

My name is Soeun Sam.

Su os dey!

("Hello" in Khmer, the language of Cambodia.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in Cambodia. I was married and had 8 children including Tithdary and Yinthy. I was in charge of the household, but I also ran a small farm. I sold vegetables to help feed our family. My husband was a soldier. He was killed during the time of the dictator Pol Pot. My children and I were all sent to different work camps. We worked all day and part of the night for almost no food.



National flag of Cambodia

Life in Transition

In 1979, I found my children and led them from Cambodia to Thailand. It was a difficult journey. We had to walk through the jungle at night. We lived in refugee camps for three years before coming to America in 1982. I was 54.



Map showing Cambodia, Thailand, Connecticut, and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Soeun moved her family to Connecticut, then to Lowell in 1984. She worked for a while in a factory, but was injured and can no longer work. She lives with family members.



Cambodian residents of Lowell

My name is Tithdary Saing, but my friends call me Sam.

Su os dey!

("Hello" in Khmer, the language of Cambodia.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in Cambodia in 1972. I was only three when the Khmer Rouge took over the country. They sent us all off to live in different work camps.



National flag of Cambodia

Life in Transition

I was seven when my family escaped from Cambodia in 1979. To get out of our country, we had to walk through the jungle. There were wild animals there, and land mines in our path. Some people in our group died along the way. My mother, Soeun Sam, led the way. My sister Yinthy helped care for me. We lived in a camp in Thailand for three years. The houses in the camp were shacks, with no water, heat or electricity. My family came to the US in 1982 when I was 10 years old.



Map showing Cambodia, Thailand, Connecticut and Lowell

Life in Lowell

The family moved to Lowell in 1984. Sam learned English, and graduated from a local high school in 1991. He went to college and became a successful businessman.



Cambodian children in Lowell

My name is Elkin Montoya.

Hola!

("Hello" in Spanish, the language of Colombia.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in 1960 in Colombia.



National Flag of Colombia

Life in Transition

My family moved to Lowell to be with my father. He had arrived in Lowell in 1969 as a member of the *primer enganche*, or "first hook," of Colombians who came to work in American textile mills.



Map of Colombia and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Elkin graduated from Greater Lowell Vocational Technical High School, and then earned a degree from the University of Lowell. In 1984, he met and married Darmery Cano. Together, they participate in a dance troupe that performs the Cumbia, a Colombian dance. Elkin has also spent some of his time as a translator for the Hispanic community at Saint Joseph's Hospital in Lowell. By 1991, Elkin had become a bank manager.



Elkin Montoya in Lowell

My name is Darmery Cano.

Hola!

("Hello" in Spanish, the language of Colombia.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in Colombia. I have two younger sisters, including Junny, who is four years younger. My father, Jairo Cano, left Colombia and moved to Lowell when I was 10. He got a job in a textile mill and saved his money to pay for us to join him.



National Flag of Colombia

Life in Transition

My mother went to Lowell in 1977, leaving me in charge of my sisters. I was only 15. Fortunately, our family was only separated for one more year. My sisters and I were able to join our parents in Lowell in 1978 when I was 16 years old.



Map of Colombia and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Darmery graduated from Lowell High School. While she was in her early twenties, she worked at D'Youville Manor, a nursing home in the city. She met Elkin Montoya, another Colombian immigrant, in 1984. They were married later that year. They both are members of a dance troupe, and together perform a Colombian dance called the Cumbia.



Colombian people dancing in Lowell

My name is John Falante.

Ola!

("Hello" in Portuguese, the language of Portugal.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in 1904 in Madeira, Portugal. My father died when I was 14 years old.



National Flag of Portugal

Life in Transition

In 1920 I came to Lowell by myself when I was 16, to join my sister who was already working here in the mills. She helped me get a job as a spinner. It was January when I arrived in Lowell. It was the first time I had ever seen snow!



Map showing Portugal and Lowell

Life in Lowell

John went to school at night because he wanted to learn English quickly. He went to the movies a lot, to help his English. John married in 1933, had children, and was able to give them the education his father had wanted to give him. He was lucky when an old man, who did not have sons, chose to train John as a loom fixer. This was the best job in a mill, but the machinery was so loud that he lost much of his hearing. John played soccer every day after work.



Portuguese family in Lowell

My name is Emily Spinola.

Ola!

("Hello" in Portuguese, the language of Portugal.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in Portugal. My family was very poor.



National Flag of Portugal

Life in Transition

I came to Lowell in 1908. I was hoping for a chance at a better life. My parents were worried about me because I came here by myself. They were glad that I was able to stay with my aunt who took good care of me. It was very lonely for me at first. I really missed my family.



