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## Peillet, Charles oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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## **Interview with Charles Peillet by Andrea L'Hommedieu**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Peillet, Charles

### **Interviewer**

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

### **Date**

December 10, 2002

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 383

### **Use Restrictions**

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### **Biographical Note**

Charles Peillet was born in Rumford, Maine in 1929, where he grew up and attended public schools. After service in the Army, he moved to Lisbon Falls to work as administrative assistant to the plant superintendent of the J.P. Stevens Worumbo Woolen Mill.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: Rumford, Maine; Stephen Muskie's tailor shop; Ed Muskie; Worumbo Mill in Lisbon Falls; decline of Maine mills; and recollections of Stephen Muskie: his personality and reputation.

### **Indexed Names**

Muskie, Stephen

Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996

Peillet, Charles

## Transcript

**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview with Charles Peillet on December the 10th, the year 2002, at the Muskie Archives in Lewiston, Maine. And you were saying you grew up in Rumford, you were born in 1929, and you have memories of Ed Muskie's father. Can you tell me what those memories are?

**Charles Peillet:** Well basically, growing up during the years I was in Rumford, I do remember my mother taking some clothing to Mr. [Stephen] Muskie who was downtown, what we called the downtown business district, and had a tailor shop. And of course within his tailor shop there were large surfaces of desks which he strewed his material on. And invariably you could find Mr. Muskie, the father of Ed, sitting on the bench with his back resting against the wall and busily sewing. And the only time it seemed that he got up was to greet the people that came in, took the order for the work to be had, and then went back to the bench and worked.

And through the years we knew that the Muskie family was, as we were, very proud of their son Ed who went on into a political career. We could always tell when they had family gatherings and Ed came back to Rumford during his work years, the distinction between the father and the son. Ed, of course, was a stalwart individual that was well over six-feet-two or three, and the father seemed half of his size. And this always brought a smile to our lips whenever he attempted to embrace his son, because he was always somewhat just above belt level when he'd put his, thrust his arms around him.

And I went on to my own personal career, and after the Army tour I accepted a position as administrative assistant to the plant superintendent for J.P. Stevens who had taken over the Worumbo Fabrics mill, a textile mill in Lisbon Falls. And a year later a crisis occurred, of course, during the years of the textile wars, everything being sent to Asian areas, and depleted the economy of the textile industries. So therefore, large textile industries such as Milliken, Thompson, and the Stevens . . . J.P. Stevens, which had at that time forty-eight plants, which was easy to remember because at that time we had forty-eight states, and therefore many of the plants were affected and the economy grew very difficult with textiles. So much so that the legal pundits in Augusta took a sharp note of the depleting economy of our Maine mills.

And therefore we had a visit by Ed Muskie and had an evening with Ed Muskie, who rallied behind attempting to do whatever he could, and had visited various foreign plants and promised us that he would and did and came back to report, and did his very best to continue the efforts to attempt to actually make us more solvent. He did all he could, I'm sure, and carried it to Washington, even further. However, a number of years later, of course, it resolved itself and unfortunately everything just dissipating on the American economy, as far as textiles were concerned.

**AL:** And I have one more question. Did you ever have a conversation or speak to Stephen Muskie, Ed Muskie's father? What was your impression of him?

**CP:** Yes, he was, of course, of very typical ingredients of the various, like my father, immigrants that came to America in the early twenties, even before then, and spoke with an

accent; a very affable individual. I found him to be a little different than Ed in respect to, of course being more quiet, more subdued as opposed to Ed who was a very loquacious individual and you couldn't help but want to go and shake his hand.

**AL:** What was his reputation in town? As a tailor?

**CP:** The father, as a tailor, was extremely well versed in his trade. He was a fine seamstress, if you will, if that's the proper terminology, and people just flocked to his tailor shop. And he was a very quiet man in all respects. But the contrast of, in physical proportions, the father and the son, was always so striking and it really brought a smile to your lips. Good memories, real good memories.

**AL:** Great, thank you so much for your time.

*End of Interview*