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The French Ancestry Population: Maine, 1980

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1. INTRODUCTION

How many French Ancestry persons are there in Maine? Where are the French in Maine? Are there areas that can be identified as particularly French? Do we know anything about the demographics of the contemporary French population? Do they speak and read French? How does the size and location of the French population of 1980 compare with 1970, 1940 and 1908 when there were previous enumerations of the French in Maine?

The information presented here is based upon the publications of the United States Census, either in print or in machine-readable form. Sources include Summary Tape File 3A from the 1980 Census of Population, the 1982 Current Population Report on Ancestry and Language in the United States: November, 1979, A Survey of Income and Education done for the Office of Education in 1976, and a "Preliminary Listing of Language Spoken in the Home," of the Population Division of the Bureau of the Census and the 1970 Census of Population.

It is to be noted that the 1980 Census data on ancestry reported in this paper identifies those persons who answered French or French and other groups to the question "What is your Ancestry?" Summary Tape File 3A does not include those persons who answered "French-Canadian," "Quebec," or "Quebecois." The French-Canadian ancestry data is being compiled as a separate tabulation in machine-readable Summary Tape File 4, which is not yet available. When it is the total number of French including

French-Canadians will be larger than reported here. How the additional French-Canadian response will change the total French ancestry figures is not known. Given the inclusion of French as an example of a possible answer in the census form and the publicity given to the desirability of Francos to answer "French" to the ancestry question, one can expect that the increase in total French ancestry from the addition of the French-Canadian responses, while significant, will be moderate. Further support for the moderate nature of the added numbers comes from a Bureau of the Census survey done in 1979 with exactly the same wording as the 1980 census. On the basis of that survey I estimate that the increase in the numbers will be in the vicinity of ten percent. I note that Acadian ancestry answers were included in the French ancestry data. The inclusion of the Acadians is perhaps a recognition of the early settlement of Acadians in American territory in Maine as well as Louisiana.

In 1890, the Bureau of the Census made its first count of persons who would later be called Franco-Americans. The Franco-American immigrants and their children numbered nearly a third of a million (332,000) in New England. The Maine French-Canadian population both native and foreign born was 39,000 persons in 1890. (MacDonald, p. 8) The next fixing of the size of the Franco-American population came in 1940, when a sample of the whole U.S. population was asked for the principal language spoken in the home of their earliest childhood. On the basis of this new criterion, over two-thirds of a million (705,000) responded "French

mother-tongue" in New England, 138,000 in Maine alone. (Sixteenth Census, Table 2) Mother-tongue was probably a good delineator of the Franco group in 1940, but less so in 1970 when the Bureau of the Census used it again. In 1970, over 900,000 persons in New England answered "French" to the question "What language other than English was used in this person's home when he was a child?" In Maine, 141,000 answered French in 1970. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1970)

In 1980, the Census did not repeat this question, but substituted "Language Spoken in the Home." An ancestry question replaced "country of birth of parents." The Census asked of a systematic sample of the United States population, "Does this person speak a language other than English at home?" If yes, then the Census asked, "What is this language?" (Census of Population and Housing, 1980: Summary Tape File 3, Technical Documentation, p. 320)

A second question of great interest to the Franco-Americans was "What is this person's ancestry?" A number of examples were given, Afro-American, English, French, German, etc. You could report any number of answers, but in most cases only the first two ancestries were counted. The only third mention of French ancestry which was counted was that of persons who answered Indian, English and French. (Technical Documentation, pp. 406-407)

The counting of third mentioned ethnic groups varied a good deal. This will affect the comparability of size of ancestry

groupings: French and other groups, English and other groups, Irish and other groups, etc. Thus, third mentions were counted in seven different combinations for the Irish, two different combinations for the Germans, and one for the French and the Italians. Third mentions are not published for the rest of the ethnic groups. The Bureau of the Census says that the additional combinations were selected on the basis of findings of previous Bureau of the Census surveys of ancestry. It is important to remember that the only data from Summary Tape File 3A which is strictly comparable for all ethnic groups is that of the number of persons who reported a single ancestry, e.g. those who said French only, German only, et cetera to the ancestry question.

The question, "What is your ancestry?" is a self-identification question. It is one of great importance for all ethnic groups, including Franco-Americans. It identifies the number of persons who know they have French ancestry and who choose to report it. There may have been a number of persons who did not know they had French ancestors. There may have been people who choose not to report their French ancestry. For these persons, either their French ancestry was unimportant or they chose to suppress it. The self-reporting aspect tells us the number who consider themselves of French ancestry. The people who answered French or French and other groups constitute the largest potential extension of the Franco-American grouping.

