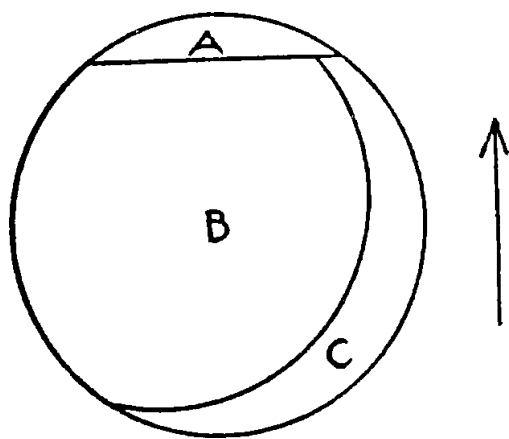


*THE FRANCO-AMERICANS OF MAINE*

by

Gerard J. Brault

*A paper read before the annual  
meeting of the Maine Historical  
Society at Bowdoin College,  
Brunswick, Maine, on June 24,  
1972.*



*Figure 1*

Outsiders view Franco-Americans in a variety of ways depending on the extent of their contact with members of the group and their particular vantage point. For most Americans today, especially those living beyond the limits of New England, Franco-Americans as such are invisible, that is, they are never thought of as constituting anything distinct from the population at large -- except every four years when they are said by some to be a factor in the New Hampshire primary.

Others, brought up residing in New England communities with many Franco-Americans, associate certain attitudes and behavior, which they believe are characteristic, with the group. Sometimes this stereotype is a favorable one, sometimes it is not. Franco-Americans, too, have a variety of views of themselves as individuals or as a group.

First of all, who are the Franco-Americans of Maine?

The United States Census for 1970 lists slightly under a million persons as the total population for the State of Maine. Of this number, approximately 141,489, that is, more than 14%, claim French as the mother tongue. [1] This total and percentage are the least unsatisfactory figures we have when referring to the Franco-Americans of Maine.

Another way of estimating the Franco-American population is by parish statistics. Virtually all Franco-Americans are Catholics and tend to be concentrated in certain parishes in New England. The Catholic Church used to distinguish between so-called "national" parishes -- French, Italian, Portuguese, etc. -- and others, a categorization it no longer makes, officially, at any rate. Thus, in 1960, one could speak of 284 Franco-American parishes in New England, including 66 in Maine. This figure accounted for 18% and 50% of the Catholic parishes of New England and Maine, respectively. [2] However, these statistics also included "mixed" parishes, that is, those having a Franco-American majority only. The totals 25,000, 12,000-plus, and 5,500-plus are readily acceptable figures for the Franco-American populations of Lewiston, Biddeford, and Waterville, respectively, the statistics being roughly the same according to diocesan records and mother-tongue responses.

However, the Brunswick totals, for example -- Saint-Jean-Baptiste parish: 5,000, French mother-tongue responses: 2,500 -- obviously need some interpretation.

In 1958, Robert Rumilly published a 552-page Franco-American history in which events having occurred in Maine play an important part. [3] Remarkable as Rumilly's book is, it has the two major weaknesses of most ethnic histories. It recounts the Franco-American experience as if it were a unique and isolated episode in American history and it concerns itself far too exclusively with developments and crises in the political and institutional life of the group. We need to understand, on the one hand, that what happened here was not a purely local event but occurred in a New England context and that it was, on the other hand, one of numerous parallel ethnic developments in American history.

One can speak of three phases in the history of the French Canadians in New England. During the first or immigration phase, experiences varied a good deal but, on the whole, the transition was a relatively happy and successful one, although accompanied by its share of traumas. The second or parish phase evolved in time from the early situation, which we can characterize as dynamic, heroic, and innovative, and which lasted up to about World War I, to the later situation in the 20's and 30's, the period of established ethnic communities with a rising middle class now sharing a mixture of old and new traditions and values. In the established parish phase, the parochial school played a key role. Since the late 1940's, we have obviously entered into a third or modern phase, World War II having brought about a great many changes in American society generally. The 60's and early 70's witnessed some crucial modifications in the parochial schools and the Catholic Church.

What sort of life did the ancestors of Maine's Franco-Americans leave behind them in the Province of Quebec? In the 19th century, a mere 20% of the Province's population resided in cities. The remainder lived in small rural communities largely engaged in subsistence agriculture. Today, about 90% of Quebec's population has abandoned rural living and the Province is essentially a modern, urban, highly

industrialized society with a standard of living comparable to our own. [4] To get to the roots of Franco-American culture, we must turn back the clock until we find an inward-looking, conservative, rural society, lacking capital, its considerable natural resources virtually unexploited.

The classic study of a typical French-Canadian community of this era, a way of life which experienced no significant changes during the entire 19th century and until World War II, was published by Professor Horace Miner in 1939. [5] Professor Miner characterizes this society as "relatively isolated, family-oriented and self-sufficient." [6] The social structure of the parish can be shown schematically as a circle representing the entire community, the greater prestige being at the top (fig. 1). In the section marked B, we find the majority of the parishioners, owners of small farms, typically, organized into a pattern based not so much on wealth as along family and neighborhood lines. The crescent C includes all the non-farmers living in the village -- bankers, day-laborers, small tradesmen, etc. -- with prestige according to wealth which rarely exceeds that of the average farmer and often ranks below it. Day-laborers and others in the lower reaches of the crescent often abandoned traditional values and mores and were looked down upon by all other members of the parish. At the top, the section marked A is made up of a distinct social class which rarely associated with the remainder of the community. It included the *cure*, or pastor, his relatives, the relatives of the former pastor, and the local senator, his family and relatives.

The most striking thing about this culture was its orderliness and the relative security resulting from a shared understanding of life's goals and everyone's place in it. The *cure* played a particularly important role in defining these views. The existence of a world beyond the village was only dimly perceived and regarded as culturally disorienting and a danger to the soul.