Map showing Portugal and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Emily found a job working as a spinner in a cotton mill. This was a difficult job, and the pay was very low. She also learned how to speak English. Her father, mother, and 5 brothers and sisters arrived from Portugal the following year. Emily's knowledge of English was very helpful for the family. Her sister, Arminda, and her father also found jobs at the mill where Emily worked.



Portuguese mill workers

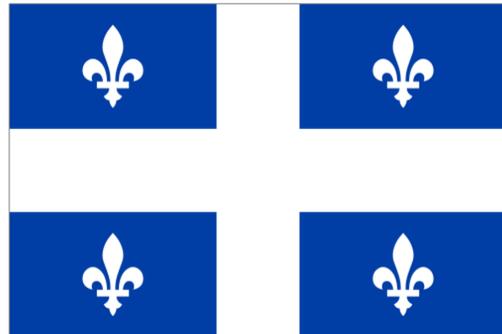
My name is Joseph Albert.

Bonjour!

("Hello" in French, the language of Quebec.)

Life in Home Country

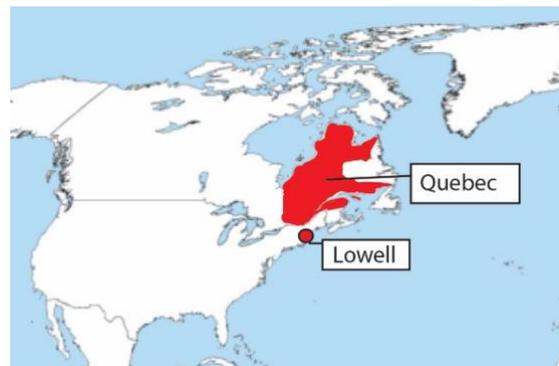
I was born in Quebec, Canada in 1869. In 1881, my parents, Felix and Desneiges Albert, gave up farming and brought the family to Lowell.



Flag of Quebec

Life in Transition

There were nine children in our family at the time. My sister Marie and I looked after the luggage while my father searched for someone we could live with until we found a place of our own.



Map showing Quebec and Lowell

Life in Lowell

During his first year in Lowell, Joseph worked in the spinning room of the Tremont Mills. He had to leave home before six o'clock in the morning and work hard for little pay. "I will go into business for myself," he thought, and he did. He became a successful undertaker and funeral director in Lowell. In 1891, he married Athala Caron, and they had six children. Joseph was very active in Lowell's French-Canadian community. People praised him as an excellent citizen, and appreciated his generosity.



Photo of Joseph Albert

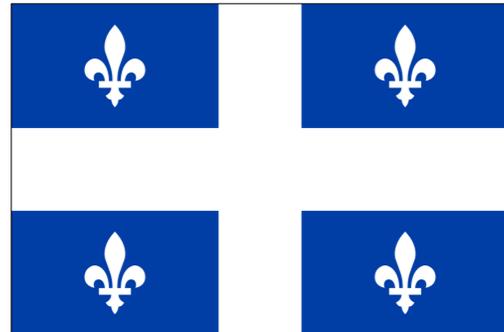
My name is Octavie Crepeau.

Bonjour!

("Hello" in French, the language of Quebec.)

Life in Home Country

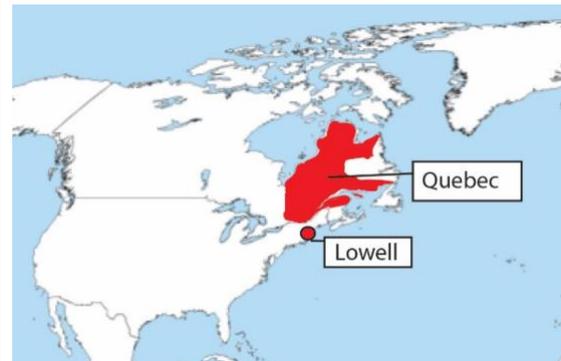
I was born in 1874 in Quebec, Canada, where my father was a ship captain. All eleven children in my family attended school, and could read and write. In 1887, after he lost his job, our family moved to Lowell.



Flag of Quebec

Life in Transition

During our trip to the United States, I talked with my sister Emma and brother George about what schools in Lowell might be like.



Map showing Quebec and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Although he had been a ship's captain, Octavie's father was happy to find work at a grocery store in Lowell. Octavie soon made many friends in the French community. She especially noticed Edward Chevalier, the young man who drove the grocer's cart. Octavie got a job in the Lawrence Mills, packing stockings in the finishing room. Eight years later, she married Edward and, like most French-Canadian housewives, did not work outside the house. She and Edward had five children.



