

MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Special Edition

Summer, 1972

*Remarks of the President
Annual Meeting
June 24, 1972*

Members and Guests:

This is our 150th Annual Meeting. It is also the 50th year since we last held our annual meeting in Brunswick. For many years prior to 1922, our annual meeting was part of the Commencement calendar of Bowdoin College. We are indeed grateful to our co-hosts: the Pejepscot Historical Society and Bowdoin College.

On this important occasion we are focussing on an equally important problem in Maine history. The problem is that the standard state, county and town histories have given scant attention to many groups of non-English heritage Maine people. If we are to know the history of Maine we must know much more about the history of those people left out of the books. For the history of Maine includes all its people, those of English, French, Italian, Swedish, Polish, Slavic and Russian heritage, of whites and of blacks, of Protestant, Jewish, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic people.

Perhaps the Civil Rights Act of 1957 serves as a bench mark to the awakening throughout the nation that a diversity of cultures has long existed and that all the cultures which have come to America did not melt in a pre-selected English pot. And this Act of 1957 sharply brought home the fact that these diverse cultures have equal status with English culture. Now, fifteen years later there is a growing inquiry in Maine about the historically neglected people.

At the Maine Historical Society we are strongly encouraging this interest. We endeavor to make pertinent material known. We hope to stimulate study of available material that from the study more shall be written.

The interest of Maine's Franco-Americans in their history and genealogy is evident. Because of this and because we can, today, focus on only one non-English Maine culture we have asked the man to speak here who can shed light on the place they, the Franco-Americans, hold in Maine history. We are indeed fortunate that our speaker is Dr. Gerard J. Brault.