ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THE PERSISTENCE OF FRENCH-CANADIAN IDENTITY IN NEW ENGLAND

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Abstract

French-Canadian immigrants to New England, unlike other ethnic groups in the United States, did not show signs of assimilation into American society until the 1950's. This thesis examines the history of one French-Canadian community--Sand Hill, in Augusta, Maine. French Canadians came to Augusta in great numbers around the turn of the century to work in the cotton mill. To investigate the retention of French-Canadian identity, French-Canadian immigrants are considered as both an ethnic group and a social class. Evidence drawn from interviews with immigrants and from written accounts shows that economic conditions, such as poverty and lack of education, helped to reinforce French-Canadian isolation from "Yankees" in Augusta. Resistance to assimilation was also promoted by policies and informal practices of two strong local institutions: the French Catholic Church and the textile mill.

Résumé

Les immigrants Canadiens-français en Nouvelle Angleterre diffèrent de tout autre groupe ethnique aux États-Unis: ils ne se sont intégrés dans la société américaine que pendant les années cinquante. L'objet de cette étude est l'histoire d'une communauté canadienne-française parmi d'autres: celle de "La Côte", à Augusta, dans l'état du Maine. Des immigrants, par centaines, y sont venus du Québec au tournant du siècle dernier, travailler au moulin de coton. Pour comprendre la résistance de la population canadienne-française à l'assimilation, on considère ici ces immigrants comme formant à la fois groupe ethnique et classe sociale. Notre étude montre que les conditions économiques, par example la pauvreté et le manque d'éducation, contribuaient à renforcer chez les Canadiens-français d'Augusta une identité de communauté ethnique. L'isolement de cette communauté était aussi renforcée par deux institutions importantes: l'église catholique française et le moulin de textile.

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Preface

This project grew out of my interests in both the Francophone population in New England and the economic history of Maine. In 1980, for my Senior Project in college, I ventured to the woods of Northern Maine and spent a summer living in Ste. Agathe, a 98 per cent French-speaking farming village in the St. John Valley. This was not only my first taste of ethnographic fieldwork but also my first contact with Maine's "Franco-Americans". As I learned more about the language and society of the people in Ste. Agathe, I couldn't help but be curious about the other, much larger, group of French speakers in New England: the mill-workers of Southern Maine and parts of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont.

This thesis tells the story of French Canadian mill-workers in one city: Augusta, Maine. More than 80 years of history are covered, from the conditions of the early 1800's which led to mass emigration from Québec, to growing "Americanization" of French Canadians in the 1950's and 1960's. Of necessity, only major events and trends could be included in the research and analysis. The many French-Canadians who have lived on Sand Hill in Augusta are represented here by the voices of a few individuals, identified in the text only by their initials.

Demographic and socio-economic features of the migration to Augusta and of the French-Canadian community which grew up there at the turn of the century, are brought together and

documented in detail in this thesis. In addition, evidence of the promotion of French-Canadian ethnic identity and social class by two Augusta institutions, the Catholic Church and the textile mill, is presented here for the first time. The ideas which guided the thesis come from many sources, but the research and writing are my own, and any errors are entirely mine as well.

Chapter I Introduction

Why do some communities within society remain separate, stable and unified over an extended period of time and then suddenly lose their distinctiveness and become integrated into the larger society? Why, in particular, did French-Canadian immigrants apparently continue to form an enclave, with their own institutions, in New England from the 1870's until the 1950's and then become assimilated?

Most studies of French-Canadian immigrants in New England have viewed this population as an ethnic group and explain the maintenance of distinct cultural identity on the basis of inherited allegiance to French-Canadian language and cultural values. Similarly, "assimilation" has been accounted for (in circular fashion, in my opinion) by the decline in language use and the loss of cultural values and behavior.

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold: first, to describe one French-Canadian enclave community and explain when and why it was formed; second, to analyse the unusual persistence of French-Canadian community identity. In contrast to other studies, this research focused on the local textile mill, since it was both the key to survival of French-Canadian immigrants and their only link to the English-speaking world. My goal was to discover whether economic relations, rather than cultural factors, can best explain the persistence and subsequent decline of French-Canadian ethnicity.

Today more than one third of the state populations of

Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine claim French ancestry, (U.S. Census, 1980). Most are the descendants of some 900,000 rural Québécois who came to mill-towns of the Northeast between 1850 and 1920 (Vicero, 1968). The setting chosen for this study is Augusta, Maine, a manufacturing city and the state capital, with a current population of about 21,000. Beginning in the 1830's, the water power potential of the Kennebec River at Augusta attracted industrial entrepreneurs from Boston and Providence. By 1883, the Edwards Manufacturing Company was operating a prosperous textile mill on the river in Augusta. Mill agents traveled to Québec to recruit labor among impoverished farmers. Their success at drawing French-Canadian workers to Augusta is shown by the establishment in 1887 of a French-Canadian Catholic Church on "La Côte" or Sand Hill. In 1892, a French-language parochial school was opened. However, by the mid-1960's, French was being taught only one hour per day at the school. French-Canadian immigrants and their children and grandchildren were suddenly becoming integrated into Augusta society.

In order to evaluate the role of economic factors in the persistence and decline of French-Canadian ethnicity, I chose to look for links between the history of the French-Canadian community and the prosperity and decline of the textile mill in Augusta. One hypothesis for the study is that agents and policies of Augusta's cotton mill, an external economic institution, helped maintain French-Canadian ethnic identity, and in so doing, also preserved the wage-laborer status of the

French Canadians. Another and related question is whether the decline of the textile mill (specifically lay-offs and closings) contributed to the loss of French language and other ethnic characteristics in Augusta's French-Canadian community. The implication is that French Canadians ceased to be a distinct ethnic group when they no longer constituted a single class of wage-laborers.

The following chapter reviews previous research on French-Canadian immigrants and presents the theoretical and methodological considerations which guided this study. Chapter III gives background information on the migration of French Canadians to New England and to Augusta, in particular. In Chapter IV, the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Augusta's French-Canadian community are discussed. Chapter V presents an analysis of the factors which contributed to the persistence of French-Canadian identity in Augusta. Reasons for the decline in French language and the breaking-up of French-Canadian community identity are discussed in Chapter VI, and conclusions are presented in Chapter VII.

Chapter II Research Orientations

Literature Review

For its size, the French-speaking population in the United States has received relatively little scholarly attention (Harney, 1982). Yet there are numerous accounts of this group, spanning more than a century and a wide range of approaches (Poby, 1984). For example, Ouellet (1980), Hamelin and Roby (1971) and others, have analysed the economic and social conditions in Québec which led to the nineteenth-century exodus. Efforts of priests and government officials in Québec to stop the emigration have been described (Hamon, 1891; Rumilly, 1958; and others). The flow of migration and patterns of settlement in New England have been studied in detail (Paquet, 1964; Lavoie, 1972; Paquet and Smith, 1983; and Allen, 1972). Finally, there are accounts of life for French Canadians in the "petits Canadas" of New England cities (e.g., Hamon, 1891; MacDonald, 1896 and 1898; Locke, 1946; Theriault, 1960; Brault, 1973; Violette, 1976; Searles et al., 1982; Early, 1982; and Quintal, 1983).

By 1891, there were eighty-six French Catholic parishes and fifty-three French parochial schools in New England (Wade, 1950:176). Teachers, priests, doctors and lawyers came from Québec, and small businesses and French Catholic and lay associations appeared. The result was the growth of completely self-contained communities within New England society, where French was spoken almost exclusively at home, in shops and in the work-place.

Most authors who investigated the persistence of French Canadians as a distinct community have (explicitly or implicitly) conceptualized this population as an ethnic group. Several of their studies are reviewed below. Four main reasons for the persistence of French-Canadian ethnicity emerge from the literature: 1) the desire and efforts of French-Canadian Church and community leaders and lay individuals to preserve French language and Catholic faith; 2) in certain areas, a high concentration of French Canadians in one community; 3) special psychocultural characteristics of French Canadians, such as family structure; and 4) proximity to Québec. Each of these factors will be discussed.

While not the first to write about "the large and increasing French-Canadian element" in the Northeast, Bowdoin College professor William MacDonald set a tone for later publications (MacDonald, 1898). Although he predicted the "inevitable absorption of the race" in New England society, MacDonald noted the influence of the Catholic Church, parochial school and voluntary associations in promoting the use of the French language and the "maintenance of distinctive racial and social characteristics among the French Canadians" (ibid.:274).

Wade (1950) documented the establishment of French national parishes throughout New England, noting that the concept of survivance, defined by Wade as the preservation of religion, language and customs, had "become an obsession with the French Canadians, as a result of more than a century's struggle to maintain their identity under British rule in

Canada" (Wade, 1950:183). And, Wade concluded, it is the French parish which has been responsible for this immigrant group's "...resistance to complete cultural fusion in the American mass..." (ibid.:189).

Bouvier agreed that more than any other immigrant group in the Northeast, French Canadians resisted assimilation "dans le grand tout américain" (Bouvier, 1964:372). He explained this by referring to the preoccupation of French Canadians with survivance. This "voluntary segregation", according to Bouvier, stemmed from the firm determination of French Canadians to maintain the French language and culture in the face of English encroachment (ibid.:379). Parents, he wrote, preferred to see their children in low-wage and low-status occupations than risk losing the faith and language of their ancestors in English-speaking public secondary schools (ibid.:378).

In most accounts of French Canadians in New England, economic factors are discussed only in the context of the migration event, rather than in studies of French-Canadian enclave communities. One example is Locke's study of the immigrant community in Brunswick, Maine (Locke, 1946). While Locke shows that waves of French-Canadian migration corresponded to the expansion of Brunswick's cotton mill, he ignores economic factors in his discussion of the immigrants' adjustment to American life. That is, Locke notes that by 1946, many French Canadians in Brunswick had attained some measure of equality with "Yankee" residents. And yet, Locke

attributes any success not to changes in society or economic opportunity, but to internal cultural and psychological factors, namely: "the adaptability, the toil, and the fertility of the French Canadians as a race" (ibid.:111).

Gerard Brault, in his description of Maine's Franco-Americans, cited the reluctance of non-French residents of mill-towns to accept the immigrants from Québec: "The wall...was erected by mutual consent" (Brault, 1973:16). According to Brault, the reasons for the "great cultural solidarity" of the French-Canadian community were: its active parish life, French-language newspapers and frequent trips to the homeland, Québec.

Allen (1974) found that French language was being retained longer in the larger French communities such as that of Lewiston, Maine (population 25,000 French mother tongue in 1970) as opposed to Dexter, Maine (population 364 French mother tongue in 1970) (ibid.:59-60). Allen documented widespread decline of French language use, "...especially in the smaller towns but in the 1960's even in the large ethnic centers" (ibid.:66).

In their study of the viability of French enclaves in Canada outside Québec, Vallee and Shulman (1969) determined that: a) population density or clustering is not perfectly correlated with French language retention; and b) proximity to Québec does not correlate perfectly with rate of assimilation. The authors would agree with Bouvier (1964) and others that other variables, such as "the views and tactics of French-

Canadian leaders...with reference to the goals of cultural survival and the means to reach these goals" are more important for understanding language retention and loss in French-Canadian communities (Vallee and Shulman, 1969:98-99).

Among Lewiston's French population, according to Parker (1979), cultural breakdown occurred within one decade (the 1960's) and involved all four generations simultaneously. Parker explains this "cataclysmic assimilation" by the loss of limited group identity criteria. "If the culture rests on essentially one differentiating factor and that factor is removed, the whole culture identity is endangered"; that key factor, in his view, was language (ibid.:311). This circular argument is only partially off-set by a suggestion of changes in employment in Lewiston to help explain language loss. In Parker's work, as in so many others on French-Canadian immigrants, "external" economic factors are seen as secondary or incidental in any explanation of cultural change. Parker's message dominates the literature: the maintenance of cultural values and behavior of a particular ethnic group depends on and is explained by allegiance to those same internal, historically generated forces.

Intrinsic cultural features have also been used to explain limited social and economic mobility among French Canadians. For example, Rosen has traced differential rates of upward mobility among ethnic groups to their dissimilar psychocultural orientations towards achievement (Rosen, 1959:47). Using the TAT test, Rosen determined that French-Canadian immigrants in

the Northeast had lower achievement motivation and educational-vocational aspiration levels than Jewish and Greek immigrants. When social class differences were controlled, differences between ethnic groups remained. Included in the list of "ethnic differences" were: parents' ambitions for their children and attitudes towards education as well as child-training practices, all of which were presumed to have been carried over by the immigrants from the societies of their birth.

Research conducted in multi-ethnic "Yankee City" in 1933 showed that occupational status of French Canadians was lower than that of Irish, Italians, Greeks, Armenians and Jews (Warner et al., 1963). The reasons cited were: large group population; proximity to the homeland; and "family structure with patterns maintaining customary status..." (Warner et al., 1963:114). Reasons given for the acceleration of social mobility among non-French ethnic groups were: "similarities between ethnic ancestral society and Yankee City in general organizational type...and similarities...in the religious aspect of culture" (ibid.).

An exhaustive review of every account of French-Canadian immigrants in the U.S. is neither possible nor necessary here. All of the authors quoted above agreed that French Canadians differed from other immigrant groups in the U.S.: they did not "assimilate" as rapidly. The theoretical approach of most authors is similar to that of Horace Miner's widely known and appreciated "community study" of a Québec village (Miner, 1939)

and subsequent mainstream social research in ethnicity. In that approach, authors tend to abstract a social group, the French-Canadians, from the larger society of which they are a part. Thus beliefs and behavior are assumed to be traditions evolving from past events and circumstances or "ethnic ancestral society", rather than rational responses to present conditions. The needs of New England society, and of the French Canadians themselves, have generally been ignored.

Theoretical Orientations of the Research

In order to situate more accurately French-Canadian immigrants within the larger economic context of New England society, I chose to consider this population as both a social class and an ethnic group. This dual conceptualization allowed me to focus on the economic position of French-Canadian immigrants over time and see how socio-economic (rather than cultural or psychological) factors have contributed to the maintenance and subsequent decline of ethnicity.

Definitions: Social Class

The term "class" denotes a set--a group of things or persons having common characteristics or attributes. To do justice to the ongoing debate over interpretations of the term would be impossible here. What follows is a brief discussion of the views of Marx and Max Weber which guided the research for this thesis.

Marx showed the strong connection between the individual and the larger economic and therefore legal structures of society. Marxism holds that the position of every class is

determined by its role in the overall production process. In modern society, under capitalist relations of production, three great social classes appeared:

> [t]he owners merely of labor-power, owners of capital, and landowners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent, in other words, wage-laborers, capitalists and landowners (Marx, 1894; cited in Tucker, 1978:441).

Max Weber placed "class" within the context of "political communities", in that "classes, status groups and parties are phenomena of the distribution of power in a community" (Weber, 1978:927). Classes are not communities in themselves but represent bases for social action in pursuit of economic interests. Members of a class share a similar chance in life according to their position in the economic order in terms of relative control over goods or opportunities for income. Class divisions appear with the rise of the market economy and what Weber referred to as economically rational consumption patterns. The basic categories of all "class situations" are property and lack of property (ibid.). "A social class", wrote Weber, "makes up the totality of those class situations within which individual and generational mobility is easy and typical" (ibid.:302). Like Marx, but influenced by the times in which he was writing (1922), Weber listed four main social classes: "the working class as a whole"; the petty bourgeoisie; the property-less intelligentsia and trained specialists; and the classes privileged through property and education (Weber, 1978:305).

In sum, Marx identified the relationship to the means of

production as the factor which determined any group's rank in society. For Weber, one's class depended on one's place in the market economy. For this thesis, French-Canadians coming to Augusta around the turn of the century were assumed to be a distinct class of wage-laborers, according to Marx and Weber's general definitions presented above. This assumption proved to be true (see Chapter IV).

There is one author who explicitly viewed French-Canadian farmers who emigrated as a "reserve of impoverished laborers in New England" (Anctil, 1980:9). In studying the official discourse of French Americans in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Anctil found that priests and other members of the French petty bourgeoisie stressed French-Canadian nationalist policies in order to preserve their class interests. The Catholic conservative ideology, referred to elsewhere as survivance, was built up by French-Canadian leaders on the shared national conciousness of French-Canadian workers, according to Anctil. Thus the persistence of French Canadian language and values was a deliberate, and apparently successful, strategy of the French-Canadian entrepreneurial class to "weld the French proletariat to itself as a captive clientele" (ibid.:23). Anctil's work provides refreshing insight into the class divisions which existed in New England's French communities. With his marxist perspective, Anctil explains the persistence of French-Canadian identity in terms of class interests, and yet, his study is limited to the French community as an island unto itself, seemingly unaffected by the surrounding economy

and society.

