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Chapter I: Introduction

This paper is my attempt to both explore a very popular concept in Anthropology, that of ethnicity, and to write a history that has largely been forgotten and untold. I have been interested in the concept of ethnicity for a number of years, and as a student of anthropology my interest, intrigue, and confusion have only continued to grow. I have also always been a lover of history, and more recently I have come to realize the degree to which history is selectively written. I am interested in how histories are crafted and how history is remembered in the popular consciousness. It is a daily challenge to remember that both concepts of ethnicity and versions of history are fluid and not stable truths. While I began this thesis project with the hope that I would learn more about the town where I have lived for four years as a student and achieve a better grasp on how ethnic categories are devised, what emerges at the end as most important is the previously unwritten history that is being presented on these pages.

This paper is an exploration of the industrial and immigration history in Waterville, Maine. The goal of this paper is to trace how different groups of people were fit into the analytic categories of ethnicity and minority in an

industrial American town.¹ In order to trace ethnic and minority labeling and how these designations change over time I have focused on the Lebanese and Franco-American groups in Waterville. Much of the history of these two immigrant groups has not been recorded and not celebrated. Today in Waterville there is very little evidence that there were once thriving Franco-American and Lebanese communities in this small town. Additionally, there is little evidence of the massive industrial history of the town that initially drew immigrants to the area and kept them here as laborers. To write this paper I consulted numerous books, articles, historical records, and conducted a number of personal interviews with people from the Waterville community.² This paper is written for the Lebanese and Franco-Americans of Waterville in the hopes that their history is not forgotten.

Exploring Ethnicity

In the realm of Anthropology, there is a vast range of ideas, descriptions, and definitions of what ethnicity is and what it means. In popular imagination,

¹ NOTE: As I began to study the use of the term ethnicity it became apparent that ethnicity is tied to the category of minority as well. In order to properly contextualize the Waterville community I will look at concepts both ethnicity and minority. Race is also tied in with notions of minority and ethnicity, however for the purposes of this paper constructions of racial categories will not be detailed.

² NOTE: The names of people I interviewed are listed in the Bibliography. However in the footnotes I refer to people as either "A,B,C...etc." in order to protect their identities.

ethnicity is a term which connotes something traditional and inherent in a given group of people or in an individual. In essence, the popular understanding of ethnicity promotes ethnic stereotypes. An example of this would be to say that Jewish people are born with a special knack for handling money and understanding business organization. Instead of looking at why some people of the Jewish faith historically have been involved with business and finance, the popular stereotypes look at a given trend in society—for example, lots of Jewish people are successful merchants—and establish an ethnic "fact" based upon this observation. During the past few decades anthropology has loudly challenged these stereotypes and begun to look at the process of ethnic identity formation. In this mode of thinking, ethnicity is a label that someone acquires and that is oftentimes a strategic political identity. This way of looking at ethnicity implies that identity can be manipulated and changed over time. This paper will draw largely on these latter anthropological standpoints.

Ethnicity is a type of label that arises out of a hegemonic process. It is a word that is used in the US to describe certain categories of people within the hegemonic socio-economic framework. Hegemony here is understood as the situation in which the dominant group in society imposes its desires onto subordinate groups who in turn consent to the imposed desires. Hegemony is a difficult concept to define adequately; it is in a sense an umbrella term yet it is a term with an ever-changing definition. Hegemony does not just mean culture or ideology. Its boundaries extend beyond the limits of those terms. A discussion

of hegemony encourages one to think broadly and look at the "whole social process." Hegemony seeks to incorporate a discussion of domination/dominant groups and how they function and affect the "whole social process". As Raymond Williams explains:

Instead it [hegemony] sees the relations of domination and subordination, in their forms as practical consciousness, as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living—not only of political and economic activity, nor only of manifest social activity, but of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense.³

Bearing in mind the inclusiveness of hegemony, for the purposes of this paper it is important to look specifically at how hegemony is established by elites. T.J. Jackson Lears emphasizes the notion of dominance in his discussion of hegemony. In society the dominant groups impose their will upon subordinate groups; initially this is established through the use of force, and if the rule of the dominant group is challenged force is also used. Once hegemony is successfully established, the dominant group exerts its will in both subtle and overt ways. The "-consent [of the subordinate groups to accept the dominant group rule] is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production."⁴ What is particularly important to understand is that

³ Williams, Raymond. Marxism and Literature. p. 110.

⁴ Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. p. 12.

hegemonic structures establish that which is normative and that which is not through manipulations of the elements of language. Through language the dominant group is able to establish “-boundaries of permissible discourse, [discourage] the clarification of social alternatives, and [make] it difficult for the dispossessed to locate the source of their unease, let alone remedy it.”⁵ Hegemony and domination are difficult to identify because the relationships of power are bound up and masked within the very fabric of social understanding. The power of hegemony and of the dominant group lies in the difficulty the subordinate groups have in articulating their position in society.

For the dominant group to achieve social and cultural hegemony, the dominant group or elite must develop a world view that they both wish to enforce and that the rest of society will be able to accept. As Foucault explains, the dominant group is considered to be normal, it sets itself up as the standard by which all others in the society are to be measured.⁶ What is key to understanding this whole process is the fact that while the dominant group sets up the social framework or the boundaries that all other groups operate within, they do not mandate how the groups will react to or perceive the given boundaries. As Lears explains: “The base [the dominant group] does not determine specific forms of consciousness, but it does determine what forms of consciousness are possible.”⁷ Thus groups of people are fit into particular slots

⁵ Lears, T.J. Jackson. “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities”. p. 570.

⁶ Foucault, M. “Two Lectures.” p. 107.

⁷ Lears, T.J. Jackson. “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities”. p. 571.

as determined by the needs and desires of the dominant group. However, these groups can be thought of as semi-autonomous in that they create their own world view and operate both within the norms established from the top and those established from within. The labels of ethnicity and minority, among others, arises out of these scenarios.

Within the boundaries established by the hegemonic process, groups—such as ethnic groups—are able to articulate their own forms of culture. Cultural expressions also affect the hegemonic process itself. Cultural traditions, the way people think about themselves, how they morally and spiritually make sense of their environment, are all bound up within hegemony along with the lived experience of domination and subordination. Hegemony is a way to talk about society in constant process. As Raymond Williams articulates:

A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis. Moreover (and this is crucial, reminding us of the necessary thrust of the concept), it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own.⁸

With society in constant process, the dominant group is not firmly established in indisputable control. In fact, the dominant group(s) in society actually must

maneuver strategically all the time to maintain their position. This leaves room for the possibility of challenges from within and outside. As Lears surmises: “The overall picture that Gramsci [who coined the term hegemony] provides is not a static, closed system of ruling-class domination. Rather, it is a society in constant process, where the creation of counterhegemonies remains a live option.”⁹

Hegemony is in flux, as are the boundaries that the hegemonic process creates. Thus it logically follows that the groups that are inserted into hegemonic boundaries are also in flux. “[T]he articulation of ethnicity is seen to be contingent and it is thus, inter alia, only a part phenomenon. Ethnic units are never isolates.”¹⁰ Ethnic groups require at the most basic level a distinction between “we” and “they.”¹¹ Thus ethnicity can only be conceived of when there is more than one group present. “Ethnicity arises in the exercise of power. It has no singular construction; there must always be two, usually more, ethnicities to be defined against each other.”¹² The ethnic label is applied when this we-they scenario is devised. Ethnicity also is situational, it is something that shifts over time and is conceived of differently throughout history. In the US ethnicity is more of a political identity because its definitions can be changed by political actors as historical contexts change.

⁸ Williams, Raymond. Marxism and Literature. p. 112.

⁹ Lears, T.J. Jackson. “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities.” p. 571.

¹⁰ Vincent, Joan. “Brief Communications.” p. 376.

¹¹ Vincent, Joan. “Brief Communications.” p. 377.

¹² McAllister, Patrick and E. N. Wilmsen. The Politics of Difference. p. 4.

Two other labels given to groups operating under hegemonic boundaries are those of race and minority. As Vincent describes:

Minorities are subordinate self-conscious segments of complex state societies with special physical or cultural traits which are held in low esteem by the dominant segments. Membership is transmitted by a rule of descent; minority members tend to marry endogamously. Negroes form such a minority in the United States.¹³

Minorities are groups of people at the lower rung of the social-economic-class structure. Categories of race and ethnicity are associated with culture in folk understanding. They are also perceived as being timeless designations. However, in actuality when a group is labeled as ethnic, this indicates that the group occupies a particular space in the social-economic-class structure. Minority group status in the US arises out of a very different set of circumstances than does the label of ethnicity.

Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris outline a useful working definition of minority groups. They explain that minority groups have the following characteristics: they are subject to disabilities in the form of prejudice, discrimination, segregation, and/or persecution; the disabilities of a minority group are connected to particular characteristics which the minority shares (and which the dominant group in society often disapproves of); minority groups are self-conscious units meaning they share a sense of group unity and belonging; finally, people are born into minority groups and also tend to marry

endogamously, or within the minority group.¹⁴ In the following excerpt Vincent addresses the differences between minorities and ethnics:

The recognition (often the legal enactment) of the minority group status of others by dominant actors serves to maintain the status quo: the recognition of ethnic group status by other political actors may bring about change. Minority group status is formally encapsulated within political structure; ethnic groups, ephemeral in nature and multipurpose in function, are formed in the interstices of the polity. Defined from above, minorities are immutable; defined from below, ethnicity is constantly subject to redefinition. Identification of groups as minorities lies within the internal structure of a polity; ethnic groups, in contradistinction, may be characterized by their external relations with "nationals" of other polities with whom they share common ethnicity.¹⁵

Minority groups do not change over time in the same way ethnic groups do. Minorities in the US such as African Americans, Mexicans, and Native Americans are all groups of people who have been conquered and/or controlled for their labor by the dominant group. These groups are at the bottom end and are some of the most disadvantaged people in the US. As Peter Kwong describes, African Americans had their "ethnic institutions" or networks destroyed because of slavery.¹⁶ The same can be said of Native Americans and Mexicans when the US conquered these peoples. These people do not have the same institutions available to them nor the same boundaries that immigrants to the US have had. It is largely immigrants to the US—Italians, Jews, Lebanese, Greeks, Chinese, and others—who have been labeled as ethnic. When, where, and how these

¹³ Vincent, Joan. "Brief Communications." p. 377.

¹⁴ Wagley, Charles and Marvin Harris. Minorities in the New World. p. 3-9.

¹⁵ Vincent, Joan. "Brief Communications." p. 377.

¹⁶ Kwong, Peter. "Manufacturing Ethnicity." p. 365.

immigrant groups entered into the US social-economic-class structure determined how they were labeled. These immigrant ethnic groups have changed their identities over time and many of them are now at the point in which ethnicity is an optional label. For a minority, the minority status is never an optional label. For these reasons minorities and ethnics should not be compared because they have never historically been operating within the same framework.

Ethnicity & Minority in Waterville

This paper traces how hegemonic forces create boundaries through the specific examples of the Lebanese and Franco-Americans in Waterville, Maine. These two immigrant groups entered into Waterville after an English-Scottish Protestant majority had already been established in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The Franco-American immigration from Quebec extended well over a century and the flow of people out of Canada can generally be studied into two distinct waves. People were constantly coming into Waterville from Quebec, and a small number would return to live in Canada after a time. It is also critical to understand that Franco-Americans were settling all over Maine during this same time span and that it is generally accepted that in the state of Maine today at least forty percent of the state has French-Canadian ancestry. In

contrast, the Lebanese who came to Waterville came during a very specific time period, from about 1890-1920. Their numbers were smaller and there were very few Lebanese who settled elsewhere in Maine.

The Lebanese, the Franco-Americans, and the Yankee (meaning the English-Scottish Protestant group) are thought of as the three leading groups in Waterville. Significantly, the Franco-Americans comprise nearly half the population of the town while the Lebanese are around one to two percent of the population. The rest are Yankees, with very marginal numbers of other groups such as Greeks, Poles, Jews, Italians, and Irish. The very fact that the Lebanese—who are numerically a minority when compared to the Franco-Americans and Yankees—are considered an influential group in town shows their unique structural position. The ways in which these groups have interacted, how they were either separated out or integrated within the social-economic-class structure all have determined how they have been publicly labeled over time. In this paper I seek to examine how these people can be labeled (in an analytic sense) as either ethnic or minority. This study allows one to observe the hegemonic process at work in a specific locality. However, the influx of immigrants into a newly established Yankee hegemony is typical of the entire Northeastern US. While there are specific details and historical conditions involved that are unique to Waterville, at the same time Waterville can be used as a model for what happened to similar towns across the Northeast over the past two centuries.

Chapter II: Early History of Maine and the Rise of Industry in the State

The early years of the penetration of European travelers and settlers in Maine is a fragmented, varied history. Many of the first Europeans to stand on the shores of Maine and travel up her rivers were French Jesuit priests who were committed to converting the native population of Maine. Others were fishermen of French and English origin. And still others were interested in establishing posts both for trading with the Native Americans in the region and for establishing forts to protect the European—either French or English—claims to the territories.

Maine's early history is directly linked with Massachusetts, the colony that Maine was a part of until the early part of the nineteenth century. Massachusetts was a strictly Puritan area, a theocracy in the sense that the religious male leaders of the colonists were also the political leaders. The development of European settlements in Maine are directly linked to the policies and political climate of Massachusetts. Even after 1820 when Maine became an independent state, the links between the two regions remained strong and many residents of each state have traveled frequently and in some cases settled in the other state.

