $50 were made available for the study and preservation of the ceinture fléchée. Having learned that Mme. Napoléon Lord, of Ste. Marie Salomé, still knew how to make sashes, I looked for someone who could learn from her. Finally the Sisters of La Providence, of Fullum Street, Montreal, accepted the responsibility of preserving the art in their institution and entrusted two members of their community with its keeping. One of the two, Sœur Marie-Jeanne, showed particular aptitude not only in the study and the making of the standard Achigan sash but in the varied techniques of finger weaving, as the "filet" sashes and the braided sashes, of which she made interesting silk waist bands. The Sisters of La Providence were the more easily induced to become actively interested in sash making as a few of the old women supported by their order were actually making arrow sashes; these women presumably were from the district of L'Assomption. The sisters tried six or seven kinds of wool but rather unsuccessfully; worsted wool, spun over and twisted hard, was a prime requirement, and Shetland wool seemed the most suitable.

"The origin of the arrow sash, of course, intrigued me, and I inquired from folklorists in France as to whether arrow sashes were known there; but the only information received was that among the Basques in the Pyrenees a textile of the same type was made, but not in the form of sashes.

"The most famous of the sashes I have seen was that of Lavallée, then manager of the Cie. Rolland, of Montreal. It was 12 inches wide, and had been made for him with Berlin wool (*laine de Berlin*) by Mme. Venne, of St. Jacques l'Achigan, as he wanted to have a sash finer than any other, and he paid $25 for it. It was later sold with the Lavallée art collection at Scott and Sons for $150."

The impetus already given to the revival of folk crafts was further enhanced at the Quebec Festivals of 1927 and 1928 at Château Frontenac, under the joint auspices of the National Museum and the Canadian Pacific Railway. The writer brought Mme. Napoléon Lord, with her daughter and Mme. Odilon Vignault, to make sashes there in the presence of the festival attendants from many parts. And, as a leaflet of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild states it, "Thousands of persons saw at close range the handicrafts of Quebec practised by folk workers. These festivals were unique in musical and handicrafts performance on the continent. They served the great purpose of crystallizing in the minds of those who attended the fact that these old-time arts and folk songs are still part of the every day life of some of the people in old Quebec."

In 1930, Mr. O. A. Bériau, then director of handicrafts for the Department of Agriculture, Quebec, became interested in the "ceinture fléchée", and had Mme. Napoléon Lord teach her craft to a few members of the staff at the Quebec school of handicrafts. Courses of sash making under the direction of Mme. Albert Bienjonetti (Brunet) have been given at regular intervals since, at the Quebec school and at various points in the province, where a number of women now are well acquainted with the technique and occasionally make sashes of the Achigan type.

ACHIGAN SASHES

Most of the *ceintures fléchées*, within the memory of old people, were made at St. Jacques de L'Achigan, in L'Assomption County, Province of Quebec; St. Jacques is about 8 miles north of L'Assomption village and L'Assomption is 25 miles northeast of Montreal, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence. For this reason the English-speaking people in Montreal often call them Assomption sashes.

Practically all the "habitant" families at St. Jacques and many others in the adjacent parishes of Ste. Marie Salomé and St. Alexis, 50 years ago, used to spend 2 or 3 months in the winter making sashes to meet the Montreal demand. Whole families, including women, children from the age of seven, and even the men, began to work at five, six, or seven in the morning, to stop only at nine, ten, or eleven at night. The extremely low price for their work and the necessity to earn their food forced the makers to muster all their resources to accomplish as much as was possible.

Other parishes in the neighbourhood, though not L'Assomption itself, also practised the craft to a smaller extent; for instance, Mme. Odilon Vigneault, of St. Ambroise de Kildare, Joliette County (5 miles from Ste. Marie Salomé), still occasionally made fine sashes down to about 8 years ago.

The names of the families specializing in this work were: Desrosiers, Mirault, Lord (French-speaking), Venne, Melançon, Légaré, Gaudet, Johnson, Bourgeois, Forest, Léveillé, and Lajoie, a number of whom were of Acadian stock—these Acadians had settled in the province about 1755 or soon afterwards.

