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Volume 4, Number 1, Autumn 1974

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad4\\_1art02](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad4_1art02)

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**Publisher(s)**

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

**ISSN**

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

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**Cite this article**

Allen, J. P. (1974). Franco-Americans in Maine:: A Geographical Perspective. *Acadiensis*, 4(1), 32–66.

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# Franco-Americans in Maine: A Geographical Perspective

During the last decade the people of the United States and Canada have shown a growing awareness of and pride in their diverse ethnic backgrounds. In Maine this interest appropriately has focused most intently on the Franco-Americans who, apart from the Yankees, constitute the most culturally distinctive and numerically important ethnic group in the state.<sup>1</sup> Yet it would be wrong to assume that members of this group are found throughout the state. They have indeed been numerous in some areas, but, at the other extreme there are portions of the state where there are few if any. The largest centres of French ethnic strength are known to local residents and scholars in a general and rather imprecise way while the less visible centres are usually ignored. However, a knowledge of the changing locations of the Franco-American population would seem a necessary prelude to understanding their significance in the state.

The major purpose of this paper is to depict the geographical characteristics of Maine's Franco-Americans during the twentieth century and to show what changes have occurred in recent years.<sup>2</sup> A private 1908 census and the most recent United States government census are the basic sources regarding spatial patterns and trends. The historical development of various types of Franco-American settlement will be traced, and statistical analyses will demonstrate the extent to which this ethnic distribution has been distinctive. A second purpose of the paper is to describe certain changes in culture and social structure which have occurred as Franco-Americans have experienced assimilation to varying degrees in different places. In this regard, a variety of

1 The term "Franco-American" in its broadest sense refers to Americans of French Canadian or Acadian heritage. In this paper the label "French" is roughly synonymous but includes also recent immigrants who may still think of themselves as Canadians. In contrast, Maine has long been dominated by people of English and Protestant heritage, constituting a very loosely defined ethnic group often labeled as "Yankee".

2 Portions of this paper are based on material from the author's doctoral dissertation: "Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1970).

data from Maine is useful as are recent comparative sociological studies based on national samples of Franco-Americans.

Membership in any ethnic group is basically a function of an individual's sense of identity with the group. Therefore, an ethnic group is most appropriately defined as a group with a shared sense of peoplehood.<sup>3</sup> Although such groups are usually limited to persons who share a common biological and cultural ancestry, ethnic intermarriage and attitude changes have meant that some biological descendants no longer feel an identity with a particular ancestral ethnic group. Such individuals are not properly considered members of that group. The best definition of a Franco-American is thus an American who considered himself or herself a Franco-American and who feels a sense of identity with other descendants of the *Canadiens* and *Acadiens*. The problem with such a definition is that the sense of peoplehood is hard to measure. For this reason various surrogates are often used. Most commonly some distinctive cultural characteristic is identified with most members of an ethnic group and the people who share this characteristic are considered members of the group. Because nearly all *Canadiens* and *Acadiens* who migrated to the United States were Roman Catholic and French speaking, religious identification and linguistic usage are potential indicators. In general, the former is the better indicator, because Catholic immigrants to the U.S. have tended to keep their religion while typically abandoning the language of the old country in two or three generations. Franco-Americans, however, have been more successful in preserving their French language through several generations than have most other ethnic groups. As a result, a linguistic measure is probably one satisfactory indicator of relative Franco-American strength in different places. Admittedly, a few people who consider themselves as members of this ethnic group were not raised as Catholics and probably a much larger number did not speak French as children. But there is no way of determining how many people are represented in these untypical categories. Moreover, measures of language and religion provide the only evidence available regarding the size and distribution of the Franco-American population.

Social scientists who have studied ethnicity in the United States have frequently used published volumes of the decennial federal census as primary sources. Depending on the year under investigation, measurement of the size of an ethnic population could usually be obtained from data on either 1) the mother tongue of the foreign born population of states, counties and larger cities; or 2) the country of origin of the foreign born and the foreign stock (native born of foreign parentage) in similar types of places. Although

3 The clearest and most valuable explanation of the ethnicity and the various types of assimilation which ethnic groups in the U.S. have experienced is found in Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York, 1964).

these would seem relatively satisfactory indicators, they are greatly weakened by being limited to the first and second generations of immigrants. Like many Americans, the officials who designed the censuses assumed that the grandchildren of immigrants would lose their ethnic identity and the culturally distinctive aspects of their ethnic background. In fact, this has often not been the case. New England's Franco-Americans, especially, have preserved their ethnicity over many more than two generations. For this reason, the use of typical census classifications may result in a serious underestimation of ethnic numbers. Religious preference might provide a further cultural indicator, but since 1936 it has been the policy of the Bureau of the Census to ask no question regarding such a private matter as religion. A second difficulty in the use of the published U.S. Census has been the fact that the data are often not presented in terms of sufficiently small areal units. This situation is exemplified by Maine, a state whose generally large counties encompass many small and often contrasting towns. County-level measurements are simply too gross to illuminate much of the geographic variety of the state, and except for Portland there has been until recently no city large enough to receive detailed treatment.

However, it is possible to overcome these problems and to obtain reasonably good distributional information on Franco-Americans, both at the beginning of the twentieth century and in 1970. For the former, two publications of the late nineteenth century are helpful,<sup>4</sup> but a special 1908 census is most useful. The unusual circumstances behind this census require some brief explanation. It was planned by leaders of the Franco-American communities in order to demonstrate that they represented an ethnic group larger than the Irish in numbers and, therefore, were deserving of more influence within the Catholic Church's Diocese of Portland. The Franco-Americans basically objected to the Church's policy of trying to assimilate them into the English-speaking Catholic population, but they found their desires thwarted again and again by the Church. In an effort to support their claims of numerical superiority the leaders formed *Le Comité Permanent de la Cause Nationale du Maine*. This group commissioned Odule Laplante to conduct a thorough survey of the Franco-American population in Maine. In his efforts Laplante traveled over 3000 miles within the state, seeking out Franco-Americans in even the smallest towns. His final count was one in which he expressed great confidence, in spite of numerous admitted difficulties. In 1908 and early 1909, Laplante's findings were published and fortunately they have been recently reprinted.<sup>5</sup> Comparison with federal census figures for 1910 indicates that he was generally accurate, with over-estimates likely

4 Edouard Hamon, *Les Canadiens-français de la Nouvelle-Angleterre* (Québec, 1891); A. Bourbonnière, *Le guide français des Etats-Unis* (Lowell, Mass., 1891).

5 The results first appeared in issues of *Le Messager*, the newspaper published in Lewiston, Maine, to champion the Franco-American cause. County totals were also reported in *La revue*

only in areas having few Franco-Americans.<sup>6</sup> Because the survey was not restricted to recent immigrant generations and because it was presented in terms of Catholic parish units, the data are more culturally valid and geographically illuminating than most U.S. Census data. His results represent the best ethnic distributional data available from this period.

In interpreting Laplante's data, certain problems must be considered. First, Laplante was, of course, interested in counting the Catholic population of French background, and he relied on parish priests for much of his information. But he never defined the criteria by which a person was to be considered a French Catholic. Although he was able to include many Franco-Americans who were outside the ethnic centers and some who were far from even an Irish Catholic Church, many of these were in the process of abandoning either their language or their Catholicism or both. There was no standardized method for identifying who was Franco-American and who was not, as in cases of children of ethnically mixed marriages. Nor were there any expressed criteria for deciding who should be counted as a member of a parish and who had been so lax and uninterested in practicing his religion as to be no longer considered a Catholic. Indeed the motivation behind the survey would suggest that Laplante was probably not reluctant to include those of French origin who were no longer using the language or practicing the faith. Although these matters do raise questions about the total state numbers, it will be assumed that variations in the accuracy of counting and in the criteria for membership in the Franco-American community did not vary significantly from place to place. As well, one must remember that Laplante's count was made by parish territories, which in much of Maine extended over several towns and often included more than one small Franco-American settlement together with scattered individuals and families. Thus, it is not possible to know the exact location and extent of population clustering within these parishes.

*franco-américaine*, II (January, 1909), pp. 206-209, and III (October, 1909), pp. 398-403. The data have been reprinted recently in Ralph D. Vicero's, "Le recensement d'Odèle Laplante," *Recherches Sociographiques*, XII (septembre-décembre, 1971), pp. 373-377.

<sup>6</sup> The U.S. Census in 1910 recorded the numbers of foreign born and foreign stock (second generation) French Canadians in counties and larger cities. This census included people regardless of religion, was taken two years later than Laplante's survey, but excluded the grand-children of immigrants. Comparison is appropriate in areas where nearly all French were first- or second-generation immigrants. In the case of the city measures, the U.S. Census excluded members of city parishes who happened to reside outside the limits of the city. In spite of these difficulties, comparisons are useful. For example, Laplante reported 15,143 Franco-Americans in York County, somewhat more than the U.S. Census figure of 13,683 French Canadians; but in Androscoggin County Laplante's total (14,842) was smaller than the government's (15,132). For the cities Laplante's figures were usually slightly higher, but relative position of both cities and counties was almost always the same. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteen Census of the U.S. 1910: Population*, II, pp. 814-816, 818. For further comparative details, see Allen, "Catholics in Maine," pp. 166-167, 172.