During the eighteenth century, the most critical settlement of European people in Maine came about as a result of the English attempting to place loyal Anglican citizens in Maine to rival the strong power base of Puritan Massachusetts.¹⁷ The English crown issued major land grants designed to make Maine a predominantly Anglican community; however the land grants brought a large mix of settlers, many of whom did not support the Anglican authority system. Some of the settlers who took advantage of the land grants were even Puritan loyalists, thus this maneuvering did not secure a loyal area for England. Instead, it brought a number of people from varied Christian backgrounds to Maine. Later, when the American colonies achieved independence from England, the Massachusetts Puritan theocratic apparatus took control of Maine. Office holders had to be Puritan and in many cases non-Puritan religious activities were repressed.¹⁸

Despite this strong Puritan control, Maine did not transform into a region centralized by a Puritan religious community. Maine's coastal areas developed most significantly during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The interior area was essentially a frontier region that experienced multiple wars with Native Americans. Settlement of the region was characterized by fluidity, many people migrated from town to town. In addition, many of the interior towns were focused around small family farming. Due to this pattern of small-

¹⁷ Allen, James Paul. Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography. p. 21.

¹⁸ Allen, James Paul. Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography. p. 23

scale economic activity, many communities remained isolated from one another making any kind of political or religious solidarity difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, if there was any dominant unifying element in Maine around 1800, it was the values and emotions of Puritan styles of worship and the Puritan work ethic.

The majority of the people in Maine during the early nineteenth century were of English and Scottish origin. Many of these people were Puritan (or Congregationalist as Puritans came to be called) and even though the Congregationalist church was not state supported after Maine gained independence in 1820, the church retained its power and its members were dominant in civic affairs. Throughout most of Maine's towns the wealthy and educated people were usually the Congregationalists, holding positions such as teachers, businessmen, newspaper publishers, and politicians.¹⁹ Some of the early French Jesuits were still active in Maine, and there were some Acadians and Quebecois in Northern and Eastern Maine, however the numbers were relatively small. In addition, Aroostook county, which has consistently held the most concentrated French population in Maine over time, was a territory claimed by both the US and Canada. The dispute regarding this territory is known as the Aroostook War; the border between Canada and the US was not determined until 1842. Regardless, Aroostook county and its largely French population was significantly cut-off from the remainder of the state. Thus it can

be stated that Maine had a largely homogenous population of Protestant people of English-Scottish ancestry. The other significant population in this area is the Native American population which was largely decimated by disease and warfare and also marginalized both geographically and culturally by the dominant society.

In terms of economic activity, there has been a marked contrast between the coast and the interior of the state from the beginning of Maine's development. Many of the coastal communities grew wealthy from fishing, trade, and shipping. Portland was the most wealthy city north of Boston and a major hub for commerce in the Northeastern US. In the interior of the state people often farmed the land, harvested ice, and did logging in the dense forests. However, during the mid-nineteenth century the economic activity in Maine made a significant shift. People moved away from the traditional industries and began to focus more on shore fishing, paper production, hydroelectric power and tourism.²⁰ Although pulp and paper production in Maine was no longer nationally competitive after 1880, it was still a booming industry in the state well into the twentieth century. The importance of the industry caused many people—mostly men—to migrate to remote sites in the woods where cities were literally being created overnight. The new "cities in the woods," such as Millinocket, were created solely for the purpose of serving the

¹⁹ Allen, James Paul. Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography. p. 37.

²⁰ Judd, Richard W. Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present. p. 420-5.

huge paper companies and everything was geared towards the optimum success of these companies. Substantial links between rural paper-production activities and the bases for these companies in larger New England cities were established. Large amounts of capital were pumped into the Maine woods from the hubs of New York City and Boston in order to fuel the paper production industry. This evolution of the pulp and paper industry was a major turning point in the economic sphere of inland Maine.

Part of the cause for the shift in Maine's economy in the mid-1800s was the westward expansion of the US—the lines of commerce began to run East-West where as previously they had run North-South along the seacoast. The development of railways and the strong links being forged between the American west and the established Eastern communities had huge and often initially detrimental ramifications for Maine. Maine's economy suffered with the lessening of these North-South connections and was forced to shift. People began to migrate throughout the state in search of stable jobs and security. Those who had once been able to survive on homesteads and sell farm products and timber to be shipped out of Maine ports often had to leave their small farm communities, or watch their children leave, in search of more lucrative jobs. Many people migrated to Maine's growing industrial centers at this time. More importantly, this time period is marked by another wave of immigration to the state from a largely non-English-Protestant population.

Chapter III: Waterville—An Overview of the Early Settlement Through Nineteenth Century Industrialization

Early European and Native American Relations in Maine

This study focuses on the history of the town of Waterville in Kennebec County, Maine. The town was established in 1802 which separated it from the town of Winslow across the Kennebec River. However, prior to settlement in the town there was an extended period of European and Native American contact in the area. Collectively, the native peoples of Maine are referred to as the Wabanaki or the "people of the dawn." The languages the Maine tribes spoke is closely related to Algonquian languages. The English settlers often named the native groups they came in contact with after their geographic locations, for example those natives living along the Kennebec were often referred to simply as the Kennebec (from Canibas) Indians. The French labeled all of the Indians living east of the Connecticut River as Abenaki, which is a term derived from Wabanakiak, which literally means "people living in the land of the dawn." The term Wabanaki is used to refer to the Micmac, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Kennebec, and various other Abenaki groups living as far west as Lake Champlain.²¹

²¹ Judd, Richard W. et all. Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present. p.99

The Native Americans of Maine initially adjusted to the European presence. By the mid-1500s some Wabanaki peoples were in regular contact with Europeans in the St. Lawrence and Gulf of Maine. There was a great deal of trading of furs for steel goods such as knives, copper kettles, or cloth goods. As the English and French became greater trading rivals in North America, the natives of Maine were drawn more and more into the conflict. The history of conflict and the complex relationships among tribes and between the natives and the Europeans is far too long and detailed for the purposes of this paper. However, it is critical to recognize that Maine had a sizable native population that initially worked in conjunction with Europeans and then later, through wars, disease, and displacement, gradually receded from their former vast territories. The natives influenced how settlements in Maine developed, especially along the Kennebec River.

Those Kennebec natives living in the areas that later became Winslow, Waterville, Oakland, and Fairfield were primarily agriculturalists. They grew crops as well as hunted animals such as beaver, otters, moose, and bear. Their population density was somewhat higher than other native groups and their fields were often located near the river. In general the natives of Western Maine had “-widely dispersed summer villages, usually located on the banks of the Kennebec, Androsocggin, Saco, and other rivers [which] differed in size, ranging

from as low as 150 to as many as 1,500 inhabitants.”²² In what is present day Waterville and Winslow there was a native village that extended for nearly a mile along the banks of the Sebastiscook and the Kennebec Rivers.²³ The village is often called Teconnet (or Ticonic) as are the natives and the series of waterfalls in this section of the Kennebec River. Traders had established a trading house at Teconnet Falls in the late 1600s. During King Williams’ War in 1688 the Teconnet village area was used as a station for captives who were either sold into slavery, killed, or ransomed.²⁴ Some Kennebec natives were allied with the French and French Jesuits had set up a settlement at Norridgewalk. They had succeeded in converting many of the natives in the area to Christianity. Kingsbury provides a description of the Kennebec (Canibas) natives that adequately indicates their power and presence in the area:

The aboriginal occupant of Kennebec County was the Indian tribe called *Canibas*. This was a large and important tribe and claimed as their territory the land extending from the sources of the Kennebec river to Merrymeeting bay. It may be noted as bearing on the Indian ideas of ownership of land, that Assiminasqua, a sagamore, in 1653 certified that the region of Teconnet (Waterville) belonged to him and to the wife of Watchogo; while at near the same time the chief sagamores, Monquine, Kennebis and Abbagadussett, conveyed to the English all the lands on the Kennebec river extending from Swan island to Wesserunsett river, near Skowhegan, as their property.²⁵

²² Judd, Richard W. et al. Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present, p. 101.

²³ Whittemore, Edwin C. The Centennial History of Waterville. p. 34-5

²⁴ Whittemore, Edwin C. The Centennial History of Waterville. p. 41.

²⁵ Kingsbury, Henry D. and Simeon L. Deyo. Illustrated History of Kennebec County, Maine. p. 73.

It is often difficult to gain an accurate understanding of what the relationship was between the English, French, and the Native Americans. What is indisputable, however, is the fact that the English were highly concerned with gaining the deeds to the natives land. The above excerpt indicates that the English were concerned with native claims to the land, and it also indicates that they had to negotiate over time with the natives in order to take over the lands. This signifies that the Kennebec natives had considerable power in the area and the English could not initially move in and push the natives aside. It took many decades of maneuvering for the English to gain a foothold.

During French and English conflict in the mid-1700s the English in Massachusetts received reports about a French fort that had been built at the head of the Kennebec River. In response, the English launched a military expedition in 1754 to root the French out of the area and to build their own fort on the river. A militia force of 800 people arrived in what is present-day Winslow and constructed Fort Halifax. This began a large permanent English settlement in the area and greatly affected the natives who did not want a fort to be built in their territory, especially so close to Teconnet village. The Kennebec River was truly a highway for the Central Maine region, even before the Europeans arrived, and the Teconnet area was particularly strategic. After the founding of Fort Halifax, the English had a vested interest in remaining in the area. The alluvial banks of the river had already been cultivated by the natives and the river provided excellent transportation route and linked the area with

other significant English settlements. The final skirmish with the native population in Waterville occurred in 1757. During the American Revolution, Benedict Arnold's army passed through the Waterville-Winslow area in 1775. They stayed at the "Fort House," a tavern in the former Fort Halifax.²⁶ As Arnold's army marched north to fight in Quebec, some Kennebec natives joined his army and took part in the assault on Quebec in 1776.²⁷ During the late 1700s, the area began to swell with English settlers. It is unclear exactly how the Kennebecs were displaced from the area and where they all went to. Disease decimated the size of the population all over the region and indeed throughout all of North America. Yet the natives had been trading with the Europeans, fighting against them and fighting with them for two centuries. Some had converted to Christianity. It is likely that some natives adopted European ways and settled along side the new English settlers.

The Early years of English-American Settlement in Waterville

The English who settled in the Waterville-Winslow area became farmers and also made use of the Kennebec river. Farmers grew crops such as corn, wheat, potatoes, oats, and barley. Orchards were a standard feature of hill farms

²⁶ NOTE: Fort Halifax was dismantled as a military installation in 1763 after the Treaty of Paris.

²⁷ Kingsbury, Henry D. and Simeon L. Deyo. Illustrated History of Kennebec County, Maine. p. 71.

and, as a result, cider mills were operated all over the region. On farms people kept sheep for wool, cows for dairy, and oxen for work. Butter, cheese and other dairy products were often sold for profit. People used sap from trees to make molasses and maple sugar. Also, hunting and fishing provided food for the settlers. The following provides a good description of what life might have been like in the greater Waterville area and other parts of Maine in the late 1700s and early 1800s:

The economy of Maine's inland farm communities revolved around subsistence production, a small export crop, a complex bartering trade between neighbors, and an assortment of small-scale crafts. Maine's early farmers usually plied a supplementary skill or occupation, since their homesteads were never fully self-sufficient. A farmer might also be a tanner, joiner, shipwright, blacksmith, or even a minister. Each, in fact, needed numerous skills: to be able to build and maintain chimneys; make farm tools, shoes, brooms, and baskets; repair looms and spinning wheels; and construct furniture. Farmers were also lumberers. During the boom years following the Revolution, harvesting timber brought a measure of prosperity to anyone willing and able to go into the woods to bring it out. Trees were an immediate crop. The forest provided not only material for home construction, but timber for shipbuilders and cargo for the vessels once they were seaborne. Maine settlers found ready markets for lumber, house frames, clapboards, shingles, and cordwood in Boston and the West Indies.²⁸

While the seaports on the Maine coast were doing a booming trade and using currency, bartering remained a common way for farming families of the interior to survive.

In terms of transportation, there were very few roads in the Kennebec region during the early 1800s. Wagons were a very rare sight. Instead, travel

²⁸ Judd, Richard W. et al. Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present, p.220.

was focused on the river and many schooners, brigs, and ships were constructed on the Kennebec just below the series of waterfalls. All around the US at this point in time canals were being dug to improve waterways and increase transportation. Canals were built in Maine to allow logs to float down to sawmills and other goods to be transported more efficiently. In Winslow and Waterville, bridges were built across the Kennebec, linking the growing towns socially and economically. Dams were also built as well as saw mills, a grist mill, and a carding and clothing mill. Most trade in the Waterville area involved lumber and farm products in the early 1800s. The town of Bath is located at the mouth of the Kennebec river and it had a lively maritime trade. Goods flowing down the Kennebec from towns like Waterville were able to enter into the global market.²⁹ The following excerpt provides a sense, albeit a perhaps inflated sense, of the far-reaching economic connections that the Kennebec settlements had with the rest of the world:

When the Revolution ended and the Americans stood up as a nation, something tremendous happened to the Kennebec. It started rising, and it kept on rising until its waters covered the Atlantic, poured down around the Horn, out across the Pacific, and met themselves coming around Good Hope. It had circled the globe, and neighbors in Bath and Bowdoinham said how-do-you-do to one another in every port of the world. The Kennebec fishing, lumbering farmers suddenly turned sailors, took down the pines back of the barn, and sailed off on them to become citizens of the universe, with their arms in spices of Java to their elbows, in tea of China, and molasses, and coffee and sugar of Brazil. For a century the doorway of the Kennebec stood open, and ships came out in thousands and

²⁹ NOTE: The port cities of Maine were heavily involved in the transportation of sugar from the West Indies and the South to New England where it was made into rum and molasses. In particular, Portland had a sugar factory where molasses and rum were made. Rum was a commodity traded with natives in Maine, the Kennebec region included. While the Waterville area was not directly involved with the rum and molasses trade, the area was linked with the coastal cities which participated heavily in the triangular trade throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.

whitened all the oceans with sail, filled the loneliest waters with songs of sailors, and hails to passing ships, and Kennebec men and women and children kept house around the world. Small farmers of Topsham walked, all Yankee spick-and-spanness, by the places of Venice and the hovels of Calcutta, through New Orleans and London and Batavia, like the princes they were. A fisherman hung up his shad net and threw a net across the sea and brought back a fortune for his family. The Kennebec became known as one of the chief rivers of earth.³⁰

Waterville had several newspaper businesses rise and fall during this era. In 1836 the Ticonic (another spelling of the word Teconnet) Village Corporation was created to levy taxes for the community. These taxes paid for items such as night watchmen, sidewalks, and other public works.³¹ Waterville's first industry was the Waterville Iron Works Foundry and during the 1840s railroads had reached this section of Maine, providing additional employment.