At St. Jacques, the people still say: "All the women, 50 years ago, made sashes; they worked night and day." As the sashes they wove by the dozen were for the traders, they always followed the same model. Whenever a finer and broader sash, 8 to 10 inches wide, was needed—that is, a *ceinture tissée plus serré* (more tightly woven) or *faite plus forte* (made stronger)—an expert weaver, like Mme. Desrosiers, Mme. Venne, Mme. Odilon Vigneault, Mme. Napoléon Lord, or some other, took charge of the order for a higher price. These weavers, except Mme. Napoléon Lord, now have died, but many of the folk weavers are left at L'Achigan and neighbourhood that could still weave a standard sash. Though the weavers many years ago ceased to practise their craft, a few of them still survive, for instance: Mme. Joseph Blanchard, of Ste. Marie Salomé, Mme. Joseph Melançon (Elizabeth Lord), Mme. Raymond-Jean Venne, and Mme. Jean-Louis Lord (Julienne Desrosiers), of L'Achigan; Mme. Joseph Larivière, Mme. Joseph Richard, both of Ste. Marie; Mme. Emile Lépine and Mlle. Erméline Mirault, of L'Achigan. These weavers, since they gave up their winter work, occasionally made sashes when they found an opportunity to dispose of them.

Children, particularly little girls, began to work at sashes at the age of about seven. First of all, helping their mother who was weaving, they unravelled the threads behind her, and this was the work of two children. Without their help, the weaver would have had frequently to leave her braiding to unravel the tangled strands behind her. The technique, according to some, was easy to learn; according to others, quite difficult. On the whole, what to an outsider seems a very complex process was natural and easy in a family where the craft had always been practised.

Not a few people, it seems, could make an ordinary sash in a long day, beginning at five in the morning and ending at eleven at night. They worked fast and were so used to the work that, so they say, they could make a sash "les yeux fermés" (with eyes shut). Elsewhere half a sash was made in a day. When the sash was of exceptional size and quality, more time was required. Mme. Napoléon Lord used to weave, in a day,

3 feet and 3 inches, that is, half of one sash, and at night she made the fringe—for that half—twisting the strands with some one helping, for it was difficult for one person alone to twist the strands properly and make the knots at the end. Now a weaver would not think of making more than a few inches a day. In a Montreal census[1] for 1825 it is stated that 3 weeks were required by a weaver to make a sash, at the factory of Nicolas Brisson, prop., to whom 20 shillings were paid for a sash, or 10 shillings for the work alone; he employed three girls (who may have been from L'Assomption).

A few sash weavers would at times gather and work together for an opportunity to chat and while away the dull hours. For instance, Mme. Joseph Blanchard and her two sisters went to the neighbour's house, and, as the house was not very large, the whole place was taken up for stretching the strands from the ceiling to the floor, and the men, who could not pass, pretended to scold.

When the strands were sorted out, placed in a set, and ready for finger weaving (*ourdir*), a *tempié* consisting of two flat cedar sticks, about 12 inches long, was placed on each side of the set of strands, at the middle or centre, and tied at the ends so as to hold them firmly in place. Then one end of the strands was tied either to a beam of the ceiling (*soliveau*) or high up on the wall, and the opposite end was fastened to a long nail on the floor. The weaver then sat beside the strands thus set diagonally and began her finger weaving from the *tempié* or sticks downwards. Thus the weaving was started at the middle or centre of the whole length of the strands, which was the usual or only method for the long sashes. From time to time the *tempié* was loosened and shifted down, to keep it closer to the hands, as it held the body of the fabric well stretched. In order to shorten the length of the stretch from the floor to the ceiling, the strands of the upper part were usually tied in several large knots, spaced from each other. When one end was woven and the fringe completed, the process was reversed; this finished end was tied to the ceiling or the wall, and the other half was woven in its turn, starting at the *tempié*, which had been readjusted just above the starting point.

It would have been practically impossible to weave a large sash from one end, as may be done with the garters; the strands were far too long, as the woven body of the sash alone often was 6½ feet long; and the unwoven strands naturally were of much greater length.

Originally there were several different ways of weaving, but the Achigan sashes are all of the same commercial standard, mostly following the description here recorded from Mme. Napoléon Lord: The arrows or points were usually made the length of the finger (the index), that is

[1] Livre de Dépouillement du Recensement fait de la Cité en 1825 (Archives of the Seminary of Quebec).

3½ inches; they could be made longer. Most weavers made 7 arrows or points or 6½ to a foot; these were long enough and could be made fairly fast. But the finer sashes, stronger and more tightly woven, like those of Mme. Lord herself, consisted of 14 arrows or points to a foot; which meant more work and better quality.

Mme. Lord made sashes as wide as 8 or 9 inches, but most weavers were satisfied to make them 6 or 6½ inches wide. The narrower ones, with fairly long arrows, were rather loose and elastic, but once pressed and ironed, they looked well. The smallest sashes consisted of more than 100 strands.