Contemporary distributional data are available in the United States Census of 1970. This was different from past censuses in that the question concerning mother tongue was not limited in application to the foreign born population. All individuals in a 15 per cent random sample were asked to identify the language used in their homes when they were children.<sup>7</sup> For this reason the 1970 data on mother tongue are more useful than those from any previous census. However, it is important to recognize that the data do not indicate the language used at the time the census was taken. Many people who learned French or other languages as their first language have since learned English and today speak English regularly as adults. The item is a good cultural indicator, however, of French ethnic background and, as such, is a good measure of the relative strength of French ethnicity in different places. The fact that only a sample of the population was asked the question does not affect the reliability of the results, except perhaps in towns with fewer than several hundred inhabitants. Another improvement in the 1970 Census is the availability of data for smaller areal units. The published volumes of the Census provide somewhat greater detail than in the past, and much more information is available in the form of computer tapes. A print-out of the results of the mother tongue question for many of Maine's towns is one empirical basis for research on the contemporary distribution of Franco-Americans.<sup>8</sup>

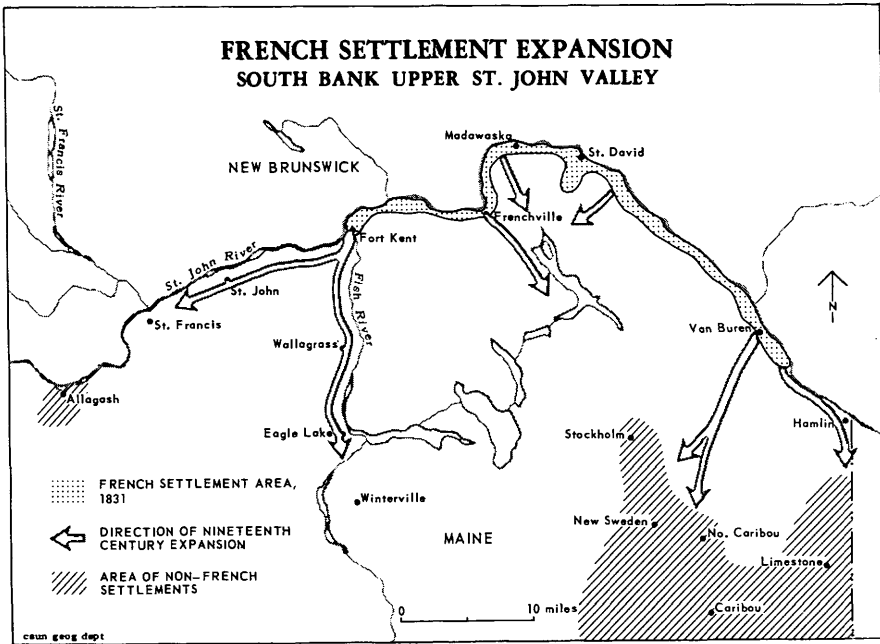
Clearly the 1908 and 1970 data are not strictly comparable since they are based on different criteria. Yet each measures an important aspect of Franco-American ethnicity, and it is indeed possible to compare the two distributions in terms of relative changes between different places in the state. Such comparisons constitute the primary evidence of the twentieth-century trends discussed in this paper.

At this point it is appropriate to examine the historical development of Franco-American settlement in Maine. In general, the ethnic distribution at the beginning of the twentieth century can be seen in terms of the cumulative effect of four major phases of settlement: 1) the expansion of early rural settlement along the upper St. John River, 2) the settlement of formerly seasonal workers, especially in the Kennebec and Penobscot River Valleys, 3) the concentration of large numbers of immigrants in cotton textile manufacturing towns, and 4) later concentrations of both immigrants and natives in certain pulp and paper manufacturing centers. Since these developments laid the foundations for the population changes to be investigated, they will be discussed briefly.

7 The question was worded, "What language, other than English, was spoken in this person's home when he was a child?" The procedures are explained in U.S., Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Appendix B*, pp. 7, 34.

8 U.S., Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, Fourth Count tapes, Tabulation P-23, "Mother Tongue and Nativity,"* for Maine. These data were supplemented by published data for counties and towns with over 10,000 inhabitants available from the *1970 Census of Population: Maine, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Tables 102, 119.*

In the late eighteenth century French Acadian pioneers began clearing land for homes and fields along the banks of the St. John River, far upstream from the predominantly British area around Fredericton. From a first landing at St. David near the present town of Madawaska, they soon began to expand along both banks, up and down the river (Map 1).<sup>9</sup> Canadians from the St. Lawrence Valley joined them, and by 1831 there were over 2,000 immigrants in the upper St. John Valley.<sup>10</sup> The settlements, known collectively then as Madawaska, extended from the mouth of the Fish River (Fort Kent) forty-five miles downriver, beyond the parish of *St. Bruneau* (Van Buren). There were some English-speaking people at either end of the Valley, but in the center the inhabitants were almost completely French, with roughly equal numbers of Acadians and Canadians. Ever since the Treaty of Paris in 1763 the entire area had been in dispute between the United States and Great Britain. However, in 1842 the northern boundary of Maine was firmly fixed along the St. John and St. Francis rivers, splitting Madawaska down its river



9 The author wishes to thank Lawrence Miyaki of the CSUN Geography Department's Cartography Lab for the preparation of maps accompanying this article.

10 Edward Kavanagh and John Deane, "Report," in *Correspondence and Documents Relative to the North Eastern Boundary*, Vol. II (1828, 1829, 1831), pp. 367-442. The volume is located in the Maine State Library, Augusta, but this handwritten description has been published in W.O. Raymond, "State of the Madawaska and Aroostook Settlements in 1831," *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society*, III, No. 9 (1914), pp. 344-384.

backbone. People who had chosen lots on the south bank became U. S. citizens while those on the north were confirmed as British subjects. Resolution of the boundary dispute brought increased migration and a resulting extension of the area of contiguous settlement. Some people moved up the Fish River along a newly completed road to the south. Also, by the 1850's logging trails penetrated the broad hill country east of Frenchville, and after 1860 this area received its first farm families. Ultimately these back settlements would be spread over the land some ten miles south of the river. By 1892 the settlement encompassed Hamlin on the east and St. Francis on the west, but the general direction of expansion was to the south.<sup>11</sup> Wallagrass, Eagle Lake, and Winterville were then well populated. The major southward thrust was along the main road from Van Buren to Caribou, with a focus around the parish at North Caribou, established in 1881. A secondary movement of French pushed south from Hamlin toward Limestone.

In contrast to the wild forest land which surrounded most of the French settlements, these lands to the southeast had been opened, if not densely occupied, by the descendants of the Yankee-British pioneers of eastern Aroostook County. At the same time, the Swedish farming colony begun in the town of New Sweden in 1871 was expanding to the north and east. Although the Swedes pushed into the town of Stockholm first, the French would soon follow. Thus, a zone of interlaced peoples was created between Limestone and Hamlin and between Caribou and VanBuren. Also, to the west along the St. John River a smaller settlement of still different character was developing. Scots-Irish loggers and river drivers from New Brunswick migrated to the Valley and located west of the mouth of the St. Francis River, upriver from the French. In time their descendents and new arrivals formed a small, somewhat unique society, isolated both geographically and culturally. A narrow cultural transition zone was being formed at the town of St. Francis: eastward was an almost exclusively French Catholic area while to the west was Allagash, whose inhabitants spoke English and were most assuredly not Catholic.

Although in-migration to the Valley declined in the last half of the nineteenth century, the population grew rapidly by natural increase. At the same time many individuals left the area and sought their fortune further south. Some worked at the huge sawmill north of Ashland, a few moved to Caribou and Fort Fairfield, and others joined migrants from the Maritime Provinces seeking employment in the sawmills, tanneries, and other industries of the

11 Thomas Albert, *Histoire du Madawaska* (Québec, 1920), pp. 191, 192, 233, 287, and 437. More details of the spatial expansion of the settlement by this time are evident from a private religious census. The numbers of Catholics reported for each town can be taken as an indication of the extent of French settlement in that town. Census results were published in the *Bible Society of Maine Quarterly*, I (March, 1893), and in the Bible Society of Maine, *Second Statistical Report* (Portland, 1901), both available at the Maine Historical Society Library, Portland.



Penobscot River towns.<sup>12</sup>

A similar southward drift was taking place from Canadian settlements closer to the St. Lawrence River. Beginning in the 1830's many French Canadians from Beauce County were able to find short-term work in southern Maine. In those early years most individuals rejoined their families in Quebec when the jobs were finished, but economic opportunities were so much better south of the border that increasing numbers decided to move permanently to Maine.<sup>13</sup> As early as 1835 thirty families had gathered in Waterville,<sup>14</sup> and by 1860 there were more than 500 French Canadians in Biddeford and almost as many in Waterville and in the towns along the lower Penobscot River.<sup>15</sup> Skowhegan had over 200 French Canadians, and there were sufficient opportunities in Augusta, Farmington, Fairfield and Dexter for each to have attracted several French families.<sup>16</sup> After 1853, when the first railroad link between Quebec and Maine was completed, transportation between Quebec and southern Maine's developing manufacturing cities was relatively easy and cheap. This, together with recruitment and the personal contact networks established earlier, made it possible for future French Canadian migration to be highly responsive to developing job opportunities and income differentials in various places.<sup>17</sup>

The largest employer of French Canadian immigrants — men, women and children — was the expanding cotton textile manufacturing establishments. After a hesitant beginning in the early nineteenth century, they grew rapidly after the Civil War with the consolidation of smaller mills and the availability of cotton fiber and Boston capital tapped for mill development by resourceful entrepreneurs.<sup>18</sup> This was also a period of vigorous railroad expansion, with each line which pushed north helping to tie more cities into the larger markets of southern New England. Moreover, Southern cotton was easily

12 *Bangor Daily Commercial*, July 2, 1872, p. 3; April 10, 1886, p. 1; June 4, 1873, p. 3; and August 15, 1874, p. 1.

13 James P. Allen, "Migration Fields of French Canadian Immigrants to Southern Maine." *Geographical Review*, LXII (July, 1972), pp. 370-371 provides more detail on this early migration.

14 Edwin C. Whittemore, ed., *The Centennial History of Waterville* (Waterville, 1902), p. 248.

15 Ralph D. Vicero, personal communication. These figures are based on revised counts from the manuscripts of the U.S. Census. See Ralph D. Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England, 1841-1900: A Geographical Analysis. (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1968).

16 Vicero, personal communication. See also Honorius Provost, "Un chapitre d'histoire religieuse dans le Maine." *La revue de l'Université Laval*, II (June, 1948), pp. 857, 858; Francis B. Butler, *A History of Farmington* (Farmington, 1885), p. 169; Philip E. Desjardins, "French Canadians. Central and Southern Maine." *Church World* (Portland), June 1, 1951, p. 4.

17 R.K. Vedder and L.E. Galloway, "Settlement Patterns of Canadian Emigrants to the United States, 1850-1960." *Canadian Journal of Economics*, III (August, 1970), pp. 476-486.

18 Robert G. Leblanc, *Location of Manufacturing in Nineteenth Century New England in the Nineteenth Century*, Geography Publications at Dartmouth, No. 7 (Hanover, N.H., 1969), esp. pp. 86-96 and 108-122.

shipped to the port of Portland and from there taken by train to the various mills. Prior to mid-century most workers in the mills were Yankees, often farm girls looking for more excitement and a better life in the city. But because of the monotonous and often dangerous work, with long hours and low pay, fewer Americans accepted such jobs, and by the 1850's much of the labor in the mills was being performed by Irish immigrants. With the post-Civil War expansion, even these recent immigrants were able to find better jobs, and French Canadians were recruited and eagerly accepted mill work.