French ancestries include direct French links as well as links via Canada. The two will never be disentangled. The 1979 National Sample Survey of Ancestry and Language Usage in the United States published last year reported 14,000,000 French ancestry persons and 1,000,000 French-Canadian ancestry persons in the United States as a whole. I estimate more than 1,000,000 French-Canadian ancestry persons in New England alone. In fact, as the Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups indicates, very few French people from France have come to live in the United States. Furthermore, many immigrants from France, chose to return to their homeland (Harvard Encyclopedia# p. 380, 392). I do not believe that a 14 to 1 ratio represents a true ratio of French to French-Canadian origin in the U.S. and certainly not in Maine. In 1970, there were 1,274 persons of French or Swiss (possible French Mother Tongue persons) foreign stock in Maine, less than one percent of the French Mother Tongue population.

2. FRENCH ANCESTRY

For 1980, the French ancestry data comes in two parts, a reporting of those persons who answered French only for their ancestry and those persons who answered French first or second in their list of several ancestries, or who answered Indian, English, French. For those who responded solely French, we have a total of 147,000 in Maine (Table 1). The single French ancestry response includes those persons whose only ancestry is French or those who chose to report only this French ancestry because of

its great importance to them. Maine has 18 percent of the single French population of New England.

How many persons reported a mixed French ancestry in Maine? One hundred and nineteen thousand did so. The importance of the French background for this group is more variable than for the single French ancestry grouping. Their parents or ancestors married outside of the French group and the varied background is important enough for these people to know it and to report it. When we add the mixed ancestry French group to the single ancestry French, we have a total of more than a quarter of a million (266,000), almost one-quarter of the population of Maine. There are almost two million French ancestry persons in New England, one-sixth of the New England population.

Looking at the location of the total French ancestry persons by counties, we find that the largest populations are in York, Cumberland, Aroostook and Androscoggin counties all of which have over thirty-five thousand French Ancestry persons. (Figure 1) Other counties with populations of over 30,000 persons of French ancestry include Penobscot and Kennebec. These counties I will designate as the core counties of the French Ancestry population of Maine. These six counties include over eighty percent of the French heritage population of Maine. They each have at least 10,000 single French ancestry persons. (Figure 2) These six counties contain 84 percent of the Maine single French population. In two counties, Aroostook and Androscoggin, French ancestry persons make up more than a third of the population.

There is a second tier to the Franco-American counties made up of Oxford and Somerset counties who have 5,000 single French ancestry persons and 10,000 and 11,000 total French ancestry persons. Together the core counties and the second tier counties make up 88 percent of the total French ancestry population and 92 percent of the single French Ancestry population of Maine.

An indication of the strength of the French tie is the proportion of the total French ancestry population which is of single French ancestry. We can infer that the higher the proportion of this single French ancestry in the total French ancestry population in an area, the greater the strength of the French ties. We have an indicator of this commitment in the single French ancestry category which reflects the choice of the individual to report the single French ancestry and the choices of spouses made by their ancestors. For instance, more than half of Maine's total French ancestry population is of single French ancestry compared to one-third of Connecticut's population.

Seven Maine counties have more than half of their French ancestry population solely of French ancestry, Androscoggin, Aroostook, Kennebec, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo and York counties. (Table 2) Aroostook's French ancestry population is 77 percent solely of French heritage, Androscoggin's French are 68 percent solely French. In two of those counties, Androscoggin and Aroostook, the French population makes up more than a third of the county population as a whole. (Table 3) There are only two other

counties in New England where the French population is more than a third of the population, Windham in Connecticut and Chittenden in Vermont.

It is to be noted that most of Maine's more significant Franco-Americans activities and institutions are located in the counties with the largest French Ancestry populations (over 37,000) which also have more than half of the French population solely of French ancestry and where they constitute more than a quarter of the total county population I refer to Androscoggin and Aroostook as well as to York counties. These county French Ancestry populations can be considered the nuclei of the French Ancestry population of Maine. Over half of the single French Ancestry population of Maine lives in these three counties of Androscoggin, Aroostook and York.

In these nuclei are located the major French institutions of Maine. The Francophone Institute of New England University, the Ruchambeau Club of Biddeford, the two Richelieu clubs of Maine, the Centre d'Heritage Franco-American, the Franco-American Festival, La Survivance, L'Unite, the Acadian village, the Madawaska Historical Society, and the Acadian Festival. The other major Franco-institutions of Maine other than the parishes are the Calumet Club in Kennebec County and the Franco-American Resource Opportunity Group and its FAROG FORUM in Penobscot County. These two counties do not meet the criteria for the nuclei counties. Their French populations are smaller, the French are a smaller

proportion of the county population and they have slightly smaller proportion of the French Ancestry population which is solely of French descent.