Scholars have provided us with detailed inventories of the means the French Canadians developed to meet their needs, their churches, houses, furniture, appliances, farm tools, and cuisine. [7] We know a

good deal about their folkways and customs, the cycle of work and rest, of religious feasts and ceremonies, of the various phases of life from birth through infancy, adolescence, maturity, old age and death. The Folklore Archives at Laval University in Quebec have a wealth of folktales and songs.

Pictures are often among the best ways we have of getting inside a culture but they can be misleading, too. One of the best painters of Canadian scenes in the mid-19th century was a Flemish immigrant named Cornelius Krieghoff. [8] His series of *habitant* heads and farm houses bring down whopping prices at art auctions today. His best-known oils are genre paintings which, unfortunately, bring to mind certain Flemish stereotypes rather than authentic Canadian situations. Krieghoff is quite witty and he faithfully records many of the homely details of Canadian life, as in the interior scene entitled *Le Careme*, or Breaking Lent, which shows a priest unexpectedly interrupting a family eating meat during a time of fasting and abstinence. His masterpiece, called *Merrymaking*, hangs in the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, New Brunswick. It is dated 1860 and captures a party of 54 revelers leaving a country inn. [9] If we are to believe Jean-Pierre Wallot's recent article, the French Canadians, especially in the cities, were hardly adverse to merrymaking. [10] However, as we shall see, scratching out a living in the harsh Quebec environment allowed little time for revelry.

As a matter of fact, the French Canadians developed quite a different image of themselves as devout, hard-working farmers, toiling in peace and harmony, benevolently watched over by wise old parish priests. This view is best illustrated by a series of sketches by E. J. Massicotte, for example, *Le Saint Viatique a la campagne* (1916), showing farmers kneeling with heads bowed respectfully as the parish priest brings the last sacrament to a dying parishioner, and *La Benediction du Jour de l'An* (1912), a dramatic rendering of the traditional New Year's Day blessing. [11] Krieghoff and Massicotte are miles apart yet each in his own way blends together the myth and reality which are important elements in the cultural heritage of the Franco-Americans of Maine.

The St. Lawrence Lowland lies within a triangle with the Laurentians to the north and the Appalachians to the south of what is referred to as Logan's Line. [12] Climate is obviously a very important consideration in an agricultural economy. Quebec has ample precipitation but only in the St. Lawrence Lowland is it warm enough for successful farming, a degree-day measurement of 3,000 to 3,500 being regarded as the absolute minimum for the hardier grains -- such as barley -- and for growing hay. Only in the St. Lawrence Lowland upstream from Quebec does this occur in the Province. [13]

What strikes us today as an elementary fact, namely that Quebec is simply not suited for most types of farming and certainly not growing wheat, was not clearly understood until the 20th century with the advent of scientific agriculture. As Vicero has shown, the 19th-century Quebec farmer, like his New England counterpart, tilled the soil, planted, and harvested according to age-old custom and stubbornly resisted any change. He did not use manure or any other kind of fertilizer, kept turning over the same old top soil with a shallow plow, sowed unclean and unimproved seed, allowed weeds to grow everywhere, and knew nothing about crop rotation. As if this were not enough, Quebec farms were also infested by insect pests and suffered the injurious effects of the blight. [14]

The upshot of all these factors was that from 1827 to 1844 the Province experienced a 70% drop in the production of wheat, the chief cash crop. In some counties the decrease was as much as 95%. When efforts were made to introduce potatoes, there was a similar disaster caused by the potato blight. [15]

The only harvest which did not fail was the human one. The population of Quebec was about 60,000 at the time of the Conquest in 1759. Less than a century later in 1851, the French-Canadian population had increased to nearly 670,000.

With farms no longer able to support the burgeoning population and with very little capital to purchase tillable land in the Eastern townships or anywhere else, an acute crisis developed in the Province.

The solution arrived at is a familiar one to historians. When the population is expanding rapidly

and there is declining productivity of the land, people emigrate. It's the reason an estimated 800,000 New Englanders left their farm lands for the West in the thirty years between 1790 and 1820. It's one of the major reasons why 10 million people, mostly Scandinavians, Irish, and Germans, emigrated to the United States between 1840 and 1880. It's one of the major reasons why more than 23 million people, mostly from Eastern and Southern Europe, came to America between 1880 and 1920.

Each immigration to the United States had its special characteristics. The best studies to date of the French-Canadian immigration to New England in general and to Maine in particular are found in recent Ph.D. dissertations by Ralph D. Vicero and James P. Allen. [16] In what follows I am largely indebted to their investigations.

Thousands of Canadians left the Province in the years following the British Conquest but settled in no particular pattern in other Canadian provinces and throughout the United States except for important concentrations in Ontario and along the Northern tier of American states. In 1850, the permanent French-Canadian immigration to New England probably totalled less than 20,000 persons, 62% of whom settled in Vermont, particularly in the northern and western sections of that state. An estimated 3,700 French Canadians had settled in Maine by that date but only 800 or 900 of that number, clustered in Waterville, Orono, and Old Town, may be termed true immigrants. The balance became Americans when the Webster-Ashburton Treaty between Great Britain and the United States in 1842 declared that 7,000 square miles of disputed territory in the St. John Valley belonged to Maine.

So far as Franco-American demography is concerned, there have always been two Maines, the northern population in the St. John Valley having developed more steadily and being rural and largely engaged in agriculture and lumbering, the southern having expanded rapidly in the second half of the 19th century and being concentrated in highly industrialized urban centers. Aroostook County's Franco-Americans are not ethnic in the usual sense for they are the dominant populace in the area, in-migration having merely intensified this homogeneity. The first Franco-American



parish was established at Burlington, Vermont, in 1850, but there were Catholic churches at Van Buren as early as 1838 and at Frenchville in 1843.

