

# Eugène & Nérée talk about Pengilly's story and the Diaries from the Asylum play

**Nérée:** Gene has found her journal in the archives of New Brunswick. Mary had the courage to go to Fredericton to present this to the Lieutenant Governor, telling him, “This is how the people you’re supposed to care for, this is how they’re taken care of in your institution, because it’s an institution of the State.” Because she had the courage to go there from St. John to Fredericton, in a time where she definitely wasn’t rich. It takes a lot of good will to do that and vision. And then she spent the rest of her life talking about the effects of institutions—of psychiatric institutions on the population in Eastern Canada and the U.S. Because of her, and because of Gene who rediscovered this journal.

**Gene:** So it’s interesting that she went on the steps of that house, gave the journal. That was her version of our voice. He pat her on the back, gave her some flowers, on her way. But today, all of us are going, and there’s not one person there, there’s 300 people.

**Nérée:** The play was also, I’m not sure if you want to insist on that, but the play that was put on by this Capitol Theatre in Moncton about Mary Pengilly was quite, quite, quite, quite something else. There was talk at that time of moving it to Toronto for more of a national visibility and circling it.

**Gene:** That was a missed opportunity for New Brunswick, we tried to push it, but...

**Nérée:** Yeah. With a few thousand dollars it could have gone to Toronto. Because the actors and actresses were incredible. Everything in that play was very beautiful and well done, so you could see what was going on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the eyes of Mary. It was re-enacted in scripture et cetera, et cetera. It was a very beautiful moment. And in Capitol Theatre where you have—the most beautiful place in Moncton, probably, for an event.

**Gene:** They have professional producers and directors. One of the touching parts about that the first night, the people, the clients from across New Brunswick came to the play, and when the play was over, they all applauded. And they applauded in a way that said, “You’re doing this on our behalf.” That was very powerful.