It is not only the size but also the commitment of the population to a Franco-American identity which is important in shaping delineating Franco-American ethnic group. Looking at the single French ancestry figures for the core and second tier counties we find the location of over 90 percent of the French ancestry grouping is clear. The solely French population of Maine finds its nuclei in York County in the southern part of the state, in Androscoggin County in Central Maine and Aroostook in the North. Cumberland, Penobscot and Kennebec link these three nuclei, with radii going North and West into Somerset and Oxford Counties. (Figure 3)

3. SOME DEMOGRAPHICS

What are some of the characteristics of the French population of Maine? What we do know at this time pertains to the French Mother Tongue population of 1970.

Data from the special study of Ancestry and Language in the United States, November, 1979, indicates that for the United States as a whole, there is a clear difference between the single French ancestry group and the mixed French ancestry grouping. The single French ancestry category (36) is more than 11 years older than the mixed ancestry category (25). The percentage of

native born of mixed French ancestry is (92 percent native born) nearly 12 percent higher than the single French ancestry population (80 percent). The single French ancestry are more likely to be married than persons in the mixed French ancestry grouping. The mixed ancestry person is less likely to be a householder than the single ancestry person. Sixty-seven percent of the males are high school graduates in the single French ancestry group, whereas 77 percent of the mixed French ancestry males have finished high school. Female high school completion rate is lower by one percent for both groups. The rate of college completion is substantially less for the single French ancestry group than for the multiple French ancestry grouping. Both the French groups have slightly higher percentages of children under 14 than does the national population.

Hence, we can conclude that we have two French ancestry populations, a multiple French ancestry population and a single French ancestry population. Furthermore, the mixed ancestry population is younger, more native born, more metropolitan with more formal education and with higher family incomes. The differences between the two French ancestry populations may vary in Maine, as they are compared to the national sample. However, I would expect that the direction of the differences would be the same.

Categorizing the counties of 10,000 or more French by the proportions of the French population which is solely of French des-

cent, we find four counties with more than fifty percent of the French solely of French descent: Aroostook, Androscoggin, York, Somerset and Kennebec. Typically, we would expect the French population of these counties to be older, less well educated than the U.S. average and to have slightly lower incomes than the average American. The French population in the counties with a majority of their French populations of mixed French ancestry we would expect to be younger, more metropolitan, better educated and with higher incomes than the traditional French populations. These French populations I label "contemporary." The Cumberland French are clearly of this type. The Penobscot French with 49 percent solely of French descent is "transitional" between the "traditional" and "contemporary" types. (Figure 4)

The Ancestry and Language Survey of 1979 indicates that French is the fourth largest non-English language spoken at home in the United States. In his analysis of the Survey of Income and Education of 1976, Calvin Veltman estimated that under 82,000 persons spoke French in Maine. In fact, the data from the 1980 Census for French Language spoken at home by persons three years old and older is ninety-five thousand in Maine in 1980. One-fourth of the French speakers in New England are from Maine. French speakers are eight percent of the total population of Maine.

In Maine in 1980 French speakers are just slightly more than a third of the French ancestry population as a whole. The French speaking population is equivalent to two-thirds of the single

French ancestry population. Therefore, if the single French ancestry population is the nucleus of the Franco-American population at least one-third of that nucleus does not speak French.

Furthermore, French speakers are not necessarily French readers and even less French writers, so that the audience for a written French media is decidedly less than 95,000, perhaps a half or even a third of the French speaking population. This is particularly true of the mixed French ancestry grouping. The ability to speak and read French is increasingly restricted to a small elite of persons under 25. The customary use of French for the population as a whole is also restricted to a small elite. In his analysis of the language data in the 1976 Survey of Income and Education, Veltman found that English was the usual language for 84 percent of the native born French aged 15 and older in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, even though 44 percent were bilingual. (Veltman, p. 32) Veltman calculated rates of anglicization by age to find that in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont in the age group 25-34, 96 percent spoke English as their usual language. (Veltman, p. 37) Implications of this for the French language press is serious. Veltman notes the high proportion of persons over age 50 in the French language population. These persons beyond the child-bearing years will make no further contribution of French speakers to the Franco-American grouping. (Veltman, p. 23) The language data by age reported in the Ancestry and Language in the United States study also indicates the "graying" of the French speaking population. (Ancestry and Lan-

guage, p. 14) We can expect the 1980 Census data on language use by age for Maine to be similar to these two surveys.