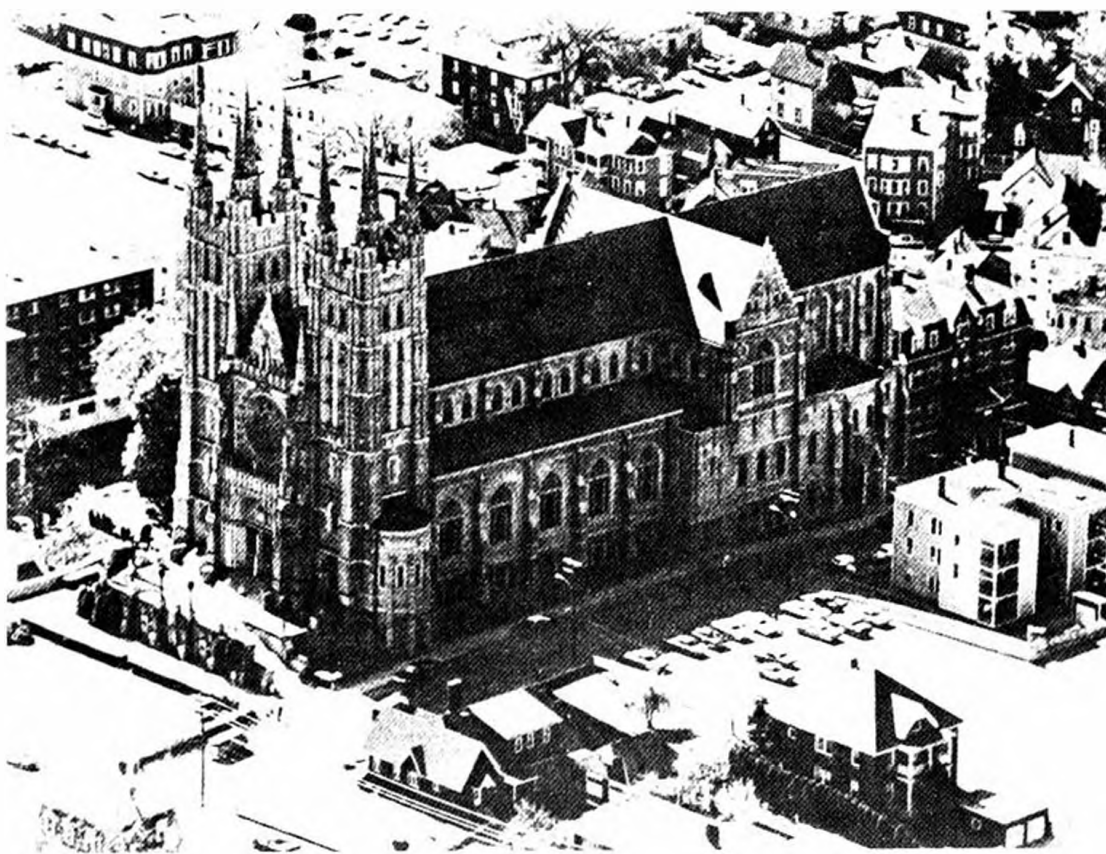
One of the earliest Franco-American settlements, Waterville had 288 Franco-Americans in 1850, immigrants there, at Orono, and at Old Town having come down the Kennebec Road to work in the lumbering industry.

By 1860, 12,000 new French-Canadian immigrants had reached New England; this, together with the natural increase, doubled the Franco-American population, pretty much in the same areas but with important concentrations now in about two dozen central Massachusetts towns in the area around Worcester south along the Blackstone Valley into Rhode Island, and along the Merrimack Valley including Manchester, New Hampshire. Franco-Americans continued to be engaged in a variety of occupations but, prophetically, in Southern New England towns, many were recruited as contract laborers for the textile mills.

What happened to cause the explosion in French-Canadian immigration in the thirty years which followed the Civil War can be traced back to twelve Boston merchants who in 1813 started the famous Boston Manufacturing Company. [17] This group which included members of the Lowell, Appleton, Lawrence, Cabot and other Brahmin families hit upon the idea of a large integrated cotton mill for the mass production of cloth, the first of its kind opening its doors at Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1815. The period between 1830 and 1850 witnessed an extraordinary development of industry in New England, largely resting on the integrated mill concept particularly in the manufacture of cotton and woolen textiles, boots, and shoes.

Cheap water power was of primary importance in this development and a map showing the major rivers of Southern New England or this area's chief cotton textile mills is at the same time a chart of Franco-American demography. [18]

Before the Civil War, the textile industry had employed mostly unmarried girls, recruited locally but also from Northern New England farm communities. By the mid-1840's, as greater and greater demands were made on mill operatives, native American employees began to abandon this type of work. Their places were



*Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul Church,  
Lewiston.*

filled for a short period by the newly-arrived Irish immigrants. As the Irish in turn began to desert the mills and with the post-Civil War boom in textiles, factory managers began increasingly to draw on the human resources of Quebec. Viceroy's maps tell the rest of the story as dramatic increases in the Franco-American population are illustrated by him, particularly in Southern New England, in 1870, 1880, and 1900, the latter year pretty much reflecting present-day concentrations. [19] Viceroy estimates that French Canada experienced a net loss of 600,000 persons to New England between 1840 and 1900, about five-sixths after 1860.

The relative proximity of New England and the availability of cheap, rapid transportation by rail were major contributing factors to this growth. The French Canadians have the distinction of being the only major ethnic group to have immigrated to the United States in any significant number by train.

In 1900, Massachusetts had nearly half the entire Franco-American population, Southern Maine and New Hampshire sharing another quarter about equally. The impact of the Franco-American element as a percentage of the total local population in 1900 was particularly noteworthy in large cities like Biddeford (62%), Woonsocket (60%), Lewiston (46%), Waterville (45%), Manchester (40%), and Nashua (35%), but also in smaller towns like Brunswick (54%) and Old Town (52%). The Franco-American distribution in 1900 has remained fairly constant until the present day with some notable exceptions. The St. John Valley still retains its more than 95% Franco-American percentage although Aroostook County experienced a major out-migration in World War I. There have been significant Franco-American increases in the major pulp and paper mill areas as well as in all the textile mill towns of Maine, Sanford's increase after 1900 being particularly dramatic.