The red core or *cœur* (heart), as it was called by the makers, consisted of 80 (double) strands or *brins*. On one side of the core there were 16 arrows or points, consisting of 12 strands each; and as many on the other side; which means, 32 arrows or points in all; making a total of 464 strands (double, or spun, two single threads together) in all. This estimate, given by Mme. Napoléon Lord, slightly differs from that of Mme. Jean-Louis Lord; that is, the sash contained 18 arrows of 12 strands each on both sides of the core; and from 50 to 60 threads for the core. The wider sashes, according to Mme. Napoléon Lord, consisted of 24 arrows or points on each side, the number of strands remaining the same, and the core the same.

The design or pattern, which could vary as in the garters, depended upon the placing at the start of the coloured strands and their number.

Red, pale blue (*petit bleu*, as it was called), dark blue (*gros bleu*), yellow, and green were the usual colours—always the same among the Achigan weavers.

As a decorative device, which was called *flêcher les flèches* or *carreauter* (*quadriller*), that is, checker any given colour in the arrows, the weaver placed 6 strands of one colour and 6 of another together, one colour above, the other under; which made them emerge in turn over the weft.

The fringes were often made by younger members of the family or even, at Napoléon Lord's, by M. Lord himself, who said that, to twist the two or three strands together well, you must be two. The strands were twisted between the palms of the two hands—*Ça vrille*, he said, it turns spirally. Before making the twists, the strands were plaited for about an inch, and the twists ended in a knot and a tuft.

The wool required (*laine à ceintures*) for making sashes was of a special type—rough and hard, and dyed in advance. For each sash 2 pounds and upwards were used. The wool was purchased in skeins (*écheveaux*) arranged in bundles (*balles*) of 10 pounds of each colour. The colours were bright, fresh, and fast. The local merchant, Dugas, used to state that he ordered his supply from France, but it might have been

more exact to say that he obtained it in Montreal, possibly through the agents of the Hudson's Bay Company. Mme. Vigneau, a good weaver who died only a few years ago, preferred store wool called Sexon (?), its strands being larger. After the wool was received it was twisted (*retordue*) on the spinning wheel at home, and two single threads were spun into one, to give more solidity to the strands.

When the sashes were finished they were moistened, stretched, covered with fine cloth, and pressed (*mises en presses*) with hot irons; then they were folded up, ready to deliver.

Orders for large numbers of sashes came from Montreal, most of them through M. Dugas, the local merchant at Saint-Jacques L'Achigan. The Richard families (two households) and others worked for a M. Hudon, also a M. Pilon, presumably merchants, in Montreal. Mme. Napoléon Lord's mother, as long ago as she could remember, used to work for a M. Bélanger, who had been brought up among the Indians, had married a Morin of St. Jacques, and traded with the Indians; his sashes were locally known, about 1830 to 1850 (?), as "les ceintures de M. Bélanger".

Joseph Dugas, the only local merchant interested in the making of sashes at L'Achigan, as this was an important item of his trade, received large orders (though they came irregularly, mostly in the winter) from Montreal, and arranged for speedily filling them. His method of trading with the weavers was typical of the period, also they provided him with a flourishing business.

Dugas did not pay the workers in money, but in goods, and the old people state that he used to exchange articles from his old stock for their work so that, by the end of the winter, he had emptied his store (*vidé son magasin*). From time to time the weavers sent their new sashes to the store and did their best to secure useful supplies for the value of their work.

The value of the small sashes was set very low, about 30 or 35 cents, the wool having been furnished by the merchant, and *ourdie*, that is, prepared in sets of strands by especial workers, at his cost. It meant for each worker about 15 cents for a day's work.

Before M. Dugas handed over the wool to the weavers it was spun and twisted hard in double strands and then *ourdie* or prepared in properly disposed sets of strands held in place together by large loose knots and ready for finger weaving. As the preparation of the strands or *ourdissage* in time became a specialized task, it was given out to a few selected workers who preferred this work on account of higher returns. The *ourdisseuses* for the closing period were Mme. Julienne Desrosiers, who is now 75 years old, and her sisters, all of Ste. Marie Salomé (Mme. Jean-Louis Lord, Mme. Magloire Lord, and Mme. Joseph Melançon). Dugas brought

over the wool for them to mount it (*on la montait*) in sets all similar to each other; then he distributed these sets among the weavers. Or, in other cases, the weavers came for the sets of strands, which were charged to them. When, in the winter, all the *ourdisseuses* at Mme. Desrosiers' were at work together it was impossible to move in the house, and the men did not like it (*les hommes n'aimaient pas ça*).