Ethnicity

Most definitions of "ethnic identity" and "ethnic group" include variations on two Weberian themes, i.e., belief in common origins and self-differentiation (Hicks and Leis, 1977). According to Weber, attachments to memories of migration, for example, could facilitate group formation which might then be used for political action. Such conspicuous differences as language, religious beliefs and customs, in Weber's view, serve to differentiate two or more ethnic groups (Weber, 1978:390). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz cited "primordial affinities and attachments" as primary aspects of ethnic groups (Geertz, 1963). Barth questioned this deterministic notion of ethnicity and focused instead on identity and interaction (Barth, 1969). Ethnic groups, according to Barth, identified themselves and were identified by others as in some way different. One could document efforts from both sides of such boundaries to maintain ethnic divisions and discuss organizational processes and political uses of ethnicity in the larger social context.

Many writers have dealt explicitly with questions of ethnic identity maintenance. For example, Cohen, in his study of urban ethnicity in Ibadan, Nigeria, followed Barth in asserting that urban ethnic groups were really interest groups in competition for scarce resources (Cohen, 1969). Ethnicity, in Cohen's view, helps promote group solidarity and exclusiveness for political and economic gains. In a previous work, Glazer and Moynihan, too, characterized urban immigrant

ethnic groups as primarily interest groups (Glazer and Moynihan, 1963). They questioned the prevailing American ideology of the nation as a great "melting pot" and provided evidence of the persistence of ethnic-based forms of association as well as continued conflict between ethnic groups in New York City.

Later writers stressed cultural patterns derived from common origins as the primary factor in the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and ethnic identity. For example, DeVos speaks of members of an ethnic group sharing a "feeling of continuity with the past" (DeVos, 1975:17). And, ethnic groups have "...a distinct sense of difference owing to their culture and descent" (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975:4). As we have seen, writers in the field of French-Canadian studies have generally adopted this culturalistic approach to ethnicity. I do not share the opinion that ethnicity is acquired at birth and is a permanent aspect of a person's identity. Following Weber, Barth and Cohen, I prefer to see ethnicity in a broader context--as a possible basis for differentiation, group solidarity and as an idiom for purposeful action. That is, ethnicity may be used to rally support for a challenge to another, more politically or economically successful group. Or, on the other hand, ethnicity may be stressed in the efforts of one group to maintain society's status quo. Thus, the focus in this study is the link between social class and ethnicity among French Canadians, and especially the role of economic factors in reinforcing ethnicity.

A parallel exists between this study and one aspect of the analysis of urbanization in Africa. Many anthropologists have been concerned with the persistence of ethnicity (often referred to as "tribalism" in the African context) among rural immigrants to cities. Two divergent processes have been identified: "detribalization" ("assimilation") and "retribalization" (roughly equivalent to ethnic mobilization) (Mercier, 1965; Cohen, 1969). Gluckman's passage on tribalism in towns is included here because it eloquently summarizes my own approach to the study of French-Canadian immigrants in Augusta. I submit that the words in brackets may be substituted without a loss of force or meaning in the quotation.

> The starting-point of our analysis of tribalism [ethnic identity] in the towns is not that it is manifested by tribesmen, but that it is manifested by townsmen. The African [French Canadian] newly arrived from his rural home to work in a mine [mill], is first of all a miner [mill-worker] (and possibly resembles miners [mill-workers] everywhere). Secondarily he is a tribesman [French Canadian]; and his adherence to tribalism [French-Canadianism] has to be interpreted in an urban setting (Gluckman, 1961:68-69; terms in brackets added).

Studies of the persistence of French-Canadian language and culture in New England mill-towns have nearly always begun from the point of view of a transplanted farmer who adheres to his "ethnic" values. In this study, I attempted to understand the experience of immigrants to the city of Augusta first as mill-workers and secondarily as French Canadians.

Methodology

The setting of "La Côte" in Augusta, Maine, is appropriate for this longitudinal study of one immigrant minority community

and its institutions in relation to the surrounding "host" society and its institutions. Two principal research methods were used: archival work and oral history interviews.

Written material came from a variety of sources. Unfortunately, employee records of the Edwards Manufacturing Company mill could not be located. However, Minutes of company Stockholders' and Directors' meetings provided valuable information. Additional primary sources included Annual Reports of the Maine Department of Labor and Industrial Statistics, newspaper clippings assembled by the textile union local, and tax records of the City of Augusta. As for the parish of St. Augustine, marriage records, St. Augustine School records, and journals kept by Religious teachers, were consulted. Finally, manuscript censuses for the City of Augusta (1880 to 1910) were a treasure trove of information on French-Canadians in Augusta.

Over a six-month period I conducted in-depth interviews with more than thirty Augusta residents. More than twenty of these were men and women between age 70 and 85, who were born in Canada and migrated to Maine alone or with their parents. Their first language was French, and many preferred to speak French in our interviews. Nearly all had worked in the mill at least one month. Other informants included members of the clergy and former white-collar mill employees. The topics of these interviews ranged from personal life histories, employment and education to language use (see Appendix A). By asking informants to discuss these topics in reference to their parents, children and grandchildren, it was possible to gain a

picture of changes in the community over several generations.

Besides providing background information on the French-Canadian community, the interviews revealed factors related to the retention and rejection of French-Canadian identity. Among the many possible indicators of ethnic identity, such as religion or cuisine, I chose language as the primary variable. As many authors have noted, language has been and still is a crucial distinguishing characteristic for both the French-Canadian population and the native "Yankees" of New England. Older French-speaking residents of Augusta are concerned about the lack of knowledge and use of the French language among young people of French-Canadian origin. Thus, my inquiry was not unrelated to their interests. Other observable indicators such as inter-marriage, naturalization and movement away from "La Côte" were also used to measure the decline of ethnic identity. The cross-fertilization of written records and oral history research provided ample material from which to draw conclusions about reasons for the persistence and decline of French-Canadian identity in Maine.

Chapter III French-Canadian Immigration and the New England Economy

> The French Canadians, following the track of their ancestors down the Kennebec and also along the railroad lines running into Canada, have found employment in the factories of our manufacturing villages; and in Waterville, Lewiston and other river cities and towns, form a large and increasing element of the population...(Abbott, 1892:534).

The presence of French Canadians in Maine is the result of a mass migration from Québec to New England from about 1850 to the 1920's.

This chapter is divided into three sections: the first provides background information about the immigration of French Canadians to New England cotton-mill towns. In order to understand this migration event, it is necessary to examine both the needs of the receiving economy as well as social and economic pressures in the migrants' own society. Thus, we will look at the growth of cotton textile manufacturing in New England and the role of French-Canadian labor in that industry's development. We will also discuss conditions in nineteenth-century Québec which contributed to the exodus of some 900,000 French Canadians. The third section of the chapter documents the migration process as it occurred in Augusta, Maine.

The extent of the French-Canadian migration to the U.S. has not been measured with absolute certainty.[1] We do know that French-Canadian migration to the United States before 1850 involved single men taking seasonal jobs in wood-cutting and railroad construction in Northern Vermont, New Hampshire and

Maine (Lavoie, 1972). In the 1860's, the rate of emigration increased sharply with a total of about 224,000 French Canadians leaving Québec during the decade (Paquet and Smith, 1983:442). Table 1 shows the figures for net annual emigration between 1870 and 1940 of French Canadians, calculated by Paquet and Smith (1983). By the 1870's, French Canadian emigrants were making their way in great numbers to Southern New England towns. In contrast to earlier waves of migration, French Canadians now began to emigrate in large family groups. Most of the immigrants were employed in New England textile mills.

According to some, the period of the highest rate of immigration of French Canadians to New England came between 1880 and 1890 (Paquet, 1964:330). Paquet estimates that Québec had a net loss of 345,000 individuals during this decade, of whom between 150,000 and 200,000 went to New England (ibid.:351). Researchers have found that the rate of French-Canadian migration followed the cycles of growth and depression in the U.S. economy and in the textile industry, specifically (Paquet and Smith, 1983:450; Paquet, 1964:366).

American cotton textile manufacturing began in 1788 in Beverly, Massachusetts. Yet, Samuel Slater, a former superintendent in a British spinning mill and Moses Brown, a wealthy merchant of Providence, Rhode Island, are credited with having established the first water-powered spinning factory in America (Josephson, 1949:14). By 1809, 27 mills were in operation, all "fathered" by the Slater mill with Providence capital (Leblanc, 1968).

Table 1 "A Preliminary Synthetic Measure of Net Emigration of French Canadians, 1870-1940" (Paquet and Smith, 1983:446)

Decade	Number
1870-1880	120,000
1880-1890	165,000
1890-1900	195,000
1900-1910	75,000
1910-1920	100,000
1920-1930	150,000
1930-1940	12,000

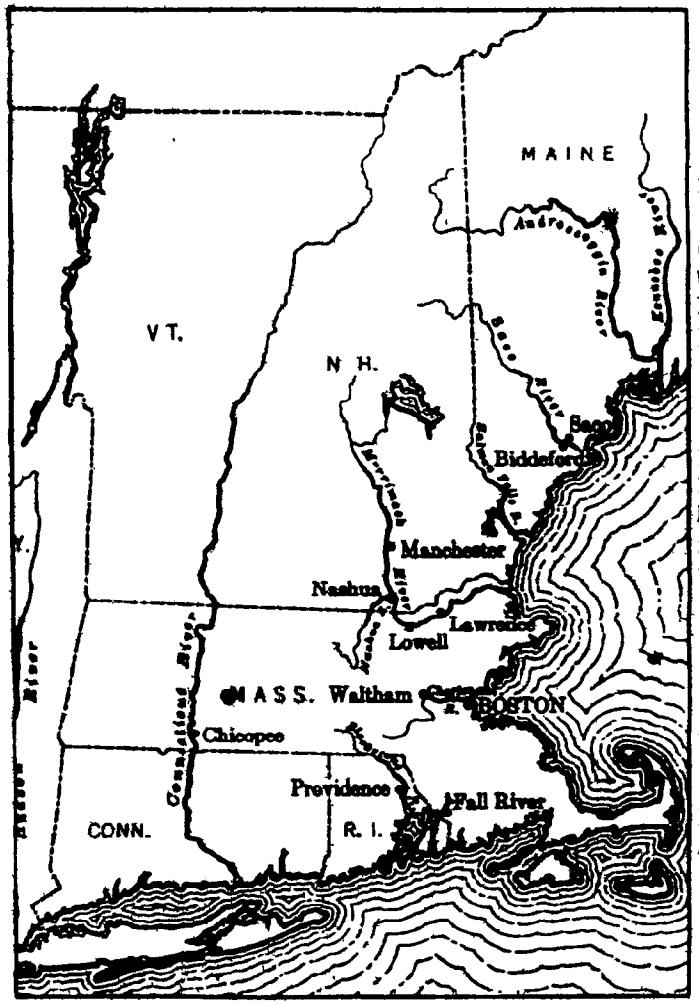
Sources

Lavoie, 1972; Paquet, 1964; and Vicero, 1968.

The Embargo Act of 1807 and the advent of the War of 1812 halted all imports from England and spurred the development of American cotton manufacturing. The archetype of the new mills was the Boston Manufacturing Company, founded in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1813 by a wealthy Boston merchant, Francis Cabot Lowell. The $300,000 authorized capital stock for the company was raised from members of the families of Lowell and those of his friends, Nathan Appleton and Patrick Tracy Jackson (Josephson, 1949). Strong water power was needed to drive the new looms, which in turn made the work lighter, requiring less physical strength in the workers. This was the first integrated cotton mill; in one plant, raw cotton could be cleaned, spun, woven into cloth and then bleached or dyed. Young, single women were recruited by the founders of the "Waltham system" from rural areas surrounding the mills. By 1831, 4/5 of the cotton workers in Massachusetts were women. Dividends remained high and steady, averaging 18 3/4 per cent annually, from 1817 to 1826 (Josephson, 1949:28). With more capital available, the friends and associates of Francis C. Lowell sought new ventures. In 1822, Jackson, Appleton and Kirk Boott incorporated the Merrimack Manufacturing Company, on the river of the same name, in a town called Lowell, Massachusetts. This corporation was followed by three others: the Hamilton, Appleton and Lowell Companies (Fig. 1).

With increased investment and the general expansion of cotton textile mills during the late 1820's and 1830's came a shift in the geographical distribution of the industry in New

Fig. 1 Major Textile Manufacturing Centers of New England, 1850



Town, State	Company	Year of Incorporation
Providence, R.I.	Slater Mill	1790
	A. W. Sprague	1815
Chicopee, Mass.	Cabot Mfg. Co.	1822
Waltham, Mass.	Boston Mfg. Co.	1813
Boston, Mass.	Offices of all Mass. mills	
Lowell, Mass.	Merrimack Co.	1822
	Hamilton Co.	1825
	Appleton Co.	1828
	Lowell Co.	1828
Lawrence, Mass.	Essex Co.	1845
Nashua, N.H.	Nashua Mfg. Co.	1822
Manchester, N.H.	Amoskeag Mfg. Co.	1831
Saco, Me.	York Mfg. Co.	1831
Biddeford, Me.	Pepperell Mfg. Co.	1850
Textile Mills in Maine Added After 1850		
Lewiston	Bates Mfg. Co.	1852
	Androscoggin	1860
	Continental	1866
Brunswick	Cabot Mfg. Co.	1857
Augusta	A.&W. Sprague	1867
	(bought by Edwards Mfg.	1882)

Map reprinted from Knowlton, E., Pepperell's Progress, 1948:7.

England. Larger mills with greater productive potential required new water power resources. The small streams of Rhode Island and Southern Massachusetts were too sluggish to drive additional and more powerful looms, so the Boston capitalists looked North to the "swift and abundant waters" of rivers like the Merrimack and Saco (Ware, 1931:81). Giant factories began to be built: in 1831, the York Company engineered a plant located on the Saco River, in Maine, which would operate 12,000 spindles on 300 looms (Bishop, 1864).

Each textile company was controlled by the same small group of Boston merchants and financiers. Under this system of interlocking directorship, the corporations produced different types of goods, so that there would be no competition between companies. The power of the Boston Associates, made up of a few families related by blood or marriage, extended beyond textiles to Boston area shipping, banks, insurance companies, real estate and railroads. This concentration of financial power was used effectively for political control, as in the regulation of protective tariffs on cotton goods imports. The corporations were thus able to influence, if not control, the cost of raw materials and their transport, as well as prices--to their advantage (Josephson, 1949).

By the 1840's, agriculture in New England was failing, and the Mid-Western states emerged as the center of agricultural innovation and productivity. Poor harvests and low prices drove New Englanders from their homes and farms. Young women workers began to leave the factory life in the Northeast,

seeking more education or responding to calls from the West for wives and schoolteachers. Their places in the mills were often taken by Irish immigrants (mostly women), who had begun to arrive in groups by the 1830's (Dublin, 1981).

Between 1840 and 1860, the number of cotton spindles in operation more than doubled. At a time of great expansion of transportation and communications in the U.S., the textile industry continued to follow the earlier trend toward the North for greater water power sources. It was during the 1850's and 1860's that the potential for Maine's water power resources began to be realized. Development began on the Saco River at Biddeford, the Androscoggin at Lewiston and Brunswick, and the Kennebec River at Waterville and Augusta. These Maine rivers, long used for transportation of logs and people, and as a source of commercial ice, now fueled power looms for the production of cotton cloth (See Fig. 1).

The expansion of textile manufacturing and the growing number of mills created enormous competition. Under these conditions, only huge sales could bring profits to the manufacturers. By 1850, the textile industry pioneers, with their sense of paternal responsibility, were being replaced by absentee owners whose main interest was profits (Kirkland, 1947). Wages began to be cut, and the number of machines per worker was increased. Between 1850 and 1860, at the Boston Manufacturing Company, there was a 29.5 per cent increase in workers' output with an average wage increase of only 10.2 per cent for the same period (Ware, 1931:113). The decline in

wages was prompted by a drop in dividends, probably caused by competition and overproduction. Some attribute wage cuts in the textile industry to poor business practices, in the overpayment of dividends to the detriment of machinery maintenance and improvement (Schlakman, 1969).

The few native New England women still employed in the mills suffered under the lower wages and more demanding work imposed upon them. They, as well as Irish immigrants, began leaving cotton mills of the Northeast. This decrease in the labor supply, combined with the increased demand for textiles during the Civil War, caused mill managers to look farther North for a new source of labor. The cotton mill's product was cheap, and labor was just a tool. French-Canadian immigrants were a new source of cheap labor which came to the rescue of mill managers at a crucial moment in the history of New England's textile industry.

Conditions in Nineteenth-Century Québec

How did thousands of French Canadians come to be such willing laborers in the cotton mills of New England during the latter part of the nineteenth century? The roots of the poverty and unemployment which pushed French Canadians to take jobs in New England mill-towns can be found in the agricultural and economic crises of Québec which began in the early 1800's.

Until the British Conquest in 1763, the economic bases of New France (what is now Québec) were fur trading and wheat. Agricultural lands, concentrated chiefly in the St. Lawrence and Chaudière River valleys, were owned by French noblemen

(seigneurs) and worked by their tenant-farmers (habitants). After the Conquest, many French administrators left Lower Canada and returned to France. Those seigneurs who stayed on had to give up their government and military posts as well as their fur contracts, and try to live exclusively from their lands (Hamelin and Provencher, 1981:65). The British had gained control of commerce in Montréal and Québec, while in rural areas, the French Catholic clergy maintained political and moral authority.