Lewiston's Franco-American population is estimated by Allen to have increased by 15% or 16% since 1900, currently making that city 61% or 62% French. There would appear to be a kind of corona effect here since most people claim the Spindle City is 75% or even 80% Franco-American today. On the other hand, Brunswick's French population has not kept pace with

the town's growth as a whole: at the turn of the century, Brunswick was 54% French whereas the percentage is considerably lower than that today.

In an article published in 1946, William N. Locke identified the place of birth of 914 Canadian-born Franco-Americans in Brunswick and found that most came from along the south bank of the St. Lawrence River from Montreal to Riviere du Loup, more than half from four contiguous counties. [20] Allen attempted to establish similar links between the major Franco-American centers of Southern Maine but achieved no clear results except for Waterville and Augusta which show clusterings in several Beauce villages. Allen theorized that a significant number of the latter came down the Kennebec Road on foot or in horse-drawn wagons, while the Grand Trunk and Maine Central Railroads carried the majority of Maine's other Franco-Americans from a much broader area of Quebec to such cities as Rumford, Lewiston, Brunswick, Westbrook, Biddeford, and Sanford. Allen also traced the routes followed by Acadian immigrants from New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and Acadian-Canadian French from the upper St. John to several areas, notably the paper mill towns.

There was some active recruitment of labor from Canada especially in the years immediately after the Civil War. Many agents appear to have been Franco-Americans. However, the Foran Act, passed in 1885, abolished contract labor and forestalled such practices. Contracting and even recruitment of Franco-Americans were probably the exception rather than the rule anyway: most immigrants came alone or in family groups, having established prior contact with relatives or friends.

On the whole, Franco-Americans seemed satisfied with employment in the textile mills in spite of its monotonous and debilitating character. One often had to work standing all day long. The noise was deafening, heat prostration was common. Cotton dust choked the lungs. A high percentage of workers developed eye problems, especially females. [21] Yet Franco-Americans, like others, did not hesitate to send their children to work in the mills, often at a very early age. How could employers -- and parents -- do such a thing, we wonder today. Yet, at the time, child labor

in the mills and, of course, on the farms was commonplace. At the turn of the century, textile employees worked from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. for \$2.00 a day and often less, 60 hours per week. [22]

Many Franco-Americans lived in company houses rented for a dollar or so per month. Their design and quality varied a good deal. In Brunswick, the Cabot Company, whose factory is still a prominent feature of the north end of town near the river, constructed wooden tenements on and near Mill Street, as did a number of private entrepreneurs, and virtually the entire Franco-American population until about 1900 was to be found in this crowded quarter. Many of the buildings still standing today were originally purchased for between \$75 and \$125 and paid for themselves every three or four years. [23] Contacts between the French and the rest of Brunswick's population, except for the foremen at the mill, were nonexistent. The town's other inhabitants simply looked the other way and pretended that a quarter and later more than a half of the population didn't exist. [24] For many years, the local newspaper did not even record Franco-American births, marriages and deaths.

In the spring of 1886, there was an outbreak of diphtheria in the French quarter. [25] A. G. Tenney, the remarkable man who edited the *Brunswick Telegraph*, started a campaign to alert the local citizenry about the threat posed by certain revolting conditions near the company houses. Tenney's analysis of the cause of the epidemic was incorrect but his increasingly strident weekly editorials, castigating the owners of the Cabot mill for their greed and negligence, drew attention to the plight of the Franco-Americans. Between May 1 and September 10 of that year (1886), 74 persons died in the French district of Brunswick, mostly from diphtheria and nearly all children. [26]

Immigrants were eagerly sought by New England industrialists as cheap, hard-working, and unquestioning labor. However, the general populace was, to put it mildly, unenthusiastic about the new arrivals. Immigrants adhered to strange religious beliefs, settled in teeming ghettos, exhibited all the disturbing characteristics of the culture of poverty, and worst of all, spoke a babel of tongues.

One concrete result of the 1886 epidemic in

Brunswick was Tenney's befriending of the young French doctor, Onesime Pare, who worked heroically through the summer to stem the tide of the disease only to die of pneumonia himself the following January. [27] Dr. Pare was born in Canada but attended the University of Michigan where he earned his M.D. degree in 1884. He died at the age of 32.

Tenney also made friends with Father Gorman, the energetic local Catholic priest, and began to record parish activities in the *Telegraph*. Although not a French Canadian himself, Father Gorman had studied in Quebec and spoke French fluently. Saint-Jean-Baptiste was originally a mixed parish and remained so until 1930 when St. Charles was founded. In 1866, the parish purchased the Methodist meeting house on the corner of Federal and Franklin Streets and held services there, somewhat uncomfortably, until a new church was consecrated on Pleasant Street in 1882. It was destroyed by fire in 1912 when the present structure was constructed. [28]

Parishes in most of Maine's Franco-American centers had similar modest beginnings. Today Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul Church in Lewiston, consecrated in 1938, is certainly among Maine's most impressive structures, Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Winslow and Notre Dame du Rosaire in Sabattus among the handsomer churches in the newer style.

The wall separating the Franco-Americans and the rest of the community in towns like Brunswick and Waterville throughout New England at the turn of the century and for a long time afterwards was erected by mutual consent. But, in their cultural isolation, the Franco-Americans did not stagnate. On the contrary, looking back over the century-long Franco-American experience, one cannot fail but be struck by the astonishing richness and vitality of the way of life they developed.

The early Franco-Americans all felt disorientation at one point or another in their lives as they struggled to overcome the language barrier and adjust to the different style of American life and to the world of strikes and lay-offs. Back in Canada, the immigrant may have been a skilled and respected farmer or blacksmith, his family relatively high on the social scale; suddenly he was merely the unthinking extension of a

huge machine, his family at the bottom of the social order.

