

## **Rose Petit Home for Orphans**

Our first newspaper encounter with Mrs. Rose Petit and Mrs. Benoit was in 1896. They were caring for 18 orphans at the already established French American Orphanage on Greendale Ave located in the Greendale area of N. Worcester. The orphanage was supported by the Baptist Church community in Worcester, Ma.

In January 1902 Mrs. Rose Petit, governess of the home, moved the orphans to a new home on Hermitage Lane. Unfortunately, on February 2, 1902, the building was destroyed by fire. Even with the heroic efforts to get everyone young and old to safety two orphans lost their lives. A temporary home was set up on Channing St. In November 1903 she was serving 18 charges at her Rose Petit Home for Orphans at 121 Orient Street, Worcester where she continued her work for many more years.

Mrs. Rose Petit died at her home in Millbury, Ma. On Nov. 5, 1938

#### SEWED FOR ORPHANAGE.

About 25 ladies of the First Baptist Church gathered at the parlors Thursday morning and afternoon to sew for the French-American Orphanage at Greendale. Mrs. Benoit, who, with Mrs. Pettit, cares for the 18 orphans now in the home, was present to oversee the work.

Four churches are now interested in the welfare of this institution, the First Baptist and Lincoln Square Baptist of Worcester and the People's Church and Baptist Church of Greendale.

The children now in the home are of all ages, from 1 to 12 years; 8 are attending school.

1896-12-05\_2

Worcester\_Daily\_Spy

#### FATAL FIRE AT WORCESTER.

##### Two Children Burned in the Rose Petit French Orphanage.

The Rose Petit French orphanage at Greendale, a suburb of Worcester, was burned this morning at 1.45 o'clock. Charles Louen, aged three years, and Vera Louen, four years, were suffocated in the second story of the house, and the bodies were recovered.

1902-02-21\_3

Springfield\_Republican

#### LITTLE ONES PERISHED.

Worcester, Mass., Feb 21 — Vera and Charles Louen, 3 and 4 years, respectively, were burned to death at 2 o'clock this morning in a fire which destroyed the Rose Petit orphanage in this city. A general alarm was sounded at 1:40 and the firemen arrived in time to rescue, with the aid of Mrs. Petit, eight children from the building. Mrs. Petit was burned about the face and hands during her effort to save the little ones. The fire started from the furnace, and catching in an air shaft, went to the second floor of the building where the children were asleep. The property loss is heavy.

1902-02-21

Fitchburg Sentinel

## TWO CHILDREN DEAD.

Suffocated in a Fire at  
Worcester.

In the Rose Petit French  
Orphanage.

Institution Destroyed This  
Morning.

WORCESTER, Feb. 21, 1902. The Rose Petit French orphanage was burned this morning at 1:45 o'clock. Two children were suffocated in the second story. Their bodies were recovered.

The dead:

CHARLES LOUEN, aged 3 years.

VERA LOUEN, 4 years.

A general alarm was sounded at 1:46 and the firemen arrived in time to rescue, with the aid of Mrs. Petit, eight children from the building. Mrs. Petit was burned about the face and hands during her effort to save the little ones.

The fire started from the furnace, and, catching in an air shaft, went to the second floor of the building, where the children were asleep. The building was owned by Frank M. Horne.

1902-02-21\_3

Boston\_Herald

## GREENDALE.

### Special Notes of Week's Doings in Northern Suburb.

The Ladies' Social Union of the People's Church met at the French-American orphanage Thursday afternoon and sewed for the little inmates.

Christmas will be observed this year, as usual, by family gatherings and by appropriate services at the churches. The People's Church Sunday school will present the children's operetta, "The old woman in a shoe," under the efficient management of Mrs. J. Chas. Villiers. The Sabbath school connected with the Baptist Church will give a Christmas concert Friday evening with Miss Ethel Woodward in charge. The concert will be followed by distribution of presents from the Christmas tree. Both churches will be prettily decorated with evergreen.

The Improvement Association ran a snow plow over the sidewalks of the village for the first time this winter, Thursday morning. The new iron plow is expected to be completed by William Field this week.