As early as 1802, the sale of wheat to Great Britain was severely restricted (Bernier, 1976:428). Fur trading continued, and the lumber industry began to be developed by British entrepreneurs. French-Canadian habitants on seigneurie lands of the St. Lawrence and Chaudière Valleys were often attracted by the money to be made in pursuits other than farming. Their lack of attention to improvement of their fields and farming techniques is notorious (Bernier, 1976; Ouellet, 1980). The French-Canadian system of partible inheritance among members of large families eventually reduced farm land to many tiny separate plots.

This problem has often been referred to as the "population crisis" of nineteenth-century Québec (See Ouellet, 1980:145). It has been explained by high birth rates encouraged by French priests (See Garigue, 1960). While rapid population growth existed among French Canadians, other factors contributed to the scarcity of land. Since 1820, the Land Bureau of Lower Canada was dominated by Englishmen who bought up huge tracts of

land, especially in Eastern Québec, for speculation (Hamelin and Provencher, 1981:77). What land there was was sold to English and American farmers at a price no French Canadian could afford. In sum, in the 1830's, the English in Québec emerged as more successful farmers than the French Canadians, because of their superior techniques, as well as advantages of easier access to land and connection to the markets of Québec, Montréal, England and the U.S. (Hamelin and Roby, 1971:7).

On seigneurie lands, meanwhile, the soil deteriorated, and demands on French-Canadian habitants from the Church and the seigneurs, in the form of tithes, rent, taxes, etc., continued to augment (Ouellet, 1980). French-Canadian farmers themselves had, by this time, given up trying to produce wheat, having already experienced great competition, both from their English neighbors and from the new and more productive agricultural areas of the Canadian prairies. Habitants turned to a subsistence form of agriculture, growing potatoes, buckwheat, and oats. Thus they became more vulnerable to widespread potato blight in the 1830's (Hamelin and Provencher, 1981:76-77).

The Rebellions of 1837, led by the fledgling French-Canadian middle class with the goal of independence for Lower Canada, were a reflection of growing French-English tensions as well as worsening economic conditions of most French-Canadians. For political and economic reasons, an estimated 40,000 French Canadians left Québec for the U.S. between 1840 and 1850 (Hamelin and Provencher, 1981:93). The Report of the Select

Committee of the Legislative Assembly to Inquire into Emigration, written in 1849, noted that experienced Eastern Canadian farmers were leaving for better land in the West, while laborers--chiefly French Canadians--went to work in New England factories or on American railroads (Careless, 1967:151). In the 1850's and 1860's, due to the lower costs of production and protective tariffs, industrial growth was favored in New England, in contrast to Québec.

The 1870's were years of economic contraction in most parts of the world, following the stock market crash in Vienna in 1873. Québec's economy was tied closely by trade and investments to the British economy and therefore suffered dearly during the Depression (Hamelin and Provencher, 1981:105). By the time Québec's manufacturing interests and financial centers recovered, it was too late to stem the tide of emigration to the United States. Having little capital for investment in industry, the Québec government offered land for re-settlement North of the St. Lawrence River. The French clergy joined in promoting the colonization of Québec by condemning emigrés and the dirty and immoral New England mill-towns they were flocking to.

When French-Canadian families chose to go to New England, it was usually because they had few alternatives. High infant mortality, malnutrition, cold and hunger, were all part of what French-Canadian habitants left behind when they came to New England.[2] They were victims of an out-moded land tenure system, poor lands, little education, no capital, and no

incentive to improve their farms.

French-Canadian immigrants to New England came from all regions of Québec (Allen, 1972). Over time, particular areas became linked to certain mill-towns, and observable "chains" of migration developed. These chains involved both communication and transportation networks. Information about job opportunities in New England came from two sources, on the whole: earlier migrants (usually relatives) and labor "brokers". Migrants who had settled in New England communicated with their friends and relatives by letter and in frequent visits. There was also movement back to Québec for marriage, health reasons, and especially during periods of economic depression in New England.[3] Movement back and forth across the border was frequent, probably because of the ease of travel by rail (especially after the 1870's) and the strength of French-Canadian kin ties (Piddington, 1965). Immigrants often depended on their relatives both for accommodation and for help with employment upon arrival in the mill-town. The second source of information was the mill agent or labor broker. These were generally French-Canadian mill employees paid to travel through Québec and recruit workers. Mill agents often paid train fare for the migrants and met them at the station in town when they arrived. In this way a strong patron-client relationship was established between the habitant and his prospective employer.

The railroad clearly had a profound influence as a link between particular source areas and areas of destination. In

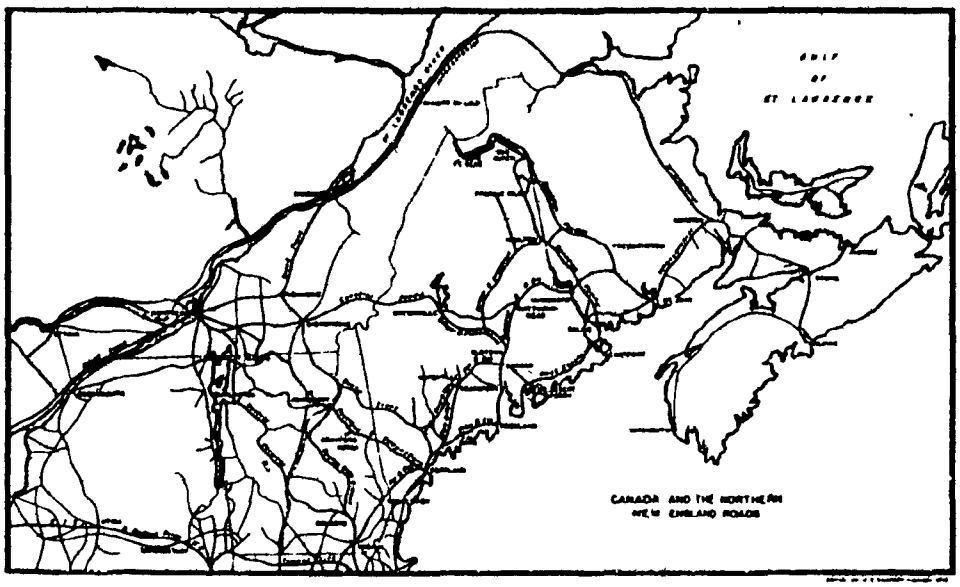
the prerailroad period, i.e., 1830-1850, French Canadians moved to Maine from two specific areas: those from l'Islet and Kamouraska followed the Temiscouata Road on foot or in wagons to the Upper St. John Valley of Northern Maine (Allen, 1972). Others came from Beauce County and followed the Kennebec Road to Waterville, Augusta and points south (Fig. 2). Completion of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railway from Montréal to Portland in 1853 opened up new source areas to the increasing number of economic opportunities in New England's expanding mills. This particular line was soon incorporated into Canada's Grand Trunk system, and connecting lines were added to Québec City by 1870. The railroads drew French Canadians from a wider range of areas, while they strengthened the old Beauce-Kennebec Valley link.

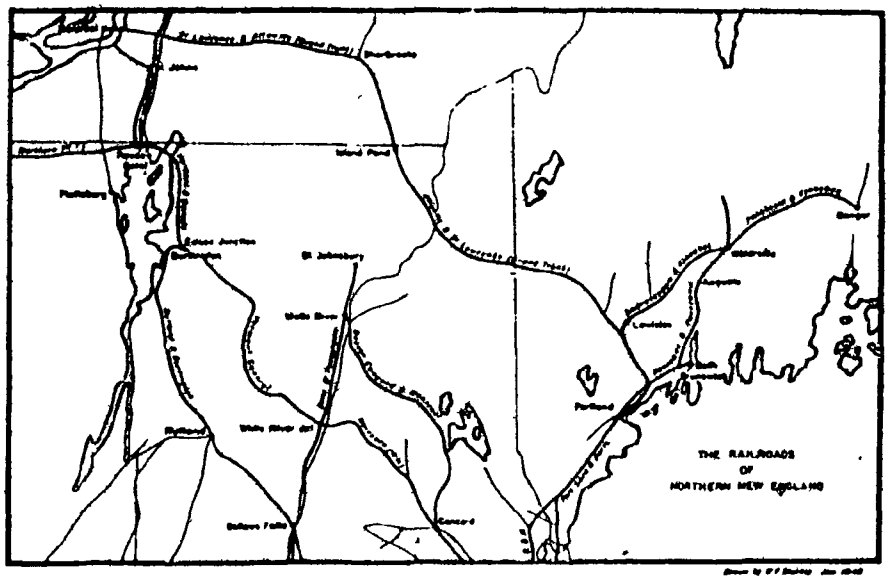
The movement of French Canadians to New England in the late nineteenth century can be understood as a fairly discrete phenomenon. Mill owners in New England took advantage of the economic depression in Québec and the existence of railroads to entice impoverished Québecois to migrate to New England and fill the labor gap. The relationship between French-Canadian immigrants and textile mills can be better understood by examining the process as it occurred in Augusta, Maine.

Immigration to Augusta

The story of French-Canadian immigration to Augusta must be prefaced by a brief account of the city's textile mill (Appendix B). The production of cotton goods in Augusta began in 1834, with the incorporation of the Kennebec Dam Company.

Fig. 2 Railroads of New England, 19th Century





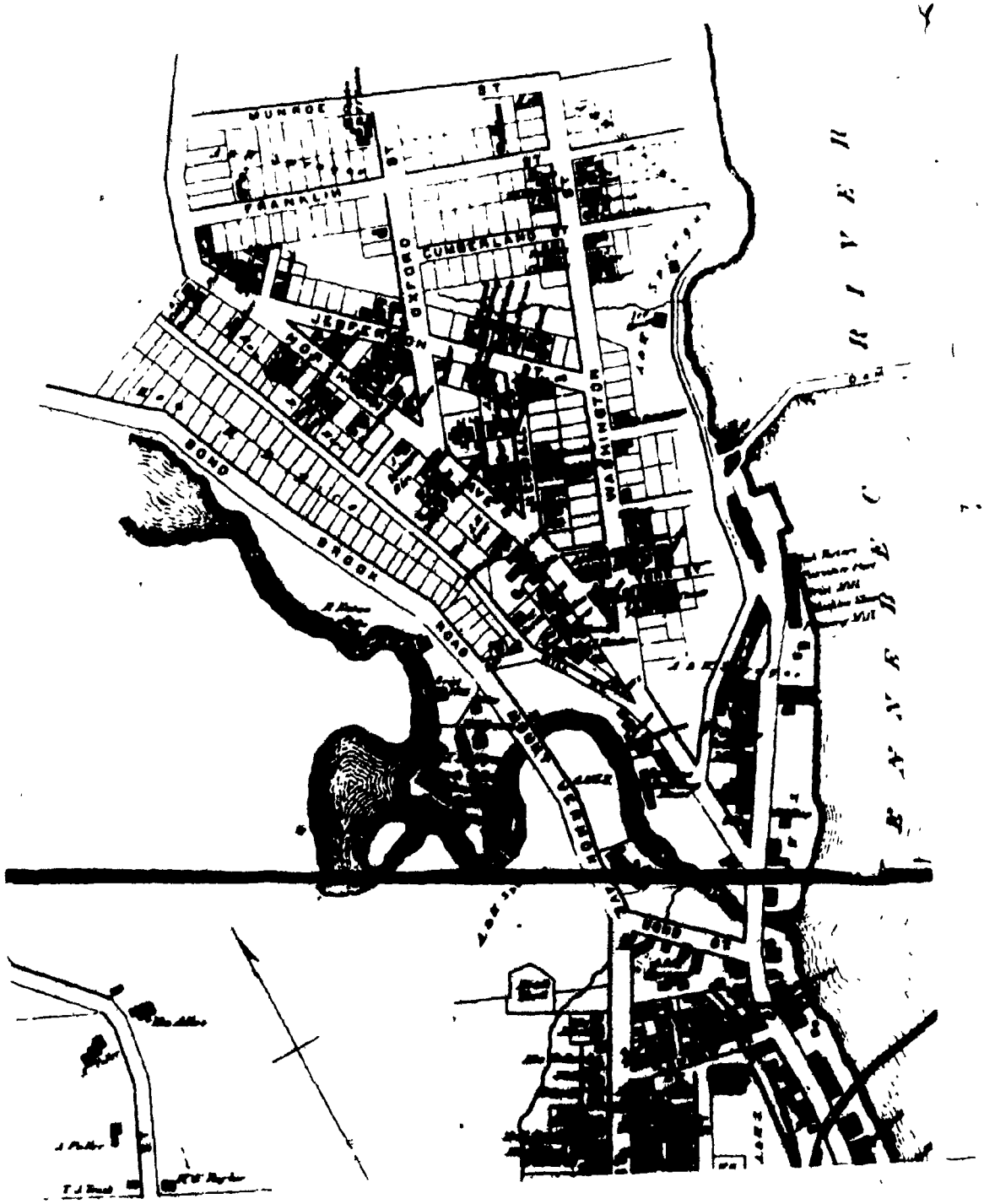
Source: Kirkland, Edward Chase, Men, Cities and Transportation, 1948:467 and 197.

The company began with $300,000 in capital and authorization to build a dam, locks and canals on the Kennebec River. The dam was finished in 1837, the year that the Kennebec Dam Co. became the Kennebec Locks and Canals Company, incorporated with $600,000 capital (Kennebec Journal, 1947). It was this company which, in 1847, established Augusta's first cotton mill, operating 10,000 spindles. Sawmills and gristmills were later constructed at the site.

Floods and fire took their toll on mill buildings and the dam during the 1850's and 1860's. Just after the Civil War, towns and cities all over the U.S. were clamoring for railroad connections and industry (Leblanc, 1968:181). Local entrepreneurs in Augusta succeeded in acquiring outside investment to develop their Kennebec water-power source. In 1865, negotiations began with the Spragues of Providence, Rhode Island, owners of textile mills, real estate and steamship lines (See Ware, 1931:130). At first, William Sprague IV objected to the price asked for the Augusta water power rights and adjacent land. Worried that they would lose Sprague to another city, local leaders secured approval from the Maine Legislature for a bond issue of $250,000. In 1867, Augusta voters approved this sum in public money for the A. & W. Sprague Company (North, 1870:777-782; Leblanc, 1968:182) (Fig. 3).

The Sprague Company added 15,000 spindles to the cotton mill on the Kennebec. The mill operated successfully, despite heavy fire and flood damage, until 1873, when financial losses,

Fig. 3 Parts of Second and Third Wards, City of Augusta, Maine, 1879; note property of A. & W. Sprague



Source
H. E. Halfpenny, Atlas of Kennebec County, Maine, 1879:20-21

probably due to the world-wide depression, forced the A. & W. Sprague Company to close down operations. Their total property, valued at $16,000,000, was placed in the hands of a trustee, Mr. Zachariah Chafee (Knight, 1881:55).

In 1882, Chafee transferred the mill property in Augusta to Mr. Isaac T. Burr, of Newton, Massachusetts, first president of the newly-formed Edwards Manufacturing Company, for the sum of $207,141.62 (Minutes, Directors Meeting, Oct. 6. 1882). The Edwards Company was another extension in a line of Boston-financed corporations which originated in 1813. This particular corporation was formed by major stockholders of the Bates Manufacturing Company, a cotton textile company founded in 1852 and located in Lewiston, Maine. Jacob Edwards, principal stockholder of the Edwards Manufacturing Co. at its establishment in 1882, also owned the most stock in the Bates Company in 1880 (Annual Returns, Secretary of State). As Table 2 shows, the system of interlocking directorship, as well as control by Boston financiers, standard features of the textile industry in New England, continued even into the 20th century.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth-century, French-Canadian immigrants began to out-number any other national group in Maine cotton mills (Annual Report of the Maine Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics, 1889:131). At the Pepperell Manufacturing Company in Biddeford, Maine, between September, 1885 and September, 1891, the number of French-Canadian operatives increased from 596 to 959, or 61 per cent, even though total employment actually declined by 5 per

Table 2 Directors, Bates Manufacturing Co., Lewiston, Maine and Edwards Manufacturing Co., Augusta, Maine, 1901

Bates Manufacturing Co., May 21, 1901

Directors	Officers
Orlando H. Alford	President, Isaac T. Burr
Isaac T. Burr	Treasurer, Robert J. Edwards
Edmund S. Clark	Asst. Treas., Orlando Alford
James B. Case	Clerk, Ralph W. Potter
William C. Hunneman	
Joseph H. Gray	

Authorized capital stock: $1,200,000

Principal office: #85 Devonshire Street, Boston

- -

Edwards Manufacturing Co., May 31, 1901

Directors	Officers
Orlando H. Alford	President, William Endicott
Isaac T. Burr	Treasurer, Jacob Edwards
James B. Case	Asst. Treas., R. J. Edwards
Jacob Edwards	Clerk, Charles B. Johnson
Robert J. Edwards	
William Endicott	
J. Manchester Haynes	
Joseph H. Manley	

Authorized capital stock: $1,100,000

Principal office: #85 Devonshire Street, Boston

Source

Annual Returns, Secretary of State of Maine, Corporate Division, 1902; Maine State Archives.

cent during those years (Pepperell Manufacturing Company Papers, cited in Vicero, 1968:318).