There have always been differences in Franco-American society, between the poor and the well-off, between those who made a relatively easy and rapid transition to American life and those who remained stubbornly ethno-centered all their lives and at times for two or three generations. There were families who tried repeatedly to settle in New England but kept returning to Quebec. Franco-American society has always had two major classes: those who lived in the *Petit Canada* -- in Lewiston about one-tenth of that city's French population still resides in a well-defined quarter near the river [29] -- and the other Franco-Americans. Even in the early days, the New England French, especially the males, found employment in a variety of other trades and some professions. We have photographs of Joseph A. Fortin's general store at the north end of Maine Street in Brunswick at the turn of the century; of Cleophas Nadeau's store in Fort Kent in 1910; of Dr. Narcisse Thivierge in front of his pharmacy in Biddeford, established in 1876. [30] Dr. Louis Martel was an important professional, political, and community leader in Lewiston and in the State of Maine at the end of the 19th century. [31]

The Franco-American situation in Maine has evolved rapidly since World War II, but not so long ago what characterized this people was the great cultural solidarity manifested in its parish life, its many social organizations, and its numerous newspapers. In 1935, there were 28 Franco-American newspapers including the historic *Le Messager* in Lewiston, founded in 1880, *Le Franco-Américain* in Waterville, and *La Justice* in Biddeford and Sanford. In 1940, 25 New England cities had public celebrations of the Feast of St. John the Baptist, June 24, the French-Canadian national holiday. [32]

Franco-Americans differ from every other ethnic group in the United States in that they kept close contact with the mother country. The annual trip to Canada was a must for most families. It was on these occasions that they were reminded of the old style of life and that parents could show their children the way it used to be, something no other group was ever able to do with such regularity over the years. It

was also the manner in which Franco-Americans, particularly the young, got rid of any illusions they might have harbored and which many other ethnic groups developed about the old country.

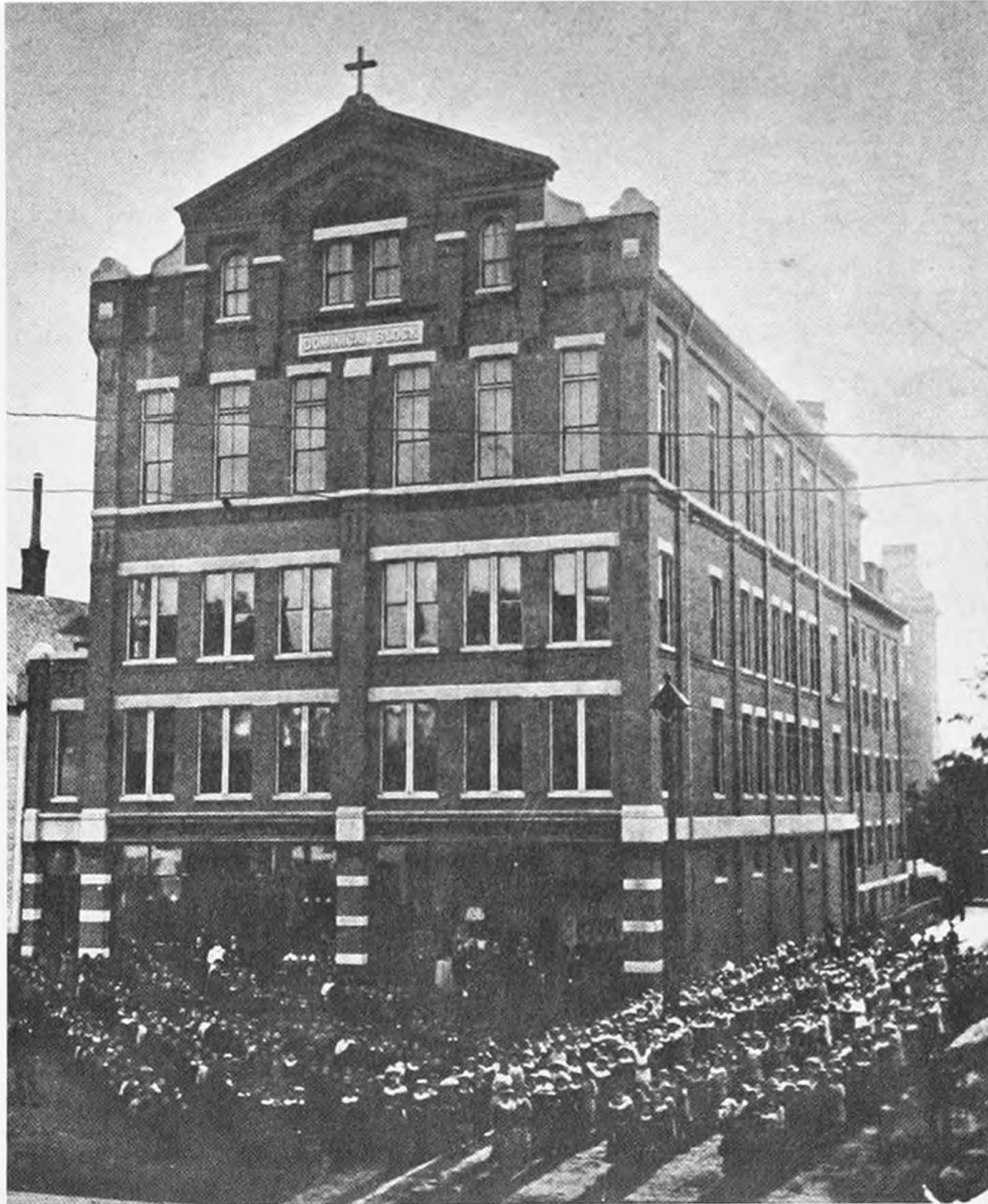
Students of Maine politics point out that the overwhelming majority of Franco-Americans in the State of Maine are Democrats whereas a substantial number of their nationality have become Republicans in the Southern New England states. The different local Irish and Yankee situations are said to provide the explanation for this. [33]

Franco-American parochial schools played a particularly important role in preserving old values and fostering new attitudes and ideals. A casual visitor might have gotten the impression that there was little difference between what went on here and in the public schools, or at least in the other Catholic schools -- after all, most of the subjects were the same. He would have been greatly mistaken.