The second of the winter sociables of the Improvement Association was held at the residence of John B. Tougas, Thursday evening. The spacious rooms were thrown open to about 60 members and friends. A most enjoyable time was passed by all, and an entertainment of excellent talent was given, encores being frequent. The program was as follows:

Trios—Mandolin, Miss Laura Fontaine; violin, Frank Lincoln; piano, Miss Albertine Fontaine. \*

Autoharp and whistling solo by Master Denny Tougas.

Trio—Cornet, Simeon Howell; violin, Frank Lincoln; piano, Miss Luta Lincoln.

Recitation—"The Shamrock band" and "There's no one like mother to you," by Miss Hattie Merrill, with piano accompaniment by Mrs. Maynard Bellrose.

Violin solo—Miss Rose Rochleau; piano accompaniment, Miss Lumina Rochleau.

Recitation—By Miss Hattie Merrill, "How do you do, Mr. McCue?" with piano accompaniment by Mrs. Maynard Bellrose.

Vocal selections by Miss Luta Belle Lincoln.

These sociables are free to members, and all are cordially invited, a special invitation being extended to strangers and others not acquainted to attend and become members. The next social will occur at the residence of Miss Luta Belle Lincoln, Tuesday evening, Jan. 12th.

# TWO CHILDREN BURNED TO DEATH IN AN ORPHANAGE

Fire at the Rose Petit Home on Hermitage Lane Early This Morning Caused a Brother and Sister To Lose Their Lives

## VARIEUX LOUEN AND CHARLES LOUEN VICTIMS

The Rose Petit Orphanage, on Hermitage Lane, to which place it was moved from Greendale about two months ago, was destroyed by fire at 1.30 o'clock this morning and two of the little orphans who were being cared for at the institution lost their lives in the blaze. They are Varieux Louen, five years old, and her little brother, Charles Louen, three years old. A third member of the orphan family, two years old, was saved from the flames, and the following little inmates also escaped with their lives: Joseph Benoit, Isador Benoit, Napoleon Benoit, Pauline Mill, Ethel Mill, Ira Mill and Elmer Coss.

Mrs. Rose Petit, matron of the orphanage, a colored woman, named Martha Birch of Providence, and a cripple named Arthur Malwhite, who assisted in caring for the home, escaped but they were badly burned, especially Mrs. Petit, who was burned about the face and forehead in her efforts to save her little charges.

The fire started in the cellar, probably from a lighted lamp which was kept there, and it was discovered at almost the same moment by Malwhite and Mrs. A. H. Sampson who lives at 48 Channing Street. Mrs. Sampson was in bed when she was awakened by the sound of wood cracking as it does when burning. The orphanage is only a few feet from her bedroom window and as she sat up in bed to see what was the trouble she saw the flames bursting from the cellar window. She immediately sprang from bed and

hastened to her telephone and sent word of the fire to headquarters.

Engine 3 was hurried to the fire, and then alarms were rung in from Box 74 and Box 148, and when the apparatus reached the scene of the fire, the firemen found the building blazing fiercely inside. The entire interior of the building was a mass of flames, and in them were the bodies of the two little orphans, who were discovered about 2.45 o'clock.

Malwhite was awakened from his sleep by the sound of the burning wood and when he discovered the home was on fire he shouted and aroused Mrs. Petit and the attendant. In a very few minutes the flames which had eaten their way through a flue were spreading into all parts of the house. Mrs. Petit and her assistant worked heroically to rescue the little inmates and were severely burned in doing so. There was no time to get clothing or anything else.

The fire spread in a twinkling and Mrs. Petit thought she had all the children out, when little Varieux Louen discovered that her three-year-old brother Charles was missing. She darted back into the house before restraining hands could be put on her, and that was the last seen of her until her dead body was found by the firemen curled up by the side of the brother she had tried to save. They were locked in each other's arms, showing that the little heroine had found her brother, but could not get him to safety and perished with him.

The children were found by the firemen curled up in each other's arms on the floor of the room they slept in. The boy apparently had found his way as far as the door and at that point brother and sister met. Under their bodies the fire had eaten its way through the floor and both bodies were badly burned.