By 1873, the cotton mill cities of Biddeford and Lewiston were receiving the largest numbers of French Canadians.<sup>19</sup> In 1860 nearly 75 percent of Biddeford's employed French Canadians were working in the cotton mills.<sup>20</sup> Although the first French Canadian immigrant to Lewiston may have arrived as late as 1860,<sup>21</sup> the growth of both industry and the French population was so rapid after 1868 that Lewiston soon surpassed Biddeford. By 1890 there were 9,250 French persons in Lewiston compared to Biddeford's 8,155.<sup>22</sup> The Lockwood Mills were built in Waterville and the French community of that town continued to expand. Other cotton mill centers — Brunswick, Westbrook, and Augusta — had fewer French, but only the smallest mills in such places as Hallowell, Kennebunk, Richmond and Yarmouth failed to become foci of major Franco-American communities.<sup>23</sup>

Woolen textile plants, more widely dispersed and smaller than the cotton mills, tended to employ local residents. In towns where both woolen mill employment and French settlement occurred, the relationship between the two was uncertain. Skowhegan, Old Town and Madison all had French Communities prior to mill construction; and Lisbon, Lewiston and Old Town were more diverse industrially, with employment opportunities not dependent on woolen manufacturing. Perhaps only in Dexter and Vassalboro could the establishment of Franco-American communities be associated primarily with the woolen mills.<sup>24</sup> However, the importance of the textile industry as a whole in providing employment to the French Canadian immigrants is clear from the fact that in 1890 over 30 per cent of Maine's employed Canadian-born French males and 84 per cent of employed Canadian-born French females

19 "Report of Rev. P.E. Gendreau, Special Agent, of his Visit to French Canadians in the U.S., to the Minister of Agriculture." *Sessional Papers* (Canada), No. 9 (1874), p. 67.

20 Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians," p. 171.

21 *Album souvenir du 75e anniversaire de la paroisse Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul de Lewiston, Maine, 1871-1946*, (Lewiston, 1946), p. 8. Louis Mothon, Notes on the history of Sts. Peter and Paul. *L'Année dominicaine*, (1893), as collected and edited by Charlotte Michaud for the *Lewiston Journal*.

22 Hamon. *Les Canadiens-français*, p. 402.

23 Maine, Secretary of State. *Statistics of Industries and Finances of Maine for 1883, Second Report*, pp. 161-165.

24 *Ibid.* See also Desjardins, "French Canadians," p. 4.

worked in such mills.<sup>25</sup>

In the late nineteenth century another major industry was developing in the state. When the paper industry switched in the 1870's from rags to wood pulp as a source of paper fiber, the resource potential of Maine's forests was obvious. Over the next few decades numerous pulp and paper mills were established, commonly on the larger rivers — the Androscoggin, the Kennebec, and the Penobscot. The industry built whole new towns on the fringes of the great forest areas and rejuvenated older settlements which had been chosen as sites for the new mills. The rapid growth of the industry meant that wood choppers were in great demand. Knowledge of job opportunities in the woods had been widely disseminated, and in 1871 a railroad connection between Bangor and New Brunswick was completed. By the end of the century a large proportion of the woodsmen were Canadian in origin: Scots, English, Irish and Acadians from the Maritime Provinces together with French Canadians from across the border to the west.<sup>26</sup>

When the large pulp and paper mills were built, a great variety of people sought work at the plants. The average annual wage was \$609 compared to \$442 for woolen mill workers, \$390 for cotton mill workers, and \$415 for lumber and timber workers.<sup>27</sup> The companies recruited a few skilled paper makers, but most of the Yankees, Italian immigrants, and French from Canada and Lewiston who were hired at the mills were anxious for any job at these higher wages. Also, the presence of Acadian French in the paper mill towns differentiated these places somewhat from the other French settlements in southern Maine. Acadians from New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the upper St. John Valley migrated in handfuls to most of the urban French centers in Maine, but the paper mill towns received easily the largest numbers<sup>28</sup> (Map 2). For example, in 1880 the S.D. Warren Company in Westbrook was described as the largest paper mill in the world; its employees included *Québécois*, but these were later joined by about one hundred Acadian families.<sup>29</sup> Some P.E.I. Acadians settled near the new mill in Yarmouth,<sup>30</sup> and others made their way to the Chisholm and Riley mills in the town of Jay.<sup>31</sup> Millinocket's Franco-Americans came mostly from the upper St. John Valley and the Maritimes, and the largest colony of New Brunswick and P.E.I. Acadians developed in Rumford after the International Paper

25 U. S., Census Office, *Eleventh Census of the U. S., 1890: Population*, II, pp. 564-565.

26 *Daily Eastern Argus* (Portland), Jan. 20, 1903, p. 10.

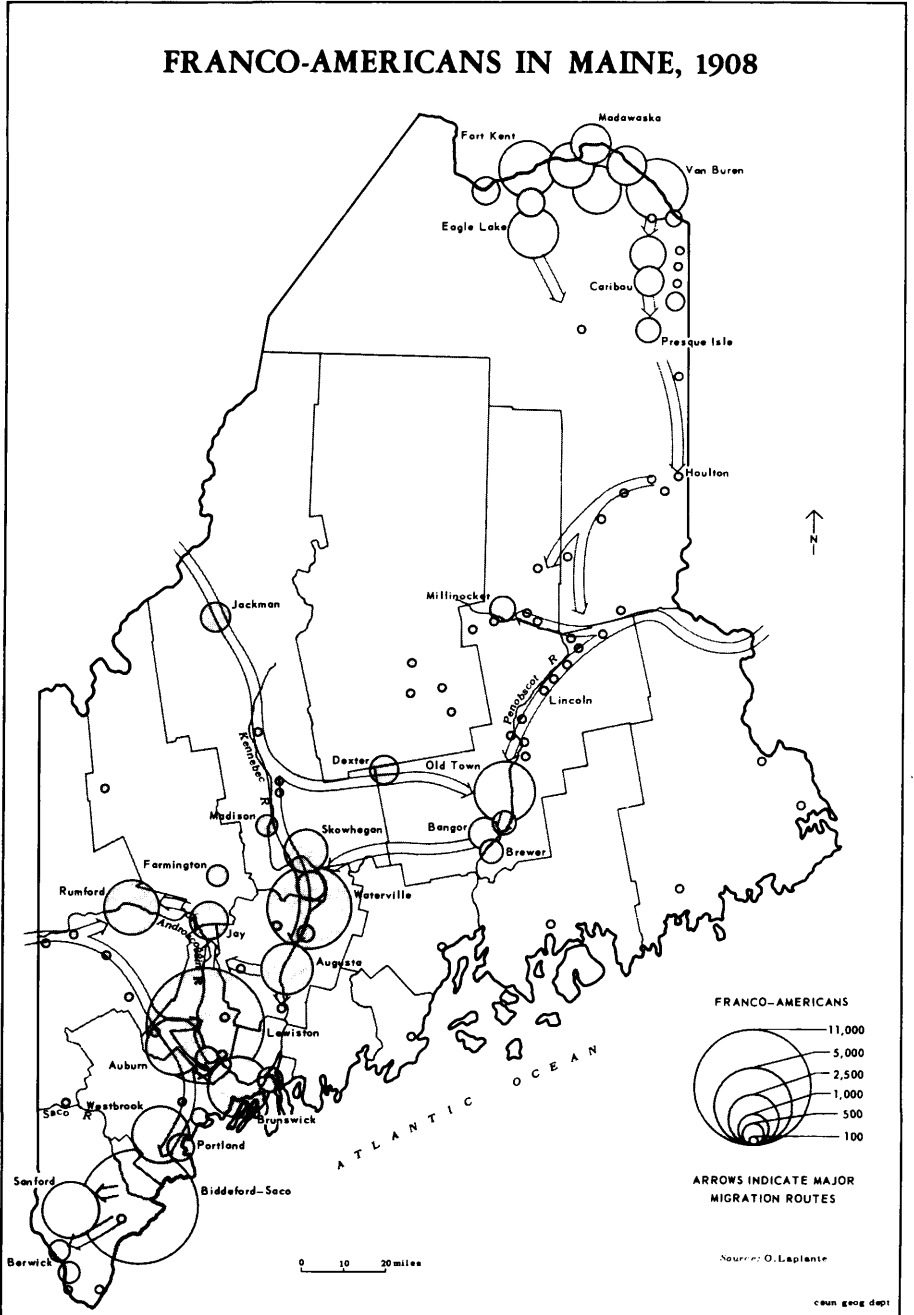
27 U. S., Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the U. S., 1910: Manufactures*, IX, pp. 453-454.

28 Desjardins, "French Canadians," p. 8.

29 Msgr. Philip E. Desjardins, former pastor of St. Hyacinth, Westbrook, interview, January, 1968.

30 Carmita Jones, "Acadia in Maine," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, XXXVI (1925), p. 361.

31 Rev. Julius Boucher, former pastor of St. Rose, Chisholm, interview, February, 1968.



MAP 2

Company opened its sulfite mill and paper bag plant in 1900.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in the lower Penobscot River towns some of the French immigrants were from Quebec, but most had come from the Maritime Provinces.<sup>33</sup>

By 1908, then, the Franco-American population was concentrated in the new manufacturing centers, and it is possible to determine statistically the extent to which French urban settlement was correlated with different types of manufacturing. Laplante's data for 1908 and Maine state statistics on manufacturing employment by town in 1908<sup>34</sup> were compared for all towns and cities with over 2,900 inhabitants in 1910. Aroostook County was excluded because Franco-American settlement there was known to be unrelated to manufacturing. Thirty-seven places were included in the analysis.

Results indicate that cotton textile employment was very highly correlated with the Franco-American population ( $r = .915$ ). Both woolen and pulp and paper manufacturing employment showed positive but much lower correlations ( $r = .141$  and  $.137$  respectively). It is correct, then, to associate the early twentieth century Franco-Americans with the cotton industry. This does not mean, of course, that all Franco-Americans or even a majority were actually working in the industry. It shows only that this industrial employment was sufficient to provide a locational focus for the infant Franco-American communities, each of which contained many individuals of varied occupational skills. That Franco-Americans had a distinctive geography at this time is further indicated by the fact that correlation between the total population and the Franco-American population of these places was relatively low ( $r = .391$ ). Clearly, Franco-American settlement was not a reflection of the general population distribution.

Of the places in the above analysis, two were cities with nearly twice the cotton textile employment and Franco-American population of the next largest center. It is quite clear that the correlation was strongly influenced by these two extreme cases (Lewiston and Biddeford-Saco) in which the correlation with cotton textile employment was very high. Therefore, in order to better understand the situation for more typical urban places, a second analysis was made, this time excluding Lewiston and Biddeford-Saco. Analysis of the remaining thirty-five places showed that the Franco-American population was still most highly correlated with cotton textile

32 Desjardins, interview; Msgr. Felix Martin, pastor of *Ste. Croix*, Lewiston, interview, February, 1968; *Church World* (Portland), July 1, 1955, p. 9.