In the earliest days, a small number of schools were instituted by the mills themselves, essentially to teach Franco-American children a bit of English and the three R's. [34] As the number of Franco-Americans grew in New England and the parishes were established, the pastors felt the need to found their own schools in order to provide proper training in a milieu regarded as a grave danger to faith and morals. The cornerstone on which the Franco-American school was built was the profound conviction that abandoning the French language was tantamount to abandoning the Catholic faith.

The first teachers were recruited from among the Franco-Americans themselves, usually girls who had attended convent schools in Canada. In Biddeford, the wife and the daughter of Dr. Thivierge, the pharmacist, started the first school together with Misses Dion and Rheaume in the early 1880's, enrolling about a hundred children. [35] In 1887, a similar school was opened in Brunswick with about 200 children in the care of Miss Daignault and several assistants. [36] In 1895, Miss Bourbeau of Lewiston started the first French school in Sanford, later assisted by Miss Bourke then by Misses Bissonnette and Labrecque. [37] Many of the early classes were held in private homes; in Brunswick, the church vestry was used, in Sanford a room





*The Dominican Block,  
Lewiston.*

above a store. This phase ended with the arrival of the religious teaching orders who brought with them a rather different concept of what a parochial school ought to be.

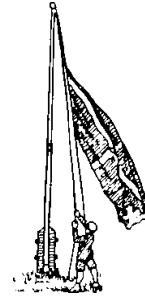
The first full-fledged Franco-American parochial school in Maine and the third in New England was founded by the Grey Nuns in Lewiston in 1878. [38] In 1882, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd established St. Joseph's Elementary School in Biddeford. [39] The Ursuline Sisters, who came to Canada with the early colonists in 1639, have always been prominent in Maine. They built a dozen schools in various localities beginning at Waterville in 1888. They arrived in Brunswick in 1915 and in Lewiston in 1916. [40] The major educational impact on the latter city, however, was made by the Dominican Fathers in 1881 and succeeding years. They constructed an imposing edifice known as the Dominican Block which began to be used as an elementary school in 1883. Many Dominicans were born in France and also served as parish priests in Lewiston. One of the earliest of these, Father Alexandre Louis Mothon, was the archetype of the embattled, no-nonsense pastors who, like the Canadian priests of old, ruled their flock with a firm hand and set their parishes on a steady course. [41] In those days, parents paid 50 cents a month for each child's tuition.

But the Dominican Block and most other buildings of the type were more than mere schools: they also served as vital community centers for the local Franco-American population. When the school sponsored *seances*, like the Christmas pageant in Lewiston in 1885, [42] the entire parish turned out. In the early days, relatively few Franco-Americans went on to high school and college. Many of those who did went out of state to Assumption High School and College for men in Worcester, Massachusetts, founded in 1904, or to similar institutions for women under the direction of the Sisters of St. Anne and of the Presentation of Mary at Marlborough, Massachusetts, and at Hudson and Nashua, New Hampshire. The Ursulines also founded Mount Merici Academy in Waterville at the turn of the century.

The early schools operated by lay teachers had witnessed a good deal of improvisation. The religious orders now introduced a new dimension in education.

2. Arborons le drapeau. Regarde l'écriteau: Entrée interdite. Porte le seau d'eau au joli veau. Arthur a perdu son couteau sur la côte.

3. Le marteau du forgeron est à l'ouvrage dès le lever du soleil. Viendrez-vous me visiter demain? A la messe, le prêtre prie l'Agneau de Dieu.



drapeau

*voici l'Agneau de Dieu, voici celui qui efface les péchés du monde. Françoise, Firmin.*

## 25e LEÇON. — Ei, ein, eint.



baleine

⇒ 1  
ei = i



reine



seigle



peigne

1. La peine, le peigne, Notre-Seigneur, une reine, la neige, la baleine, le baleineau, le treize janvier, le seize février.

2. Le démêloir est un peigne à grosses dents. L'hiver, la neige tombe et couvre la terre. Le chien de Cyprien a la teigne.

They did not just teach subjects; they strove rather to show people how to live according to well-defined rules. [43] Today as we look back on these early parochial schools with their iron discipline and simple view of life, we tend to forget the crucial role they played in lifting a people out of illiteracy and backward modes of thought. They provided the secure environment which virtually eliminated the culture shock experienced by most other ethnic groups upon arrival in America. Early Franco-American society, like most ethnic cultures, was a pre-figurative community, the parents often learning from their children, not the other way around, as is usually the case. The schools may not have been as progressive as many would have liked but they preserved our culture.

The schools eventually settled into a routine familiar to most Franco-Americans who graduated before about 1960: half a day in French, with subjects like French grammar, catechism, Canadian history, art and music, and half a day in English, that is American history, arithmetic, geography, and so on. [44] Except for such communities as the Dominicans, the first religious were Canadian born. Over the years, the French-language subjects gradually became the province of the Canadian religious, English-language topics the specialty of the Americans, the former, in a sense, transmitting the old, the latter the new.

Canadian history was usually not presented as a systematic chronicle of events but as a series of vivid tableaux of the Ancien Regime, larger-than-life heroes like Dollard des Ormeaux and the Jesuit martyrs Brebeuf and Lalemant serving as models for the moral edification of the young. [45]

Like the McGuffey readers used in the public schools in the 19th century and later, the French-language primers, for instance the series by L'Abbe Magnan and the Christian Brothers, [46] taught children to read but also inculcated religious tenets and ethical principles by their repeated use of key words and phrases and stories with a moral. Many of these values were identical with those found in the McGuffey readers as, for example, the importance of learning to read, respect for the elderly, and neatness; others were more typically Catholic, such as the relationship between God and the family and bedtime prayers in the

cozy environment of holy pictures and the crucifix.

