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French Canadians in Lewiston-Auburn

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One word suffices to explain why French-Canadians settled in Lewiston-Auburn, as well as elsewhere in Maine. That word is: economics. ^{here} They came ^{here} to better their way of life.

They were called French-Canadians because they originally came from France to help colonize Canada in the 17th century. Life was difficult in those years when farmland was frequently a wilderness grant ^{made} on condition it be developed. This meant felling trees and clearing land before farming operations could begin, and housing consisted of a rough dwelling.

Everything had to be done through individual ^{labor,} skill and ingenuity, and every one of the family worked, ^{merely} ~~just~~ to keep alive and warm in a country of long winters. Farming operations were just enough to supply the family ^{though wives} ~~and men~~ helped in the fields in addition to their household duties. ^{merely supplied for the family, even}

It was an era of large families. French-Canadians averaged at least a dozen children, and there were always ^{a few} ~~several~~ in each family ~~who~~ who died either at birth or in early childhood. No hospital, and few doctors, were available, ~~so~~ mothers ~~were~~ invariably ^(distant) ~~assisted~~ had to depend on mid-wives or more-or-less experienced neighbors ^{or other medical} for child-birth assistance. Mothers died frequently, ~~and~~ and men re-married. When husbands died, widows did the same, out of necessity, and children of both marriages were brought up together as one family.

These people had been in Canada more than 150 years before Great Britain ^{in 1763} took over. While governed by their own people, the French-Canadians could endure their hardships, always hoping, that, from generation to generation, life would become easier, and it did, for some. Others fared only moderately, and some gave up the struggle and returned to France at the time of the "conquest" as the French-Canadians still refer to ^{the end of} ~~the~~ that war.

^{When the} conflict ended, ~~and~~ France ^{was} strong enough to insist ~~that~~ on a guarantee that its people remaining in Canada would have the freedom to

retain their speech and religion. Assured of that by treaty, French-Canadians ^{have} ~~upheld~~ these rights to this day. ^{more}