Religious Institutions

Maine did not become independent from Massachusetts until 1820, thus during Waterville's early years the Puritan theocracy was still strongly in control. Many Congregationalist Churches were founded in Maine during the early 1800s and the members of the Congregational churches were typically the most wealthy business owners, land owners, and politicians. The Congregationalists became strong in Waterville and built a church in 1836.

³⁰ Coffin, Robert P. Tristan. Kennebec: Cradle of Americans. p. 131-2.

³¹ LaPierre, Louis Leonard. C.F. Hathaway Company: The First One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years. p. 11.

However, before the Congregationalist church was founded there was already a strong Baptist presence in Waterville which was atypical of Maine towns. There is a long history of tension between Baptists and Congregationalists in the state of Maine and this is reflected in Waterville. This is due to the fact that the Baptists, led by Roger Williams (1603-83), had originally grown out of the Congregational church.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Baptists had been religiously oppressed in New England by the civil authorities and Congregationalist clergymen. The Baptists had a church in Kittery in 1682, however it had to be dissolved because of religious intolerance and persecution. When this church was dismantled, the Baptists fled the state—many went to the southern colonies where Baptist churches were more successful and accepted—and did not return to Maine until 1764. During the Great Awakening (roughly from 1725-1760), a popular religious revivalist movement, Baptists were responsible for pulling hundreds of people away from the Congregational church.³² The following description (written by a Baptist describing the situation in 1785) aptly depicts the religious climate in Maine during the end of the eighteenth century:

These five churches and four ministers, constituted the entire denomination in Maine, while at the same time there existed something more

³² NOTE: The Great Awakening revived the Baptist religion throughout the 1700s to such a degree that by the end of the century the Baptists were the largest single Christian denomination in the US. See: Weaver, Mary Jo. Introduction to Christianity, p. 131.

than eight times the number of Congregational churches and ministers, who were encouraged by the protection of law, and privileged with the disposal of all the ministerial lands in the places where they were located. They had, therefore, the power of influence, and possessed every facility for retaining it, nor were they slow to secure every means favorable to their success.³³

When the Baptists returned, they hoped to evangelize the state and traveled into many Maine communities attempting to set up churches.³⁴ As churches were founded, the Baptists created associations, such as the Bowdoinham Association and the York Association, so that communities would work together to complete their common goals of spreading their faith.

The Baptists did not have a well established, educated clergy that they brought from Europe like the Congregationalists and Presbyterians did. As Ernest Marriner describes:

The first Baptist colleges...came into being as the result of local movements by respected, influential Baptist leader, rather than because of any general concern for education throughout the denomination...Chartered in 1765, Brown was for nearly fifty years the only Baptist college in America. Not until 1813 did another group of Baptists secure a charter to found a college, and that group was an association of clergy and laymen in Massachusetts' sparsely settled District of Maine. The institution for which they secured a charter, the second Baptist college in the country, was the Maine Literary and Theological Institute, the forerunner of Colby College.³⁵

³³ Millet, Joshua. History of the Baptists in Maine. p. 73-4.

³⁴ "The eight years from 1782 to 1790 saw a rapid spread of the sect in Maine, with churches at Bowdoinham, Thomaston, Limerick, Parsonsfield, Newfield, Waterboro, Cornish, Fryeburg, Whitefield, Vassalboro, Hebron and Bucksfield. The year 1796 saw the founding of the very influential Baptist Church at Portland, and in 1801 another church of even more substantial influence at Yarmouth." From: Marriner, Ernest C. The History of Colby College. p.3

³⁵ Marriner, Ernest C. The History of Colby College. p. 2.

When the Maine Literary and Theological Institute was chartered in 1813, there was still a great deal of difficulty choosing a site. The Baptist associations in the state all recognized a need for a school, but initially Waterville did not seem like a good site. Marriner again describes why the virtual frontier town of Waterville was chosen:

During the months that had passed since the Trustees had first sounded out several communities, Waterville seemed to be at a disadvantage. She had no academy and no Baptist church. But what she did have was a group of energetic and determined citizens, led by the town's two wealthiest men, Nathaniel Gilman and Timothy Boutelle. Singly or in partnership, the town owned vast acreage of Maine land. Both were prominent members of the Jeffersonian party and both were well acquainted with William King [one of the Trustees]. Better still, they were outspoken supporters of King's pet project, independence for Maine. Preserved in the King Collection at the Maine Historical Society are several letters from Gilman to King, concerned chiefly with commercial matters, but in every letter Gilman took the opportunity to put himself on record as a booster for an independent state.³⁶

This Institute was later named Waterville College, and still later named Colby College.³⁷ The College has had a profound influence on the town of Waterville from its inception to present day. Its founding meant that an educated elite would appear in the town, and also many people from all over the country would come to the school. Many graduates remained in the area, opening businesses and becoming involved in industry in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

³⁶ Marriner, Ernest C. The History of Colby College. p. 15.

³⁷ NOTE: The Coburn Classical Institute was founded in 1829 as Waterville Academy. It served as a preparatory school for Colby.

As mentioned above, in many towns that the Baptists pushed into there was already a Congregationalist influence. However, the Winslow-Waterville area did not have a strong Congregationalist background. A minister from Winthrop commented in 1817 that Waterville was lacking in religious sentiments.³⁸ Shortly thereafter, steps were taken in nearby Congregationalist communities to establish a church in Waterville. There was a bit of a struggle for a few years to maintain the vitality of the Congregational church, however powerful ministers came from other parts of New England and the church became linked in with an influential Congregational network. A Universalist church was founded in 1833 by Thomas Barnes, who was the first Universalist minister ordained in the state and who previously had been a Baptist.³⁹ The Universalists had more influence in West Waterville, which later was incorporated as the separate town of Oakland. In 1863 a Unitarian society was founded in Waterville and by 1890 a church was constructed. The Centennial History of Waterville implies that many Unitarians were considered affluent citizens both within Waterville and around the state.⁴⁰ There had also been a great deal of Methodist activity in Waterville beginning as early as the 1820s and 1830s when ministers would pass through the town. In 1870, a Methodist church was founded.

³⁸ Whittemore, Edwin C. The Centennial History of Waterville. p. 241.

³⁹ Whittemore, Edwin C. The Centennial History of Waterville. p. 235.

⁴⁰ Whittemore, Edwin C. The Centennial History of Waterville. p. 257.

The Establishment of Small Industries in Waterville

In the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s there were grist mills, saw mills, and carding and clothing mills on the Kennebec. Leonard Cornforth and James Cormmett were two men who owned such mills. In 1830, Windsor and Barrett opened a carpet factory which also produced cotton goods such as linen table cloths. Later, this factory was turned into a shop for the manufacture of woolen mill machinery. In 1836 William Pearson established a large tannery. The Waterville Iron Works was established in 1833 by Joseph P. Fairbanks, a member of the family from St. Johnsbury, Vermont who built the famous Fairbanks scales. After a few years, the Iron Works became the Waterville Iron Manufacturing Company. Around 1850 Samuel Appleton, Zebulon Sanger, and John Ransted built a paper mill on Erastus Wheeler's property along the river. The paper from this mill was used for newspapers. This paper mill was taken over by the Monroes of Boston who made paper from cedar bark. Also in 1850 another dam was built (there were already several on the river at this point in time) by Daniel Lord who manufactured axes and hoes. Two scythe and ax factories were established in the greater Waterville area and in 1857 the two were organized into one and named the Dunn Edge Tool Company. Also, around 1870 the Emerson and Stevens Manufacturing Company began manufacturing scythes and axes in Waterville. In 1867 the Noyes Stove Company was founded; it changed hands a few times and in 1902 it employed about 15 men. In 1883 the

Cascade Woolen Mill was founded. Also important to Waterville's industrial growth throughout the nineteenth century were saw and grist mills. Throughout the century many different prominent men in the area owned and operated saw or grist mills on the Kennebec River.

Large-Scale Industrialization in Waterville

In 1837 Charles F. Hathaway founded a shirt factory in his Waterville home that grew into a prosperous industry and became internationally recognized in the twentieth century. Hathaway was from Massachusetts, his ancestors were English and had settled in Plymouth. His wife, Temperence Blackwell, was from Waterville and thus Hathaway married into a family that was firmly rooted in the Kennebec Valley area. Hathaway experimented with entrepreneurial activity first in Massachusetts, and later in Waterville. He first tried his hand at newspaper publishing, but failed in this endeavor. Hathaway's second attempt at establishing a business was far more successful; he founded the shirt company in his home on Appleton Street. Like many other budding textile industries in New England, Hathaway had cotton shipped to Maine from the American south. Cotton production was well established in the south and once New England industrialists began to tap into the cotton resources, textile industries in the northeast began to rapidly expand. The workers Hathaway

hired were all women and the job required training. The women either sewed in their own homes or traveled to Hathaway's home to work.⁴¹ Hathaway would pick up the women—often unmarried girls from outlying farms—and bring them to his home to work during the week. He would return the women to their families on the Sabbath. Hathaway was known for his religious fanaticism; he and his wife were both particularly pious and Hathaway especially tried to sway his workers into accepting his particular religious views. Throughout his lifetime, Hathaway was particularly torn between worldly and spiritual matters and spent a great deal of time trying to determine how he could reconcile the two.

Hathaway had to expand his homestead in order to have enough room for his growing business. Ultimately, the site of Hathaway's home continually expanded until it no longer resembled a house—it became a full fledged factory. During the Civil War the demand for shirts increased significantly, which helped expand the company considerably. The expansion of railroad networks in Maine during the mid-1800s allowed the goods from Hathaway to be shipped out of Waterville for sale (see below for more information on the railroads). In 1872 a steam system was installed in the plant and all the sewing machines were steam powered. This was a significant change from the company's beginnings

⁴¹ LaPierre, Louis Leonard. C.F. Hathaway Company: The First One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years. p. 17.

when the sewing machine was not yet invented and all of the work was done by hand.

In 1864 another Massachusetts family—John and Lyman Hollingsworth from South Braintree—founded an important industry that would have considerable impact in the area. The Hollingsworth and Whitney paper mill was established on the Winslow side of the Kennebec River; many people from Waterville were employed at the mill along with Winslow residents. A small toll foot bridge was constructed over the river for workers who lived in Waterville to cross over to the factory for the work day. This steel foot bridge lead directly from Temple Street in Waterville across the river and into the mill yard of the Hollingsworth & Whitney factory (the H& W).

While both men and women were employed at the H & W, the jobs were particularly gender specific—as was the case for most of the developing industries in Waterville during the latter half of the nineteenth century. For example, one of the women’s jobs was to take the knots out of the wood chips before the wood was processed and turned into pulp, which was a job for men. The H & W helped the local economy and seems to have done a great deal for its workers beyond the confines of the mill yard itself. For example, new homes were built for employees in a district called “Sand Hill” in Winslow. In addition, the company created a club for employees called the Taconnet Club (again using the Native American tribe name). A club house was built by the company and this house was located on the hill above the mill on the Winslow

side of the river. This club had its own constitution and bylaws that were printed up, most likely at the expense of the H & W company. In addition, the club had a president and annual meetings. The club was essentially a social unit designed to include all kinds of activities for H & W employees. The clubhouse itself housed a gym, billiard room, library, smoking rooms, lockers for personal items, and a kitchen. The club would host activities such as Sunday picnics for workers and their families. In addition, the facilities of the clubhouse were open to employees, their spouses and children.⁴²

In 1870, Maine Central Railroad chose Waterville to be its rail center for Central Maine. Maine Central Railroad (MCRR) combined the older railways of the Androscoggin & Kennebec, the Penobscot & Kennebec, the Portland & Kennebec, and other rail lines.⁴³ MCRR provided critical links with Northern Maine and Canada and offered high paying jobs for area residents. The establishment of the railways was likely encouraged by the businessmen of Waterville who would be able to expand their enterprises with this new mode of transportation. In 1886 many new shops were built for the company in the north end of Waterville. Around the same time that MCRR was adding growth to the area, another large industry—the Lockwood Company—was established in 1874. Lockwood was a cotton textile factory and employed predominantly women. The mill produced the high quality bedsheets, among other items, that were

⁴² Waterville Historical Society, Hollingsworth & Whitney File.