A French-Canadian market in Lowell

My name is Diamond Brustos.

Kalimera!

("Hello" in Greek, the language of Greece.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in Greece. My family was very poor.



National flag of Greece

Life in Transition

I arrived in New York in 1913 when I was 7. I traveled with my mother and my sister. We came to meet my father, who was working two jobs in Lowell. During the day he worked at the Merrimack Mills, and at night he worked for United States Cartridge Company. He worked very hard to save money. He sent the money to Greece to pay for our steamship tickets to America.



Map of Greece and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Diamond attended the Greek church school until she was fourteen. She then went to work in the Merrimack Mills as a velvet cutter. Diamond lived with her parents until she married, when she was eighteen years old. Her husband's name was Christos Paleos. He ran the local candy store that was downstairs from her apartment.



Lowell immigrant from Greece

My name is Charles Antonopoulos.

Kalimera!

("Hello" in Greek, the language of Greece.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in Greece in 1886. I decided to leave my farm in Greece because I wanted to get an education in America.



National flag of Greece

Life in Transition

I was 21 when I came here by myself. It was very crowded on the large ship. I chose Lowell because I had a cousin who worked in the Hamilton Mills.



Map of Greece and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Charles could not find a job at first because he could not speak English. He finally found a job as a tailor in Haverhill, MA. He was paid \$4.00 per week for sixty hours of work. Charles had to return to Greece in 1912 to fight in the Balkan War. He returned to Lowell two years later. He married in 1919, and had four sons. Charles later opened his own tailor shop and dry cleaning business. After some struggles, he became very successful. His little store grew into a chain of dry cleaning stores called "Anton's Cleaners."



Greek immigrants in Lowell

My name is Peter Quinn.

Hello!

(English is one of the languages spoken in Ireland.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in Ireland in June 1858. My family was very poor.



Flag of the United Kingdom (Ireland was part of the United Kingdom from 1800-1922.)

Life in Transition

We came to the United States in 1872 and settled in Boston. I came to Lowell in 1880, when I was 22. I got a job working in a textile mill, making cotton cloth.



Map of Ireland and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Peter later got a job as a machinist at the Lowell Machine Shop. A machinist helps to build machines, such as power looms. Being a machinist was a good job. Peter married Annie McCabe in about 1885, and they had ten children. All five of the boys died while they were infants. The Quinn family moved many times, always to a nicer neighborhood. They ended up living in Belvidere, the nicest part of Lowell. Peter became a U.S. citizen in 1900. His hobby was making clocks and wooden cabinets. Peter went to church every day up to the time of his death in 1933.



Irish men in Lowell

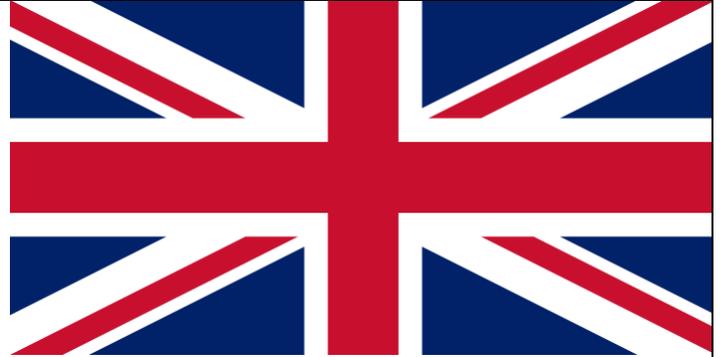
My name is Bridget McCabe.

Hello!

(English is one of the languages spoken in Ireland.)

Life in Home Country

I was born in Ireland in 1866. I lived on a farm with my family, but we were very poor.



Flag of the United Kingdom (Ireland was part of the United Kingdom from 1800-1922.)

Life in Transition

My family left for America in 1879. I travelled with my older sister Annie and the rest of my family. I remember that the trip over on the steamship was very unpleasant, and I was glad to reach land. We settled in a neighborhood in Lowell called the Acre. It wasn't a good place to live. It was dirty and crowded.



Map of Ireland and Lowell

Life in Lowell

Bridget was working in the Boott Mills in 1887. It was a difficult job, and the pay was not very good. She lived in a boardinghouse which stood opposite the Boott Mills, alongside the canal. Bridget later moved further west, to California. She met and married Miles Regan there, and they had several children.



Irish mill workers in Lowell