33 Analysis of a sample of 128 naturalization records showing place of birth of French-named immigrants from Canada to the Old Town-Bangor area in the period 1880-1910 showed 30 per cent from the Province of Quebec and 55 per cent from the Maritimes, in addition to 15 per cent from the New Brunswick section of the upper St. John Valley. U. S., Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, "Record of Declaration of Intention," Vols. I, II, III, and VI, Penobscot County Courthouse, Bangor.

34 Maine, Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report, 1910* (Augusta, 1910).

employment ( $r = .703$ ), but that pulp and paper industry employment was also strongly correlated ( $r = .484$ , statistically significant at the .01 level). Woolen textile employment had a much lower correlation ( $r = .258$ , not statistically significant at the .05 level). Correlation with total manufacturing employment ( $r = .468$ ) was less than that with either cotton or pulp and paper manufacturing, making clear the fact of Franco-American settlement in these specialized industrial centers. Moreover, total manufacturing employment was more highly correlated with the total population ( $r = .808$ ) than with the Franco-American population.

The data were further analyzed by step-wise multiple regression to determine the cumulative importance of the different manufacturing types in accounting for the Franco-American distribution. The results indicate that half the variation in the Franco-American distribution could be explained by cotton textile employment ( $R^2 = .4942$ ) without even including the two largest cotton mill and Franco-American centers. Furthermore, all three variables together account for over 70 per cent of the distribution of Franco-Americans outside Aroostook County.

TABLE 1  
RESULTS OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF FRANCO-AMERICAN  
POPULATION ON EMPLOYMENT VARIABLES\*

<i>Employment type</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Increase in R<sup>2</sup></i>
Cotton textile	.7030	.4942	.4942
Pulp and paper	.7714	.5951	.1009
Woolen textile	.8410	.7073	.1122

\*Lewiston, Biddeford-Saco and Aroostook County not included.

Other major features of Franco-American settlement in 1908 can best be seen in terms of county comparisons (Table 2). Aroostook County contained the largest number of Franco-Americans, and the largest proportion of Franco-Americans in the total population was also found there. Settlement was still highly concentrated in the rural upper St. John Valley (Map 2). Because immigration in the late nineteenth century was not large, it was indeed a native-born population that occupied the area. By 1910 only 13 per cent of the French in Aroostook County had been born in Canada.<sup>35</sup> Penobscot County also contained a large number of Franco-Americans; and because so many of its residents had migrated from the U.S. side of the St. John Valley or were descendants or very early French Canadian settlers, the percentage of foreign born was exceptionally low (26%) in that county too.

In the southern part of the state Franco-Americans were clearly strongest

35 This figure and subsequent ones are based on foreign-born French Canadians in 1910 as a percentage of the 1908 total. U. S., *Thirteenth Census of the U. S., 1910*; Population, II, pp. 814-816.

TABLE 2  
FRANCO-AMERICANS IN MAINE COUNTIES: 1908, 1970

County	1908		1970	
	<i>Franco American Catholics</i>	<i>Per cent Fr.-Ams. in Total Pop.</i>	<i>French Mother Tongue Population</i>	<i>Per cent Fr. M. T. in Total Pop.</i>
Androscoggin	14,842	25	35,940	39
Aroostook	22,883	31	27,442	29
Cumberland	7,715	7	11,286	6
Franklin	2,351	12	1,559	7
Hancock	22	0	403	1
Kennebec	9,152	15	18,264	19
Knox	112	1	211	1
Lincoln	22	0	200	1
Oxford	3,341	9	3,612	8
Penobscot	9,892	12	8,885	7
Piscataquis	397	2	845	5
Sagadahoc	723	4	1,174	5
Somerset	4,358	12	4,475	11
Waldo	145	1	467	2
Washington	301	1	500	2
York	15,143	22	26,226	24
Total	91,567		141,489	
Average		12		15

Sources: Laplante. "Les Franco-américains du Maine," *La revue franco-américaine*, II (January, 1909), pp. 206-209. U.S.. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the U.S., 1910: Population*, II, pp. 814-816. U.S.. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, Maine: Number of Inhabitants*, Table 10; General Social and Economic Characteristics, Table 119.

in Androscoggin and York Counties, with Kennebec County third in numbers. Here most Franco-Americans lived close to the mill operations of the types already discussed. With the exception of Waterville and, to a lesser extent, Biddeford, the French population of these counties was relatively new to the state. Over half the French in Androscoggin and York Counties in 1910 had been born in Canada. The presence of Franco-Americans in such counties as Cumberland, Franklin, Oxford and Somerset can be understood only in terms of particular towns. Because the low numbers and proportions of county totals obscure the local significance of these French settlements, an examination of the distribution by towns is more illuminating.

Table 3 includes only parishes in which the Franco-American population in 1908 was substantially concentrated in one town. Data for smaller places indicate a dispersal of Franco-Americans which made location in terms of towns too uncertain. In those parishes where Franco-Americans were known to be concentrated in one town, but with significant numbers in one adjoining town, the second center is indicated as being included as part of the parish total. In such cases the percentage figure for the major town in 1908 is somewhat higher than it should be, as this figure does not take into account the total population in the adjoining town. The case of Biddeford and Saco, for which additional information on French locations is available, illustrates the situation. Because there was no French parish in Saco, even as late as 1908, the more than 1,000 Franco-Americans in Saco<sup>36</sup> were included by Laplante with those in Biddeford to make the total of 10,641. Biddeford would then appear to be 62 per cent Franco-American. But if the 1,000 in Saco are subtracted from Biddeford's total, the revised total of 9,650 Franco-Americans, 57 per cent of the city's people, is more accurate. Still, Biddeford was the leading city in the state in terms of proportion of French in the total population. During this period the city was experiencing also an influx of European immigrants of varied nationalities. At the same time old Yankee families had been moving across the river to Saco to avoid contact with the "new and uncertain peoples."<sup>37</sup> Saco was considered a serene and prosperous traditional community, epitomized by its old colonial homes and elm-shaded streets. As Biddeford became increasingly foreign and Catholic, Saco became a suburban refuge for the Yankees.

In Old Town, also, measurement was complicated by the location of parishioners in neighboring towns. Over two decades earlier, one-fifth of the French members of the parish in Old Town had been living in Bradley and Milford towns.<sup>38</sup> If the relative location of parishioners had not changed, then in 1908

36 William MacDonald, "The French Canadians in New England," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XII (April, 1898), p. 254.

37 Roy P. Fairfield, *Sands, Spindles and Steeples* (Portland, 1956), p. 217.

38 *Le Messenger* (Lewiston), Sept. 15, 1881.



TABLE 3  
FRANCO-AMERICANS IN SELECTED TOWNS: 1908, 1970

Town or Parish	1908		1970	
	<i>Franco-American Catholics</i>	<i>Per cent Fr.-Ams.</i>	<i>French Mother Tongue Population</i>	<i>Per cent French M. T.</i>
Lewiston	11,180	43	25,037	60
Biddeford (incl. Saco)	10,641	62*	15,599‡	61
Waterville (incl. Winslow)	5,862	51*	8,338	30
Van Buren	3,800	97	3,844	94
Brunswick (incl. Topsham)	3,308	50*	3,152	15
Old Town (incl. Bradley)	3,300	52*	1,980	20
Sanford (incl. Springvale)	2,968	33	5,997	38
Westbrook	2,951	36	2,487	17
Auburn	2,911	19	6,938	29
Fort Kent	2,850	95	3,929	86
Rumford (incl. Mexico)	2,745	41*	2,665	21
Augusta	2,487	19	6,419	29
Eagle Lake	2,400	99	933	95
Caribou (incl. N. Car.)	2,242	43	2,470	24
Frenchville	1,950	99	1,441	97
Skowhegan	1,806	34	925	12
Madawaska	1,600	95	4,800†	86†
Jay (incl. Liv. Falls)	1,525	51*	1,505	18
Bangor	1,058	4	1,861	6
Millinocket (incl. E. Mil.)	1,039	31*	1,369	13
Dexter	855	24	364	10
St. Francis	805	95	876	79
Portland (incl. S. Port.)	760	1	3,653	4
Bath	674	7	270	3
Presque Isle	641	12	876	14
Brewer	624	11	479	5
Orono	599	17	768	8
Lisbon	567	14	1,135	17

\*See text for explanation of probable slight overestimate represented by these figures.

†Estimate.

‡For Biddeford alone the 1970 French mother tongue population was 12,268.

Sources: Laplante's census, published in issues of *Le Messager* (Lewiston) and reprinted (See note 4). U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the U.S., 1910: Population*, II, pp. 801-805. U.S., Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, Maine: Number of Inhabitants, Table 6; General, Social and Economic Characteristics, Table 81, 102; Fourth Count of Computer Tapes, Table 23 for towns with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants.*

probably only about 39 per cent of Old Town's inhabitants were Franco-Americans. Similarly, some of the people counted by Laplante for St. John's parish in Brunswick actually lived across the river in Topsham. Lewiston may have been the largest Franco-American center at this time but the proportion of French in this second-largest city of the state was lower than one might have expected from its widespread reputation as *the* French city. Lewiston had large numbers of both Yankees and Irish, so that even by 1908 the French were not in a majority. But it had been growing faster than Biddeford, as was indicated by the change in manufacturing employment from 1904 to 1909. While Biddeford grew by only 288 persons in such jobs, there was an increase of 1,540 manufacturing workers in Lewiston-Auburn by the latter date.<sup>39</sup> Waterville was still the third Franco-American city, and new industry had appeared in the area. The Hollingsworth and Whitney pulp and paper plant was constructed across the Kennebec River in Winslow, and a new soda pulp plant at Fairfield also provided jobs for the French community. But more immigrants were heading down the river to Augusta where cotton mill employment had by 1910 grown to ten times its size in 1845.<sup>40</sup> Also, the town of Jay experienced a major influx of people when the International Paper Company developed plants on the Androscoggin River. Few people had been living just north of the town of Livermore Falls when the mills were built. Consequently, in the Chisholm area especially and in the town of Jay as a whole the Franco-American community represented a large proportion of the inhabitants.