⁴³ Chenard, Robert E. St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church. p. 284.

shipped for sale all over the US and made this company famous. The mills were located on the edge of the Kennebec River at the southern end of the town of Waterville, very close to the bridge connecting Waterville to Winslow. The company used the water power from the river to operate the machinery in the large mills. Lockwood grew considerably between 1874 and the turn of the century and multiple mills were constructed within the company's complex near the river. Lockwood did provide some housing for its employees, however it did not seek to build and operate housing complexes for all its workers the way some cotton mills—such as the Amoskeg in Manchester, NH—succeeded in doing. Instead, there were some company houses, boarding houses, privately owned tenements, and private homes for the Lockwood employees. The establishment of the Lockwood mills was the final thrust that encouraged major immigration into Waterville from Quebec and other areas outside Maine.

Two major industries were established in Waterville around the turn of the century; they were the last two major industries founded that would significantly impact the development of the community. First, in 1899 the Riverside (Wyandotte) Worsted Mill in 1899 was created. The mill was built in the Head of Falls area of Waterville, next to the Kennebec River directly across from the Hollingsworth & Whitney. This mill specialized in woolen materials as opposed to the cloth products produced by mills like the Lockwood. There were several other woolen mills being founded in Central Maine around this time; a December 1905 article from the *Waterville Morning Sentinel* described that

mills like the Wyandotte were thriving all throughout Central Maine.⁴⁴ The mill was founded by Thomas Sampson, and later run by G.F. Terry. Ownership was quickly transferred to Frank Chase who was a very successful local entrepreneur. Chase started the Union Gas and Electric Company, he built a dam on the Kennebec and thus controlled the water power for the area, and he also bought out the Pierson Tannery and Winslow Marston Match Factory. This match factory had been established in 1857 and provided jobs for some of the immigrants settling in the greater Waterville area during the late nineteenth century. Chase also bought out the Morrill mill in Readfield and used both this Readfield mill and the Wyandotte mill to produce cloth for men and women's clothing. By 1900 Waterville was securely established as a manufacturing city. The river transportation first allowed industries to grow and the water power from the river was harnessed for these industries. In 1900 the Lockwood Company employed 1,300 people, the Hollingsworth and Whitney 675 men, and Hathaway 175 people.⁴⁵

In 1901 Keyes Fiber Company was founded by Martin L. Keyes, a man who had invented a machine that manufactured pie plates and butter dishes from pure ground spruce fiber. Keyes patented his invention and first used it in Shawmut, Maine. In 1907 Keyes opted to relocate within Maine and bought land in Waterville on the border of Fairfield. He considered relocating in

⁴⁴ Waterville Historical Society, Riverside Worsted Mill File.

⁴⁵ From the Waterville Centennial Official Program, Colby College Library Special Collections. No numbers were given for the Wyandotte or Maine Central Railroad.

Massachusetts or New York because there would have been “-better timber supplies, better market accessibility, and cheaper power supply. However, with the problems in transporting his operation to these new areas and the increasing problems with labor unions in those states, he finally elected to stay in Maine.”⁴⁶ By 1910 1,000,000 plates were being manufactured per day. The laborers worked forty eight hours per week stretched over six days. There were sixty eight wage laborers, twenty three of whom were men and forty five of whom were women.⁴⁷ Keyes has steadily grown in size during the twentieth century and certainly affected the development of both Waterville and Fairfield.⁴⁸

Overall, Waterville’s early history reflects the broader trends for the state of Maine as a whole. The early population had significant strife with local indigenous people. As more English-American people settled in the area the main economic activities revolved around trading, logging and farming. The settlements along the Kennebec, although removed in a virtual frontier land, were linked with the maritime activities of the coast. With the shifts in the national orientation from a North-South network to an East-West network during

⁴⁶ Cloutier, R. The Industrial and Business Development of Waterville, maine from Colonial Settlement to 1900. p. 80.

⁴⁷ Cloutier, R. The Industrial and Business Development of Waterville, maine from Colonial Settlement to 1900. p. 77-81.

⁴⁸ NOTE: Out of all the major industries in Waterville I have the least amount of information about Keyes Fibre. I have no evidence of any Lebanese workers there, only of French-Canadians. Also, it appears that while this is a major manufacturer in the area it may have drawn more people from Fairfield to work and did not directly affect the town of Waterville as much as other large manufacturers did. Regardless, Keyes has remained in the area and several people have mentioned the town is lucky to still have Keyes considering the departure of so many other big industries. Keyes was renamed Chinette Co. sometime during the 1970s or 1980s and now uses recycled papers to produce paper plates and oer paper products rather than using spruce fibre.

the middle of the nineteenth centuries, many of the earlier industries that had once flourished in the Northeast were forced to change. It was around this time that manufacturing began to grow and prosper in Waterville. This economic growth drew immigrant populations into the region. The Christian Arabic-speaking people from Lebanon and the Catholic French-speaking people from Quebec were drawn by the burgeoning economic opportunities, which were far better than the opportunities for successful survival in the homes these immigrants left behind.

Prior to the arrival of immigrants from Quebec, Lebanon, and other areas Waterville contained predominantly Protestant peoples of English (Anglo-Saxon) and Scottish origin. Like their compatriots in other parts of New England, these people developed a distinct cultural life and came to be referred to as "Yankee" The early history of Waterville indicates that the Yankees owned vast tracts of land that they had been given in deeds by the Massachusetts and later the Maine state governments. These people had links with the sea coast where some of the farm goods and early industrial items were shipped. Additionally, the Yankees were linked with important religious networks, such as the Baptist and Congregationalist communities. Many of the Yankee men who established businesses in Waterville had business interests elsewhere in Maine and in Massachusetts. Thus by the time the French-Canadian and Lebanese people began to travel to Waterville, many Yankee families were well

established, propertied, and had a vested interest in maintaining their position in Waterville society.

Chapter IV: French-Canadian Migration to Waterville

Waterville holds a unique position in the history of French-Canadian migration into the state of Maine. Waterville's French-Canadian community is the oldest in the state, excluding the settlements in Northern Maine, and as a result the patterns of development remain distinct from other Maine towns with large French-Canadian populations. In addition, Waterville essentially had two waves of migration which produced a more stratified French-Canadian community. The first wave came during the early to mid-1800s while the second wave took place around the turn of the century. Thus some families had well-established roots in Waterville when a second wave of French speaking people from Quebec came to settle in the town.

Early Colonial History : The Roots of French-Canadian Migration to the US

In 1827 Jean-Baptiste Mathieu was the first French-Canadian to settle in Waterville.⁴⁹ As he traveled from Quebec southward into Maine he worked as a

⁴⁹ NOTE: Several sources cite Mr. Mathieu as being the first French-Canadian to settle in Waterville, including the thesis by Albert Fecteau who grew up in the French-Canadian community in town and who is seen as an authority by many members of the community. However, in The Centennial History of Waterville and other publications, other citizens with French last names appear. Most notably Timothy Boutelle, a prominent and wealthy citizen, has a French last name. The connections and implications here are unclear, however it is worth bearing in mind that Waterville was in a frontier area for quite some time and it is highly plausible that other French-Canadians lived in the Waterville area before Mr. Mathieu. Yet, Mathieu is also worth mentioning because he is a solid historical figure who a large number of Waterville French-Canadians look back to and hold up as their 'founding father.'

food supplier for lumber camps and small villages. As Mathieu established his food supply networks more and more, he decided to settle in Waterville because of its central location and connections with many Central Maine communities. However, the reasons Mathieu and subsequent travelers after him originally came to Maine are critical for understanding the ethnic community that was established in Waterville. The reasons so many French-Canadians traveled to Maine are numerous and are layered in the history of colonization, conquest, and religious strife in North America. In order to fully understand the social climate in Quebec that spurred the migration of French-Canadians to a new country, it is necessary to examine the history that precipitated this mass exodus out of the Quebec country-side and into all parts of New England.

It is critical to bear in mind that the first French explorers in North America traveled widely through the continent and a vast portion of what is today the United States was once under French control. In addition to Canada, the French had established many outposts such as St. Louis, Détroit, Chicago, New Orléans, and Pittsburgh, known then as Fort Duquesne.⁵⁰ They had created a virtual French corridor through the interior of the continent. Oftentimes the vastness of this French empire is forgotten amidst the pieces of the later history that detail the fall of French power in the New World. However, for French-Canadians and Franco-Americans this history is vital to fully understand their position in North America.

The French goals in the New World differed greatly from those of the English. In particular, the fur trade lured the French and Dutch to the New World. By the end of the sixteenth century in Europe, the beaver population had declined rapidly in Europe and thus this animal was eagerly sought in North America. In 1608 Quebec City was established and became the base for the Company of New France. Quebec played a major role in the growth of trade in North America, along with New Amsterdam (New York).⁵¹ Quebec was the central link between the Maritimes, the St. Lawrence, the Great Lakes, and the forts along the rivers of the interior. The French had continuous contact with various Native American groups, such as the Abenaki, Huron, and Iroquois, as they continually pushed westward in search of untapped beaver grounds. These men who wandered through the northern part of the continent were called *coureauseurs des bois* (frontiersmen). Thus the French goals in North America were very directive; they sought furs and other goods that could be extracted and pumped into the European market for economic gain. Their strategies for expanding their trade networks led them to gain vast territories, yet they did not focus on settling their territories with French citizens.

Despite the small numbers of settlers, one key aspect of New France was the emphasis on the church and spreading of the Catholic Faith. In 1642 it was French missionaries who founded Montréal and many missionaries worked

⁵⁰ Ledoux, Denis, Lives in Translation. p. 12.

⁵¹ Wolf, Eric. Europe and the People Without History. p. 161.

endlessly to convert Native Americans to Catholicism. Most importantly, the seventeenth century was a time of Catholic Revival in France. This situation resulted in the firm establishment of a church-oriented province of Quebec, which has strongly influenced the lives of French-Canadians and Franco-Americans for generations. “[T]he destiny of New France was shaped by the fact that in the 17th century, the great age of Catholic Revival in France, the renewed energy of the Church found in America an outlet from the restraint imposed at home by the dominance of the state.”⁵² In 1663 Canada was made a royal province and at this time there was some attempt made to increase the population. Very few of these settlers were merchants or professionals; the vast majority were poor peasants from rural areas who were enticed to try their luck in the New World. Among the settlers who were in Canada or New France there were very few women. As a result, the French king made a concerted effort to send women of marriageable age to the settlements. One such “shipment” of women was labeled the “King’s Women” and essentially consisted of prostitutes who were “encouraged” to settle in Canada. Other “shipments” of women were extracted from the orphanages all over France. These unwanted children, who had a very limited number of future options in France, were skimmed out of the cities of France and placed in North America.

The encouragement of settlement in New France did not last long as King Louis XIV increasingly turned his attention to French influence in Europe. At

⁵² Wade, Mason. The French Canadians, 1760-1967, Vol. 1. p. 4

the same time the English began to rest their gaze on North America, and with purposes very different from those of the French. For the English, the eastern seaboard of North America was a place to send citizens to relieve population pressures and to create a permanent settlement for trading ventures. The different colonizing goals of France and England were reflected in the social climate in their settlements in North America. The English were more focused on creating European-like settlements while the French only sent certain members of French society who worked more within the native frameworks (at least initially). Additionally, the number of settlers in the respective colonies provide perspective on the situation being established and also indicate a pattern that has remained with the French in North America to this day. In 1750, New France had 60,000 French residents while England's colonies to the south had 1.25 million people.⁵³

This time period—the mid-eighteenth century—marks the beginning of a succession of territorial losses of great magnitude for France. Many of the European conflicts from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had spread into North America in the form of English versus French settlers, with each side utilizing Native Americans in their battles of strategy and trade. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 forced France to cede the mainland of Acadia (present day Nova Scotia and parts of New Brunswick), part of Newfoundland, and ports on the Hudson Bay to England. Skirmishes continued through the early part of

⁵³ Wade, Mason. The French-Canadians, 1760-1976, Vol. 1. p. 18.

the century until 1755 when the Seven Years War (known as the French and Indian War in North America) began in Europe. The conflict had already begun on the North American continent and it ultimately resulted in the British taking the French fort of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in 1758, Quebec City in 1759, and Montréal in 1760. The English had conquered New France, and thus the French became conquered peoples living under foreign rule. The following passage details the magnitude and importance of these events for the descendants of the French in North America today:

The events of 1755 were the beginning not only of a new North American war but also of a dizzying series of conquests, revolutions, migrations and diplomatic manoeuvres that would change the face of the continent. Within less than fifty years every part of North America between the Gaspé and the Rocky Mountains would undergo at least one change of sovereignty and some would undergo two or three, and a country that did not yet exist at the beginning of this period would be the continent's dominant power at its end. There had been an arc of French territory stretching from Labrador to the Gulf of Mexico, but after 1803 France was gone from North America and its last hope of a North American empire had vanished. The majority of the French-speaking North Americans now lived under British sovereignty, the rest under the sovereignty of the United States.⁵⁴

The French Under English Rule and the Emergence of La Survivance

Suddenly the French in Canada found themselves in a marginalized position under the domination of English rulers. This set up a pattern of negative relationships in Canada that ultimately lead to a series of massive

⁵⁴ Chodos, Robert and Eric Hamovitch. Quebec and the American Dream. p 28.

migrations out of Quebec throughout the next century. The conflict between the French and English had left much of Canada in ruins and for many French families finding a way to make a living was a challenge. The entire French colonial system was altered and the French settlers had to adjust to an entirely new system of governance under the rule of a country with radically different colonial goals. In New France it was the French king, the colonial governor, and the Catholic clergy who held power and directed the colonial society. After 1759, of these original three, it was only the Catholic Church that retained power. The governor and the influence of the king was automatically cut off when the English won the French territory through conquest; however, the bishops of the church worked with the English in order to retain their position in the colony.⁵⁵ The church became a rallying point for the French, as it was the only remaining sphere of French leadership, the only stable institution in an unstable, war-damaged colony. The church clergy was pleased because they were able to retain their influence and prestige and the French people became staunchly tied to their religion as a source of faith, protection, and identity. This moment in time can be thought of as the birth of *la survivance*, the French-Canadian (and later Franco-American) concept of maintaining the French culture, language, and religion in the face of oppression and English influence from all sides.