In Augusta, the same infiltration of the mill by French Canadians can be seen. Based on figures given in the manuscript census of 1880, out of a sample of 348 cotton mill workers in Ward 4 of Augusta, approximately 60 per cent were American, English or Irish by birth, while 40 per cent were born in Canada. In the 1900 manuscript census, however, when French- and English-Canadian origins were distinguished, almost 85 per cent of the sample of cotton mill workers in Ward 4 were born in French Canada or were born in Maine of two French-Canadian parents (Tables 3 and 4).

By 1900, then, French Canadians were a significant part of the labor force of the Edwards Manufacturing Company. Where did they come from, and when did they arrive in Augusta? The majority of French-Canadian immigrants to Augusta came from the County of Beauce, Québec. According to one survey, 2/3 of the immigrants in Augusta were from Beauce and another 12 per cent were born in nearby parishes of adjoining counties (Allen, 1972:379). Interviews with older French-Canadian immigrants in Augusta and a sample taken from marriage records of Augusta's French Catholic Church showed that, by and large, French Canadians came to Augusta from a handful of villages in Beauce. In the marriage records, for those baptised in Canada before 1900, the following parishes of baptism appear over and over: St. Frédéric, St. Samuel, St. Méthode, St. Benoit, St. Honoré, St. Georges, St. Jules, St. Victor, St. Joseph-de-

Table 3 Cotton Mill Workers in Ward 4, Augusta, Maine, by Place of Birth, 1880

Place of birth of person	Place of birth of parents	#	%
Maine	Maine	166	48
Canada	Canada	142	41
England	England	11	3
Ireland	Ireland	8	2
Maine	Ireland	7	2
Maine	Canada	5	1
Other+		9	3
TOTAL cotton mill workers in sample		348	100

Source: Manuscript Census for the City of Augusta, 1880.

Table 4 Cotton Mill Workers in Ward 4, Augusta, Maine, by Place of Birth, 1900

Place of Birth of Person	Place of Birth of Parents	#	%
Canada (French)*	Canada (French)*	325	75
Maine	Canada (French)*	40	9
Maine	Maine	31	7
Canada (English)*	Canada (English)*	8	2
Ireland	Ireland	7	2
Maine	Ireland	5	1
Other+		16	4
TOTAL cotton mill workers in sample		431	100

Source: Manuscript Census for the City of Augusta, 1900.

\+ Mostly persons born in other New England states.
* In 1900, for the first time, the census distinguished between French- and English-speaking Canadians.

Beauce, East Broughton... All of these parishes are located along the Chaudière River, in Beauce County, and the longest distance between any two villages is not more than 50 km. The second major source area for immigrants in Augusta born before 1900 was Joliette, especially the parishes of St. Charles and Ste. Mélanie (Marriage Records, 1981). They came on foot along the Kennebec Road, or, later, by rail via Sherbrooke, Québec, and Greenville, Maine. Others took the Grand Trunk Railroad from Montreal to Boston, then transferred to lines bound for Maine (Searles et al., 1982) (Fig. 2).

Paquet calculated net emigration by county in Québec for one decade, taking into account population totals, births and deaths, and immigration and repatriation. He estimated that, between 1881 and 1891, Beauce County had a net loss of 7,255 people, almost 23 per cent of the county's 1881 population. Net emigration from Joliette during the 1880's was, according to Paquet, 5,527 individuals, or 25 per cent of the population in 1881 (Paquet, 1964:342-3).

Immigrants to Augusta came from different areas in Québec than did those who settled in Lewiston or Brunswick, Maine and other mill-towns of Maine and the rest of New England. The flow of migration also differed. There were peaks and lows, as in other areas, but the mass migration process began somewhat later in Augusta. It is reasonable to associate the arrival of French Canadians in Augusta with the out-migration of native New Englanders and the remarkable expansion of the city's cotton mill, especially between 1887 and 1910.

As Figure 4 shows, French-Canadian immigration to Augusta really began in 1870, when the Sprague mill was still functioning.[4] After that year, immigration was relatively insignificant, probably due to the general economic slump from 1873 to 1879. It is difficult to account for the large jump in immigration in 1880. However, between 1884 and 1885, a third mill was constructed on the Edwards property. Two more mills were added in 1889. Figure 4 shows that over 130 French Canadians arrived in Augusta in 1890. The depressions of 1893 and the early 1900's are also reflected in Figure 4. Between 1887 and 1892, the overall capacity of the Edwards mill was increased three-fold, for a total of 98,000 spindles. The product was diversified and sales were steady, holding at an average of $1 million annually between 1890 and 1910 (Violette, 1976:31). By 1910, the Edwards Manufacturing Company was operating 103,000 spindles (American Cotton and Wool Reporter, 1911).

The decade with the highest number of French Canadians arriving in Augusta was probably 1890-1899 (Table 5). This finding is in direct conflict with reports by Vicero, Lavoie, and Paquet, which place the highest numbers of immigrants to New England in earlier decades, either the 1870's or the 1880's. These discrepancies probably reflect regional differences in business climate within New England as well as the difficulty of determining with exactitude the rate of migration of French Canadians to New England.

Our objective in this chapter was not to record exact

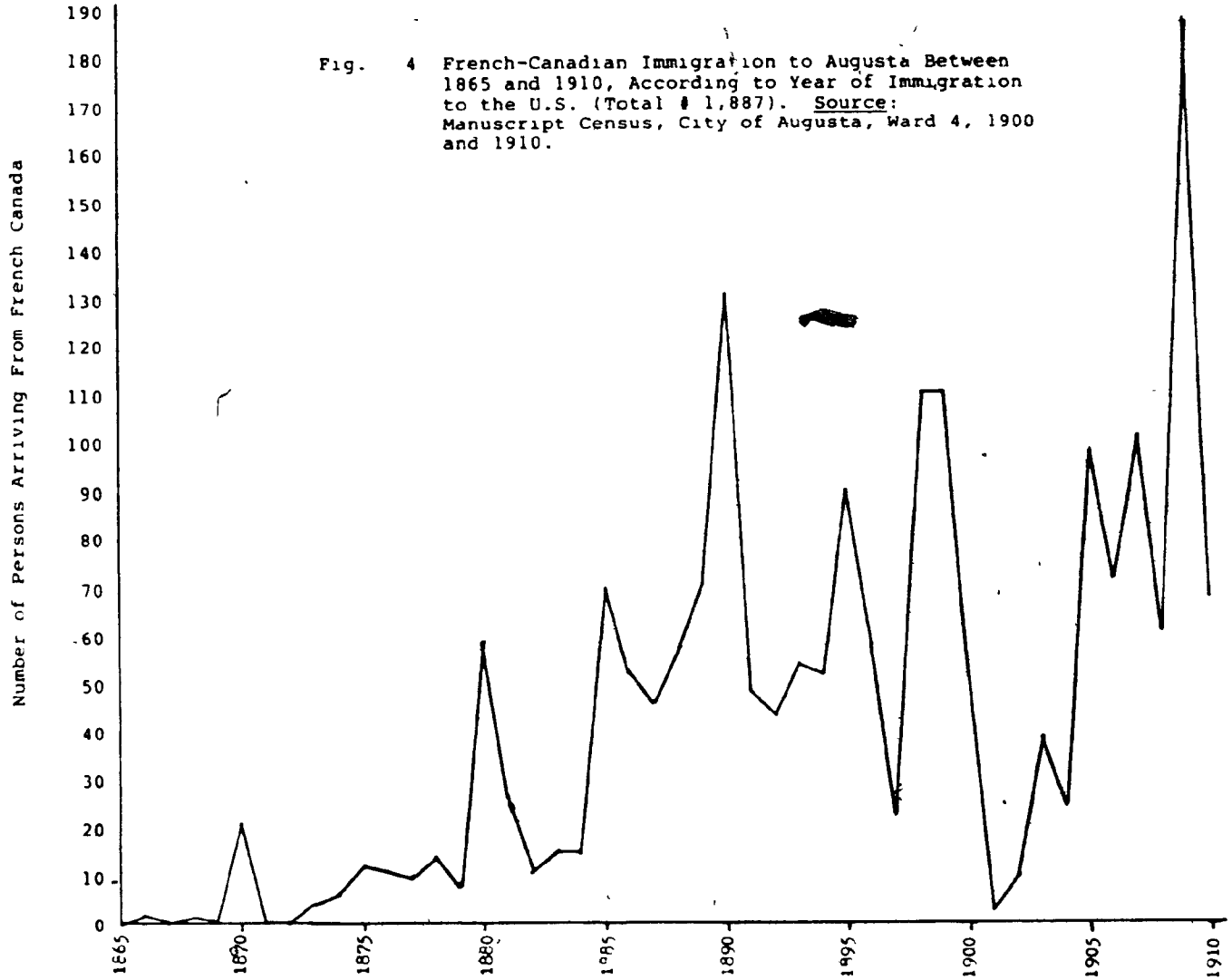


Fig. 4 French-Canadian Immigration to Augusta Between 1865 and 1910, According to Year of Immigration to the U.S. (Total # 1,887). Source: Manuscript Census, City of Augusta, Ward 4, 1900 and 1910.

Table 5 French-Canadian Immigration to Augusta; Totals by Decade, 1840-1909

Decade	No. of Immigrants
1840-1849	2
1850-1859	9
1860-1869	2
1870-1879	86
1880-1889	426
1890-1899	724
1900-1909	638
TOTAL (1840-1909)	1,887

Source

Manuscript Censuses for the City of Augusta, 1900 and 1910; Ward 4 only.

numbers of immigrants, but rather to understand why and how French Canadians came to New England. One researcher wrote of a French-Canadian community in Maine: "Franco concentration in the city led to Franco concentration in local textile mills" (Guignard, 1982:3). It should be clear from the above discussion that the reverse is in fact the case. A general understanding of the reasons for the emigration is essential to our discussion of the French-Canadian community in Augusta, Maine.

Notes

1. Specialists on French-Canadian immigration disagree on numbers of emigrants per year. Careful and detailed studies of the exodus include: Faucher, 1964; Paquet, 1964; Vicero, 1968; Lavoie, 1972; and Paquet and Smith, 1983.

2. An interview with a French-Canadian woman, born in 1902, revealed infant mortality as a common characteristic of poor Québec farm families. R. P. recalled:

> Notre famille, c'était une grosse famille. Mes parents ont eu 16 enfants. Il y en a plusieurs qui sont morts jeunes, tout jeunes, deux, trois mois. Pis, il en y a six qui sont morts; le plus vieux avait trois ans. C'est dans l'enfance qu'y sont morts. (Sic).

This woman's mother died in childbirth with her 17th child, and R. P. herself was sick with tuberculosis for 5 years, from age 9 to age 14. She moved to Augusta at age 18. [Interview, Augusta, Oct. 17, 1984].

3. In addition to periods of general economic slump, summer months tended to be slack in the textile industry.

Mills were often closed down one month or more in summer, as water levels were low.

4. Statistics for Figure 4 and for Table 5 come from the manuscript census, which gives information on date of arrival for individuals. Only the manuscript censuses through the year 1910 are available to the public. Immigration to Augusta continued into the 1930's, but there is no way to have an accurate count of its extent after 1910. "Ward 3" and "Ward 4" refer to sections of Augusta designated as such by the federal census administration.

Chapter IV The French-Canadian Community in Augusta, 1880-1920

Augusta's French-Canadian community was segregated geographically, linguistically, and economically from the rest of the city for over 50 years. Older French-Canadian immigrants often tell of poverty and suffering they experienced: the hard work, ill health, and especially, discrimination and conflict with Yankees. As a nun and teacher of French-Canadian origin put it: "They've always been in the background; not necessarily being proud of who they are" (N.B., interview, Augusta, January 7, 1985).

In this chapter we will focus on the social and economic characteristics of Augusta's French-Canadian community which identified its members as a distinct ethnic group and social class. Size of the French-Canadian population, family size and composition, occupational level and education will be discussed to provide background material for an examination of the maintenance of this distinct group identity.

The Size of Augusta's French-Canadian Population

The French-speaking population of Augusta was always small by comparison to that of other Maine manufacturing centers, notably Biddeford, Saco, Brunswick, Lewiston and Waterville. This helps explain the lack of attention paid to Augusta's French-Canadian immigrants in private censuses, in the Franco-American press, and in scholarly works. To illustrate, the French-Canadian population of Lewiston in 1908 was 11,180, or 43 per cent of the total, according to the Laplante census

(Vicero, 1971).' In Waterville, 5,862 French Catholics accounted for 51 per cent of the city population, by the same survey. In Augusta by 1908, there were an estimated 2,487 French-speaking Catholics out of a total of some 13,000 residents. This pattern of growth is consistent with our finding that the largest number of immigrants from Québec to Augusta came between 1890 and 1899. Indeed, of the sample of French Canadians arriving between 1840 and 1909 discussed in Chapter 3, two thirds came to Augusta during the last two decades of that period.

Population figures are summarized in Tables 6 and 7. French population figures generally correspond to the number of St. Augustine parish members. Reliable figures are not easy to find, because of bias and inaccuracy in record-keeping, loss of records and the frequency with which French Canadians moved. Finally, many French Canadians had immigrated illegally and could therefore be expected to try to conceal information from "the authorities".[1]

Social and Economic Life of French Canadians in Augusta

Residence

By 1900, the great majority of Augusta's French-Canadian immigrants lived in an area of the city known as Sand Hill, or "La Côte". Sand Hill remains a well-defined triangular section enclosed by the Edwards mill and the Kennebec River, on the East side, Laurel Street to the South, State Street and Bond Brook to the West, and the Augusta city line to the North (Fig. 5). Like other "Little Canadas" and "Frenchvilles" throughout New

Table 6 Population Totals for the State of Maine and Augusta

Year	Maine	Augusta	Net Increase Augusta Population
1850	583,169	7,225	
1860	628,279	7,609	+ 384
1870	626,915	7,808	+ 199
1880	648,936	8,666	+ 858
1890	666,086	10,527	+1,861
1900	694,466	11,683	+1,156
1910	742,371	13,211	+1,528
1920	768,014	14,114	+ 903
1930	797,423	17,198	+3,084
1940	847,226	19,360	+2,162
1950	913,774	20,913	+1,553
1960	969,265	21,680	+ 767
1970	992,048	21,945	+ 265
1980	1,123,560	21,819	− 126

Source

Maine Register, Portland, ME: Tower Publishing, 1982.

Table 7 French-Canadian Population of Augusta

Year	French population	Augusta population (persons)	% French	Source
1870	12 families	7,808	0.9%	a.
1880	53 families	8,666	3.5%	a.
1886	125 families			b.
1888	1,200 persons	11,000	11%	c.
1889	1,250 "	10,000	12.5%	d.
1890	2,500 "	10,527	24%	e.
1897	2,050 "			f.
1900	2,954 "	11,683	25%	g.
1900	1,900 "	11,683	16%	h.
1908	2,487 "	13,089	19%	i.
1910		13,211		
1916	553 families	13,700	23%	j.
1970	6,419 persons	21,945	29%	k.
1980	4,600 persons	21,819	21%	l.

Sources

a. Manuscript Censuses, 1870 and 1880, (Violette, 1976:20).

b. Father LaCroix Census (Kennebec Journal, 1947).

c. Documents deposited in cornerstone of new church on August 28, 1888 (Cited in Violette, 1976:95) (St. Augustine parish members).

d. Le Messager, August 22, 1889 (St. Augustine parish members).

e. Hamon, 1891:399 (St. Augustine parish members).

f. 1897 Census by Le Messager, February 19, 1897.

g. Author's study of manuscript census, City of Augusta, 1900; (persons born in French Canada or born in Maine of two French-Canadian parents).