Incidentally, symbolic of the dual language and culture system, Franco-American children began the school day with the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States, like their counterparts in the public schools, but often followed this with a similar oath to the Sacred Heart flag introduced in Canada at the turn of the century. This was the familiar banner with the white cross and fleur-de-lis on a blue field which is now the official flag of the Province of Quebec but with a Sacred Heart emblem superimposed in the center. The flag in question appears in a photograph taken at St. Joseph's School in Biddeford before 1910 as well as in a Christian Brothers primer. [47]

Space does not allow me to characterize the French taught in the Franco-American schools and spoken in New England today. Suffice it to say that it is no more distinct from standard French than is, say American English from the British variety. Each has identical stratification according to social class and degree of formal training in the language. There are some minor differences between Acadian French and Canadian French and also between the latter two idioms as spoken in the Province today and that used by most people in New England. Franco-American speech tends to be a bit more old-fashioned. Canadian and New England French, especially that spoken by lower class individuals or colloquially, has quite a few Anglicisms but this is normal for all immigrant languages in America and, for that matter, evident in many European languages today including French. However, Canadian French has its own integrity and, moreover, has a characteristic lilt which I personally find delightful. Finally, it is insensitive, to say the least, to suggest that Franco-Americans do not speak good French.

Except for the comment on the state of the language, what precedes refers primarily to the Franco-American situation before World War II. Our institutions, ways of life, and modes of thinking have evolved considerably over the years and in many cases disappeared completely. As a matter of fact, many Franco-Americans find little of all this in their lives today. In most parochial schools today, for instance, French is taught only one hour per day, in

most churches French liturgy and sermons are used at only one of the five or six Sunday masses. [48] On the other hand, the America we grew up in has also undergone an enormous cultural transformation. In each case, this is cause for concern and even alarm in certain quarters, but most people view it with equanimity if not indifference. Be that as it may, there are still in Maine and elsewhere in New England many unmistakable signs of Franco-American linguistic and cultural continuity. Ethnicity in America has always led a perennially perilous existence.

The notion of divided loyalties needs to be mentioned here, as it is sometimes felt that the encouragement of ethnicity or of such a thing as the old custom of saluting the Sacred Heart flag was un-American. However, from the very outset and particularly since the 20's, Franco-American churches and schools steadfastly manifested their devotion and loyalty to American ideals. Love and appreciation of an ethnic heritage is a bit difficult to understand when one identifies exclusively with the more familiar American mainstream. People have a tendency to regard their own values as the natural and the right way of doing things. Being a Franco-American is like being an American and a New Englander, or having a father and a mother. Not surprisingly when one considers the state of most other ethnic groups in America today, present-day Maine French culture is a mixture of traditional French-Canadian attitudes and values and an ethos more generally associated with the middle class and with white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

There is much talk these days of the so-called ethnic revival in America, much of it, to my mind, illusory. What we need, these people say, is to recapture the more primitive ways of the past with more spontaneity, more ghetto-living, more vulgarity. Such persons tend to make ethnicity a unified phenomenon when, by definition, it is diverse. Also, these individuals not infrequently have little appreciation for their true background and invent an ethnicity that never was.

A good deal of Franco-American culture persists in Maine today, much of it unwitting and evolving more rapidly than ever before, but much of it is conscious, too, and surprisingly stable. [49]