To The Spy man Mrs. Petit said she was awakened by the cries of Malwhite and she ran about the house waking the children. She awakened Varieux and got the child as far as the door when she turned back in quest of her brother. She says she does not know how the fire started but thinks it must have been set by someone. She is positive it did not start from a lamp.

Malwhite told The Spy man he was in the cellar watching the fire in the furnace when suddenly the flames spread to the walls and ate a hole through the floor. Being a cripple, he says he could not ring the alarm.

When the bodies of the children were located by the firemen, they were lifted out of one of the windows and placed in the police wagon. The bodies were taken to the rooms of Benjamin Bernstrom, the Swedish undertaker, on Thomas Street.

The condition of the streets was bad and it was next to impossible for the apparatus to make anything like the time expected in good weather. The house is a total wreck. Mrs. Petit and the eight children saved were cared for in the house adjoining on Hermitage Lane.

### TEMPORARY QUARTERS FOR MRS. PETIT'S CHARGES

Mrs. Rose Petit, matron of the French-American Orphanage, has entirely recovered from the effects of the fire at the Orphanage Friday, and said yesterday at no time was she ill or hysterical, despite the reports given out by friends, to the effect she was bordering on nervous prostration. She is still in the neighborhood of the fire and her friends at 48 Channing Street are willing that any donations of food, clothing, fuel or any articles be sent there. Herbert D. Gough of 22 Windsor Street has offered Mrs. Petit the use of his cottage at 47 Channing Street until such time as another home can be provided. The orphans are being cared for at the homes of persons living in the vicinity.

1902-02-23\_12

Worcester Daily Spy

### FRIENDS RESPOND TO THE CALL FOR HELP

Friends of the Rose Petit Orphans' Home have received much valuable assistance in their endeavors to re-establish the home that was burned out last week. Yesterday generous response to solicitation was received from furniture dealers, dry goods merchants and hardware dealers. There is a great need for coal, bedding, comfortables, blankets and food. The children are still in the care of persons in the neighborhood of the burned orphanage and will remain with these friends until provision is made for a new home. Aid for the home will be gratefully received at 488 Channing Street.

1902-02-25\_4

Worcester Daily Spy

3 p. m.  
—The Sterling Aid Society of Grace Church will meet, tomorrow afternoon with Mrs. Charity Patterson, 1 Austin Place. Supper will be served at 6.30 o'clock and will be followed by a social evening.  
—The Loyal Women of American Liberty will meet, this afternoon, at Mrs. Rose Petit's orphanage to make clothing for the children.  
—A deed of release for damage

1902-05-07\_3

Worcester Daily Spy

On the deaths of the Louen children, Judge Utley says: "The house where they lived caught fire and they were burned so that they died. The evidence showed that they were removed from the house by one Rose Petit, but they apparently became bewildered and returned to the house. And no unlawful act of any other person contributed to their death."

1902-03-13\_10

Worcester Daily Spy

## HER CONDITION IS PRECARIOUS

Mrs. Rose Petit, Governess of the French-American Orphanage, Affected by Death of Her Two Young Wards

### BODIES OF LITTLE ONES TO BE SHIPPED TO BOSTON

Chief Vaughn and Aid to State Fire Marshal Molt Visit Scene of Conflagration and Discover the Probable Cause of the Fire

Mrs. Rose Petit, governess of the French-American Orphanage, on Hermitage Lane, that was badly gutted by fire yesterday morning was in a precarious condition yesterday morning because of the death of her two young wards, the Louen children.

At intervals Mrs. Petit had violent fits of hysteria. She would have been removed to the City Hospital yesterday afternoon had her condition permitted. The bodies of Charles Louen and his heroic five-year-old sister, were taken to Boston yesterday afternoon by the mother of the children who suffered badly from the shock.

She knew nothing of the terrible death her children had met until late yesterday morning when told about the fire by a friend. Mrs. Louen arranged with Undertaker Benjamin J. Bernstrom to have the bodies prepared for burial and shipped to Boston and today the remains will be interred in the family lot.