In the upper St. John Valley the building of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad and the development of the potato as a specialty crop permitted much closer commercial ties with the growing urban markets to the south. For farmers the potato represented a gamble for possible large cash gains, and for young people and entire families there were good jobs for a few weeks in late summer picking potatoes. Unfortunately, the prosperity of bumper harvests too seldom compensated for lean years; the Valley remained poor. Lumbering still provided seasonal employment for local men, and some Franco-Americans were able to purchase businesses such as sawmills, starch factories and stores, which had been started originally by Yankee entrepreneurs.<sup>41</sup> And although Franco-American lawyers and doctors were beginning to replace most non-French professionals, there were altogether not enough good jobs to go around. Even though some Franco-Americans were leaving the Valley, the high rate of natural increase plus the departure of some English speakers meant that the populace was becoming ever more dom-

39 U. S., *Thirteenth Census of the U. S., 1910: Manufactures*, IX, p. 455.

40 Maine, Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, 1910*, p. 15.

41 Edward Wiggin, *History of Aroostook*, Vol. I (Presque Isle, 1922), p. 185.

inantly French.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the total population was growing rapidly. The number of people in the region, from Allagash to Hamlin and south to Winterville and Stockholm, increased from less than 9,000 in 1880 to over 21,000 in 1910. The new Franco-American settlements of Guerette and Sinclair on the lakes southeast of Frenchville were developed in the 1890's while Eagle Lake and Stockholm tripled their numbers between 1900 and 1910. The cultural and geographical separation between the Franco-American settlements in northern Maine and the rest of the state produced the most distinctive cultural region in all New England, one which appeared at this time in little danger of being overwhelmed by the English-speaking Protestant and secular dominance of the rest of the state and the country.

Many French Canadians arrived in New England in the years after 1908. Except for the period of World War I the net southward flow continued until 1930, when the depressed U. S. economy and new immigration restrictions effectively ended the long period of large-scale French Canadian immigration to New England.<sup>43</sup> The development of growing French populations in rural and urban places within the culturally alien state of Maine posed an understandable threat to the integrity of the transplanted French culture. In the nineteenth century French Canadians felt that their language was inseparable from their religion, that the French language was a necessary bulwark for Catholicism. As long as a person continued to use French rather than English he would remain a Catholic. But *qui perd sa langue perd sa foi*. The priests and other leaders who came to New England were very much aware of the danger of exposure to the alien influences.

The establishment of a Catholic elementary school was often the first concern of the pastor in a growing Franco-American community. In 1908 there were over 9,000 pupils in parochial schools in Maine, and two-thirds of these were in French schools.<sup>44</sup> Usually the teachers were nuns from either France or Canada. Although in some schools there were classes in English, most teaching was devoted to French-language subjects, including religion and French Canadian history.<sup>45</sup> Except in the major Franco-American centers, the attempt to preserve the use of French in everyday speech failed. In most parishes the priests spoke no French, and the acquisition of English language skills was obviously valuable, if not necessary, where Franco-Americans were a local minority numbering a few hundred or less. Even in the larger places many Franco-Americans lost interest in ethnic matters; the 1920's represented the last decade of widespread ethnic support for the use

42 *Ibid.*

43 Yolande Lavoie, *L'émigration des Canadiens aux Etats-Unis avant 1930* (Montréal, 1972), pp. 13, 22.

44 J.L.K. Laflamme, et al, "French Catholics in the United States, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1909), Vol IX, p. 275.

45 Herve B. Lemaire, "Franco-American Efforts on Behalf of the French Language in New Eng-

## 50 *Acadiensis*

of the French language in all possible affairs of the community.<sup>46</sup> By 1930 the smaller schools had evolved into general Catholic schools with French language study occupying a minor position in the curriculum. Larger schools still emphasized the language, but no longer were the sisters preaching love of Canada and its history.<sup>47</sup> In these schools a bilingual generation of Americans was being produced. In fact, until the 1950's the state of Maine never really enforced the requirement that English be the basic language of instruction in all schools<sup>48</sup> although, until 1969, the state officially prohibited the teaching of subjects other than a foreign language in a language other than English.<sup>49</sup>

Enrollments in Franco-American Catholic schools in a typical year during the first half of the century give an indication of those places where the French language was receiving support from the schools. Although the establishment and success of such schools was dependent to some extent on the abilities of the individual pastor, there was rough correlation with the size of Franco-American communities (Table 4). All the larger communities supported such schools, although Old Town had a much lower enrollment than might have been expected from the number of people in the area. Bangor and Portland had large enrollments in parochial schools too, but these, being Irish, provided no support for French. Millinocket and Dexter were the largest Franco-American centers without any Catholic schools at all.

In general the French who migrated to Maine remained more closely tied to their language and traditions than those in other New England states. They also had less formal education. Considering only Canadian-born French eleven years of age and older in 1930, the percentage illiterate was higher in Maine than in any other New England state. Maine's position was the same with respect to the illiteracy rates of the second-generation Canadian French.<sup>50</sup> Also, the Canadian-born French in Maine were highest in the percentage unable to speak English, highest in median family size, and lowest in the percentage who had become U. S. citizens.<sup>51</sup> Although such characteristics were partly a function of problems affecting all of Maine, they do suggest that French culture was being Anglicized least in Maine.

land," in *Language Loyalty in the United States*, Joshua A. Fishman, ed. (The Hague, 1966), p. 258.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 262.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 263.

48 Rev. Charles M. Murphy, Superintendent of Schools of the Diocese of Portland, interview, September, 1967.

49 Heinz Kloss, *Les droits linguistiques des Franco-Américains aux Etats-Unis* (Québec, 1970), p. 52.

50 Leon E. Truesdell, *The Canadian Born in the United States* (New Haven, 1943), pp. 189, 190.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 117, 199, 248.

TABLE 4  
FRANCO-AMERICAN PARISH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT: 1930

<i>Town</i>	<i>Pupils</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Pupils</i>
Lewiston	2928	Skowhegan	417
Biddeford	2543	Jay*	405
Sanford*	1298	Old Town	385
Waterville	981	Mexico*	295
Brunswick*	875	Fairfield*	253
Augusta	699	Orono*	247
Rumford	600	South Berwick*	158
Auburn	550	Jackman*	140
Westbrook	440		

\*Indicates pupils in a parish not officially designated by the Diocese as a French parish but in which the Franco-American population was clearly dominant. In such parishes French was typically studied as a foreign language rather than as the language of instruction.

Source: *Official Catholic Directory*, 1930 (New York, 1930).

Note: In addition, in the upper St. John Valley there were eight public schools which were operating essentially as French parochial schools. See Francis Brassard, "The Origin of Certain Public Schools in the St. John Valley of Aroostook County, Maine," (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1967), pp. vi, vii. Discussions of these schools and the problems involved with their operation can be found in Ernst C. Helmreich, *Religion and the Maine Schools: An Historical Approach* (Brunswick, 1960), pp. 22-27, and in Kloss, *Les droits linguistiques* (See note 49) pp. 50-53.

The size of Maine's Franco-American population can also be measured relative to the other New England states, and recent changes can be shown by comparable data on mother tongue for 1940 and 1970. In 1940, Maine had the second largest number of people whose mother tongue was French (Table 5). Moreover, Maine contained a larger number of third- and fourth-generation French speakers than any other New England state,<sup>52</sup> but the major explanation for this was the unusually early development of the upper St. John Valley. Since 1940 the percentage of foreign born among those of French mother tongue has dropped in all the states, an indication of the general reduction in immigration from French Canada. The differences between the 1940 and the 1970 mother tongue figures thus reflect internal migration within New England, natural increase, and differences from place to place in language maintenance.

52 U. S., Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the U. S., 1940: Population, "Nativity and Patentage of the Total White Population by Mother Tongue,"* Table 2.

TABLE 5  
 FRENCH MOTHER TONGUE POPULATION, NEW ENGLAND STATES:  
 1940, 1970

<i>States</i>	<i>French Mother Tongue Population 1940</i>	<i>French Mother Tongue Population 1970</i>	<i>Per cent Increase Fr. M.T. 1940-70</i>	<i>Per cent Increase Tot. Pop. 1940-70</i>
Massachusetts	281,960	367,194	30	32
Maine	138,260	141,489*	2	17
New Hampshire	100,580	112,559	12	50
Rhode Island	85,260	101,270	19	33
Connecticut	59,900	142,118	137	77
Vermont	38,580	42,193	9	24

\*In 1970 Maine recorded 256 people who were born in France and 796 who were born in the U.S. but had at least one parent born in France. This indicates the insignificant role of that country as a source of French-speaking people in the state.

Sources: U.S., Bureau of the Census, *1940 Census: Population, "nativity and Parentage of the White Population,"* Table 2. Data based on a 5 per cent sample of the entire population, not restricted as has usually been the case to the population of foreign birth or parentage. U.S., *1970 Census of Population, U.S. Summary, General Social and Economic Tables 146, 147.* Data based on a 15 per cent sample of the entire population.

It is important to note that in all the New England states the last few decades have seen a growth in the number of people who learned French as their first language in the home. This is strong evidence that French ethnicity was much more resistant to change than many people had expected. The greatest absolute gains in Franco-American population as measured by French mother tongue were made in Connecticut and Massachusetts, with Connecticut showing by far the largest percentage increase. This was also the only state in which the French population grew more rapidly than the total population. Changes in the size of the French population do mirror shifts in the total population and seem to accentuate contrasts between the states. There are perhaps some differences between the states in the extent of French language retention. This would appear to be a function of the size of local Franco-American communities, the extent of French language use in schools, and the amount and recency of immigration from French Canada. But the characteristics seen in Maine that differentiate French communities in terms of the potential for language retention are, for the most part, eliminated by aggregation at the state level. Also, there is no indication that rates of natural

increase among Franco-Americans differ from one state to another. Consequently, the growth rate differences between states are primarily the result of geographical shifts of the Franco-American population.

The data indicate that Franco-Americans, compared to the total population, have shown a greater net migration out of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont and a correspondingly greater tendency to move to Connecticut. The large net migration to that state makes it now roughly equal to Maine in the size of its Franco-American population. Maine, on the other hand, showed the lowest percentage increase of both Franco-Americans and total population, suggesting a very significant out-migration, especially of Franco-Americans. In fact, direct migration from the upper St. John Valley to Connecticut has been well known for decades. With the build-up of U.S. forces prior to the country's entry into World War II, the newly developed aircraft factories and other defense plants in southern New England needed labor. Workers from all over Maine, and especially from the Valley, came to industrial centers like Hartford and New Britain. The migration to such places in central Connecticut has continued through the 1960's,<sup>53</sup> stimulated by the greater job opportunities in Connecticut and the personal contact established through previous migrants.