The English in essence forced the French—who had previously been employed as trappers and traders—into the role of small town farmers, a role

⁵⁵ Person A. *Personal Interview*. 1/26/99.

they were untrained for. The French became *habitants*, people anchored to the land. As Dyke Hendrickson explains, the English would later “-sow the seeds of industrialization in Quebec and Montreal, but the French were not to be a part of this new wave of economic activity and prosperity. Discrimination, if not outright exclusion, kept the *habitants* anchored to the earth.”⁵⁶ Rural Canada was particularly poor, and the *habitants* had a hard time farming in the fields on the St. Lawrence plains due to the generally poor quality of the soil. The growing season was short and families could rarely raise enough produce to sell any excess from their yearly crops. The French farmers would labor anywhere from 12-16 hours a day to raise their crops, children would work along side parents which left little time for any formal education for the *habitants*.⁵⁷ Due to the need for lots of laborers in the fields French families had many children. It was common to have as many as 15 children in one household. However, it was ultimately the church that encouraged French families to have lots of children. The church clergy sanctioned the large families because it was a way to build a power base. It was both in-line with Catholic philosophy and provided the clergy with more people to rule over. This phenomenon was called the “revenge of the cradle” and it allowed the French to quietly resist their English rulers. By numerically having more French Catholic people in Canada the French population (led by the Catholic clergy) would be able to resist

⁵⁶ Hendrickson, Dyke. Quiet Presence. p. 17.

⁵⁷ Hendrickson, Dyke. Quiet Presence. p. 18.

domination more effectively. There were only about 60,000 French settlers when the English conquered them and the French sought to bolster their numbers in order to compete with the English and continue their struggle for *la survivance*.

While children were vital to the success of Quebec farms⁵⁸ and the large numbers of children increased the size of parishes, problems arose when the children grew into adulthood. Often the family farm was given to the eldest son in the family; occasionally it was divided up among all the sons of the family. In either case, it became harder to make a living for each successive generation and the English rulers blocked the French out of many other economic avenues in Canada. Farming was truly the only job for the majority of the French people in Canada. Many of the French began farming life under destabilized conditions with no previous agricultural knowledge and limited access to resources—such as machinery and tools—for farming. Thus by the nineteenth century, farming methods in Quebec were antiquated and roads were poor, making it difficult to move goods between rural communities.⁵⁹ With little education and the need for jobs, many French-Canadians began to look southward into New England.

⁵⁸ Please note that previous discussion of New France and Canada was inclusive of the entire geographical regions (meaning what is today the Maritime Provinces, Quebec, Ontario, etc.). From this point on, the discussion focuses on Quebec because nearly all the French-Canadian immigrants in Waterville came from Quebec. The particular histories of the former Acadian French Province and the French settlers in the St. John Valley in Northern Maine are very different from the history of Quebec.

⁵⁹ Allen, James Paul. Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography. p. 62-3.

Early Migration into Maine

Those French-Canadians who traveled to Kennebec County (where Waterville is located) made use of the Native American route through the Kennebec River Valley. This route was used by Native Americans, Jesuits, and traders during the 1700s. Benedict Arnold's army used this route to bring troops into Quebec during war time. As more people began to use this route during the early nineteenth century it evolved into the "Kennebec Road." The town of Waterville along with other Maine towns agreed to help build-up the Kennebec (or Canada) Road during the 1820s, and as the road improved more French families were enticed to travel southward.⁶⁰ The Maine residents had a reason to push northward and improve the road—the Maine farmers could get better prices for their beef and livestock in Quebec than they could in Boston. In addition the Canadian buyers would pay in silver coin, which was a benefit because the US paper currency was not as stable at this point in time.⁶¹ The road became a well established through-way and during the 1830s it was the major stage coach route between Boston and Quebec.

Thus while the road was built up intentionally by many Maine towns, the road was also used by the French in Quebec for commerce, “-such as regular trips to the Maine coast for cod to sell in Canada.”⁶² Thus many French used the

⁶⁰ Fecteau, Albert. *The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine*, p. 12-13.

⁶¹ Allen, James Paul. *Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography*, p. 62.

⁶² Bangor Daily News. “Graduate Student Searches for the Long-lost Canada Road.” April 30, 1997 (from

road to travel south and in the early years there was a great deal of nomadic migration between towns along the Kennebec Road. Many of the French-Canadians who traveled into Maine did not intend to settle permanently. Instead they traveled to Maine and other New England states as a way to supplement their livelihood. Many of the earliest French-Canadians who traveled to the Kennebec County area sought seasonal jobs in lumber yards, shipyards, quarries, sawmills, and worked on log drives, making bricks out of clay, and haying for farmers in the summer;⁶³ these people, mostly men, would then take their earnings back to Quebec and continue to work family farms for the rest of the year. The people who traveled down the Kennebec Road would come on foot or with a small wagon and would travel from village to village seeking food and employment as they traveled. While the patterns of this migration were to spend a portion of the year in Maine and then return to Quebec, some of the people did relish the freedom traveling into the US provided. For some, it represented freedom from the restrictive family pressures and from the paternalistic Catholic church.

Quebec in the 1820s and 1830s was a region going from bad to worse as land was continually divided and families had no means of accumulating enough money or resources to even move to a more productive area. In addition the appearance of the wheat midge insect devastated a large portion of

UMO, an article about Barry Rodrigue-- PhD candidate in history at Umaine and PhD candidate at Université Laval in Geography)

⁶³ Allen, James Paul. Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography. p. 63.

the wheat crop around this time. With this worsening situation, Louis-Joseph Papineau led a rebellion—Papineau’s Rebellion—against the English government in 1837-8. The *habitants* wanted a better life, they were fed up with their poverty and lack of representation in government. In the end, the rebels numbered 2,000 while the organized state force numbered 8,000; needless to say, the rebellion was quickly crushed and the punishment severe. Many people were imprisoned and rebellion leaders killed.⁶⁴ Many of the participants fled, and others who had not participated were further frustrated by the English government’s response and began to look beyond French Canada for a new home. Many people traveled to the Canadian west or the American Midwest, but the vast majority opted to travel south into New England.

From this point on, the migration of French-Canadians was largely a migration of families, although some enterprising young men continued to venture into Maine in search of work alone. Whole villages would network with each other between the US and Quebec and often times families from the same village would settle together in the US. In the case of Waterville, the majority of the French-Canadians were from the Beauce region in Quebec where the Chaudiere River is located. Throughout Quebec during this time, parish records indicate that whole families would leave at one time and re-establish themselves together in new, foreign American towns. In Waterville, the first French-Canadians settled in the south end of town, in a region that came to be known as

⁶⁴ Hendrickson, Dyke. Quiet Presence. p. 20.

“the Plains.” This area is next to the Kennebec River and geographically has the lowest elevation in the town. The area is bordered by a sharp hill rising up to form the next plateau or level of the town. This hill serves to demarcate the Plains and also acts as a kind of social border between the French and other residents in Waterville.

The French were markedly poorer than the Yankees in Waterville and often only had a few belongings and perhaps—if a family was particularly lucky—some domesticated animals. Many of the original French families were too poor to build their own wooden homes and thus many French “-sought steep slopes into which they dug shelters which were then reinforced with slabs or rough planks and used as temporary homes. In front of such excavations, they usually built a rude facade so as to block the entrance and give this new “home” a more acceptable appearance.”⁶⁵

These first settlers found a variety of jobs in the Waterville area that provided the financial security they needed. In many cases the French-Canadians could make more money in a few months in the US than they could make in an entire year in Quebec. Some French-Canadians worked in saw mills such as the W. W. Getchell and Smith & Meader. Also, some were employed by the Waterville Iron Works. Others worked in the steamboat services for river transportation companies.⁶⁶ With the arrival of the railway system in Kennebec

⁶⁵ Fecteau, Albert. The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine. p. 14.

⁶⁶ Fecteau, Albert. The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine. p. 16.

County, the use of the river for most transportation halted; most French-Canadian workers left their jobs working for the river companies and began to work for railroad companies. Ultimately, many French-Canadians were employed by the Maine Central Railroad (MCRR). Importantly, many French did not take up farming, the one job they were sufficiently skilled in.

While more and more families did travel to Maine, especially after Papineau's Rebellion, people did consistently travel between their old homes and the new ones in Maine. Often times these trips back would encourage more French to leave Quebec after hearing the stories of the economic opportunities to the south. Many families still owned their farms in Quebec and sometimes sons who grew up in Maine would return to Quebec to take over the family farm when they reached adulthood. Thus the lines of connection between the old and new homes were strong and remained so well into the twentieth century.

The Second Wave of Migration to Maine

To understand the French community in Waterville it is most important to bear in mind that the community was well established in pre-industrial Waterville. The Plains, where the first settlers had set up their sod homes, evolved over time into a community with houses and one main road, Water Street, running parallel to the Kennebec River. The original settlers on the Plains

were often single men involved in lumber yard work, sawmills, the steamboat industry, and, by the 1850s, the railroad. Many of these men settled down, later encouraging relatives to join them in Waterville. Thus even before Waterville became an industrial center reliant on French-Canadian labor, there was an established link with Quebec and a French identity in the town. This is a very marked difference between Waterville and other industrial New England towns such as Biddeford, Lewiston, Manchester, Woonsocket, and Lowell. These towns did not have any French-Canadian residents prior to the growth of industries in the area. Consequently, the French who flocked to these growing industrial centers established communities that had a different physical lay out, organization, and mindset than the community in Waterville.

The French were an integral factor in the success and volume of productivity of the textile mills of New England. However, they did not enter the textile mills en mass until after the mid-1800s. In the early days the mills, such as Samuel Slater's mill in Rhode Island, were small operations largely employing local people. In the case of the Hathaway Shirt Factory in Waterville, local young farm girls served as the laborers. The industrialists in New England, who were trying to make use of the enormous amounts of cotton being produced in the South and link the new nation together economically, were initially successful. This success allowed them to rapidly expand their enterprises. As the size of the mills grew, the labor pool also shifted. The expansion of New England mills coincided with major Irish immigrations.

These new Irish workers were willing to take jobs with low wages and long hours, which the Yankee laborers were less willing to do. The shift in the labor pool marks the time in which the industrial efforts in the Northeast became colossal and the health and safety conditions in the mills declined. After the Irish became entrenched as mill workers, the French began to arrive in large numbers from Quebec.

The Civil War era brought many more French-Canadians into the Northeast for two reasons. First, the Union Army needed recruits, and for desperate French-Canadians who were suffering in Quebec the option of going to war to travel and earn money seemed like a viable option. "It is estimated that out of 40,000 enlistees in New England, 36,000 were French-Canadians. In some regiments from Northern New England so many of the privates were from Quebec that French was the prevailing tongue."⁶⁷ Secondly, war stimulates the economy by providing a huge demand for specific war paraphernalia. For the textile industries in Maine, such as the Hathaway Shirt Co., the war provided more jobs, production, and money. This in turn meant more French-Canadians could find jobs in Maine, which kept up the pace of migration. This was the time of active recruitment by New England mills in the Quebec countryside. Mill owners began to recognize that the French-Canadians were welcome workers; they were desperate for work, would agree to lower wages than the Yankee employees, and were uncomplaining. As Albert Fecteau describes:

“Agents [from the mills] were sent through the Quebec countryside to stimulate emigration. Thus, the movement which had been a trickle, turned into a flood.”⁶⁸

Many of the French who traveled to large textile centers in New England were the first wave of French-Canadian settlers in the area, whereas those who traveled to industrializing Waterville can be thought of as part of a second wave. Additionally, the French traveled to areas such as Lewiston with the idea that they would work for a few years, save their earnings, and return home to Quebec. Unlike many other immigrant populations in the US during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the French-Canadians had the advantage of having their homeland only a matter of hours away. In order to preserve their language and cultural distinctiveness—to continue *la survivance*—while working in Yankee dominated, English-speaking New England the French built closed-off *Petit Canadas*, or Little Canadas. These enclaves were virtual fortresses constructed to seal the French-Canadians off from the other ethnic groups around them. If the French were going to return to Canada and retain their French heritage, they did not want to become integrated into American life.⁶⁹ Importantly, the French Catholic clergy wanted to retain their position of control over their parishioners. The first French people to leave Quebec were

⁶⁷ Fecteau, Albert. *The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine*. p. 7.

⁶⁸ Fecteau, Albert. *The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine*. p. 8.

⁶⁹ NOTE: It is important to understand the complexity of the situation involving *la survivance* and the *petits canadas*. The French-Canadians will describe that they chose to cut themselves off from American society from the beginning. This may be the case, yet at the same time there were boundaries in place that kept the

denounced by the clergymen as renegades who were abandoning their families and homeland. Those who left were a threat to the French clergy because it was the size of the French population that allowed the clergy to maintain some power in English-dominated Canada. However, as more and more families were leaving their villages the church opted to move with them and maintain a network of control that extended into New England.

By the 1860s and 1870s the call for workers in New England industries penetrated into villages all over Quebec and the French knew they could earn a better living in the mills than on their farms. Trainloads of French-Canadians would pour into New England during certain high points of the migration. The people would exit the train, walk to the local mill where they were handed a job, and then find housing within the *Petit Canada*. These transactions were usually done entirely in French. The *Petit Canadas* were virtual fortresses, they blockaded the French in and kept everyone else out. As the communities grew, parishes were founded and the churches were built inside of the *Petit Canadas*. Small neighborhood grocery stores were opened by the French and many communities had French language newspapers.