Chief Edwin L. Vaughn of the Fire Department with Aid to State Fire Marshal Robert E. Molt visited the scene of the fire yesterday morning and closely questioned Arthur Malhoit, the cripple, who saw the fire start. Malhoit says he is at a loss to understand how the blaze got going but remembers having cleaned sand off the top of a furnace in the cellar a few days ago.

Sand is usually spread over the top of the furnace to deaden the effect of the heat and it is now thought the removal of the sand exposed the wood-work which was set afire.

The building is completely gutted inside. The dormitory where the children slept is as badly burned as any portion of the house. On all sides yesterday much praise was heard for Mrs. Petit who worked heroically to save her wards.

The eight children saved from the fire were cared for yesterday by neighbors. Three of the children were taken to the home of H. F. A. Lange on Channing Street where they were cared for.

## FINDINGS ON RECENT DEATHS

Judge Utley Hands Down Decisions of the Caucuses That Led to the Violent Deaths of Several Persons

### MOST FATAL ACCIDENTS RESULT OF VICTIM'S ACTS

The Death of James J. Murphy on November 4 Attributed Largely to Improper Construction of Piazza on Mechanic Street House

Judge Utley, yesterday, handed down his decisions in inquests held before him Feb. 25. Among the decisions are those on the deaths of Mrs. Nora Shea and her child, Gertrude, on the Louen children burned to death in the fire at the French Orphanage Feb. 21, and on the death of James J. Murphy, who was killed as the result of a fall from a piazza at his home on Mechanic Street, Nov. 4.

In his decision on the death of Murphy, Judge Utley says, "It appears the piazza was improperly constructed in that it was not sufficiently nailed and had become weak from age. The building was owned by Mrs. Thomas Daniels. The representatives of the deceased have secured counsel. Murphy was 44 years old at the time of his death. On Nov. 11 of last year he was on the piazza and when he leaned on the railing it gave way and he fell to the ground, sustaining injuries which caused his death.

On the death of Mrs. Shea and her baby daughter, Gertie, who died as a result of burns sustained at the family home on Charles Street, Feb. 15, Judge Utley finds that "Nora Shea, aged 39, and Gertrude Shea, aged 16 months, died as the result of burns resulting from a lamp dropped and broken by said Nora Shea in the house where they lived."

On the death of Michael Mirikewizil, who was found dead outside his home on Wilson Street, Feb. 12, under suspicious circumstances, Judge Utley says: "Mirikewizil fell from a piazza at his home and received injuries causing his death. Evidence showed he was probably intoxicated and no unlawful act of any other person contributed to his death."

On the deaths of the Louen children, Judge Utley says: "The house where they lived caught fire and they were burned so that they died. The evidence showed that they were removed from the house by one Rose Petit, but they apparently became bewildered and returned to the house. And no unlawful act of any other person contributed to their death."

Judge Utley also handed down decisions on the sudden deaths of an unknown colored man killed on the tracks of the Boston & Albany Railroad at North Brookfield, Jan. 15, on James C. McGauvren, killed at the Grafton Street crossing Feb. 11, and on the death of John Codv, killed at Jefferson Dec. 13, on the Boston & Maine tracks. In each of the latter cases Judge Utley finds that no unlawful act on the part of any other person contributed to their deaths.

## OPPOSITION TO MR. ST. JAMES

Pastor of the French Baptist Mission is Charged by Several Members of the Church With Being "Too Bossy"

### CITY MISSION BOARD UPHOLDS THE PASTOR

Opposition to the Minister is Said to Be Led by Mrs. Josephine Petit Because of Mr. St. James' Activity in Investigating Green-dale Orphanage

There is dissension among the members of the French Baptist Mission on Beacon Street. The cause of the trouble is the dissatisfaction of a certain element with the pastor, Rev. Arthur St. James.

This mission is supported almost wholly by the Baptist City Mission Board, which in its turn is under the Baptist Home Mission Society. Some time ago a petition asking for a change of pastor was presented to the mission board. It was signed by 25 persons. No specific reasons were given why they wished to get rid of Mr. St. James.

The matter was referred to the committee on French work—Rev. Dr. John S. Holmes chairman—after the petitioners had been given a hearing. At the hearing it was stated that Mr. St. James was "too bossy." That, with what it implies, was all the excuse they could give for their action. The committee investigated the matter thoroughly and could not substantiate the charge of bossism against Mr. St. James.