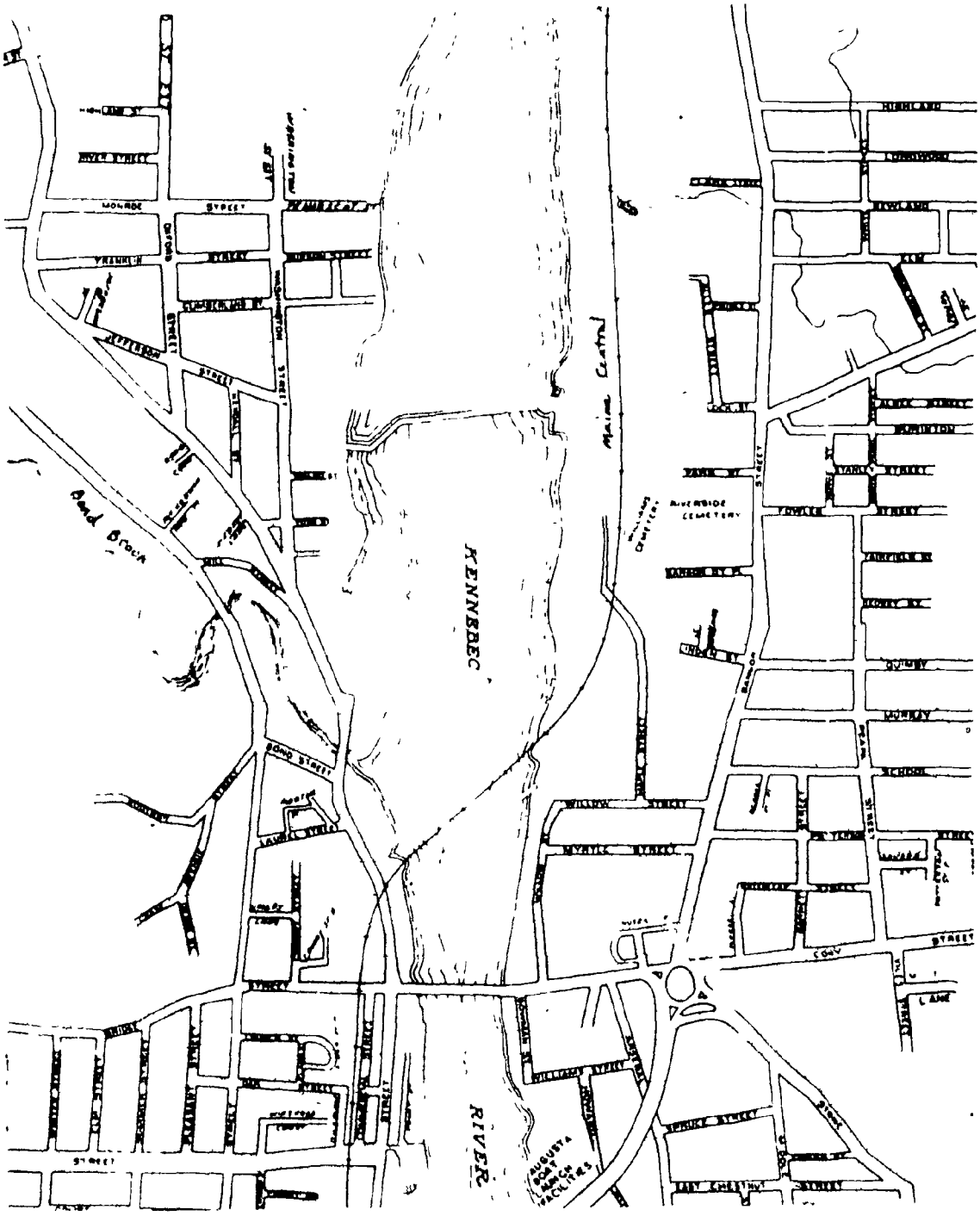
h. Vicero, 1968:294.

i. Laplante Census (Vicero, 1971; Allen, 1972) (French-speaking Catholics).

j. Violette, 1972.

k. U.S. census, 1970 (Allen, 1974:47) (French mother tongue population).

Fig. 5 Part of Present-day Map of the City of Augusta



Source
Augusta Planning Commission, 1959.

England, Sand Hill was a poor, densely populated, and somewhat isolated area, where French was spoken almost exclusively.

The section now called Sand Hill was a mill-workers' neighborhood before it began to be occupied overwhelmingly by French-Canadian immigrants, around the turn of the century. In 1880, this area was inhabited, in roughly equal numbers, by French Canadians, native Americans, English Canadians, Irish, English and Scottish. The trait common to almost all adult residents of Ward 3 was their occupation: "cotton mill worker" (Manuscript Census, 1880).[2] The change in the composition of Sand Hill by national group parallels the change which took place between 1880 and 1900 in the proportion of French Canadians to English-speaking workers employed in the Edwards mill (See Table 3 and Table 4).

When French Canadians began arriving in Augusta, they naturally settled on Sand Hill, for several reasons. First, the area is adjacent to the cotton mill: "The Hill, Sand Hill, what they call Sand Hill, was -- the mill was their bread and butter... Most of them, when they first came in from Canada, that's where they worked" (Sic.)(D.C., interview, Augusta, October 5, 1984). Secondly, it was common for immigrants to stay with relatives who were already living on Sand Hill. Thirdly, for many French Canadians, housing in Augusta had already been arranged by mill agents before the immigrants arrived. Upon arrival, French Canadians were lodged in either company-owned boarding- or tenement houses ("mill blocks"), or in private boarding-houses.[3] The Edwards Manufacturing Company

owned extensive land and residential buildings on Bond and Kendall Streets, and other streets adjacent to the mill and within the Sand Hill area (Real Estate Book, 1921:104-106).

Manuscript censuses, available up to 1910, give information on names of persons, size and composition of households, number and ages of children, occupations, school attendance, and in some cases, literacy and ability to speak English. By including such material here, we can quickly gain a general understanding of some aspects of life for a small but fairly representative sample. Excerpts from those censuses, showing households as they were recorded, appear in Table 8 and Table 9.

Occupations, Wages and Hours

> It has to be remembered, that the French man almost invariably arrives here poor, often penniless; he comes from a farm, knows nothing of any other employment and speaks no language save the barbarous Canadian French; he must have work at once, and is usually glad at first to take any wages offered him... (MacDonald, 1896:286).

Census information given in Tables 8, 9, and 10 shows the predominance of the cotton mill in the lives of Augusta's French-Canadian immigrants. Whole families were often employed in one room or department of the Edwards mill.[4] Opportunities for employment at "le moulin de coton" were what drew French Canadians to Augusta and other towns. The second-most common occupation of French-Canadian men in New England was "general labor", according to Vicero (1968:298; Table 10).

Earnings of French-Canadian male heads of households employed as "laborers" are difficult to determine. For mill-workers, on the other hand, it is clear that they received lower wages than did workers in most other industries. For an average

Table 8 Two French-Canadian Households, Augusta, 1880

Bond Street

Name	Age	Rel'ship	Birth Place	Occupation
Pallard, Levi	52	head	Canada	laborer
-------Flemie	50	wife	Canada	keeping house
-------Joseph	20	son	Canada	works in cotton mill
-------Edward	18	son	Canada	works in cotton mill
---------Mark	17	son	Canada	works in cotton mill
-------Auguste	15	son	Canada	works in cotton mill
---------Veni	14	son	Canada	works in cotton mill
-------Albert	4	son	Canada	
---------Mary	22	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
--------Adela	19	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
------Malvina	11	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
--------Mell(?)	9	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
--------Lucy(?)	7	daughter	Canada	

* * * * *

Water Street

Philipe, Louis	45	head	Canada	laborer
--------Mary	42	wife	Canada	keeping house
-----William	20	son	Canada	works in cotton mill
-------Louis	19	son	Canada	works in cotton mill
------Clara(?)	18	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
------Lemey(?)	17	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
-------Sarah	16	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
------Manet(?)	15	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
-------Celia	14	daughter	Canada	works in cotton mill
-------Agnes	4	daughter	Canada	
--------Tina	2	daughter	Maine	
--------Mary	2mo.	daughter	Maine	
Lampier, Lucy	26	border	Canada	works in cotton mill
Lampier, Peter	18	border	Canada	works in cotton mill

Source
Manuscript Census for the City of Augusta, Ward 4, 1880

Table 9 Two French-Canadian Households, Augusta, 1900

24 Northern Avenue

Name	Age	Rel'ship	Birth Place	Year of immigration to the U.S.	Occupation	Can read.	Can write.	Can speak English.
Roy, Joseph	61	head	Canada Fr.	1895	Day laborer	No	No	No
-----Celina	40	wife	Canada Fr.	1895		No	No	No
-----Joseph	24	son	Canada Fr.	1895	weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	Yes
--------Lea	20	daughter	Canada Fr.	1895	spinner cotton	Yes	Yes	Yes
------Delia	16	daughter	Canada Fr.	1895	weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	Yes
----Octavi	15	daughter	Canada Fr.	1895	weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	Yes
---Alphonce	10	son	Canada Fr.	1895	at school 9 months	Yes	Yes	No
----Xavier	88	son	Canada Fr.	1895				
----Alvina	6	son	Canada Fr.	1895				
Bolduc,Gedeon	27	Boarder	Canada Fr.	1895	weaver cotton	No	No	No

28 Northern Avenue

Paré, Eva	47	head	Canada Fr.	1896		No	No	No
----Joseph	25	son	Canada Fr.	1896	weaver cotton	Yes	No	No
---Delmase	24	daughter	Canada Fr.	1896		Yes	Yes	No
-----Sara	21	daughter	Canada Fr.	1896	weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	No
---Ernest	19	son	Canada Fr.	1896	weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	No
--Napoléon	17	son	Canada Fr.	1896	spinner cotton	Yes	Yes	No
---Lumina	15	daughter	Canada Fr.	1896	spooler cotton	Yes	Yes	No
---Merida	13	daughter	Canada Fr.	1896		No	No	No
---Olivine	12	daughter	Canada Fr.	1896	spooler	No	No	No
-----Delina	10	daughter	Canada Fr.	1896	at school 10 months	Yes	Yes	No
----Gedeon	7	son	Canada Fr.	1896				
--Alphonse	3	son	Maine					
--Marie L.	27	d in law	Canada Fr.	1899	weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	No
Huse, Alfonce	28	s in law	Canada Fr.	1896	weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	No
Duffy, Anna	42	Boarder	Vermont		weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	Yes
Williams, Janet	57	Boarder	Maine		weaver cotton	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Manuscript census for the City of Augusta, Ward 3, 1900.

Table 10 "Occupations of the Male Labor Force of French-Canadian Stock in New England, 1900[a]". (Vicero, 1968:298)

Occupation	Number	Per cent
Agriculture	11,746	7.4
Mining	1,578	1.0
Forest workers	1,801	1.1
Manufacturing		
Textile industry (all branches)	42,087	26.5
Leather and leather goods	8,984	5.7
Pulp and paper	1,753	1.1
Saw and planing mills	1,620	1.0
Furniture makers	669	0.4
Brick and tile makers	1,943	1.2
Machinists	3,156	2.0
Iron and steel workers	2,736	1.7
Gold and silver workers	1,109	0.7
Tool and cutlery workers	640	0.4
Other manufacturing	10,395	6.5
General labor	20,902	13.2
Teamsters	5,154	3.2
Railroad and street railway workers	3,335	2.1
Engineers and firemen (excl. railroad)	1,351	0.9
Domestic and personal service[b]	5,355	3.4
Building trades[c]	13,823	8.7
Blacksmiths	2,141	1.3
Other trades[d]	2,471	1.6
White collar workers[e]	9,732	6.1
Professional personnel	1,455	0.9
Other occupations	2,950	1.9
ALL Occupations	158,886	100.0

a. Compiled and calculated from: U.S., Bureau of the Census, Special Reports, Occupations at the Twelfth Census, 1900, pp. 220-423. French-Canadian stock includes those with both parents born in Canada or one parent born in Canada and one in the U.S.

b. Includes janitors, launderers, servants, waiters, watchmen, policemen, firemen, bartenders and barbers.

c. Includes carpenters, joiners, painters, glaziers, varnishers, masons and plumbers.

d. Includes bakers, butchers, tailors, printers, pressmen and lithographers.

e. Includes bookkeepers, accountants, clerks, copyists, merchants, dealers, agents, salesmen, manufacturers and officials.

of 60 hours' work, weekly wages were $10.52 for skilled workers and $5.23 for unskilled; $8.79 for men and for women, $6.90. The highest wages earned in 1887 were in confectionary, wire and granite industries. Weekly earnings in the granite industry, for example, were $16.52 for skilled workers, $9.50 for unskilled. Only bleacheries and leather businesses paid lower weekly wages than cotton textiles in Maine in 1887 (Annual Report, 1887:122-125). In 1892, cotton mill wages varied from over $2.00 per day for mule spinners to $0.40 or $0.50 per day for ring spinners, spoolers, doffers and sweepers (Annual Report, 1892:20-27).

Within the textile industry, earnings varied among different immigrant groups. French-Canadian mill-workers in New England earned less than Scottish, English and Irish immigrants, according to an investigation carried out by the U.S. Immigration Commission in 1908. Average weekly earnings of French-Canadians were $10.09 for men and $8.23 for women, compared to $12.75 and $8.66 for Scottish men and women, respectively. Ramirez speculates that earning levels corresponded to year of arrival and experience in textile work. "New" immigrants: Portuguese, Polish and Greek cotton mill employees, earned less on average than French Canadians (Ramirez, 1983:137-8).

By 1916, mill employees in Augusta worked a 54-hour week--10 hours a day and 1/2 day on Saturday for $5.00 to $7.00 a week paid fortnightly (D. C., interview, 1984). These conditions seem to have prevailed until 1928 (Early, 1973). Workers were

called to the mill each morning by a bell. One had to work fast, because wages were based on a piece rate.[5] The machines were noisy and shook violently, and most of the work was repetitive. The air in the mill was filled with cotton dust:

> Au moulin de coton, c'était pas facile... Puis, dans la card room, il y avait la waste là, la mousse, qu'on respirait, et puis, c'était pas si bon pour la santé. (Si .) (Interview, A. G., October 9, 1984).

Children in the Mill

As shown in the manuscript census material above, large families were not uncommon in tenement houses of Sand Hill around the turn of the century. Three factors which had existed in Québec probably continued to encourage a high birth rate: 1) the Catholic Church promoted large families; 2) the infant mortality rate continued to be high in immigrant communities (Manuscript Census, 1900); and 3) economic reasons: children, through their labor and/or earnings from other work, contributed to household income.

In 1880, the average number of hands employed in Maine cotton mills was 11,864, of which 12 per cent were children under 16. In that year, women and children together made up roughly 62 per cent of the total number employed in cotton and woolen mills combined (Annual Report, 1893:173). In the 1880's, labor reformers, anxious to strengthen existing child labor laws, accused French-Canadian parents of being "child speculators", who abused their children and refused to work:

> Here in Augusta can be found family after family of Canadian-French, where neither father nor mother make any pretense of labor beyond that of getting meals....As soon as the oldest is large enough it is put at work in the mill...The entire wages earned by their children is absorbed by the lazy louts who have brought them into

> existence....These children have no chance for schooling....A law which will prevent them from working at all in the mills until fifteen or sixteen years of age, will do more to keep a very undesirable class of people from our manufacturing towns than any other one thing...(Daily Eastern Argus, February 5, 1885).

French-Canadian children under 16 years of age did work in New England textile mills, and contributed up to 1/3 of household income, according to the U.S. Immigration Commission survey of 1908 (Ramirez, 1983:139). Yet, as Ramirez points out, in English and Irish households,

> the contribution of children was even greater than that of the French Canadians. This seems to indicate that the factors making possible the pursuit of a "family wage" were related primarily to the character of the cotton industry and to the peculiar labor market conditions it created in the communities in which the industry was implanted (Ramirez, 1983:140).

Education

School attendance was not encouraged by French-Canadian parents, either in Québec or in immigrant communities in New England. In Québec, popular education was neglected; if a child didn't particularly like school, he wasn't forced to attend.[6] In New England communities, children of 10 or 12 could already be productive members of the household by working at the mill.[7] It should be remembered that French-Canadian adults in Augusta around the turn of the century had had little or no formal education. Many over age 40 could not read or write, and only a few children and adults could speak English (Manuscript Census, 1900, 1910, e.g., Table 9).

There was little enforcement of school laws in New England before World War I. Parents and manufacturers refused to cooperate, and public school authorities did not want French-

speaking children of the working class in their schoolrooms (Ensign, 1921; cited in Podea, 1950:372). Education in Augusta's French-Canadian community at the turn of the century was administered by the Catholic Church; local and state government did not interfere. In 1887, Bishop Healy of Portland and Augusta's Irish Catholic pastor had organized the St. Augustine parish for French-speaking Catholics. The church building, completed in 1889, was designed with classrooms and, in 1892, three Ursuline Sisters of Waterville, Maine and Trois-Rivières opened the school for 162 pupils (Desjardins, 1961).

In 1904, nine teachers from the French-Canadian order of the Presentation of Mary replaced the Ursuline teachers. Enrollment for the five classes was 283 (Les Annales, Vol. I, 1904-1922). School records show that sisters were assigned as French or English teachers beginning that year (N.B., correspondence, 1985). However, relatively little class-time was devoted to English; all instruction was in French (N.D., interview, Augusta, Jan, 10, 1985). By 1907, enrollments had grown, and sixth and seventh grades had been added (Violette, 1976: 122).

In just five years, the number of pupils enrolled at St. Augustine School doubled, to a total in 1909 of 564 pupils in seven grades. This group represented approximately 22 per cent of the entire French-Catholic population of Augusta, according to the Laplante census (Vicero, 1971). The significant increase in the number of pupils being presented for school between 1904 and 1909 can be explained, in part, by population

growth among French Canadians on Sand Hill. In addition, the St. Augustine School program was expanded, with more classes and teachers. Finally, during the early 1900's, there was a sharp decrease in the number of children working at the Edwards Manufacturing Co. in Augusta (Annual Report, 1910:465).