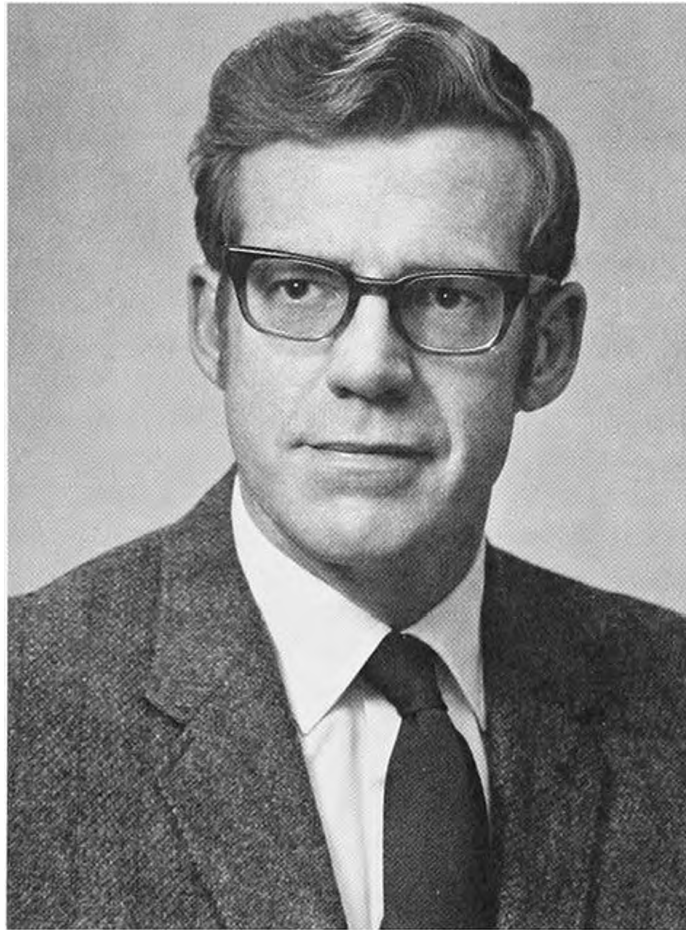
## NOTES

1. 1970 Census of Population. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. General Social and Economic Characteristics. Maine. PC (1) - C21. Issued February, 1972.
2. *Official Catholic Directory* (New York: Kenedy, 1960), cited by Hervé B. Lemaire in Joshua A. Fishman, *Language Loyalty in the United States* (London-The Hague-Paris: Moulton, 1966), p. 267. Cf. *Notre Vie franco-américaine* (Boston [Manchester, N.H.]: L'Avenir National, 1949), p. 21.
3. Robert Rumilly, *Histoire des Franco-Américains* (Montreal: L'Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste d'Amérique, 1958).
4. Pierre Biays in *Canada. A Geographical Interpretation*, ed. John Warkentin (Toronto-London-Sydney-Wellington: Methuen, 1968), p. 288.
5. Horace Miner, *St. Denis. A French-Canadian Parish* (1939; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).
6. Miner, p. vi.
7. See, especially, Sister Marie Ursule, C.S.J., *Civilisation traditionnelle des Lavallois* (Quebec: Presses Universitaires Laval, 1951), and Nora Dawson, *La Vie traditionnelle à Saint-Pierre (Île d'Orléans)* (Quebec: Presses Universitaires Laval, 1960) [*Les Archives de Folklore*, 5-6, 8].
8. Marius Barbeau, *Cornelius Krieghoff, Pioneer Painter of North America* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1934).
9. Reproduced in J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada. A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 123.
10. Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Religion and French-Canadian Mores in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Canadian Historical Review*, LII (1971), 51-94.
11. Edmond J. Massicotte, *Nos Canadiens d'autrefois: 12 Grandes Compositions* (Montreal: Granger Frères, 1923).
12. Donald F. Putnam and Robert G. Putnam, *Canada: A Regional Analysis* (Toronto: Dent, 1970), p. 126.
13. Putnam and Putnam, p. 127.

14. Ralph D. Vicero, *Immigration of French Canadians to New England, 1840-1900: A Geographical Analysis*, unpublished University of Wisconsin Ph.D. dissertation, 1968, ch. i.
15. Vicero, figs. 8 and 9.
16. James P. Allen, *Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography*, unpublished Syracuse University Ph.D. dissertation, 1970. For Vicero, see above, n. 14.
17. Evelyn H. Knowlton, *Pepperell's Progress. History of a Cotton Textile Company, 1844-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 28-32.
18. Vicero, fig. 15. See also Knowlton, p. 6.
19. Vicero, figs. 21, 22, 23.
20. William N. Locke, "The French Colony at Brunswick, Maine. A Historical Sketch," *Les Archives de Folklore*, I (1946), 107-110. Redrawn in Allen, fig. 10.
21. E. Hamon, S.J., *Les Canadiens-Francais de la Nouvelle-Angleterre* (Quebec: Hardy, 1891), p. 17.
22. For wage rates of the Pepperell Manufacturing Company, 1870-1924, see Knowlton, p. 166, with discussion, p. 167.
23. *Brunswick Telegraph*, August 6, 1886.
24. Edward Chase Kirkland, *Brunswick's Golden Age* (Lewiston: Loring, 1941).
25. Locke, p. 101.
26. *Brunswick Telegraph*, September 10, 1886.
27. Obituary in the *Brunswick Telegraph*, January 7, 1887.
28. *Souvenir du 50ième anniversaire de la paroisse St.-Jean-Baptiste, Brunswick, Maine, 1877-1927*.
29. "Little Canada -- The Vanishing Neighborhood," *Maine Times*, III, No. 49, September 10, 1971, cover and pp. 12-15, article by Wayne E. Reilly, photographs by Stephen Nichols.
30. *Brunswick Record*, November 29, 1962, p. 4A; *Fort Kent Centennial, 1869-1969*, p. 113; *The Pepperell Sheet*, April, 1941, p. 5.
31. *Paroisse Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul, Lewiston, Maine, 1971. Centenaire. Album souvenir*, p. [xxix].
32. Jacques Ducharme, *The Shadows of the Trees. The Story of French Canadians in New England* (New York and London: Harper, 1943), p. 182.
33. Allen, pp. 285-299.



34. Locke, p. 99.
35. *The Pepperell Sheet*, April, 1941, p. 5.
36. *Brunswick Telegraph*, May 13, 1887.
37. Private communication from Sister Mary Lucy, O.S.U., Principal, St. Ignatius School, Sanford, Maine, dated March 28, 1972.
38. *Paroisse Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul*, p. 15.
39. *St. Joseph Parish Centennial, Biddeford, Maine, 1870-1970*, p. 35.
40. Private communication from Sister Mary Lucy, O.S.U., Principal, St. Ignatius School, Sanford, Maine, dated March 28, 1972.
41. *Paroisse Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul*, pp. 22-31.
42. *Paroisse Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul*, p. 31.
43. See, for example, Sister Marie de Saint Jean Martin, O.S.U., *Ursuline Method of Education* (Rahway: Quinn and Boden, 1946).
44. This daily routine was detailed in such manuals as the *Programme d'études et Directoire a l'usage des SS. de l'Assomption de la S.V. pour les Ecoles Bilingues* (Nicolet, 1912).
45. *Histoire du Canada par Les Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes. Cours Moyen*, 4th ed. (Montreal: Les Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes, 1916), pp. 63, 69.
46. L'Abbé J. Roch Magnan, *Cours français de lectures graduées* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1912), 3 vols; the long series of Christian Brothers primers begins with their *Syllabaire* published at Montreal in 1872.
47. *St. Joseph Parish Centennial*, p. 80; *La Lecture par la méthode phonique. Deuxième partie* (Montreal: Les Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes, 1918), p. 43.
48. However, the exact reverse still holds for Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul Church in Lewiston to this day.
49. For additional observations, see my "New England French Culture," *French Review*, XLV (1972), 831-837.



Dr. Gerard J. Brault has been Professor of French at Pennsylvania State University since 1965.

A noted medievalist, Professor Brault has also written extensively on New England French language and culture. He attended Franco-American schools in Massachusetts, graduated from Assumption College in 1950, and was awarded a Ph.D. in Romance Languages by the University of Pennsylvania in 1958. He was a member of the Bowdoin College faculty from 1957 to 1961 and directed three National Defense Education Act summer institutes for Franco-American teachers of French, two of them at Bowdoin in 1961 and 1962.

The recipient of numerous fellowships and honors including the French Government's *palmes academiques* in 1965, Dr. Brault was recently awarded a research grant from the American Philosophical Society to enable him to complete a book on the Franco-Americans of New England.