At the last meeting of the board the committee reported against the petitioners and the board voted unanimously to sustain Mr. St. James. Now the disgruntled members are talking of starting a new society and of hiring the old First Presbyterian Church on Kilby Street as a house of worship.

A reporter for The Spy was given to understand last night that there are two things responsible for the whole trouble. One is the opposition of Mrs. Josephine Petit to Mr. St. James. Mrs. Petit, with her sister, Mrs. Rose Petit, whose orphanage was recently burned, formerly had an orphanage at Green-dale. They solicited funds principally among Baptists and a report got abroad that it was a Baptist institution backed by the church organization. The Baptist City Mission Board, while finding no fault with the orphanage, thought it right to deny any connection with it which was done through the Watchman. St. James was active in the investigation of the orphanage at the time. Since then Mrs. Josephine Petit has been hostile to him. Many of the petitioners were her relatives and it is said that the discontented ones do not represent the influential part of the membership.

The other thing that has militated against Mr. St. James was the good impression that a man who preached at the church some two years ago made upon some people. His intimacy with the city has been kept up through a friendship with the daughter of the church organist and a number of the congregation would like to see him pastor of the church.

The Baptist City Mission Board thoroughly upholds Mr. St. James. He has been in the employ of the board more than nine years and has proved himself efficient. Besides the Beacon Street Church he has charge of the Oak Hill Mission. Recently he determined to lift the mortgage on the two missions, amounting to about \$2600, and has already raised a good part of it through his personal exertions. In fact the Sunday that the petition asking for his removal was circulated he was in Southbridge trying to raise money for the church.

Mr. St. James has had a number of calls to other churches since he has been here but the Mission board has ever insisted that he should stay. His reputation as a worker among the French population is not confined to Worcester but is well known in home missionary circles throughout the state.

1902-02-22\_1

Worcester Daily Spy

1902-03-13\_10-1

Worcester Daily Spy

1902-04-01\_6

Worcester Daily Spy

## INQUEST DAY IN THE DISTRICT COURT

Mrs. Rose Petit, matron of the French-American Orphanage on Hermitage Lane appeared at the inquest on the deaths of her two little wards held in the Central District Court yesterday morning. Mrs. Petit told the story of the fire and the rescue of her other wards to Judge Utley and was complimented by him for the bravery and fortitude she showed in saving the lives of the little ones.

Alfred Malnoit, the aged cripple who tends the boilers and saw the origin of the fire also testified.

1902-03-01\_12  
Worcester Daily Spy

## LOYAL WOMEN PLAN FOR FUTURE EVENTS

The L. W. A. L. met yesterday afternoon with Miss A. E. Sampson, 11 Sever Street. A business meeting was held at which plans were made for the national convention of the league which is to be held here June 6 and 7. Wednesday the league will meet at the home of Mrs. Rose Petit to sew for the orphans in her charge. A tea meeting will be held Thursday, May 15, at the home of Mrs. Annie Crosby, 271 Salisbury Street.

1902-05-02\_1  
Worcester Daily Spy

## LAKE VIEW OBJECTS TO AN ORPHANAGE IN ITS MIDST

The residents of Lake View do not take kindly to the establishment of the Rose Petit orphanage at 70 Alvarado Avenue and yesterday a delegation of the people who live in the vicinity called on Clerk James C. Coffey of the Board of Health at City Hall and made a formal protest against it. They claim the building at 70 Alvarado Avenue is unsuited for an orphanage because it has not sufficient sanitary appliances.

The delegation was informed that the Board of Health cannot do anything in the matter until the building is actually occupied.

1902-06-06  
Worcester Daily Spy

## SALE FOR ORPHANS' HOME HAS TO MEET COMPETITION

A rummage is being held in the store at 185 Front Street for the benefit of the Rose Petit Home for Orphans. The sale is in charge of the matron of the home, Miss Rose Petit, and she is assisted by many of the orphans. The home has 18 inmates at present, and it looks as though there will be hard times ahead of the institution this winter, owing to the price of fuel and food.

