



Who was Arthur Vaillancourt?

Arthur Louis Vaillancourt was born on 28 May 1912 in Lowell, Massachusetts, the son of Eugénie Gagné (1870-1935, born in St Fredenont Beauce, Quebec) and Oscar Vaillancourt (1868-1919, Lowell, Mass). Arthur had one brother and one sister, and seven half-siblings from Eugénie Gagné's later marriage to John Alpheus De Carteret (1873-1947, né en mer). Prior to his life in Boston, Vaillancourt had taken a wife with whom he had two children. As early as the 1930 census, Arthur (then called De Carteret) is identified as a dentist's apprentice in Lowell.

We begin to notice Arthur around the American dancer Adolphe Robicheau in 1937. The passenger list of the liner S.S. Yarmouth, departing Yarmouth for Boston on August 20, 1937, records the return of both gentlemen to the United States after a stay in Nova Scotia. As a fellow dancer, Arthur had already shared the stage with Adolphe Robicheau at the world premiere of his ballet *Evangeline* in 1939.

In his 1940 draft card, he was 5'5", 140 pounds, with brown eyes, brown hair with a reddish tint, and a scar under his chin. The Biddeford Daily-Journal, in 1941, reported on a free art exhibition held under the auspices of the Ogunquit Art Association: Adolphe Robicheau and his dance company, including Arthur, would give a lecture. This would indicate that Arthur Vaillancourt did accompany Robicheau to his *Manoire Normandie* seaside school in Maine.

A 1942 Boston city directory lists Arthur as a dental machinist for MacEachern & Low Dental Laboratory. In 1943, when Adolphe Robicheau wanted to buy the Appleton Manor but could not afford the down payment, Arthur Vaillancourt quickly sold his car to make up the difference. The two held a Christmas party every year after the purchase of 54 Beacon Street, which was interrupted only twice by storms. Adolphe was known for his jubilation and mastery of greeting guests, while Arthur presided over the large crystal bowl, serving each glass of eggnog.

The Boston Globe reported on a fire at 54 Beacon Street on Christmas Eve in 1946. "The building is owned jointly by Robicheau and Arthur Vaillancourt. The students, who normally practice on the second floor, were not in the building because of the Christmas holidays."

Since 1947, Vaillancourt had been president and treasurer of the dental firm of MacEachern & Low, whose offices were now located at 54 Beacon Street.

He loved to travel and often went on cruises. We know from the Ellis Island archives that he travelled to Bermuda on the S.S. Nieuw Amsterdam in 1959, then in 1962 on the S.S. Statendam, via the Virgin Islands, Curacao and Port-au-Prince, before returning via New York.

In Nova Scotia, Le Petit Courier reported on June 12, 1969, that Arthur Vaillancourt and Adolphe Robicheau of Boston, hosts of *La Vieille Maison*, had arrived in Meteghan. The next issue published on June 26, 1969, stated that they had organized an evening of dancing and singalong.

Vaillancourt attended the 1976 revival of Robicheau's famous ballet *Évangéline*, where he was noted as being in the original cast. It was also in 1976 that the two gentlemen held the last of their famous Christmas parties on Beacon Hill. In 1977, they were shaken by the deaths of several friends who had attended their parties.

Arthur Vaillancourt attended Adolphe's funeral in August 1978. The obituary in the Boston Globe referred to Arthur *as his dear companion*. The complicity between the two gentlemen is evoked in Lorita's manuscript:

Robicheau was buried alongside his parents. The family lingered after the funeral service to accept condolences and thank everyone for their support and presence. Arthur Vaillancourt stood somberly nearby. "When my time comes, this is where I will be," he remarked. "The Robicheaus told me there will always be a place for me here with them."

Arthur continued to live at 54 Beacon Street after Adolphe's death. Loraine "Lorita" Ash, a teacher at the Academy, noticed "the atmosphere of silence and emptiness, almost palpable in the whole house." Despite Adolphe's wish that his Academy not outlive him, Arthur agreed to Peggy Hunter's request to continue running the studio. He was later unhappy with her decision because it required him to be present on the premises during class time. (The last dance class was held at 54 Beacon Street on June 13, 1981.)

Vaillancourt was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1979. The Robicheau family often visited him, "*aware of the altruism with which he had taken care of their Adolphe*". He died on January 25, 1981, alone in his flat above the dance studio, surrounded by empty liquor bottles.

The Vaillancourts could not be persuaded to allow their brother to be buried as he wished, in the same grave with his companion Adolphe. The funeral took place behind closed doors in the Lowell area without any notice in the Boston newspapers.

No obituary was ever posted.