In light of these trends, Waterville stands out as slightly different on several levels. Because of the existence of many French families in Waterville prior to the establishment of the larger factories such as the Hollingsworth & Whitney, Lockwood, and Wyandotte, there was not as much of a sense that the

French-Canadians in narrowly defined geographical spaces and in certain kinds of jobs.

French community was blockaded into a French fortress. In addition to the Plains, where the majority of the French-Canadians lived, there was also a French enclave in the North end of town near the Railway station. Those French-Canadians who worked for Maine Central Railroad and wanted to live closer to their place of employment settled in the North end. Additionally, some French-Canadians lived in the Head-of-the-Falls and King Court area of town, which is directly adjacent to the Lebanese section of town. This area is not far from the Plains and was very centrally located between the Lockwood mill, the Wyandotte Woolen mill, and the Hathaway Shirt Factory, the three largest employers of French people in town.

Despite the differing physical geography and the age of the Waterville French community, many of the French people coming to Waterville from Quebec during the period from 1860-1900 seemed to share the same ideal of returning to the family farm that French migrants to other industrial areas had. In this way the newer French migrants differed from the French-Canadians who had settled in Waterville during the early half of the nineteenth century. Many of the first wave French settlers had become more established and had abandoned more of their French-Canadian culture. Some scholars indicate that during the earlier period those French who traveled into Maine did not face as much hostility, were more entrepreneurial, and were more easily incorporated into the life of Maine Yankee towns. In addition, many of the first wave settlers were bilingual because they came “-from diffusing frontier societies of Quebec

and the Beauce.”⁷⁰ In Waterville, many of the French families were very established by the time industrialization began to grow. Many of them had assimilated into local Yankee culture and had anglicized their names. The changing of last names from French sounding to more English sounding ones was a phenomenon that occurred in Waterville far more than in other towns with French-Canadian communities.⁷¹

Thus the first wave of French people was well established in the town when the second wave began. Part of the attractiveness of Waterville to the French who came to settle during the 1860s-1920s was the existence of a flourishing French community on the Plains. The establishment of the Lockwood mill in 1874 drew the largest number of French from Canada into Waterville. The French learned of the mill and had been hired by mill agents or recruiters who had traveled to Quebec in search of laborers.⁷² The Lockwood mill owned some boarding houses, or “maisons de la compagnie,” where workers could live. Others rented out rooms in private homes on the Plains, such as the Bang’s estate.⁷³ Additionally, the second wave settlers expanded the French community in the North end of town and in the Plains. Frederick Pooler (Poulin) who had come to Waterville in 1848 was a real estate owner and he was instrumental in further developing the Plains as the French population began to

⁷⁰ Rodrigue, Barry. “Graduate Student Searches for the Long-lost Canada Road.” Bangor Daily News. April 30, 1997.

⁷¹ Some of the families that had assimilated include the Dubord, Marqis, Laverdier, Cyr, and Joly (a changed name) families. Person B. *Personal Interview*. 1/21/99.

⁷² Fecteau, Albert. The French-Canadians of Waterville, Maine. p.13-14.

swell in the city. He held a large estate in the Plains that he divided up and sold to the new immigrants.⁷⁴

The Role of the Catholic Church

As mentioned previously, the Catholic church played a pivotal role in Canada after the English conquest. The church became the central organizational institution in French-Canadian life and this was transported with the French into New England during the periods of migration. The clergy held power as long as they had large numbers of parishioners to direct and from whom to receive financial support. During the first wave of migration into Maine, many clergymen defamed those who left the parishes because the priests were losing part of their power base in the process. They feared that the immigrants would lose their faith and loyalty to the church in the Protestant dominated state of Maine. However, as migration increased, especially with the advent of industrialization in the late 1800s the church began to support the movements. The French-Canadians brought their most cherished institution with them because it was a focal piece of their identity and would help them maintain *la survivance* in this new context.

⁷³ Fecteau, Albert. The French-Canadians of Waterville, Maine. p. 14.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 14.

When the first French-Canadians arrived in Waterville, there was no Catholic Church. In order to keep up their faith, the French-Canadians held mass in local homes. Father Moise Fortier was the pastor of St. Georges Parish in Beauce County, Quebec and he began to make missionary visits to the growing French-Canadian community in Waterville during the 1840s. He performed marriages, confirmations, heard confessions, and baptized children. Father Fortier also visited other French-Canadian communities in Maine during his visits.⁷⁵ Some Waterville residents would also travel to Quebec for the express reason of visiting the Catholic Church to perform some of the major sacraments such as baptism and marriage. Many of the earliest baptismal records of Waterville's French-Canadian immigrants are today housed in St. Georges Parish in Quebec.

As Catholic immigrants arrived, some Protestant denominations from within the Yankee community began to encourage the French-Canadian children to attend the Protestant Sunday schools in the hopes of converting the children and thereby affecting the future religious affiliation of the new community. One of the most drastic measures taken to convert the French away from their Catholicism was taken up by C.F. Hathaway, the founder of the successful shirt factory. Hathaway believed it was his God-given duty to work with the poor French immigrants living on the Plains. In 1857 he began a Sabbath school and prayer meeting on the Plains, then in 1858 he was given charge of the mission

⁷⁵ Chenard, Robert E. St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church. p. 2-3.

school of the Baptist Church. This mission school was begun by Jonathan Furbush, a theology student from Colby College, who left the school in disarray. Hathaway's religious convictions prompted him to devote time, money and energy into promotion of the Baptist faith on the Plains for the next twelve years. Hathaway even went to the trouble of finding Protestant religious tracts that were written in French so that he could reach a larger percentage of the population.⁷⁶

In 1852 a Catholic church was finally constructed in Waterville. The building of the church was coordinated primarily by the activity of Father John Bapst, a Swiss born Jesuit missionary who was assigned to minister the Catholics living in Old Town, Maine. Many different priests came to Waterville after Father Fortier, but it was Father Bapst who made the largest impact during his visits.⁷⁷ In 1869 the St. Francis de Sales Parish was founded in Waterville under the dioceses of Portland.⁷⁸ The Catholic Church began to gain more influence in Waterville after the founding of this parish and the Catholic leaders identified a drastic need for religious education in the town. Father Charland was the leading pastor in the Catholic Church in Waterville and observed the poverty of his parish and the destitute position of the French-Canadian children. "About

⁷⁶ LaPierre, Louis Leonard. C.F. Hathaway Company: The First One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years. p. 26.

⁷⁷ NOTE: More information regarding Father Bapst is located in the next segment of Chapter IV.

⁷⁸ NOTE: In 1905 Sacred Heart Parish was founded and in 1911 Notre Dame Parish was founded. Today Notre Dame Church has the largest congregation of the Waterville Catholic churches. Notre Dame church was first located on Water Street in the Plains, but now has been rebuilt on Silver Street a few blocks above the Plains. Sacred Heart church is known as the Irish or English Church in town because its leadership and orientation was distinctly different from the Franco-American Catholic churches.

one third [of the French-Canadian children] were registered in the existing schools. The remaining two thirds were either employed in the factories or working at other menial jobs or roaming the streets.”⁷⁹ Father Charland had appealed to many of the monastic communities in Maine to send nuns to help educate the children, however all his attempts had failed. Finally in 1887, Sister Marie du Sacré Coeur requested from her superior in Three Rivers, Quebec that she be sent to Waterville to be a missionary to the French-Canadians living there. She was from the Ursuline community, which had a long tradition of teaching excellence and high educational standards. Father Charland recognized the profound sacrifice the nuns were taking by agreeing to travel to Waterville to teach the poor people living there. The diocese of Maine was the poorest in the Northeast at the time the Ursulines arrived in Maine and has continued to be the poorest through the twentieth century.⁸⁰

The sisters who arrived and ultimately founded Mt. Merici Academy in 1912 faced severe hardship. They had to share blankets, went with out any payment, and often did not have enough food to eat. In addition, the school rooms were packed with more children than the nuns could handle from the outset. From the beginning, the Mt. Merici parochial school (and the other Waterville parochial schools that opened later) taught in both English and French and emphasized knowledge of both languages. In 1891 the nuns

⁷⁹ Bourassa, Sister Rita. History: Province of the Northeast United States. p. 2

⁸⁰ Person C. *Personal Interview*, 11/6/98.

requested independence from the Ursuline community in Three Rivers. Communication between the two convents was difficult and there were jurisdictional difficulties relating to whether or not the Portland diocese had any control over the Waterville church. Ultimately the Ursulines in Waterville did gain independence and established a strong educational system that enhanced the solidarity of the French-Canadian community in Waterville.

French-Canadian and Yankee Relations during the Two Waves of Migration:

Upon arrival in Waterville the French immediately felt the limitations of the realm within which they had to operate. Many prejudices seem to have arisen immediately between the French and the Yankees. The Yankee community perceived the French-Canadian religion as a potential threat to the solidarity of their Protestant community. The Yankees feared that their religious values would be compromised if a sizable Catholic population began to inhabit the region. Many Yankees began to encourage the French-Canadian children to attend the Protestant Sunday schools in the hopes of converting the children and thereby affecting the future religious affiliation of the new community. Additionally, the fact that the Baptists in Waterville set up a "mission" school indicates how separate the two communities were; the Yankees saw the French-Canadians as a very different group of people who needed to be changed

somehow. The physical separation of the French and the concrete plan of the Protestant groups to establish schools and send in missionaries indicates just how drastic the divide was between these two groups in Waterville from the very beginning. Rather than incorporating these new immigrants into the community and accepting them as "normal" the people were separated from the Yankees because of their lower class status, because of their language, their traditions, and their religion. They were given only certain types of jobs by those in charge of the local Waterville economy which further solidified the immigrants into what came to be perceived as a homogenous group.

From the outset, the parochial schools taught half in French and half in English, reflecting the pressure from the local community to conform to the norms of the dominant society. Even though by 1900 around half of the town's population was French-speaking, English was still emphasized. The fact that the parochial schools emphasized learning English well suggests that the French were led to believe they needed to change their habits to successfully survive in Waterville.

It is of paramount importance to understand that the establishment of clearly defined Catholic communities in Maine was met with hostility from some Yankees. The climate of hostility most clearly indicates how deep the ethnic divides were and how powerful some Yankees could be when expressing their perceived superiority. In particular the hate group known as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) reacted severely against the Catholics. In Waterville "-St. Johns [Catholic

Church] did not have a steeple nor belfry—perhaps to keep the building unobtrusive and thus not draw attention to it since there were, in that period, a number of religious bigots and KKK members throughout this state who objected to, feared the presence of, and even hated the "Papists" (i.e., Roman Catholics)."⁸¹

In the early days of the Franco-American community in the Plains, there was a great deal of open animosity between the "-young men of the "Plains" and the young men of the town...Whenever a group of young men, either visited the town or the "Plains", they always came in bands strong enough for offense or defense, as the case might require. On many occasions, the French warriors imported some redoubtable battler from Bangor or Orono, to retrieve disaster or lead their clan to victory."⁸² Even within this description it becomes evident who was considered legitimate and who was not. The French were from "the Plains" and not from "the town." The French-Canadians were not even given a space to live that was considered to be part of the town. This evidence hints at the kind of marginalized position these immigrants were given from the start.

While there appear to be no recorded incidences of out-right hate acts targeted at Roman Catholics specifically in Waterville, the following passage explains how Father Bapst met with the issue of religious-ethnic hatred head-on:

⁸¹ Chenard, Robert E. St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church. p. 3. NOTE: St. John's was a small wooden church built in the Plains prior to the founding of the St. Francis de Sales parish and church.

⁸² Fecteau, Albert. The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine. p. 22.

In Bangor he [Father Bapst] opened a Catholic school in an old chapel. The chapel was blown up by the bigots. He then moved the school into the Catholic church and the church as well as his residence were stoned. In July 1852, an attempt was made to burn the church. In October of that year (as pastor in Bangor), he went to Ellsworth to hold services for the handful of Catholics there, but was seized, dragged naked, tarred and feathered, made to run the gauntlet and left abandoned to die. He managed to survive this terrible ordeal and held religious services the following day. A Grand Jury unanimously failed to indict his attackers and no one was ever punished. But the Bangor newspapers loudly condemned this action and a public meeting expressed strong indignation to the attack upon the priest.⁸³

These severe acts upon the Catholic, predominantly French-Canadian community signifies the depth of the divide between the French and the Yankees in Maine.

As mentioned previously, there were attempts made by the Yankees to convert the French-Canadians away from Catholicism. Some Yankees also encouraged the French-Canadians to become more "like the Americans", for example changing the spelling of French names into more English-sounding ones. The French were told on the one hand that to become American they had to learn how to be like the dominant society—in the case of the name changes, they had to sound more American by speaking English and having more standard, normal names. While some of these efforts may seem to have encouraged the French-Canadians to blend in, there were other messages from the dominant Yankee group that indicated the French were not entirely welcome in the Waterville community. The French were invited to become Baptist, but not to live next door to the Yankee Baptists; they could work as farm hands in

⁸³ Chenard, Robert E. St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church. p. 4.

the summer haying season, but they were not encouraged to own their own farms. All kinds of historical documents refer to the "hard-working", "quiet", "industrious", "law-abiding", and "family-oriented" attitudes of the French-Canadians. These documents were predominantly written by members of the Yankee elite who were commenting down upon the French-Canadians. This commentary indicates that the group in control had the right to criticize or praise the attitudes of the French-Canadians who were perceived as inferior members of the social community.