The decrease in the number of child laborers in the mill is no doubt related in part to the arrival of Greek, Italian and Turkish workers in large groups, especially in the years 1905, 1907 and 1909 (Manuscript Census, 1910). Secondly, child labor laws had become increasingly strict since the implementation of the first restriction in 1847. The Knights of Labor and legislators from Maine's textile centers, especially Biddeford, led the fight for reform in hours of labor and in child labor (Scontras, 1966:48-50). By 1910, all children between the ages of 12 and 16 wishing to work had to file proof of age and school attendance with the manufacturer, who then issued a certificate prior to employment. Mills were inspected by the Maine Bureau of Labor, and manufacturers found in violation were fined (Annual Report, 1910:466). In spite of stricter measures to prevent it, however, children continued to work at the Augusta mill illegally, by hiding when inspectors came or by lying about their ages, until the 1930's.[8]

In the early years of St. Augustine School, a very small percentage of pupils actually completed all eight grades. In 1913, when total enrollment was 585, only eight pupils graduated from eighth grade--all girls (Violette, 1976:129). Those who wished to continue their studies left Augusta to attend French

colleges in Northern Maine (Van Buren College) or in Canada (ibid.:128). As late as 1930, the number of graduates at St. Augustine was only 30 out of 727 students enrolled (N.B., correspondence, 1985). Students left school typically after fifth or sixth grade, because of lack of interest, lack of encouragement from parents and/or pressure by parents to work at the mill.

French-Canadian Identity

Sand Hill was a French-Canadian parish, transplanted from Québec, with its parish priest retaining administrative control (Hughes, 1943:9-11). Like its counterparts in other New England manufacturing towns, Sand Hill had its separate French Catholic Church, schools, social clubs and homes for the needy (Podea, 1950:380). Professor MacDonald described the separateness of Maine's French Canadians:

> They have the clannishness of strangers in a strange land, for the most part live by themselves in a distinct section of the town or city, and prefer their own stores, their own mechanics, and their own physicians.... Intermarriage is...infrequent....In general, the French keep to themselves, associate little with people not of their own race, and...seem content to be thought a distinct class in the community (MacDonald, 1896:286).

Besides being considered strangers, French Canadians were also members of a distinct social class, identified by certain actions or traits. As far as Americans were concerned, French Canadians all lived in tenement houses on Sand Hill, had large families, were Catholic, spoke French or broken English with a heavy accent, didn't go to school, worked in the cotton mill, and tended to keep to themselves. French Canadians were regarded at first as "industrial invaders", whose only

contribution to American society was their labor. Carroll Wright wrote in 1881, "[They have] one good trait. They are indefatigable workers, and docile..." (Wright, Annual Report, Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, 1881).

How did French Canadians in Augusta view themselves? What were their attitudes towards the United States? Many immigrants in fact believed at first that their stay in Augusta was temporary. Some wanted to earn money to buy farmland in Québec. Others may have had trouble adjusting to city life, or perhaps they missed their relatives and friends in Québec.

> On s'ennuyait [à Augusta]. Oh, oui, ça s'ennuyait. On voulait pas mourir à Augusta. On voulait pas y être enterrés, laisser nos os là (sic.)(A. G., Interview, Augusta, October 9, 1984).

There was some fear and resentment on the part of French Canadians towards Americans in Augusta, and there is evidence of conflict. Apparently even in the 1930's French-Canadian men were subject to name-calling and fist fights if they stepped across the Bond Street bridge onto Water Street in downtown Augusta (A.V. and P.R., interviews; Violette, 1976). However, there is one 82-year-old immigrant who was not unhappy in Augusta, because, "Où s'qu'il y a de l'ouvrage, c'est bien, n'importe quelle place" (sic.)(Interview, Au. B., Augusta, October 24, 1984).

Education beyond the eighth grade and knowledge of English were not goals held by the majority of French Canadians before the 1930's. Most children born between 1890 and 1910 expected to work at the cotton mill or in a shoe factory, marry a French Canadian and live on Sand Hill until they died (P. R.,

interview). Many people did live out their lives in French-language, working-class isolation. To this day, there are 70- and 80-year-old men and women in Augusta who almost never speak English and only know a few English phrases:

> A l'époque il y avait très peu d'Anglais. C'était du français partout, au moulin de coton-- et puis, c'était ben difficile d'apprendre l'anglais. Alors, mon anglais a resté toujours très pauvre....Aujourd'hui ça me fait ben de la peine de pas parler mieux l'anglais. On ne savait pas que l'anglais prendrait le dessus...(Sic.)(A. G., Interview, Augusta, October 9, 1984; emphasis added).

Notes

1. A.G. recalled that some French Canadians, in order to avoid paying the $8.00 "head tax" required for an entry visa, walked across the border secretly through the woods. Others, traveling by train or car, hid their children for the same reason (Interview, Augusta, October 9, 1984).

2. This is confirmed by P.R., a Franco-American informant who independently reported:

> Before the mill started bringing French Canadians, there were all kinds of churches, different kinds of people. When they started bringing the French Canadians, the Hill was close to the mill. The mill built these houses, charged them very little rent. They flooded the Hill with Franco-Americans (Sic.)(Interview, Augusta, October 17, 1984).

3. L. C., born in Augusta in 1904, tells how his parents met:

> My father came here single, and my mother came here single. But they heard, through...that man--the cotton mill hired a man, a fella that could talk both languages. He'd go to Canada, and he'd try to pick up so many people, to come and live, and they'd have their rent paid already. Supposin' there was 15 rents empty. They hired that man and they'd say, 'Go, give us 15 families.' They wanted families because the kids, they all worked in the mill.... My father heard about it and my mother heard about it from

different people, and they both wanted to come. They arrived by train, and everything was ready at the boarding house on State Street. That's where they met (Sic.) (Interview, Augusta, September 26, 1984).

A.G., who arrived in Augusta in 1921, recalled:

> On est resté en pension pour quelques semaines seulement. Puis on a trouvé une place pas loin qu'il pouvait nous garder. On pouvait faire notre manger nous-mêmes...de tout, là-bas à notre goût. Et puis, on payait une piastre et vingt-cinq par semaine....C'était dans la Mill Street. C'était du bon monde...tout les quatre: mon frère puis sa femme, puis moé, puis mon mari. On se faisait manger sur la poêle. C'était de la première classe, à cause que ça ne coûtait pas trop cher (Sic.) (A.G., Interview, Augusta, October 9, 1984).

4.
...They'd hire some of these Canadian families and put them together in one department [e.g., weaving, carding room]. Sometimes it was to their disadvantage, though, 'cause they'd come out sick and they'd have to close the whole department. Well, my grandmother had 11 kids, and I think there was 5 of them working in the same department. They'd come out with mumps and had to stay home..." (Sic.) (P.R., Interview, Augusta, October 17, 1984).

5. L.C., age 81, a life-long resident of Sand Hill, described working conditions for his mother, a weaver at Edwards mill since she arrived in Augusta, at age 15, around 1884:

> She worked in the mill, I should say, almost 35 years.... We was all very young, seven in the family...My mother used to go to work in the cotton mill at 6 o'clock....You had to be on the job at 6 o'clock when the bell rang. One hour at noon-time....[D]uring the one hour she used to work fixing her loom. The thread would break. But if the machine was working and it was 11 o'clock and there were two or three threads broken, she wouldn't bother fixing it. Every time the machine run, you'd make more money. One côte was 26 yards. They'd get so much a yard. They had to push like thunder. Saturday they had to work 'til 10:30; 54 hours! (Sic.) (Interview, Augusta, September 26, 1984).

In August 1887, weavers at Edwards Manufacturing Company were paid "$0.18 a cut"; 200 weavers went on strike that month to

demand $0.20 a cut (Kennebec Journal, August 16, 1887).

6. An 83-year-old resident of Sand Hill stated:

> J'ai presque pas été à l'école, moé...Aujourd'hui c'est différent. Les parents dans ce temps-là [Québec, 1910-1915] poussaient pas les enfants à l'école. Ceux qui voulaient aller à l'école c'est bien, ceux qui voulaient pas y aller-- ça forçait pas les enfants à école (Sic.) (R.P. Interview, Augusta, September 19, 1984).

7. In the summer of 1921, at the age of 14, L. L. went to work at the Edwards mill in the weave room, under the supervision of his father's brother. He worked from 6:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. and 1/2 day Saturday, for $7.50 per week (Interview, Augusta, October 29, 1984). A. V., one in a family of seven children raised on Sand Hill, remembers that he and his siblings would work and put their wages on a plate in the center of the kitchen table. Then their parents would give them an allowance (Interview, Augusta, October 17, 1984).

8. A 74-year-old man in Augusta stated that in 1926, when he was 15, his family was desperate: "J'suis allé travailler au moulin de coton. J'ai triché; j'ai mis 1910 pour dire que j'avais 16 ans. Tout le monde crevait de faim; il fallait faire quelque chose." (Sic.) (A.B. Interview, Augusta, September 13, 1984).

Chapter V The Maintenance of French-Canadian Identity

> [French-Canadian mill-workers] lived right there. They had their own church and organizations. For years they weren't part of the Augusta community; they were sort of--off (M.K., interview, Augusta, October 23, 1984).

In Chapter IV, components of French-Canadian identity were examined. Augusta's French-Canadian community was identified as a population of foreign, transient wage-laborers who spoke little English and seemed disinclined to become part of American society. French Canadians saw themselves as different from Americans because of their language, their residence on Sand Hill, and their strong adherence to Catholicism.

Unlike other immigrant groups in America, French Canadians were not integrated into the larger society by the time that the third generation had appeared. Gordon's model (1964) of gradual and inevitable cultural and socio-economic assimilation does not fit French-Canadian communities in New England (Parker, 1979). French-Canadian neighborhoods can still be identified in many cities, and French is still spoken in the streets of those neighborhoods. Second-generation Canadian French were not as highly concentrated in the textile industry as their parents (Ramirez, 1983:141-2). And yet, in 1890 in the U.S., French Canadians as a national group had the second highest index of occupational concentration between foreign-born men and women and their children (Hutchinson, 1956:152-3). Moreover, the rate of socio-economic mobility for French Canadians (improvement in education, wages and occupational status) was slower than the rate observed for Irish, Italian and Polish immigrants (Rouvier, 1964). For example, while

second-generation Poles and Italians had four and five more years of schooling than their parents, second-generation French Canadians had only 7/10 of a year more schooling than their foreign-born parents (ibid.:375).

How can we account for French-Canadian resistance to assimilation and delayed socio-economic mobility given the reasonable expectation that immigrants to the United States would, over time, begin to speak English and occupy educational and economic positions equivalent to those of all Americans? Bouvier (1964) and many other writers assert that French-Canadian resistance to assimilation was the direct result of voluntary segregation, i.e., the determination on the part of French Canadians to preserve language, religion and customs of their birth. In this chapter we will examine pressures from within and outside the French-Canadian community, emanating from the textile mill, the French Catholic Church, organized labor and state government. Pressures applied by these institutions tended to preserve French-Canadian identity and to simultaneously reinforce a low wage level and social status for French Canadians. The fundamental reasons for the persistence of French-Canadian community identity, as we shall see, are not cultural in nature but economic.

The Textile Industry's Role

It is clear that the persistence of French-Canadian minority enclaves was an advantage for textile manufacturers, who depended on a steady supply of cheap, "docile" labor. A labor-intensive industry, textile manufacturing in New England

prospered from the 1840's to the 1920's, except for temporary slumps. Mill managers actively recruited French Canadians to form a permanent labor supply. They preferred French Canadians to other workers who may have been available (Vicero, 1968:331). "[French Canadians] are a very prolific race, and their large families provide many operatives" (Copeland, 1912:120). French Canadians did not object to long hours, extreme noise and dust in the mills, or to their children working. They were docile and industrious, and "looked with disfavor upon strikes which interrupt their labor and lighten the pay envelope" (ibid.). French Canadians could be recruited easily and transported by train from areas just to the North of textile centers. Once some willing laborers had been installed, the process continued of its own accord, as the immigrants encouraged their friends and relatives to come as well. As long as the mill operated successfully, more French Canadians came; when the demand for labor dropped, French Canadians could return to farms in Québec.

Hiring practices at the Edwards Manufacturing Co. in Augusta restricted French Canadians to the lowest-paid jobs. Until the 1930's, i.e, before the union, mill superintendents from different departments would pick their workers for a given day from of a group of children and adults lined up at the entrance to the mill (D.C., interview, Augusta, October 5, 1984). Immigrants who were hired on a long-term basis were operatives exclusively. They rarely received training for better-paid jobs as loom-fixers or mule-spinners. Irish,

English and American workers from Augusta filled those positions; management personnel were often brought in from other mills outside Maine. Before 1956, no French Canadian was ever promoted above the rank of second-hand at the Edwards mill, according to a former manager (M.K., interview, Oct. 23, 1984) (Appendix C).

The Catholic Church

Policies followed by the French Catholic Church in New England promoted allegiance to Québec and helped to preserve the low socio-economic status of French Canadians. French priests came to New England full of missionary zeal, hoping to convert Americans, increase their numbers and unite the region with Québec (Hamon, 1891:143). Thus French priests, supported by the French-American press, defied a resolution passed by the U.S. Catholic Congress in 1889 which held that "national societies...have no place in the Church of this country" (Wade, 1950:185). The priests who were most successful in establishing French parishes negotiated with town and textile mill officials. Father Joseph Chevalier, for example, received financial support from the City of Manchester, New Hampshire, for his parochial schools, and the Amoskeag Company gave land in the city for his church (Paradis, 1949, cited in Wade, 1950:176).

Such practices allowed priests in New England to maintain enormous control over their parishioners:

> In all matters of general concern the influence of the Church is on the side of law and order and public progress; in labor disputes the priests have often been successful in preventing strikes and adjusting differences....That the Church maintains so perfect a hold

> upon its members is no doubt due in part to the great docility of the French, as also in part to their ignorance;... [I]t is to the Catholic Church, more than to any other single agency, that are to be ascribed the general good order and absence of crime (MacDonald, 1896:286).

Priests in Augusta used their authority to persuade parishioners to give generously of their meagre earnings and stay away from the YMCA, public schools and other places dominated by Protestants (M.V., interview, Augusta, November 25, 1983).[1] Catholic priests and nuns encouraged hard work, obedience to authority, use of French language and regular financial contributions. By promoting these and other "French Canadian" traits and behaviors, Catholic leaders reinforced distinct ethnic identity and helped to preserve the low socio-economic status of French-Canadian immigrants. The parish of St. Augustine did not promote education for the average resident of Sand Hill. It was not until 1907 that St. Augustine offered a seventh grade, and there was never any provision made for French youth over the age of 14 or 15. Those who did attend the school were taught exclusively in French until the 1950's.

Church policies clearly eroded the position of French Canadian workers by intervening in labor disputes. A French Catholic convention in Waterville, Maine, held in 1881 "...condemned strikes as detrimental to public interests and opposed to the moral and religious duties of Catholic citizens, advising amicable adjustment of such difficulties" (Daily Eastern Argus, June 24, 1881). In 1885, Bishop Healy of Portland, Maine condemned the Society of the Knights of Labor

and forbade Catholics to join the labor organization (Pastoral Letter, February 18, 1885; cited in Scontras, 1966:8). In 1879 and 1885, during strikes by textile workers in Fall River, Massachusetts, French parish priest, Pierre Bedard, insisted that French Canadians not participate in labor walkouts. He was even alleged to have brought in French-Canadian families as "knobsticks" (strike-breakers) (Silvia, 1983:49-50).

French-Canadian Workers and Labor Unions

Pro-management policies followed by the Catholic clergy had the obvious effect of alienating French Canadians from labor unionists. The Knights of Labor and other union organizations deliberately blamed French Canadians for lowering wages for all workers and retarding progress in labor reform. One staunch supporter of the Knights of Labor complained of:

> the ruinous competition of foreign pauper labor....In Maine as well as in Massachusetts the cotton mills are swarming with cheap French-Canadian operatives, not twenty per cent of the work being done by the natives (Rockland Opinion, October 30, 1885).

Anger and resentment of French-Canadian workers were often expressed in racial terms. French-Canadian immigrants were seen as a "sordid and low" people and "rather immoral" (Wright, 1881:470). Smallpox epidemics were traced to French-Canadian neighborhoods (Guignard, 1983:14), and immigrants were accused of being lazy (Daily Eastern Argus, February 5, 1885) and "not always faithful and reliable" (MacDonald, 1896:286).

French Canadians were generally ignored by agents of state and local governments. Maine law required French-Canadian children to attend school, but public schools could not or

would not accommodate children who could neither speak English nor read French (MacDonald, 1896:286). In 1886, the Augusta Assembly of the Knights of Labor passed a resolution requesting that the school district enforce child labor laws and appropriate money:

> for the establishment of a school, and the employment of a teacher qualified to instruct the children of our French residents in the rudiments of the English language... (Kennebec Journal, August 24, 1886).