Within Maine itself certain growth trends and migration flows have occurred. The size of the 1970 Franco-American Catholic population may be estimated by extrapolation from 1908 data. In 1908 the 91,567 Franco-American Catholics included by Laplante constituted 74 per cent of the state's total Catholic population of 123,547.<sup>54</sup> If it is assumed that the French proportion within the Catholic population has remained the same,<sup>55</sup> then in 1970 there were approximately 200,000 Catholics of French background in the state.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, it appears that 70 per cent of this group did speak French as their mother tongue, a remarkably high percentage for 1970 considering the powerful pressures for linguistic assimilation. In relation to the total state population, 15 per cent of the people in 1970 spoke French as their mother tongue, and the Catholic population of French heritage now makes up at least 20 per cent of the population of Maine.

53 U. S., *1970 Census of Population*, Subject Reports: Migration Between State Economic Areas, p. 86.

54 P.J. Kennedy, *Official Catholic Directory, 1909* (New York, 1909).

55 There is no good evidence on the present proportion of French within the Catholic population, but some confirmation of the relative stability of the proportion is found in a 1949 estimate of 77 per cent by a French ethnic organization. See Comité d'Orientation franco-américaine, *Notre Vie franco-américaine* (Boston, 1949), p. 21.

56 In 1970 there were 267,886 Catholics in Maine according to the Diocese of Portland. Felician A. Foy, ed., *1971 Catholic Almanac* (Patterson, N.J., 1971), p. 512.

When the mother tongue data by town are used as an indicator of the size of the ethnic population and compared to data based on Catholic parish membership, the fact of place to place differences in linguistic assimilation must be kept in mind, and an analysis of geographic variations in this aspect of culture change will be presented later in this paper. However, the key process behind the 1970 distribution has still been migration, not assimilation. Thus, major changes that have occurred between 1908 and 1970 in the numbers and proportion of Franco-Americans as indicated by the available data are primarily the result of population shifts.

Several significant developments are evident. First, the Franco-American population of the southern industrial areas has grown the most. Androscoggin County's French population grew by over 20,000 between 1908 and 1970 (Table 2). This was twice the increase experienced in any other county, and it made that county the present obvious focus of Franco-American ethnicity. York and Kennebec Counties have grown substantially also, each increasing its Franco-American numbers by roughly 10,000. These counties with their greater economic health have generally been attractive to residents of poorer areas. A second trend has been the dispersal of some Franco-Americans into areas in which they have historically been few in number. Now a majority of towns in the state have some people whose mother tongue was French. Counties along the coast like Hancock, Lincoln, and Waldo have shown the largest percentage increases because their 1908 populations were so small; but in these counties Franco-Americans still constitute less than 3 per cent of the population in even the largest towns.<sup>57</sup>

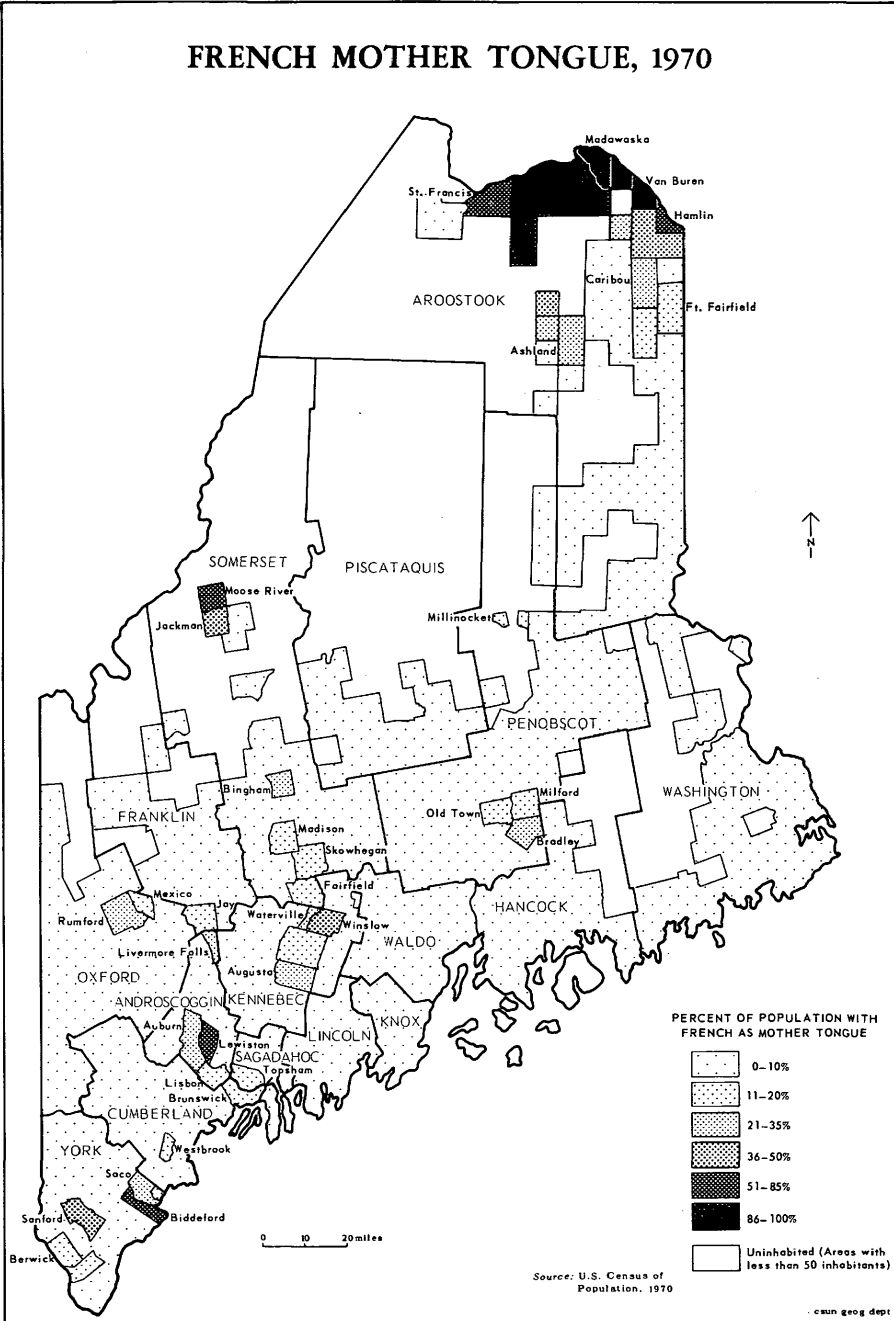
In Aroostook County the earlier pattern has changed but slightly. The southward drift begun in the last century has continued to the lake resorts of Guerette and Sinclair, and other people have by-passed the intervening woods to settle in Portage Lake, Ashland and Stockholm. Settlement south of these towns, however, is still distinctly non-French (Map 3). And to the west, the town of Allagash in 1970 recorded not one person who had spoken French as a mother tongue. With such little in-migration to the county's rural areas, the stability of the cultural boundary between French and non-French areas is not surprising.

The dispersal of Franco-Americans from the earlier concentration in the industrial centers has been most evident in suburban expansion. Auburn and Saco were the first of the suburbs, and soon Old Orchard Beach became a popular suburban resort for Biddeford residents and French Canadian visitors alike. Within Lewiston, parishes created in the 1920's serve many Catholic families who moved to the south and east parts of the city from the older French parishes in *le petit Canada*. Brunswick Franco-Americans had,

57 See note 8 for sources.



FRENCH MOTHER TONGUE, 1970



Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1970

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MAP 3

by 1946, already bought many old Yankee homes outside the city.<sup>58</sup> In the small, growing towns outside the cities in the southern part of the state typically between 4 and 8 percent of the people in 1970 spoke French as their first language. No longer are Franco-Americans so concentrated in the old mill towns. More Franco-Americans now live in Livermore Falls than in the town of Jay, where the original settlement was located. Bradley has a higher percentage of Franco-Americans than does its parent settlement of Old Town, and Bingham shows an unexpectedly high proportion of Franco-Americans, although in both cases the absolute numbers are small. If a comparison of the percentage of a county's Franco-American population which lived within the major urban centers of that county is made for 1908 and 1970, it is clear that a substantially lower percentage of Franco-Americans are living in the older centers of Waterville (including Winslow), Rumford (including Mexico), Lewiston, Biddeford (including Saco), Brunswick, Westbrook, and Old Town.

Another trend has been the development of some new Franco-American centers. Winslow has proved so attractive to Franco-Americans, generally former Waterville residents, that the French mother tongue population of nearly 2,900 represents over 39 per cent of the town's people. The most pronounced change, however, has been the movement of Franco-Americans into Portland, the largest city in the state (Table 3). Historically this city has been a commercial and diversified manufacturing center with few Franco-Americans. Nevertheless, by 1970 the French population numbered over 2700, making it slightly larger than Westbrook and Brunswick, both of which have had a large out-migration. A similar development in Penobscot County has meant that Bangor has now surpassed Old Town in the number of people who spoke French as their mother tongue. Considering the strong pressures for linguistic assimilation in these cities, the growth of the French mother tongue population indeed represents a major geographical shift of Franco-Americans. In addition, Franco-Americans in Auburn, Augusta and Sanford have more than doubled since 1908. And if Franco-Americans in Winslow are not included in the Waterville total, then each of these three cities has substantially more French people than does the formerly third largest center, Waterville.

The cities of Biddeford and Lewiston have been clearly the most important urban centers for the preservation of French ethnicity regardless of the method of measurement. In 1930 only one large city in New England (Berlin, New Hampshire) had a higher percentage of Canadian-born French in its total population than Lewiston and Biddeford.<sup>59</sup> However, a comparison of

58 William N. Locke, "The French Colony at Brunswick, Maine," *Les Archives de Folklore*, I (1946), p. 106.

59 Truesdell, *The Canadian*, p. 53.

the two suggests what has happened to make Lewiston and Auburn come to overshadow Biddeford and Saco. In 1908 Lewiston and Auburn contained 13 per cent more French than Biddeford and Saco, although Franco-Americans in Biddeford constituted a greater proportion of the city's people (Table 3). Yet Lewiston's French culture has continued to be replenished by immigration from Canada, especially during the 1920's, whereas Biddeford has received fewer immigrants. This is evident from the fact that in 1960 Lewiston recorded more than twice as many foreign-born French as Biddeford.<sup>60</sup> Also important has been the fact that the largest and oldest French parish in Lewiston has long been under the supervision of Dominican Fathers from Canada while Biddeford's parishes have had no comparable link with French Canada.<sup>61</sup> As a result, in 1970 total membership in Lewiston and Auburn's French parishes was almost twice that of Biddeford-Saco's, and Lewiston and Auburn together had more than twice as many people who listed French as their mother tongue (Table 3).