Owing to the competition, the rummage sale has not been much of a success so far, but Miss Petit is in hopes that today, which is the last day of the sale, will be more successful.

1902-11-12\_7  
Worcester Daily Spy

## ROSE PETIT HOME SEEKS AID FOR CHRISTMAS

An afternoon tea was given yesterday afternoon at the Rose Petit orphans' home, 46 Channing Street, by the Loyal Women of American Liberty. The attendance was small but at the next one which will be early in the new year, it is hoped there will be many present. There are at present 23 children in the home and presents of money, clothing or toys for the children's Christmas tree will be gladly accepted at the home. Several of the stores of the city have promised toys and clothing for the tree which will be stripped at 10 o'clock Christmas morning.

1902-12-19\_7  
Worcester Daily Spy

## LOYAL WOMEN ELECT OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR

The Loyal Women of American Liberty met yesterday evening at the home of Mrs. F. C. Carroll, 13 Sever Street. Officers were elected and work mapped out for the ensuing year. The officers are: President, Mrs. Ella Brooks; first vice president, Mrs. J. B. Garrett; second vice president, Mrs. Annie Crosby; recording secretary, Mrs. S. E. French; treasurer, Mrs. F. C. Carroll. The financial secretary will be elected at some later meeting. Various committees were appointed to look out for the work of the society. The women of the society will have a sewing social at the Rose Petit Home, 46 Channing Street, Jan. 15. Tea was served in the evening by Mrs. Carroll.

1902-05-02\_1  
Worcester Daily Spy

Painters Local 48, which has caused the council to ask that the charter from Local 48 be withdrawn. The National Council has been conferred with and the difficulty may be settled without any further trouble.

—Mrs. Rose Petit, matron of the Rose Petit home on Channing Street, expects to be able to leave the hospital today. The children of the home are planning a little celebration in her honor tonight at the home, 46 Channing Street.

1903-05-21  
Worcester Daily Spy

—The Loyal Women of American Liberty will meet, this afternoon, at Mrs. Rose Petit's orphanage to make clothing for the children.

1902-05-07\_3  
Worcester Daily Spy

With the exception of \$250.

—Mrs. Nellie E. Sweet, first vice-president of the W. C. T. U., occupied the chair at the regular meeting in the absence of president. The meeting of members to sew for the fair is postponed until after Thanksgiving.

—Another two days' rummage sale started yesterday morning at 3 Trumbull Square. Mrs. Rose Petit, founder of the Rose Petit home on Orient Street is in charge.

1903-11-14  
Worcester Daily Spy

## TEAM DRIVERS' UNION CONTRIBUTES AID

The regular meeting of the Worcester Branch of the Team Drivers' International Union was held yesterday afternoon at 12 Austin Street. It was voted to give \$10 to the Rose Petit orphanage. It was also decided to give \$10 to the textile workers of Lowell who are on a lockout. An insurance branch was formed and Dr. Henry F. Cronin was appointed physician for one year. Four new members were admitted and five applications received.

1903-04-20\_2  
Worcester Daily Spy



## Founder of Former Worcester Orphanage Was a Native of Canada

MILLBURY, Nov. 5.—Mrs. Rose Petit died this morning at her home, 650 Millbury avenue. She was born in Montreal, Canada, daughter of Bazille and Apauline (Challes) Roy, came to this country fifty years ago and had lived in this town for the past ten years.

Mrs. Petit was the founder of the old Rose Petit Home for Orphans, formerly at 121 Orient street, Worcester, and she operated it for many years.

She is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Eben Blanchard of this town; four sons, Nelson L. Harper of Upton, John B. Benoit of Seattle, Wash., Joseph A. Benoit of Washington, D. C., and John N. Benoit of New York, N. Y.; two sisters, Mrs. Ada Desmarais and Mrs. Charlotte Raciot of Montreal, 20 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held in her late home, Tuesday morning at 11 o'clock. Rev. Hamilton Chapman and Rev. Marcelle Bonard will officiate and interment will be in Spring Grove Cemetery, Andover.

1938-11-05\_18  
Evening Gazette