4. CHANGE

What changes do the 1980 figures indicate took place between 1920 and 1980, and 1908 and 1980? The 1970 data is French Mother Tongue Census data. The 1908 data was collected by Odile Le Plante, the circulation manager of Le Messager of Lewiston who was also supported in his efforts to enumerate the French population of Maine by a group of militant Franco-Americans who were anxious to document the fact that the French were the majority of the Catholic population of Maine in order to influence the selection of the next Catholic Bishop of Maine. LePlante traveled hundreds of miles by train, horse and buggy and boot to gather his data. He never says how his French were defined, but given his clerical informants, we can assume that the enumerated population was French-speaking and Catholic. The results were published in Le Messager the French newspaper of Lewiston and in a separate booklet. They were repinted in Recherches Sociographiques in 1971 in an article by geographer Ralph Vicero. Vicero evaluated the data as relatively accurate and usable. My independent assessment of the data based on the 1910 census of population and inquiries about former parish boundaries support the validity of the enumeration.

If we compare the size of the French population of Maine in the various enumeration using the more rigorous indicator of single French ancestry, we find a substantial increase in the French population for the period 1908-1980 and a slight increase between 1970-1980. (Table 4) These changes in the French population are both larger for the longer period and smaller in the most recent period than for the population of the state as a whole. When we look at the state economic areas we find substantial growth of the French population in the period 1908-1980 in all areas. The most recent period of 1970-1980 shows substantially more growth of the French in the woodland counties, the coastal area and Cumberland county than for the general population of those areas. In Aroostook county there was a five percent increase in the French population compared to a slight loss in the total population of the county between 1970 and 1980. The industrial counties experienced an 18 percent drop in their French populations when measured by the single French ancestry criterion as compared to an 18 percent increase in the general population of the area. This seems to be the product of rising rates of intermarriage in these industrial counties. For if we were to use the total French ancestry criteria we find substantially higher rates of growth for the French than for the general population of all economic areas and the state as a whole.

If we compare the location of the French in Maine in 1908 and 1980 there is remarkable stability in the distribution of the population whether the single French ancestry or the total French

ancestry indicator is used. (Table 5) For the single ancestry measure for 1980, none of the differences (epsilon) are significant. With the total ancestry measure the Epsilon's of + 11 for Aroostook and - 11 for Area II (the Woodland counties) are worth noting. The first Epsilon indicates that the proportion of the French population in Maine which resides in Aroostook has declined since 1908, this is confirmed by the - 5 Epsilon. The Area II change is not as clear since the two Epsilons have different signs. The most striking feature of the 1908-1980 population is the stability of the distribution of the French population are nearly a quarter of a century.

The change in the pattern of the distribution of French between 1970-1980 is in general not significant. Area IV (the industrial counties) seems to have decreased its share of the French ancestry population in 1980 as compared to the French Mother Tongue population in 1970. It will be interesting to see the changes as measured by speaking French at home in 1980. Aroostook and the industrial counties may, under this rubric, maintain their distribution.

5. IN SUMMARY

The 147,000 French solely of French ancestry in Maine in 1980 is but slightly larger (four percent) than the French Mother Tongue population of 1970. The total French ancestry population (single and mixed ancestry) of 266,000 is 24 percent of the total population of the state. It is nearly 90 percent larger than the 1970

French Mother Tongue Population. Differences in definition account for much of that increase. (Tables 1 and 3)

There are six counties with 30,000 or more French ancestry persons: York, Cumberland, Aroostook, Androscoggin, Penobscot and Kennebec. These six counties account for over 80 percent of the French ancestry population of Maine. (Figure 1) The nucleus of this core as measured by size, by the proportion of the French solely of French ancestry and by the proportion of the county as a whole which is French is found in Aroostook, Androscoggin and York counties. (Table 2 and Figure 2)

The single ancestry population in Maine is probably older, less well educated, and with lower incomes than the mixed French ancestry population. The county with a large French population solely of French ancestry are Aroostook, Androscoggin, York, Kennebec and Somerset. The French of Cumberland county can be considered "contemporary" and the Penobscot French are a transitional aggregate.

The French population grew faster than the general population of Maine in the period 1908-1980. (Table 4) On the other hand, the French population seems to have grown more slowly than the total population of the state in the period 1970-1980.

The distribution of the French has been remarkably stable over the period 1908-1980 and the period 1970-1980. (Table 5)