The long duration of the French-Canadian migration into Waterville and the differing conditions people came under affected how the community formed in the town. Those who came in the first wave were certainly adversely affected by British rule, however on the whole they seemed to be more merchants or business people. Those who came around the time of Papineau's Rebellion came directly out of a scenario of turmoil and fear. And still others who came during the second wave had been farming for a few generations and were starving due to prolonged adverse economic conditions in Canada. Often times during the second wave multiple families from the same village would move to the same New England town within a few months of each other. This spurt after spurt of families coming to Waterville under different conditions made for a very complex French-Canadian community. It appears that members of the first wave were not well received, however they were able to establish themselves in the town and the jobs they took on were not so drastically removed from the

Yankees in the town as were the factory jobs that French-Canadians took later in the nineteenth century. The French-Canadians of the first wave tended to Anglicize their names more readily and some became relatively prosperous. They did not feel an instant bond with the French-Canadians who came out of Quebec during the second wave. This is not to say that they had fused with the Yankees in town either. However, it does point out that those French in the first wave had arrived during a time when the boundaries of permissibility were different and out of those boundaries they had created a certain world view for themselves. When more French-Canadians poured out of Quebec in the 1870s, 80s, and 90s, the boundaries shifted. These newer arrivals were often recruited, they were coming for a very specific kind of job, and they Yankee factory owners had a vision of how they wanted their laborers to act. These circumstances were very different from the circumstances when the first wave immigrants arrived. Also, some first wave French were more affluent and appear to have offered services—for example selling land or renting out rooms—to the new arrivals.

One final point that makes Waterville distinctly different from other parts of Maine is that there was not a sizable population of Irish Catholics in the town. In many of Maine's growing urban centers there were large numbers of both French-Canadians and Irish. This caused tensions because in the US the Catholic church hierarchy was dominated by Irish-Americans. In Lewiston and other areas, there were long periods of tension that resulted in many of the Franco-American churches splitting away from the Irish dominated ones. This was a

trend all across the US. However, few Irish immigrants settled in Waterville. Many of the Irish immigrants traveled to North America at the same time the French-Canadians were leaving Quebec. Many of the ships transporting Irish immigrants out of Ireland during the height of the potato blight were British owned. Due to the British desire to add to the population of Canada, many of the Irish were dropped off in ports in Quebec and the Maritime provinces. Once in Canada, many of the Irish would travel down the Kennebec Road and other old Native American trading roads through Maine to seek jobs in the US.⁸⁴ In many cases, the Irish were bound for the larger cities with large employers and Waterville did not retain many of the passer-bys. Certainly there were some who remained in the area, and the transient population moving through the region must have had some effect. However, Waterville is unique in Maine in that it has one of the oldest French-Canadian populations and had a very small Irish one. Thus the ethnic issues in Waterville were somewhat unique compared to other large industrializing towns in Maine.

⁸⁴ See: Mundy, James H. Hard Times, Hard Men.

Chapter V: Lebanese Settlement in Waterville

As Waterville grew its population began to increase dramatically after 1880⁸⁵ and immigrants from places other than Quebec began to settle in the area in larger numbers. Immigrants from Lebanon began to arrive in Waterville during the late nineteenth century and they established what grew to be a sizable, influential Lebanese community. While the numbers of the Lebanese immigrants were on a far lesser scale than the French, the Lebanese community was similar in its establishment of a separate, identifiable neighborhood, church, parochial school, and cultural club in the town. In a sense, the Lebanese, Franco-American, and Yankee communities in Waterville can be thought of as a kind of triumvirate of power and influence. Each of these three groups have altered their relationships with one another over time, played pivotal roles in the shaping of the town, and all three remain recognizable powers in some form today.

⁸⁵ See: Waterville Population Graph in Appendix.

The Early History of Syria-Lebanon

The first Lebanese people to live in Maine came as peddlers, which was a job also held by Jewish immigrants. Prior to the Jewish and Lebanese peddlers, Yankee men held the job. The state government would issue peddler's licenses and then peddlers would stake out specific trade routes in towns and on rural roads. They would sell wares such as needles, thread, pins, yarn, watches, pots and pans, and jewelry.⁸⁶ Many of the items they carried, such as silk from the Orient, were rare, especially in rural areas that often did not have a single store. Many of the Lebanese immigrants who came to North and South America around the turn of the century started out as peddlers who then turned became merchants or store owners. Others became industrial workers or craftsmen. Why did the Lebanese travel to the US and become peddlers? More specifically, why would they venture into rural Maine? As with the case of the French-Canadians, it is important to examine what forces prompted the Lebanese to travel to Waterville in order to properly contextualize Waterville's Lebanese community. The homes that the Lebanese left behind and their former lifestyles are reflected in the ways they established themselves in Waterville.

The country of Lebanon was established in 1946. However during the time of massive Lebanese immigration into the US, what is today considered modern Lebanon was part of the historic province of Syria within the Ottoman

Empire. Thus the immigrants who came to the US from what is the present day territory of Lebanon were labeled by the immigration authorities as Syrians. This region in the Middle East has a long history of conquest and throughout the centuries many different peoples have been in control of the area. Beginning in 1516 the Ottoman Empire ruled over this territory and it was administered as two provinces, a northern district including Tripoli and a southern region including Sidon.

Before discussing the social and political climate in Syria-Lebanon⁸⁷ that led to massive immigration, it is necessary to review the religious affiliations which play largely into some of the conflicts within the Empire as a whole. In particular, this paper will focus on the history of the Maronites because the overwhelming majority of the Syrian-Lebanese immigrants in Waterville were Maronite. The Maronites are a Christian group whose origins date back to 400 C.E. A Christian monk named Maron who lived around this time inspired many people to follow Jesus and embrace Christian tradition and belief. Maron himself was a member of the Church of Syria and after his death his followers founded a monastery in his memory. Maron lived in the area today known as Lebanon and his followers adopted his name as the name of their church. Shortly after the Maronites became a cohesive group, they had to flee into the hills—particularly into the area known as Mount Lebanon—to avoid persecution

⁸⁶ Risen, Celia C. [Some Jewels of Maine: Jewish Maine Pioneers.](#)

⁸⁷ NOTE: I will refer to this territory as Syria-Lebanon and the people from the territory as Syrian-Lebanese to indicate that it is a certain part of the province of Syria that I am referring to and a specific people—all of

by Byzantine emperors and later Muslim Arabs. It was in these hills that their traditions were preserved. The Maronites follow a liturgy that is distinct from the Roman Catholic liturgy. Their spiritual leader is the Patriarch of Antioch. The Maronites use Arabic in their churches, however the liturgy of the mass is in Syriac, a form of Aramaic. The Maronites were always loyal to the pope, however the Patriarch was their spiritual leader and the upholder of their distinct traditions. The Maronites are all Catholic, even though their rite is different from the Latin (Roman Catholic) rite, and they have always been part of the Roman Catholic church. Some other Christian groups who consider the Patriarch of Antioch to be their leader are non-Catholic. This distinction is important to make, especially because Maronite immigrants in the US sought out Catholic churches to worship in, which was not an option for other non-Catholic Christian immigrants from Syria.⁸⁸

As Christians the Maronites were a minority within the framework of the Ottoman Empire. Another important group to take into consideration is the Druze contingent because, as Phillip K. Hitti describes, “-the Druzes and their fellow mountaineers, the Maronites, constituted a thorn in the side of the Turks”⁸⁹ during the Ottoman period (1516-1918). The Druze community formed after the Maronites had established themselves in the Mount Lebanon area.

which later became known as Lebanon.

⁸⁸ NOTE: Some of the other Christian groups in Syria-Lebanon include: Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, those who follow the Syrian rite (both Catholic and non-Catholic), and those who follow the Byzantine rite, such as the Melkites. While this paper focuses largely on the Maronites, when I refer generally to Christians from Syria-Lebanon this includes Maronites and people from the groups listed above as well.

“[D]issident Moslem sectarians and varied ethnic groups—Shi’ites, Isma’ilites, Persians, Arabians—began to infiltrate South Lebanon, to coalesce in the mid-eleventh century into the Druze community.” When the Ottomans took over the Syria-Lebanon area in the sixteenth century, it organized the population based on religious affiliation. Many of the groups such as the Maronite and Druze suffered under Ottoman domination. The fact that the people in Syria-Lebanon were under pressure and facing hardship under this foreign rule is evidenced by uprisings such as the insurrection of 1840. “The Maronite and Druze peasants rebelled against oppression, injustice, and an odious foreign domination; their feudal sheikhs rose to reclaim lost privileges and rights and a prestige which had been heavily trespassed upon.”⁹⁰ While the Turkish troops did return to the area and remained in control, the uniting of the Druze people and the Maronites helped the Syria-Lebanon province remain somewhat autonomous during part of Ottoman rule.

1860-1914: Highlighting the causes of Syrian-Lebanese Immigration

The relationship between the Druze people and the Maronites took a dramatic turn during the mid-1800s. The Maronite peasants had been drifting

⁸⁹ Hitti, Philip K. The Origins of the Druze People and Religion. p. 2

⁹⁰ Salibi, Kamal S. The Modern History of Lebanon. p. 40.

southward⁹¹ into Druze areas and displacing many Druze farmers. Moslem and Christian landlords preferred the Maronites because they had more efficient farming techniques and were very prosperous.⁹² This economic situation produced tensions between the two religious groups of people. The following passage explains the shift away from alliance and into a period of massacre:

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Christian subjects of the sultan had generally grown rich and influential, and had established close commercial, cultural, and sometimes also political contacts with Europe...There were consequently developed, in every part of the Empire, communities of well-to-do Christian townsmen whose prosperity and power aroused the envy of their Moslem neighbours. When, by the Ottoman reform decrees of 1839 and 1856, the Sultan recognized the principle of equality between his Christian and Moslem subjects, the latter were highly incensed. A wave of fanaticism spread all over the Ottoman provinces, and Christians everywhere, as a result found their existence threatened. It seems that in Lebanon the Druzes took advantage of the prevalent Moslem fanaticism; in 1860 they tried to appear as champions of Islam. By doing so they succeeded in gaining the support of the Moslems in the country, and also the sympathy of the local Turkish garrisons and their commanders. Khurshid Pasha himself apparently sympathized with the Druzes, and may also have been guilty of some of the less extravagant accusations brought against him. These being the prevailing conditions, it was only natural that the Lebanese Christians, in spite of all their preparations, were dismayed. Lacking proper leadership, they could only look for help to the European consuls, and felt that only foreign intervention could save their cause.⁹³

In 1859 and 1860, the Druze people lashed out against their Christian enemies. The Maronites and other Christians often ran for protection to Turkish officials or to the French. The French and English throughout the nineteenth century wished to gain influence in the Middle-East, especially in the lands held by the

⁹¹ NOTE: While the Maronites were spread throughout Syria-Lebanon, their highest concentration was in the northern part of Mount Lebanon.

⁹² Kayal, Philip M. and Joseph M. Kayal. The Syrian-Lebanese in America. p. 62-3.

⁹³ Salibi, Kamal S. The Modern History of Lebanon p. 94.

Ottomans, for economic gain and political strategizing.⁹⁴ By allying with the Maronites, the French were able to gain more entrance into the area and extend their influence. Similarly, the English backed the Druzes in this conflict for the same reasons.

Many Christians congregated in town fortresses, fearing to step outside lest the Druzes attack them. Many Christians at this time lost some of their wealth and faced starvation. In some cases, the Druze people negotiated with the Turkish officials and the Turks handed over the Christians to the Druzes. In order to gauge the impact of this period upon the Christian community, it is important to understand the vast numbers of people who perished and how many people were uprooted from their homes. Again, Salibi describes the situation well:

With the massacre of Dayr al-Qamar the violent phase of the 1860 disturbances in Lebanon came to an end. In less than four weeks an estimated total of eleven thousand Christians had been killed, four thousand more had perished of destitution, and nearly a hundred thousand had become homeless fugitives. The Druzes had also lost a number of dead, but otherwise their triumph had been amazing. Now they spoke of crossing over into the northern Kaymakamate and invading the purely Maronite district of the Kisrawan, and it seemed that nothing could stop them. Meanwhile in Beirut, Moslem taunts and threats caused many Christian families to leave the city; some escaped to the Maronite districts in the north, while those who could afford it fled by sea to Greece or Egypt.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ NOTE: The English, French and other European nations had been trying for some time to establish a power base in the Middle-East. They already had some presence before the conflict in 1860 broke out. Using their naval power, these European countries had already established shipping lines in Beirut prior to 1860. It was also partially due to foreign influence that the silk industry grew larger in Syria-Lebanon. The first silk reeling factory in Syria-Lebanon was established by an Englishman. Additionally, Europeans helped spur on the growth in the trade of cotton, barley and hard wheat (used for beer), oranges, and tobacco in the region. See: Orfalea, Gregory. Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans, p. 61.

⁹⁵ Salibi, Kamal S. The Modern History of Lebanon. p. 106.

A vast majority of the Christians fled to Egypt, where educated personnel were needed to help with the modernization plan of Khedive Ismael. This plan brought about the construction of the Suez Canal. Many Syrian-Lebanese Christians prospered in Egypt during this time.