In her 1888 report on Maine women in various occupations, Flora Haines also urged law-makers to provide general education and English instruction to French children (Haines, 1889:129-30).[2] These and other appeals fell on deaf ears, however, and public school teachers and administrators in Augusta continued to discriminate against French-Canadian children.[3]

"Alliances" Between Church and Mill

Pressures from state and local government, the textile mill, Catholic Church and labor organizations tended to isolate French Canadians and reinforce French language and class in Augusta. Another force which helped to maintain French-Canadian identity arose from connections between two of these institutions: the mill and the church. We have seen the "pacifying" influence that Catholic bishops and French priests exercised by condemning unions and even supplying scabs. Cooperation between industry and the churches, in the pursuit of common interests, has not been unusual in North America, as the following examples show. In the 1830's, Francis C. Lowell's Merrimack Corporation appropriated $5,000 for an Episcopal Church for the regular attendance of his New England

women operatives (Josephson, 1949:46-7). Later, in response to unrest and vandalism attributed to Irish immigrants in Lowell, Massachusetts, the Corporation offered the Catholic Bishop an old schoolhouse as a temporary chapel and a lot on which to build their church. The company's financial backing was given "in the hope that the discipline of the church would put an end to the disorders" among the Irish (ibid.).

Anthropologist Gérard Bouchard carefully researched religious life at the turn of the century in the Saguenay Valley, Québec, and discovered "une étroite alliance de classes entre clercs et industriels" (Bouchard, 1980:23). Bouchard found many illustrations of this class alliance, including the gift from a pulp and paper manufacturer to Catholic Eudist fathers of a plot of land for the construction of a church and rectory. In addition, priests, in weekly bulletins and sermons, cautioned their working-class parishioners against the evils of drinking and laziness; work was represented as a divine law (ibid.:11-15). Bouchard concluded that the actions and exhortations of Eudist clerics encouraged submission to industrial dominance and contributed to the perpetuation of class structure in Chicoutimi.

Alliances between corporations and religious leaders have been effective in controlling workers in multi-ethnic settings as well. Encouragement of ethnic diversity as a means of counteracting labor solidarity was an aspect of paternalistic attitudes and policies of early 20th-century industrial entrepreneurs (Hareven, 1975:165). Hareven has documented the

influence of the giant Amoskeag textile corporation in preserving national identities among its workers in the early 1900's. Linguistic diversity was tolerated in the Amoskeag mill, and overseers were encouraged to learn the language of their immediate subordinates, i.e., French, Polish or Greek. Finally, the corporation "allowed celebration of traditional holidays, encouraged parades in native costumes and endowed immigraht churches" (ibid.:164).

In Augusta, examples can be found of promotion of French-Canadian community identity through support of the St. Augustine Church by the Edwards Company. The construction of the first church was arranged in negotiations between Bishop Healy, Father Charles Doherty, the Irish pastor at Augusta's St. Mary's Catholic Church, and Edwards mill management (Desjardins, 1961). The result was that in October, 1887, the Treasurer of the Edwards Manufacturing Company signed over a deed for two lots on the west side of Washington Street to Bishop Healy (Minutes, Directors Meeting, October 20, 1887). The amount paid for the land was $600, or the value of one lot (Desjardins, 1961). Augusta historian Maurice Violette wrote, "Through the intercession of the Irish clergy, the Edwards Manufacturing Company became the largest contributor and furnished the economic basis for the future of St. Augustine" (Violette, 1976:91). The Edwards Manufacturing Company could afford to be generous; in the previous month, capital stock in the company was increased from $750,000 to $1,200,000, for the construction of a new mill (Minutes, Stockholders' Meeting,

September 8, 1887). In 1913, the mill gave land to the Catholic Church for the construction of a stone church, provided that parishioners move a tenement building which stood on the site (Violette, 1976:103-4). Plans for the church were drawn up by T.G. O'Connell, of Boston, and the new church opened in December 1916 (Desjardins, 1961). In 1934, the company again granted land to the Bishop of Portland: "a strip of land 50 feet wide and about 590 feet long...for cemetary purposes, for a consideration of $100..." (Minutes, Directors Meeting, December 21, 1934). In that same year, there had been a serious strike at the mill, and the National Guard were called in to maintain order for two weeks (R.C., interview, Augusta, September 19, 1984).

Besides giving financial support to the church, Edwards Manufacturing Company executives also promoted French-Canadian Catholic identity among their workers. For example, the mill was often closed to allow employees to attend special masses, such as one held in 1915 on the anniversary of the death of a popular priest, Father Alphonse LaRivière (Violette, 1976:103). French was the language of production at the mill. French-Canadian operatives worked under bi-lingual assistant overseers, and signs were posted in both French and English (M.K., interview, Augusta, October 23, 1984). Finally, the Edwards Manufacturing Company encouraged its workers to celebrate traditional French-Canadian religious holidays. The most important of these was St. Jean Baptiste Day, usually celebrated with a mass, then a parade, followed by singing and

dancing. Photographs taken in the early 1900's show that the mill regularly provided floats for St. Jean Baptiste Day parades in Augusta (Searles et al., 1982). In 1911, the nuns at St. Augustine Church were given a tour of the Edwards Manufacturing Company (Les Annales, vol. I, 1904-1922).[4]

There seems to be no evidence of direct support of the textile industry by French Catholic priests and nuns in Augusta. Yet the role of the church in preserving French-Canadian identity cannot be doubted. And the church was supported in that effort by the local textile mill. Ultimately, the underlying cause of the continued isolation and restricted mobility of French Canadians arose from the immigrants' textile mill occupations, not their national or ethnic background. For example, French Canadians were condemned as "child speculators" for allowing their children to work in factories. In fact, textile mills offered work to children, thereby promoting child labor. Wages for adult French-Canadian mill-workers were so low and families were typically so large that children's income was needed in order for the family to survive. Low wages and not "low morals" were the principal reason for the "low standard of living" attributed to French Canadians.

Labor leaders made French Canadians scapegoats for the failures of trade unionism in the textile industry without justification. Was the appearance of French Canadians in textile mills a cause or a consequence of low wages in that industry? In 1904, a Harvard economist wrote that problems in

American trade-unionism were caused by "ethnic heterogeneity" --a high "proportion of alien blood" among workers in the U. S. (Ripley, 1904:299-300). French Canadians, he wrote,

> show little liking or aptitude for trade-unionism organization and discipline. This is partly due to their low standard of living, making them content under conditions which would engender a strike among other peoples; but I am inclined to the belief that the main reason for their backwardness lies in the transient character of their employment. They are birds of passage to a considerable extent (ibid.:302).

Although Ripley's main argument rests on differences of race and national origin between workers, he asserts ultimately that the fundamental reasons for non-participation of French Canadians in unions are ecoromic. The inability of French Canadians to be involved in labor reform is due to the nature of cotton mill employment rather than any peculiar French-Canadian cultural trait.

French-Canadian workers remained in low-paying jobs because of their poor bargaining position. Dependency on the mill for housing and jobs, lack of education and experience besides cotton-mill work, combined with a poor command of English restricted employment opportunities for French Canadians. And mill work was still the most comfortable and secure alternative: they knew it best, their friends and relatives worked there, it was warm inside the mill, and everyone spoke French (D.C., interview, Augusta, October 5, 1984). The lives of French Canadians in Augusta revolved around the mill. They immigrated in order to work in the mill; they began work at an early age, and did not quit until after 40 or 50 years of service. Each day began and ended with the sound of the

company bell. A typical work-week before the 1930's was 50 to 60 hours. Leisure time was spent in church or among family members. Whole families worked together in the mill and lived in houses owned by the company. Naturally, a strong association developed between French-Canadian family life and language on the one hand, and work in the "moulin de coton", on the other. This close association of work, French language and religion helped maintain the French-Canadian community in Augusta as a minority wage-labor enclave for over 50 years.

Notes

1. One St. Augustine priest, who served from 1919 to 1961, was mentioned above for his particularly strong control over the community:

> I hate to say this, but Father Casavant, he came in 1922,(sic) and he kept so-called "Sand Hill" Sand Hill. In other words, we weren't supposed to mix with the Yankees. And his word was law! That is why the people stayed on Sand Hill (Sic.)(L.L., interview, Augusta, October 29, 1984).

2. Flora Haines's report of 1888 documents in detail a wide range of occupations in which women were employed in Maine in that year. Miss Haines visited nine cotton mills and discovered that out of a total of 5,521 women operatives, 3,005 were French Canadian. She wrote:

> The strong race feeling, particularly against the French girls, is much to be regretted. Hundreds of these cannot speak a word of English, and the American girls cannot speak French. I do not know that a single agent, overseer or section-hand speaks French. The French girl is "gentle" and untaught, consequently is more easily influenced than almost any other working-woman. I consider the teaching in the public schools of the French and French-American children, the girls especially, of the very greatest importance to the State. I feel that I cannot urge it too strongly upon our law-makers, and I

speak advisedly... (Haines, Annual Report, 1889:129-30; emphasis in original).

3. The following entry appears in Les Annales, the nuns' journal, of their 14th year of service, 1917-1918, vol. I:

> Octobre--- Deux de nos élèves de l'an dernier furent jugés capables (par le Surintendent) d'être transférés à la Haute Ecole, "Cony High", d'après leur science et arithmétique... Ceci en fit réfléchir quelques-uns--- (Sic.)(emphasis in original).

St. Augustine School had received high praise from the Mother House of the Congregation of the Presentation of Mary in St. Hyacinthe, Québec. Hence the ironic tone.

4. The journal entry reads:

> Avril 1911.... Outre les devoirs ordinaires parfaitement accomplis, ceux de la condescendance nous procurèrent l'avantage de pénétrer pour la première fois, au Capitole et au Moulin de coton. Notre Révérende Mère était à notre tête (Sic.).

Chapter VI The Decline of French Language Use and French-Canadian Identity

> Them days it was different. Today Sand Hill is not the same. Today all the kids don't speak French. All that language is gone. Their parents and all this, they have to speak English to them. (Sic.) (D.C., aged 80, interview, Augusta, October 5, 1984).

Older French-Canadian men and women in Augusta remember growing up on Sand Hill in a totally French environment. They are sad that young people no longer speak or understand French. Most feel that the decline in the use of French language is a result of parents deliberately speaking English to their children. By informants' accounts of language patterns among their grandchildren, it is clear that the children of mixed marriages speak and understand French less, on the whole, than the children of their sons and daughters whose spouses are of French-Canadian origin (A.G., D.C., and others; interviews).

Other changes have accompanied the loss of French language among young people. Social sanctions against intermarriage are gone, and French Americans are no longer concentrated in the Sand Hill area of Augusta. These changes, taken together, represent the breaking up of a distinct French-Canadian community identity. It is significant that this cultural break-down occurred concurrently with general improvement in socio-economic status among French Americans. This status change is well-documented by Madeleine Giguere, from studies of census figures. "In 1970 in New England, the occupational patterns of those of French mother tongue were only marginally different from those of English mother tongue" (Giguère,

1982:74). The traditional image of Americans of French-Canadian origin as wage-laborers was no longer true by 1970.

If we assume a link between linguistic and general cultural break-down and change in occupational profiles of French Americans, we must examine the two phenomena together. As stated earlier, this kind of inquiry has rarely been attempted in the study of French Americans. One exception to most research on culture change among French Americans is a study of French lead miners in Missouri (Gold, 1979). While French merchants in Missouri had become integrated into American life by the end of the nineteenth century, part-time farmers continued to dig lead and barite from 20-foot-deep pits in the Ozark Mountains. French culture and language flourished until the arrival of power shovels in the late 1930's.

> [This marked] the end of pick and shovel mining... [and] eliminated French language as a language of work in the lead fields. Removed from its family sanctum and from relations of work, and lacking elite support, the Missouri French lost their speech community. Those who continued to speak French have become isolated and alienated, if not deeply ashamed to use their language (Gold, 1979:339).

As in the Missouri case, can the break-up of French-Canadian identity in Augusta be attributed to the removal of a particular economic niche for French Canadians? An examination of events and trends of the 1930's to 1950's, shows a variety of factors which led to the decline of French language and distinct French-Canadian identity in Augusta.

Improved Standard of Living in the 1930's

As we stated above, cotton mill work was the principal occupation among French Canadians in Augusta around the turn of

the century. Starting in the late 1920's, however, a variety of events led to lesser dependence upon mill employment and an improved stardard of living for French Canadians. Among these factors was the nationwide Depression which caused many French Canadians to lose their mill-jobs and look elsewhere for sources of income. In the 1930's, for example, French-Canadian youths earned money by picking up garbage or transporting hot lunches to workers, while adults kept chickens, took in boarders or sold prepared food (R.P., interview, September 27, 1984; L.L., interview, October 29, 1984; Augusta).

Working conditions for cotton-mill workers also improved. In 1934, in response to strikes throughout New England, workers at the Edwards Manufacturing Company in Augusta called for an increase in wages--from $10 to $13 per week. For the first time, French-Canadian workers joined the ensuing strike, which lasted five weeks. Their active participation signifies a change of attitude--an openness to workers of non-French background and a willingness to defend the rights of workers despite reproof from Church leaders. One French-Canadian man, who was employed at the Hazzard Shoe factory at the time, was a member of the National Guard unit called in by the Governor to maintain order at the mill:

> They put French fellas [national guardsmen] there; they knew they wouldn't attack us... It was very hard, like the North against the South. The French men [mill-workers] were after us, but what could we do? We took an oath (R.C., interview, Augusta, September 19, 1984).

French Canadians were called in deliberately to neutralize hostilities between striking French mill-workers and Yankee

managers. A textile workers union, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.), was voted in at Edwards in 1935. The union brought a seniority system for lay-offs and, therefore, job security. The passage in 1938 of the Federal Wages and Hours Act also benefitted mill-workers, by imposing a minimum wage and maximum work week of 40 hours.

Finally, while 30 Maine cotton mills closed, for a variety of reasons, between 1900 and 1935, the Edwards mill stayed open (Kennebec Journal, July 12, 1975).[1] Although company profits fell dramatically during the 1920's, Central Maine Power Company and others, interested in water power rights, bought out Edwards and kept the plant running (Early, 1973). Between 1927 and 1933, employment at the Edwards mill increased from around 700 persons to around 1300, with a June, 1933 weekly payroll of over $15,000 (Press Release, around 1933:3). The new owners' investments in the mill, combined with the establishment of a 40-hour week, increased the demand for workers at the Edwards Division.

The French-Canadian Ethnic Economy

Hard work, self-sacrifice and creative efforts to supplement income resulted in accumulation of wealth for some Sand Hill residents (L.L., interview). In the late 1920's and 1930's, class divisions began to appear within the French-Canadian community. An "ethnic economy" grew up, and a local French-Canadian petty bourgeoisie, with a mostly French clientele, emerged. Pierre Anctil described how the Franco-American petty bourgeoisie in Woonsocket, Rhode Island,

encouraged the preservation of French language and Québécois heritage in order to further their own class interests (Anctil, 1980). Augusta's Sand Hill had its share of French-Canadian small businessmen who clearly helped to maintain a distinct French identity in Augusta. In 1922, these men founded their own organization, Le Club Calumet, with, as its purpose,

> ...the propagation of the French language and intellectual development, by means of music, literature, and anything else that the club shall judge beneficial to the interests of Franco-Americans (Violette, 1972:17).

This club still exists and is still open only to men with French last names. In the 1920's, membership was restricted to those who held des occupations non-salissantes, i.e., shopkeepers and professionals (Violette, 1976:173). These successful French-Canadian entrepreneurs provided credit to less fortunate relatives and neighbors, often enabling them to buy property or finance education for their children (B. C., interview, Augusta, September 26, 1984). Because of the ethnic economy and changes in working conditions, therefore, many French-Canadian families were able to move up the socio-economic scale without ever departing from the French-Canadian, cotton-mill-dominated environment of Sand Hill.

Those who wanted a high school education for themselves or their children had to leave the safety of the French community. Attending Cony public high school entailed extra effort to learn English as well as the risk of rejection by both French-Canadians and Yankees.

> Ça allait pas si vite que ça. Quand y ont commencé l'école à la Cony-là, y étaient en peine, à cause ça tomber rien q'sur l'anglais. C'était notre plus vieux qui a commencé le premief dans notre rue...pour aller à la

> Cony....Pis, plusieurs disaient, 'Quoi ça va dis donner, d'aller à Cony-là? --pour travailler au pic pis à la pelle plus tard?' Y a jamais travaillé au pic pis à la pelle plus tard. Non! (A.G., interview, Augusta, October 9, 1984).

The movement towards the wider (American) society began slowly, in the late 1930's. At that time, French-Canadian adults, although they couldn't all speak English, chose to stay in Augusta and become American citizens. Naturalization classes were held twice a week on Sand Hill in 1938 and 1939. One woman, after living in Augusta for twenty years, attended these classes with her husband and became a U.S. citizen in 1941:

> Moi, j'savais que c'était important-là. Là, c'etait notre chez nous pour vrai! On savait qu'on s'entournerait pas vivre au Canada. C'était important de devenir citoyen (Sic.)(A.G., interview, Augusta, October 9, 1984).