The weavers, who would have preferred to receive money for their work, had to accept the trader's system of barter, which was patterned after the Hudson's Bay Company's. Dissatisfied with their unreasonably low pay from a trader whom they considered well off, they brought their grievance to Rev. Tancrède Viger, their parish priest about 30 years ago (it may well be over 40 years ago). M. Viger, who held the opinion that they were ruining their health to no good (*elles travaillaient pour rien*), urged them to require money for their sashes or refuse to go on with the work. But the merchant, who had grown old and indifferent, would not change his ways, as they had proved profitable. An impasse resulted and the ancient craft of sash-making at L'Achigan came to an end.

The parish priest looked for a substitute to enable his parishioners to earn a living in the winter. He arranged for the purchase of sewing machines for them and secured orders from Montreal for sewing at home. But long before the machines were fully paid for, orders ceased to come and the workers found themselves in debt, sorry to have dropped the substance for the shadow.

The weaving of sashes at L'Achigan and Ste. Marie Salomé began many years before the time of the present-day survivors. When questioned about the origin of the craft, one of them answered: "Grandmother Desrosiers made sashes just as we do." Mme. Napoléon Lord said that she had learned from her mother, Adelaide Richard, who had made sashes since her childhood; and she concluded: "A ma connaissance, il s'est, ici, toujours fait des ceintures" (to my knowledge, sashes have always been made here). But sash-making did not develop, at L'Achigan itself, from the technique of making braided garters, as nobody there seems to have made garters. Yet, Mme. Napoléon Lord at least on one occasion after the Folk-song and Handicraft Festivals at Quebec, spontaneously made a braided waist band out of silk that closely resembles a braided garter.

Mme. Jean-Louis Lord remembered having heard old women say that, before the parish of L'Achigan was established Indians (Algonkin), at Ruisseau-du-Nord, knew how to make sashes and had shown their Canadian neighbours how to weave them. As soon as the land was cultivated the Indians moved away, but the art of making sashes was preserved.

A Mlle. St. Jean, of St. Jacques de L'Achigan, who made sashes, went away to Manitoba, about 60 years ago, and there, according to Mme. Napoléon Lord, showed the Indians how to weave sashes; this she told the Achigan people, many years ago, when on a short visit home.

As many of the settlers at L'Achigan and in the neighbourhood are of Acadian origin (including the Lord family, whose grandfather cleared the land there), it has been presumed, but mistakenly, that the craft of sash-making originated in Acadia. There is no evidence to support this theory.

After the writer had invited Mme. Napoléon Lord and her daughter Alice, in 1927, to figure among the folk weavers at the first Quebec Festival, and to give demonstrations of sash-making, Mme. Odilon Vignault, of St. Ambroise de Kildare, who also made fine broad sashes of the best type, was discovered and invited to join Mme. Lord at the second festival. Their activities at the festivals drew the attention of the Department of Agriculture in Quebec, who had supposed, like others, that this old Canadian craft was lost, and from that moment on undertook to help in its preservation. Mme. Lord was later invited by the Ecole des Arts domestiques at Quebec, where she taught finger weaving to five women students. Since, Mme. Lord has taught a few others, just as she had previously, when brought to Montreal, shown the method to Sister Marie-Jeanne.

GARTER WEAVING

Woven garters and bands in French Canada once were made in three different ways: (1) on a small ribbon loom with loose thread heddle controlled by two treadles, of the type preserved at Hôtel-Dieu, Quebec; (2) with a wooden heddle (*grille à tisser*) hand controlled or fixed on a bench, such as are occasionally found in rural Quebec and among the Indians—a woven garter of this type was collected at Island of Orleans (Plate XXIII); (3) by means of finger weaving or braiding, of the kind studied here. The following description of the technique of garter weaving is restricted to this third kind—finger weaving, as illustrated in the garter collection made by the writer for the National Museum of Canada, and as observed and recorded in 1937 with Mme. Alma Tremblay, 61 years old, of St. Joseph des Eboulements, Charlevoix County, Quebec.

The wool, produced on the farm, is prepared at home and dyed in the usual way; Mme. Tremblay's is carded at Onesime Tremblay's mill at Blagousse (in the neighbourhood). It is spun first in single threads, then two (sometimes three) threads are spun into one strand.

When the strands are ready, and rolled in small balls of various colours, they are *ourdies* or mounted in sets or skeins. To do this, two