Nevertheless, in spite of these developments, the 1970 pattern of Franco-Americans shows a great similarity in features to the 1908 distribution. This is due partly to the lack of geographic mobility of some families but much more to the fact that mobile Franco-Americans tend to move either out of the state or to the major centers where others live and find good employment. Ethnic geographical patterns can thus be preserved regardless of mobility rates.<sup>62</sup> In Maine the older residential pattern could still be preserved as economic opportunities changed after World War II. With the decline of the cotton textile industry, it might be thought that many people would leave the old cotton towns. But in many cases other industries have appeared. When the large Goodall-Sanford cotton mills closed in 1954, most people who were laid off remained in Sanford, and most of those who left returned to Sanford when the town later brought in new industries.<sup>63</sup> One reason why Maine has

60 U.S., Bureau of the Census, *1960 Census of Population: Maine*, Table 80, p. 120.

61 Vincent Tatarszuk, ed., *The Catholic Directory of the Diocese of Portland, 1967-1968* (Portland, 1967), pp. 81, 83.

62 The incredibly high residential mobility of the American population throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is being demonstrated by research on population turnover and persistence rates by decades in a variety of cities and towns. This research, involving the tracing of individuals rather than measures of net migration and aggregate population change, suggests no major differences in geographic mobility by size of place or ethnic group, when socioeconomic status is controlled. The persistence of ethnic residential patterns, both within cities and between towns, as in Maine, must therefore be accounted for by the existence of distinctive ethnic migration streams, linking together in a circulation system ethnic communities in many places. See Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), esp. pp. 220-232, for a synthesis of these research methods and findings.

63 W.S. Devino, et al, *A Study of Textile Mill Closings in Selected New England Communities* (Orono, 1966), p. 29.

been able to attract new industries is its labor availability. The new electronics and shoe factories, for instance, have employed many people who formerly worked in the textile mills and could be readily trained in other assembly line tasks. Moreover, the willingness of workers to commute long distances has eased potential labor shortages.<sup>64</sup> The development of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard at Kittery created jobs for several thousand civilian workers; and when the Bates Cotton mill in Biddeford closed in 1959, an estimated 800 persons found jobs at the shipyard and commuted each day from Biddeford.<sup>65</sup> The automobile has thus permitted employees to reside in the community of their choice while taking jobs elsewhere, and residential patterns of the past are thus less subject to change.

In order to examine general changes in the distribution of Franco-Americans since 1908, a correlation analysis was performed using several 1970 population and manufacturing variables.<sup>66</sup> As in the earlier analysis, Aroostook County was not included because of its special characteristics. Data were available for 53 towns and cities, including all the places in the 1908 analysis and all but three of the other Maine towns having 1970 populations of 4,000 or more.

The geographical stability of the Franco-American distribution during the twentieth century is indicated by the fact that correlation with the 1908 distribution was extremely high ( $r = .913$ ), much higher than the correlation with the total population of the state ( $r = .582$ ). However, the degree of correlation with the total population has increased since 1908 ( $r = .391$  in 1908), a demonstration of the fact that Franco-Americans have been moving somewhat out of their earlier more distinctive settlement pattern and are becoming more like the total population in distribution.

Cotton textile mills are now found in only a few of their former locations in Maine, and even pulp and paper industry employment is no longer correlated with Franco-Americans ( $r = .043$ ). This figure might have been somewhat higher if Franco-Americans residing in towns adjacent to mill towns had been included, as would be appropriate to the less concentrated residential patterns of today. Replacement of many textiles mills by a wide variety of manufacturing establishments not dependent on riverside locations and internal migration within the state have meant that Franco-Americans are slightly less correlated with total manufacturing employment than they were in 1908 ( $r = .716$ , as opposed to  $r = .808$  in 1908, with Biddeford-Saco

64 Armour Research Foundation, *Planning Study for the Economic Growth of the State of Maine*, Vol. II (1960), pp. 12, 15.

65 Devino, *Textile Mill Closings*, p. 14.

66 Data on manufacturing employment by town were from the Maine Department of Economic Development, *Maine Buyers' Guide and Directory of Maine Manufacturers, 1970-1971* (Augusta, 1970). Population data were from the *1970 Census of Population*.

and Lewiston included). Moreover, this is still less than the correlation between the total population and manufacturing employment in 1970 ( $r = .771$ ), indicating that neither the past nor the present Franco-American distribution should be thought of as tied to total manufacturing in any special way.

Cultural changes among Franco-Americans are much harder to measure than geographical changes. However, it is possible to make some statements about French language use, political preferences, income levels, religious behaviour and social structure.

Regarding the first of these, there is evidence of striking place to place differences in linguistic assimilation when mother tongue data are compared to Catholic Church data. Records of the Diocese of Portland show for 1965 and 1966 the number of Catholics of different ethnic backgrounds in certain parishes for which such figures were supplied by pastors. These figures are directly comparable to the 1908 data since the same measure was used. The 1965 and 1966 figures were averaged and then adjusted on the basis of the major town's 1960-1970 population trend, so as to provide an estimate of the French Catholic population in 1970 (Table 6). Where a substantial portion of the parish population resides in an adjacent town, the French mother tongue figures for that town were included in the total for the major town. In other cases parish boundaries conform to town boundaries or, in the case of Dexter, 84 percent of the parishioners live in Dexter town.<sup>67</sup> If the 1970 French mother tongue figures are compared to the 1970 totals of Catholics of French background, the result is a rough indication of the extent of language maintenance in different Franco-American centers. The higher the index, the greater the percentage of the local French Catholics who spoke French as their mother tongue. Conversely, a high degree of assimilation to English over the last few decades is indicated by a low index. All percentage figures are somewhat overestimated due to the fact that not all people whose mother tongue was French are Catholics. Also, in the many cases of inter-ethnic marriage, pastors in the large Franco-American parishes probably counted as Franco-Americans those people whose background they did not know.

The index shows that the French language has been retained as the mother tongue most completely in Lewiston, the largest urban French center, and in Frenchville and Fort Kent, St. John Valley towns. In Biddeford and Auburn, French language maintenance has also been relatively high. As the size of the local Franco-American community and its proportion in the total town population decrease, the need for English speaking skills increases and French language maintenance suffers. Thus, French has been retained least in small communities like Dexter. In the still smaller towns of Jackman and Moose

<sup>67</sup> Personal communications from Rev. Gaston Auger (Dexter) and other pastors concerning the distribution of parishioners within their parish territories, January, 1968.

TABLE 6  
FRENCH LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN SELECTED TOWNS

<i>Towns</i>	<i>French Catholics, 1970*</i>	<i>French Mother Tongue 1970</i>	<i>Index of French Language Maintenance†</i>
Lewiston	25,282	25,037	99
Frenchville	1,461	1,441	99
Fort Kent	4,225	3,929	93
Biddeford (incl. Saco)	18,768	15,599	83
Auburn	8,838	6,938	79
Jackman (incl. Moose R.)	824	599	73
Brunswick (incl. Topsham)	4,454	3,152	71
Caribou (incl. N. Car.)	3,759	2,470	66
Jay (incl. Liv. Falls)	2,354	1,505	64
Rumford (incl. Mexico)	4,465	2,664	56
Old Town (incl. Bradley and Milford)	4,223	2,196	52
Dexter	1,277	364	29

\*Calculated by multiplying the percentage increase or decrease in the major town's population from 1960 to 1970 by .4 and adjusting the 1965-1966 average to show this change.

†Index represents the per cent of French Catholics in 1970 who reported their mother tongue as French.

Sources: Annual Reports, selected parishes, Archives of the Chancery Office, Diocese of Portland.

U.S., *1970 Census of Population* (See note 8).

River language maintenance has been high because most people are of French background and the nearest larger towns lie across the border in French-speaking Quebec.

In the 1950's, maintenance of French continued to be dependent to a great extent on its use in schools. Those families with the greatest experience in French parochial schools have been the ones most likely to speak French in their homes.<sup>68</sup> In 1958 the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools stated that in 53 of 93 parochial schools in Maine, French was taught as a language, was the language used for daily religious instruction, and was frequently spoken and written apart from these formal occasions.<sup>69</sup> The

68 Peter H. Rossi and Alice S. Rossi, "Background and Consequences of Parochial School Education," *Harvard Educational Review*, XXVII (Summer, 1957), p. 187.

69 Rev. Armand E. Cyr, quoted in Kenneth C. Carpenter, "The Franco-Americans in Maine." (Unpublished Honors thesis, Bowdoin College, 1958), p. 26.

value of French as a second language was being emphasized by the teachers, who encouraged its use in school assemblies and in conversation outside school. Interestingly, in 1956 the public schools of Sanford began a program of instruction in French to all students from the fourth grade through the twelfth grade.<sup>70</sup> No other public schools in the state — other than the schools in the St. John Valley — offered this training.

In a 1960 survey sampling Franco-Americans in Brunswick and Lewiston over three-quarters of the respondents stated that French was spoken most of the time in their homes. Only 13 per cent of the parents surveyed had children whose only language was English.<sup>71</sup> However, major changes occurred in the 1960's. The practical erosion of French language use was accelerated everywhere, probably most effectively by the influence of television, although the value of bilingualism was being stressed in new, ethnically self-conscious educational programs, especially in the early 1970's. Even in the upper St. John Valley, where well over 90 per cent of the 1970 residents had spoken French as their mother tongue, the actual use of French dropped sharply. Outside the home the young people speak English though the older people are understandably more comfortable with French. A combination of French and English is spoken in most homes (Table 7), and in only 44 out of 271 sample households surveyed in 1966 was French the only language used.<sup>72</sup> The cultural homogeneity of the Valley and the presence of French language radio and television stations on the Canadian side of the St. John River account for its persistence in Valley communities relative to all other places in the state except Lewiston (Table 6).

TABLE 7  
LANGUAGE REGULARLY SPOKEN IN THE HOME  
WEST END, UPPER ST. JOHN VALLEY, 1966

Town	Per Cent French	Per cent French- English Combination	Per cent English
St. John	27	51	22
St. Francis	21	61	18
Fort Kent	64	30	6
Eagle Lake	41	51	8

Source: See note 73.

70 Devino, *Textile Mill Closings*, p. 17.

71 David B. Walker, *Politics and Ethnocentrism: The Case of the Franco-Americans* (Brunswick, 1961), p. 17.

72 Louis A. Ploch and Nelson L. LeRay, *Social and Economic Consequences of the Dickey-Lincoln School Hydro-electric Power Development on the Upper St. John Valley, Maine — Phase I, Preconstruction*, Misc. Report 123 of the Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Maine (Orono, 1968), p. 22.