Naturalization did not result in immediate integration into American society, however. For example, although the teacher of one naturalization class encouraged students to speak English at home to their children, many did not follow this advice (A.G., interview). A more profound transition to American life is illustrated by the life of Augusta's Franco-American historian, Maurice Violette. The thirteenth child of an Acadian laborer from New Brunswick, Violette grew up on Sand Hill and attended St. Augustine School. After Violette finished eighth grade in 1936, his father got him a job in the mill. At age 16, he worked the 12-8 shift at the mill, attended the English public high school, played baseball and even sang in the school choir. In 1940, Maurice was among the first French children in Augusta to graduate from high school

with honors. He spent 20 years in the Navy, was an executive at Central Maine Power Company and served as President of the Calumet Club, which had excluded his father, because of his occupation, many years before (Violette, interview, Augusta, November 25, 1983; used by permission).

For Violette and others, change in socio-economic status was accompanied by identity readjustment. The successful passage of a few individuals from French Canadian to "Franco-American" self-identification helped pave the way for others. Change was slow, however; discrimination against French-Canadian children in public schools was still common in the 1950's (L.C., interview, Augusta, October 26, 1984). Those who managed to graduate from high school had gained fluency in English and were better qualified for a wider range of jobs than their parents ever could have been. By the 1940's, high school was an option for more French-Canadian teenagers, as French-Canadian families were smaller, child labor laws were better enforced and wages for adult workers had increased. Educational aspirations were higher, too, as shown by peak enrollments at St. Augustine School of 741 students in 1939 and 762 in 1943 (Les Annales, vol. II, 1922-1947).

Without doubt the most significant "engine of change" for French Canadians in New England was the Second World War (Giguere, 1982:72). French-Canadian men, born around 1920, were drafted or joined the military and were sent off to other parts of the U.S. or abroad, gaining new knowledge and skills. For many, this was their first experience away from Sand Hill,

in a totally English environment. They met new people and learned about other ways of life. Other French-Canadians left Augusta to work in naval shipyards and other defense industries in Maine or elsewhere. One Augusta man, before the war, worked at the Edwards mill, where both French and English were spoken: "c'était pas stricte." Yet, during the war, in his new job at the Bath Iron Works, French was not allowed: "Strictly orders. No French. All English. They didn't want bad feelings between the men" (R.R., interview, Augusta, September 26, 1984).

In the 1940's, the Edwards Division was busy, with 99% of its production in war goods (D.C., interview, Augusta, October 5, 1984). The mill hired more women, trained them to fix looms, and paid commensurate wages (M.K., interview, Augusta, October 23, 1984). Also at that time, a new superintendent was hired at the mill, and for the first time French-Canadian workers were promoted to more skilled positions (D.C., interview, October 5, 1984).

Military service granted educational benefits, with which many French Canadians improved their socio-economic status. One man of French-Canadian origin, born in 1935, did not take advantage of his G.I. Bill benefits at first. Rather, he went back to his job at the mill, married a girl from Sand Hill and lived in an apartment next to the mill (L.C., interview, Augusta, September 20, 1984). During the 1950's production levels and wages fluctuated at the Edwards Division, still Augusta's largest single industry. Operations were often cut to a 2- or 3-day work week (Lewiston Sun, February 26, 1952;

Clipping File, Textile Union Local 494). A strike in 1955 did not improve conditions for workers. In this climate of uncertainty, the French-Canadian Korean War veteran used his G.I. benefits to gain high school equivalency and to take business courses at a local college. In 1958, as large Maine textile plants were closing, he was laid off at the Edwards mill. Yet, with his business knowledge and proficiency in French and English, this man was an attractive candidate for a position at a new bank; he has worked there ever since (M.C., interview, Augusta, September 20, 1984).

Changes in Schools

"The key to getting out of the mills was English language proficiency as well as education" (Giguere, 1982:72). Those who had little education suffered the most during mill shut-downs.[2] Both public and private schools played a role in promoting proficiency in English, before the War as well as after. The movement to restrict the use of languages other than English began in 1919 with a Americanization program led by the U.S. Bureau of Education (Vermont Advisory Committee, 1983:9).[3] At St. Augustine School, all instruction was in French with one hour of English per day until the late 1940's. It was reported by one resident who was 11 years old in 1948, that the sudden change to half-day French, half-day English, coming as it did in her 6th year of school, was extremely difficult to adjust to (L.C., interview, Augusta, September 20, 1984). In the 1960's, the language of instruction at the school became English with one hour of French per day. The

current principal of St. Augustine School thought that these changes, in 1948 and again in the mid-1960's, were due to requirements from the State and "the needs of the people" (N.B., interview, January 7, 1985).

The history of St. Augustine Church shows a parallel, though somewhat delayed, trend towards integration of French Canadians into American life. English masses were not introduced until the 1960's, but American citizenship was encouraged in the late 1930's: "À l'église y ont annoncé ça; y voulaient que les gens votent" (Sic.)(A.A., interview, Augusta, September 19, 1984). Yet, the pastor at that time, Father Casavant, still kept the community together. He didn't want the French to mix with Americans". During Father Casavant's tenure, recalled one man, "il y avait pas un mot d'anglais dans l'église" (Au. B., interview, October 24, 1984).

According to people on the Hill, "everything" changed when Father John Curran, son of an Irish father and French-Canadian mother, became pastor in 1962. Curran is credited with having bridged a 75-year gulf between "one world of French Canadians up on Sand Hill and another world of Maine Yankees in the rest of Augusta" (Caldwell, Maine Sunday Telegram, October 10, 1971). A skilled public figure, Curran was influential in establishing an Augusta branch of the University of Maine and was an active member of the board of the YMCA and other community organizations serving all of Augusta. Curran had a more realistic view of the change in self-identification of French Canadians in Augusta which had become apparent by the

mid-1960's. Speaking about students at St. Augustine School, Father Curran said:

> These children are the fourth generation French. But they are 100 per cent American. They speak French now only as they learn it in French class. They have no leanings to France or to Canada. Augusta, not Québec, is their City. Maine is their home... (Maine Sunday Telegram, October 10, 1971:7D).

It is not surprising that schoolchildren in the 1970's identified with Maine and the United States. American children of French-Canadian origin, growing up in Augusta in the 1950's and 1960's, watched televison, drove cars, and shopped at shopping malls. Supermarkets and state-owned liquor stores had replaced local French-Canadian-owned businesses by the 1950's. The French-Canadian ethnic economy was disappearing, as French-Canadian professionals had to serve American clients in order to remain in business. American and Franco-American youth looked to the mill only when jobs in Augusta were scarce or they needed money for their studies. One man of French-Canadian origin worked at the mill for two summers while in college in the early 1960's. He found the plant noisy and hot, the vibrations from the old machines and the fast pace of the work unpleasant. He left the mill as soon as a "work-study" job came through at the University of Maine at Augusta (A.D., interview, Augusta, September 13, 1984).

A change in ethnic identity was apparent in the French-Canadian community in Augusta by the 1960's. However, the decline in French-Canadian identity was not cataclysmic, as some researchers have found for other such groups. Rather, it was a gradual process, which followed a series of events

starting in the 1920's. The process of assimilation into American society began with the appearance of class divisions within the French-Canadian community-- divisions which were reinforced by such exclusive associations as the Calumet Club. When the majority of French Canadians became aware of their similarity to mill-workers of all national groups, they probably began to consider becoming American citizens. It was during the 1934 strike at the Edwards mill that French-Canadian workers defied Church precepts and picketed with other operatives. Following that experience, in 1937 and 1938, many French Canadian immigrants attended language classes in order to become naturalized Americans. The Depression had closed the border to new immigrants from Québec; many in Augusta abandoned the idea of returning to Québec to live and concentrated instead on doing well in their new country. Other factors in the gradual differentiation from a strong French-Canadian identification were increased education and economic and educational aspirations, brought on partly by improvements in the standard of living during the 1930's and 1940's.

Even as French Canadians began to accept American citizenship and English language for themselves and their children, they did not wholly reject their heritage. By learning English and moving away from Sand Hill, many were able to improve their lot. They differentiated themselves from the negative "distinctive racial and social characteristics" ascribed to French Canadians (See MacDonald, 1898). They modified their self-identification in response to new

opportunities in American society and passed from a strictly French-Canadian identity to a new "Franco-American" one.

Notes

1. The main reasons for the decline of the cotton textile industry in New England between 1919 and 1962 are the following:

- competition from synthetic fabrics;

- foreign competition;

- competition from Southern U.S. mills. Cost of production was lower in the South, due to the supply of cheap, docile labor, a warm climate, and tax breaks.

- New England mill equipment was old and inefficient.

Of the New England states, Maine had the most lenient labor laws and the lowest wages. Because of this, the textile industry fared better in Maine (Estall, 1966; Devino et al., 1966; Early, 1973).

2. One French-Canadian ex-mill-worker put it this way:

> You know, most of the people in Augusta, where else have they got to work if they haven't got an education? Most of the people who went to work here [in the mill], they went when they were 16 years old. They worked there 40 years; they're 56 years old. How can they work any other place? Some of them never graduated from grammar school. They were from large families, and when they got 16, they thought they'd go out and help. Take my wife, she was in a family of eight, so when she turned 16 she went to work [at the mill]. And she worked there 'til 1984. She got out of grammar school in the sixth grade; she never graduated from grammar school. And the majority of the people on the Hill-- same thing (Sic.) (P.R., interview, Augusta, October 17, 1984).

3. The Americanization Department of the U.S. Bureau of

Education wrote in 1919:

> We recommend urgently to all States to prescribe that all schools, private and public, be conducted in the English language and that instruction in the elementary classes of all schools be in English. But our office does not oppose the conduct of church services in other languages... as long as the right of the child to acquire an elementary knowledge of the English language and to receive his education in it is not violated (Kloss, 1977:26; cited in Vermont Advisory Committee Report to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983:9).

Chapter VII Conclusion

The question posed in this thesis is why French-Canadian ethnic identity was retained in one immigrant community from the late 1800's until the 1940's. Most studies of French-Canadian ethnic identity take the view that the maintenance of separate French-Canadian enclaves in New England mill-towns was the result of a collective will to preserve the French-Canadian heritage. In contrast to those studies, this thesis is an attempt to examine the development of the French-Canadian community in Augusta, Maine within a broader social and economic context.

When so-called "external" forces are considered, it is clear that French-Canadian ethnic identity was part and parcel of the socio-economic status of French Canadians in Augusta. From the time of their arrival, French Canadians were wage-laborers at the local textile mill. Whatever the inclinations of immigrants to continue to use French language and practise their religion and other customs as they had in Québec, it has been shown that French-Canadian ethnic identity was reinforced and maintained by the same pressures which tended to preserve the class position of French Canadians.

French Canadians remained a distinct group in Augusta for over fifty years largely because of economic factors, e.g., lack of opportunities and education as well as pressures from the Catholic Church, the textile mill and local French-Canadian merchants and professionals, to retain French language and a lower-class, dependent position in society.

Two institutions exercised great influence over the French-Canadian community in Augusta: the mill and the French Catholic Church. Although primary source material from these institutions was limited, it is significant that no conflict between them was found for the period studied. Rather, a community of interests between the mill and the Church helped to preserve French-Canadian ethnic identity, principally by promoting French as the language of work, worship and schooling. With these institutions and local French-Canadian businesses and services, the French community in Augusta remained self-sufficient and isolated. To the extent that members of the community looked beyond their neighborhood for their income and their spiritual and material needs, the strength of these institutions and business correspondingly diminished.

In the 1930's and 1940's, French-Canadian immigrants ceased to belong to one class of wage-laborers. Worsening conditions at the mill during this period helped to stimulate French-Canadian mill-workers' interest in organizing for reform by breaking out of their isolation and joining other workers of various nationalities. With improved access to education and to occupations outside the textile mill, French-Canadians gradually adopted certain aspects of American identity. Young members of the French-Canadian community began to abandon French language in favor of English. Yet, as we have seen, French-Canadian language and identity were not completely rejected but only modified, to reappear in a new, more

positive, "Franco-American" community identity.

During the 1950's and 1960's, changes in the two important institutions, such as promotion of French Canadians to managerial positions in the mill, and increased instruction in English at the parochial school, facilitated socio-economic mobility for the French community and, simultaneously, integration into American society.

Further research in other New England mill-towns such as Waterville, Biddeford, Manchester or Fall River, would be of great intefest and value. From the standpoint of social researchers, these communities at the turn of the century were remarkable for their lack of complexity and for the clarity of the principal societal divisions: French-Canadian mill-workers, the Catholic Church and the textile mill. While several examples of support of the Church by the local mill were found in the Augusta case, valuable material, such as employee records and managers' correspondence from the mill and texts of sermons and bulletins from the French parish, were missing. Perhaps in another city these records could be located and examined. It would be of great interest to document the specific attitudes of the dominant actors towards each other and to understand better the relations between mill bosses and priests as they affected the maintenance of French language and identity in New England.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Guidelines for Interviews

- When and where were you born?
- When did you come to Augusta?
- Why did you come?
- How did you travel? How did you pay for the trip?

Employment history

- What occupation(s) have you held?
  in Québec? in Augusta?
- Union membership, if any
- Why did you hold these jobs?
- How did you get the job?
- How many years in any given job?
- When did you stop working? Why?

If informant worked in cotton mill:
- How old were you when you started? - What kind of work?
- Weekly wages? - Describe working conditions - What language did you speak with co-workers --with bosses? - Why did you leave the mill?

Education

- Where did you go to school?
- What was the language of instruction?
- How many years of schooling have you had? (e.g, high school diploma)

Language

- What language was spoken in your home when you were growing up?
- When did you learn English? At what point in your life were you able to converse fluently in English?

Citizenship

- Are you now an American citizen?
- If you were not born in the U.S., when did you become a U.S. citizen?

Marriage
- When, and with whom? (with Franco or non-Franco?)

Religion

The same questions to be asked for informants' parents, children and grandchildren.

APPENDIX B

Chronology of Cotton Textile Mill, Augusta, Maine

1834	Kennebec Dam Company incorporated with $300,000 capital
1837	Name changed to Kennebec Locks & Canals Co.; capital doubled
1845-46	Construction of first cotton mill with 10,000 spindles
1850's	Flood damage; competition from Great Britain; price of cotton rose
1867-69	Negotiation of purchase by A. & W. Sprague Co. of Rhode Island; City of Augusta gives $250,000
1870	Sprague Co. adds 15,000 spindles
1873	Sprague Co. fails; property placed in hands of trustee
1882	Mill sold to Edwards Manufacturing Company, of Boston, for $207,141.62; Isaac T. Burr elected President
1887-92	Edwards mill has 1,050 employees; number of spindles increased to 98,000; sales around $1 million per year
1910	Capacity of mill increased to 103,020 spindles and 1,100 employees
1921	Average work week 54 hours for $7.50; 700-800 employees and only 70,000 spindles operating
1927	To prevent mill closing, Walter Wyman and New England Public Service Co. buy out Edwards
1929	NEPSCO sells to New England Industries, Inc.; more investment brings employment to 1,400 by 1933
1934	Workers on strike at Edwards 5 weeks; A.F.L. contract signed 1935; 40-hour work week
1942	Edwards mill bought by Bates Manufacturing Co., Lewiston; Edwards Division now produces shoe lining and other war goods, both synthetics and cotton, until 1947
1952	1,250 employed at Edwards Division; wages $50-$60/week; many mills close: 131,000 textile jobs in New England lost between 1949 and 1962; (11,000 in

Southern Maine)(Estall, 1966:61).

1955 Strikes throughout New England; Minimum wage increased from $.75 to $1.00 per hour; production fluctuates at Edwards

1964 Group of Augusta businessmen, led by local bank president, form Economic Development Corporation of Augusta, buy mill to save it from closing, and lease it to Bates mill, of Lewiston

1973 About 900 employees in "faltering mill"; mill sold to Herbert Miller, of Lewiston, for $2.6 million; some equipment added; products are fabrics for industrial use, blankets, mattress pads.

1982 More than 500 workers laid off

1984 (October) Skeleton crew of 22 at mill; manager says he hopes to re-open; some workers fear mill will re-open with non-union labor; mill up for sale or lease (Kennebec Journal, September 30, 1984)

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APPENDIX C

Personnel Organization, Edwards Manufacturing Company

1. In Boston (later in Lewiston): Company Officers: President, Vice President, and Treasurer

In Augusta:

2. Plant Manager.

3. Superintendents of 12 Departments, e.g.,

4. Weaving Spinning Card Room Shipping Finishing Inspection

5. Overseers

6. Second-hands, or Assistant Overseers

7. Skilled workers: weavers (one per approximately 50 looms), loom-fixers, mule-spinners

8. Unskilled workers: ring-spinners, cloth inspectors, doffers, spoolers, bobbin-boys, sweepers, etc.

Source

Interview, M.K., Augusta, October 23, 1984