The significance of the geographical divide between the French and non-French areas of Aroostook County (Map 3) is especially evident in political preferences. The voting pattern in recent presidential elections and certain referenda shows a consistent distinction between the Democratic and liberal French towns and the Republican, strongly conservative towns like New Sweden just to the south. The rural and small town areas of Aroostook County, west of Caribou and Presque Isle and south to Houlton are some of the most conservative towns in the state. Moreover, the cultural differences expressed in voting behavior also distinguish the French-American urban centers from places like Portland, South Portland, Gorham, Farmington, and Bangor, where Franco-Americans are proportionately weak.<sup>73</sup> In Maine, the proportion of Franco-Americans in a town's population, whether rural or urban, is often the best single predictor of town-by-town variations in voting preferences.

In addition to language and politics, certain other attitudes and behavior distinguished Franco-Americans in the 1950's, but there are indications that many of these have since come closer to the American norm. When the socio-economic levels of second-generation French Canadian, Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants were compared nationwide in 1950, the French clearly showed the least increase in education, income, and occupational status from the levels attained by the first generation.<sup>74</sup> Most immigrants' children improved substantially their status position in American society, yet the French demonstrated little change. Another study based on the interviewing and personality testing of 954 subjects from 62 towns, mostly in Connecticut, found people of French and Italian background were significantly lower in achievement motivation and vocational aspiration than Jews, Greeks, Protestants, and Negroes. Social class differences accounted for only part of the variation.<sup>75</sup> One observer noted in the early 1960's, "Franco-Americans still read very little and, too often, have what has aptly been termed a low achievement syndrome; they are quite happy if they live comfortably."<sup>76</sup> A 1964 nationwide sampling of 2,701 Catholics, including 160 Franco-Americans, supported this view, as Franco-Americans showed a low movement

73 Allen, "Catholics in Maine," pp. 252-261, 285-299. David Walker, "The Presidential Politics of Franco-Americans," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, XXVIII(August, 1962), pp. 353-363.

74 Leon F. Bouvier, "La stratification sociale du groupe ethnique canadien-français aux Etats-Unis", *Recherches Sociographiques*, V, No. 3 (1964), pp. 375-378. Bouvier's data came from the U.S. Census in 1950.

75 Bernard C. Rosen, "Race, Ethnicity, and the Achievement Syndrome," *American Sociological Review*, XXIV (Feb. 1959), pp. 57-60.

76 Herve B. Lemaire, "The Franco-Americans of New England," U.S., Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Language Resources Project (mimeo, 1963), p. 63.



into higher education and a low occupational mobility between generations compared to most other Catholics.<sup>77</sup> It would appear that some values characteristic of nineteenth-century French Canadian culture were influential at that time.

However, during the 1960's there have apparently been some changes. In a well designed 1972 national sampling of over 47,000 homes in all fifty states, respondents were asked to identify their ethnic origin or descent and answer questions regarding income, education and family size.<sup>78</sup> With this research a better indication of the size of America's ethnic populations in terms of self-identification is now available and comparison among groups may be made more reliably. Of significance to the understanding of the long-term influence of ethnic heritage is the fact that over 90 per cent of American households were able to identify their ethnic background. The results indicated that between 5.2 and 5.6 million inhabitants of the U.S identify themselves as of French descent; this is more than twice the number (2.6 million) who claimed French as their mother tongue in 1970. Most of these people were, of course, of French Canadian or Acadian heritage, as opposed to European French or Belgian.

In contrast to the implications of most previous studies, the sample population was very close to the national means and medians in its characteristics; in most cases there were no statistically significant differences. The median income of male persons 14 years old and over (\$7,146) was slightly above the median for the entire survey population; the mean French family size (3.5 persons per family) was the same as that of the total population; and the median number of school years completed for the French population age 25-34 was the same as that for the total (12.6 years). The percentage of male French craftsmen and kindred workers (24.1%) was somewhat higher than that of the total population (20.6%); and the percentage of French professional, technical and kindred workers (11.8%) was but slightly below the figure for the entire sample (13.8%).

It is a reflection of the dominant American culture that most large-scale surveys of this type are concerned with questions of social and economic achievement. Some equally significant comparisons might be made between groups in terms of consumer behavior, life styles, values, personality, religious behavior, or interest and skill in art, music, or various sports and games. Apart from studies of national character and impressionistic, highly personal descriptions, there has been little research along such lines. Nevertheless, with respect to religion, in 1964 first-generation French involvement in the

77 Harold J. Abramson. *Ethnic Diversity in Catholic America* (New York, 1973), pp. 42, 45.

78 U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 249, "Characteristics of the Population by Ethnic Origin, March 1972 and 1971," pp. 19-25.

formal requirements of the Catholic religion (attendance at Mass and Communion) appeared high compared to other Catholic ethnic groups, though U.S.-born Franco-Americans (second generation) were somewhat less regular.<sup>79</sup> Also, the strong Franco-American support of Catholic schools was clear, as this group, "regardless of level of education, had over 80 per cent of their children attending parochial schools."<sup>80</sup>

For Franco-Americans such religious behavior is closely tied to the social structure. Intermarriage with members of other ethnic groups is a direct function of public schooling and the relative absence of religious behavior in the home. Ethnic endogamy, parochial schooling, and religious behavior in the home are all closely related; as ethnic intermarriage increases there is a corresponding decline in formal religious behavior.<sup>81</sup> Such effects have long been predicted by the French. For several decades the many Franco-American social organizations, schools, and the Catholic Church itself were able to discourage social assimilation into non-French society. Inter-ethnic marriage rates were low in the large French centers, and second-generation French showed hardly any increase over the very low rate of ethnic intermarriage of their immigrant parents. Only with the third-generation, those generally maturing in the 1920's, did ethnicity lose its extremely tight hold.<sup>82</sup> In the 1950's the old ethnic organizations found it almost impossible to recruit new members from either the élite or the young, for these people had little need for formal organizations or for such ethnically restricted social groups.<sup>83</sup> But because many of Maine's urban Franco-Americans remained in the working class, it is not surprising that in 1960, 58 per cent of Franco-Americans interviewed in Lewiston and Brunswick "claimed that most of their friends were Franco-Americans."<sup>84</sup>

During the 1950's and 1960's social assimilation generally increased, though in terms of inter-religious marriages in Maine, French Catholics were intermarrying with non-Catholics less than were Catholics of Irish background.<sup>85</sup> For the state as a whole, Catholic sanctioned mixed marriages accounted for a quarter of the total Catholic marriages in 1965. Intermarriage was lowest (3%) in the parishes of the upper St. John Valley, where, of course, nearly everyone was Catholic. However, the rates were almost as low (7%) in the largest French urban parishes, where contact with non-Catholics was

79 Abramson, *Ethnic Diversity*, pp. 117-119.

80 *Ibid.*, p.90.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 91-95, 160-164.

82 Bessie B. Wessell, *An Ethnic Survey of Woonsocket, Rhode Island* (Chicago, 1931). This thorough survey was based on questionnaires completed by 4,978 public school children in a French center similar to the larger ones in Maine.

83 Romeo Boisvert, quoted in Carpenter, "The Franco-Americans," p. 43.

84 Walker, *Politics and Ethnocentrism*, p. 17.

85. Allen, "Catholics in Maine," pp. 334-337.

relatively minimal. Religious intermarriage rates generally increased as the size and proportion of the local Franco-American population decreased. Rates of intermarriage were highest in parishes without parochial schools and in towns with less than 5,000 people and a predominantly non-French Catholic population. Altogether, these figures point to tremendous differences in the religious life of Franco-American Catholics depending on where they live.

Of course, the significance of Franco-American culture and society changes through time and varies from individual to individual. But every indication supports the notion that its geographic variations — the differences from place to place — are some of the most important and that, in spite of difficulties in measurement, their varied geographic expression must be considered in any cultural assessment. The experience of growing up as a Franco-American in Maine or elsewhere in New England differs very much as a function of the town one lives in.

In summary of these geographical and cultural findings, it is clear that Franco-American settlement in Maine in the early twentieth century was the result of several processes: 1) contiguous expansion of rural settlement east and west along the St. John River, followed by movement along several routes to the south; 2) exploration of economic opportunities by seasonal and, later, permanent immigrants from Quebec, creating the first French urban nuclei in Waterville and the Old Town area; 3) permanent settlement of large numbers of French Canadian immigrants in the cotton mill towns of southern Maine; and 4) later migration from within Maine and from both Quebec and the Maritime Provinces to the pulp and paper mill towns. Geographically, the distribution was very distinctive in its high correlation to the cotton textile and, to a lesser extent, the pulp and paper industries. At the same time, French Catholicism, together with the use of the French language, encouraged so strongly in the home and parochial school, made for a correspondingly great cultural and social distinctiveness on the part of Franco-Americans. Immigration from Canada was sharply reduced in the second quarter of this century, but a new out-migration to Connecticut and population shifts within Maine became important.

The major distributional changes in Maine during the twentieth century have been 1) a wide scattering of Franco-Americans in small towns, especially in the southern portions of the state; 2) the dispersal out of earlier concentrations near various mills to suburban towns; and 3) the development of Portland and Bangor as important Franco-American centers. Altogether, these trends have made the residential patterns of Franco-Americans in the state more like those of the general population. Yet, perhaps somewhat surprising is the extent to which the 1970 geography mirrors that of sixty years before, although today it is no longer correlated with special aspects of the economy.

During the twentieth century the processes of cultural and social assimilation have eroded some of the distinctiveness of the Franco-Americans, even in the large French centers. Culturally, the greatest change has probably been the decline of French language use, especially in smaller towns but in the 1960's even in the large ethnic centers. Until the late 1960's most young people were uninterested in their linguistic heritage, but the revival of ethnic pride which has enveloped the entire country has produced a new interest in learning French among some of Maine's Franco-Americans. Contrary to the opinions expressed in the late nineteenth century, linguistic assimilation has apparently not weakened ties to Catholicism, although ethnic intermarriage may be having this effect. In 1970 three quarters of the state's Catholics and at least one-fifth of Maine's entire population were Franco-American Catholics.

Most Franco-Americans retain some sense of identification with their ethnic heritage, and in the larger centers a new pride is often in evidence. Nearly five and one-half million people in the United States are of French origin. They constitute a major element in the diversity of cultures which is so striking in this country. Franco-Americans are now at the American norm in terms of socio-economic status, although below-average levels of income for Maine's population as a whole together with a legacy of relatively slow Franco-American assimilation may be reflected in a slightly lower position for that state. In addition, the fact that Franco-Americans in Maine are still distinctive in their distribution and that the strength of their ethnic culture varies so much from place to place underscores the significance of a geographic perspective on this, the most important ethnic minority in the state.