Thus the religious tensions were a cause for the immigrations out of Syria-Lebanon and into Egypt and other Mediterranean areas as well as countries in South America and the US. The Christians in Syria-Lebanon felt oppression throughout the term of Ottoman rule and this culminated when their one-time allies the Druzes also turned against them. Very few of the people who were persecuted during the 1860 massacres actually fled to the US; most Christians from Syria-Lebanon did not start traveling to the US until the 1890s. However, the overall tone of religious persecution remained with the Christians in the area. A Christian who immigrated from Syria-Lebanon to the US during the 1890s or early 1900s would likely have a relative who had died in the massacres, or might have a cousin who had fled into Egypt. Even though the massacres stopped, the atmosphere of hatred and conflict remained in the region. The severity of the massacres remained in the memory of the Christian groups and many of them sought a home where they did not have to fear for their safety and the safety of their children.

The relationship the Syrian-Lebanese province had to the Empire took a critical turn in 1861 when an autonomous Mutesarrifate (subdivision of a

province) was “-created under the guarantee of the European Powers, to include that part of the present Lebanese territory which extends roughly from the watershed of the Lebanon to the sea, excluding the town of Beirut and the regions of Tripoli and Sidon.”⁹⁶ This new subdivision was called Mount Lebanon and was administered from 1861-1915 by a non-Lebanese Ottoman Christian administrator. This administrator was appointed by the Ottomans with the approval of the European Powers⁹⁷ and was responsible directly to Istanbul. In 1864 the Ottomans reorganized their administrative districts. The areas around Tripoli and Sidon were merged together into the vilayet (province) of Beirut. While these changes divided up the territory, the area—which includes modern day Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, and Syria—was still generally referred to as Syria.

While this climate of religious strife is critical to understanding those Syrian-Lebanese who came to the US, of even higher importance is the shifting of the economy and demographic pressures in the region. By and large, the majority of the immigrants were peasants from the lower socio-economic classes.⁹⁸ One of the major causes for change in the economic situation was the restructuring of trade routes and the decline in the Syrian silk industry. Many Maronites had grown noticeably wealthy from silk production during the eighteenth century and nineteenth centuries. This helped to establish their

⁹⁶ Salibi, Kamal S. The Modern History of Lebanon. p. xii.

⁹⁷ NOTE: The term 'European Powers' refers essentially to England and France.

⁹⁸ Khalaf, Samir. "The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration to the United States before

economic ascendancy in the country.⁹⁹ During the time of the Mutesarrifate, many French companies encouraged the establishment of more silk factories and helped propel the industry to new heights. However, this all began to decline around the turn of the century as trade routes changed and it was entirely cut off during World War I. Interestingly, it was the Suez canal that so many Syrian-Lebanese Christians helped to build in Egypt that had such a major impact on Syrian-Lebanese economy during the late 1800s. As Orfalea explains:

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 diverted some of the transit traffic to the East that would ordinarily have stopped for overland transport on the Syrian coast. Steamships going through the Black Sea had a similar effect. Also, high Turkish taxation on loom industries and the lack of tariffs to protect against the onslaught of cheaply priced machine-made goods slipping in from Europe hurt the traditionally strong Syrian cloth industry. Perhaps the most serious blow to the native Syrian economy in the midst of this whirlwind of trade, however, was the silk-worm blight of 1865-1871, which hit sericulture production just as it was beginning to prosper. Though partly aided by the importation of silkworm eggs from France, the production of Syrian silk never really recovered; by the early 1920s, it was down 85 percent from late-nineteenth-century figures.¹⁰⁰

With such a shake-up in the economy, many Syrian-Lebanese were more willing to look for new options in America.

Another key component for understanding the picture of Syrian-Lebanese immigration is the 'cultural awakening' that occurred in the region during the nineteenth century. Many sources label the increase in intellectual and literary

World War I." p. 27.

⁹⁹ Salibi, Kamal S. The Modern History of Lebanon. p.12.

¹⁰⁰ Orfalea, Gregory. Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans, p. 62.

training in Syria-Lebanon as a 'cultural awakening.' Both foreign and native schools were founded during the nineteenth century. As Samir Khalaf describes:

The popular media, through newspapers, periodicals, and books, aroused the consciousness of masses with regard to public issues such as social equality, freedom, liberty, and national and civic consciousness. Participation in voluntary associations, clubs, and literary societies also became more accessible. That awakening, as several writers have observed, was doubtlessly made possible and stimulated by the relative freedom of thought and expression that prevailed in Syria until 1880.¹⁰¹

This shift towards an intellectual, informed society can in large part be attributed to the influences of the French, English, and especially the American missionaries. American Protestant missionaries opened their first public school in 1834 which provided basic educational instruction. More of these schools were founded throughout the century both in Beirut and in the outlying areas. Many of these schools were successful and the Americans would often provide money for native groups to organize and found their own schools. The schools founded by Syrian-Lebanese people "-employed French- or American-educated teachers and used French or English as the language of instruction."¹⁰² In 1866 Syrian Protestant College—later renamed American University of Beirut—was founded and was instrumental in creating a new social group of professional intellectuals.

¹⁰¹ Khalaf, Samir. "The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration to the United States before World War I." p. 28.

¹⁰² Hitti, Philip K. Lebanon in History. p. 460.

The influence of the foreign press also caused many Syrian-Lebanese and other Arab peoples to emulate this medium of communication. While more and more Syrian-Lebanese people were learning French and English, this cultural awakening also rejuvenated the use of the Arabic language. Arabic language newspapers abounded, and Arabic was widely used in the legal, scientific, and philosophical circles. As Philip Hitti animatedly describes:

With this linguistic development [of Arabic] the spirit of the times which had begun to blow on Lebanon in the 1830s almost pervaded the land. It whirred on the wheels of printing presses, spread over the pages of books and periodicals, flashed along telegraphic wires, traveled on trains and other fast vehicles and penetrated to the remotest corners of the mountain. Fanned into a bright flame by emigrants and through such explosive elements as nationalism and political democracy, it rendered Lebanon the first modernized land in the Arab East.¹⁰³

The Syria-Lebanon area, especially with the Mutesarrifate that was partially administered by the English and French, was truly the part of the Middle-East that was most open to Western influences.

While the vast majority of the people leaving Syria-Lebanon around the turn of the century were peasants suffering from economic hardships, many others were inadvertently influenced by the American missionaries who spoke of the modernization occurring in the US and of the economic opportunities available there. While missionaries did not actively encourage people to move to America, immigration was partially a by-product of the American presence in

¹⁰³ Hitti, Philip K. Lebanon in History. p. 468-9.

Syria-Lebanon. In 1880 Sultan Abdul Hamid II repressed the publishing fervor that had been a trademark of the previous decades in Syria-Lebanon. Many books were burned and many writers were fined, expelled or imprisoned. Additionally, towards the end of the nineteenth century the Turkish officials increased the size of taxes expected from the Syrian-Lebanese, which increased the economic pressures throughout the region.

Linked with all of this was the desire to escape from military conscription. The Ottomans initiated many reforms throughout the nineteenth century, many of which were designed to improve the position of minority groups within the empire. This atmosphere of reform culminated in the Constitution of 1908 in which citizenship with equal rights and duties would be granted to all people within the empire. This meant a loss of traditional Muslim superiority and "[f]or Christians it meant that they would be subject to military conscription, a requirement from which they had been exempted since the Muslim invasion of Syria more than twelve centuries earlier."¹⁰⁴ Many Syrian-Lebanese Christians wanted to evade this draft and this further propelled many to leave the country.

Many of the people who left Syria-Lebanon traveled to both North and South America. In South America, many people settled in Argentina and in Brazil. In particular, the Brazilian city of Sao Paulo has a large Lebanese community where many Lebanese families prospered. Others traveled to

¹⁰⁴ Khalaf, Samir. "The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration to the United States before World War I." p. 28.

Mexico or Cuba, and it was not uncommon to have Syrian-Lebanese people work their way from community to community throughout North and South America. Some of the people who settled in Waterville started out in South American countries and worked their way up the coast until they arrived in Maine. Still others started out in the US in states like Maine or New York and worked their way south to communities in South America.¹⁰⁵ Many of the immigrants also traveled back to Syria-Lebanon. It is important to note the impact made by those who returned to their homeland from abroad. Some of those who returned came back permanently and used the wealth they brought back with them to establish new businesses or build impressive homes. Most importantly, they also could tell others about the opportunities abroad, which inevitably encouraged others to leave and try their luck outside of Syria-Lebanon. Finally, money lenders and steamship agents spent their energies in the region telling inflated tales of job-opportunities in America. Their goal was to convince rural peasants to travel abroad and buy fare on their ships or trick them into compulsory labor by making the peasants indebted to them. Sometimes the ploys of steamship owners resulted in Syrian-Lebanese immigrants thinking their ticket would take them all the way to New York City when in fact the ship would drop them off in some other distant port. This

¹⁰⁵ NOTE: For example Sandy Ford's (her family name was Saliba, or 'Sleeper' in the US) grandfather first settled in the Lebanese community in Northern Maine, then headed to Colombia to work and live in the Lebanese community there. He did not like the cold climate of Northern Maine, which is why he traveled to Colombia, however he returned to Maine because the economic opportunities in Maine were far better. Ford, Sandy. *Personal Interview*. 2/26/99.

situation added to the 'community jumping' between different North and South American countries.

For the purposes of this paper the discussion of immigration from Syria-Lebanon does not extend far beyond World War I. However, special notice needs to be given to the peak years of immigration from Syria-Lebanon. In 1913 9,210 people arrived from Syria-Lebanon and in 1914 9,023 did.¹⁰⁶ During World War I the people in Syria-Lebanon were starving to death. The British and the French had blockaded the coast from the moment the Ottomans entered the war on the side of the German Kaiser. The blockade prevented ships from bringing food in, and what little food was being produced in the country went immediately to the Turkish troops. The memory of starvation and deprivation remained with the Syrian-Lebanese immigrants.

The Establishment of a Syrian-Lebanese Community in Waterville

As mentioned above, the most common job for Syrian-Lebanese people in the US was peddling. The migration out of Syria-Lebanon was largely of the younger generations, most notably young men who had been educated in the new Western-oriented schools. As peddlers these young men had a largely

¹⁰⁶ Orfalea, Gregory. Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans, p. 66.

migratory lifestyle during their first few years in the US. Some of the first men to arrive were merchants and businessmen who attended three American world expositions—1876 in Philadelphia, 1893 in Chicago, and 1904 in St. Louis. Many of the young Syrian-Lebanese bachelors would work for a few years, establish themselves, and then return home to find a wife or to live for a few years. It was also excessively common for the immigrants to send money from the US to the family in Syria-Lebanon.

Most of the Syrian-Lebanese who settled in the Northeastern US arrived in New York City. This city soon gained a huge, vibrant Syrian-Lebanese population and the majority of these people lived on or near Washington Street on the Lower West Side. By 1900, over half of the Syrian-Lebanese in America lived in New York City.¹⁰⁷ Many of the men would peddle throughout the city, returning home to the Syrian-Lebanese enclave in the evenings. Many Syrian-Lebanese began new silk industries in the US and oftentimes it was the women who worked as weavers of the silk.¹⁰⁸

The Syrian-Lebanese, along with the French-Canadians in Waterville and many other immigrants who passed through Ellis Island, frequently had their names changed upon arrival in an American port. Many of the immigration

¹⁰⁷ Orfalea, Gregory. *Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁸ NOTE: While I have not found this stated anywhere, I suggest that it may have been the knowledge of silk weaving that made Syrian-Lebanese immigrants so greatly sought after by textile mills in the US, especially in New England. In the case of Maine, there are many references to Syrian-Lebanese getting the higher paid weaving jobs over the French-Canadians and others. The fact that many of the Syrian-Lebanese may have been highly skilled weavers before coming to work in textile mills would account for this discrepancy in the hiring process.

officials could not pronounce let alone spell the Arabic names, thus names were shortened or spelled so that they looked more English. In many cases the Syrian-Lebanese names were Biblical in origin, thus the names were simply changed to the English Biblical equivalent. For example, Ibrahim would become Abraham, Moussi would become Moses, Ishaq would become Isaac, and Yusuf would become Joseph.¹⁰⁹ While it is difficult to know what would have initially drawn the Syrian-Lebanese into Maine permanently, it appears that many companies would heavily advertise in New York City to encourage recent immigrants to move out into the various states in search of employment. There were labor agencies established to specifically create advertisements to draw people to remote areas such as Waterville. Such agencies were established around the turn of the century around the time when immigrants began to come in large numbers from Southern and Eastern Europe as opposed to Northern and Western as had been the trend for the earlier part of the nineteenth century. It is likely that the Lockwood company utilized the labor agencies in order to draw Lebanese to Waterville in order to be employed as weavers in the mills.¹¹⁰

The majority of the Lebanese who came to Waterville came between 1890-1910. Most came from villages near Tyre and Sidon in the southern part of Syria-Lebanon. Others were from areas northeast of Beirut and some came from Latakia and Damascus areas of what is modern-day Syria.¹¹¹ In a 1976 oral

¹⁰⁹ Moses, John G. The Lebanese in America. p. 17.

¹¹⁰ Allen, James Paul. Catholics in Maine: A Social Geography. p. 206.

¹¹¹ Hooglund, Eric J. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 86 (NOTE: Hooglund's article is about the

history project conducted in Waterville with members of the Lebanese community, many of the people interviewed mentioned the frequency with which their relatives would move between Lebanese communities throughout New England. Many people cited their main reason for coming to Waterville was because a cousin or a brother lived in the town; the existence of a sizable number of people who were related or who hailed from the same region in Syria-Lebanon. It appears to have been very common to move to one town for a few years and work there and then move again. In addition, it does not seem to be whole families moving, rather it could be individuals moving between extended relatives depending on what types of jobs the individual was interested in. For example, a 1976 Oral History Project conducted by Joseph Ezhaya on the Lebanese community in Waterville mentions an adolescent boy who left Waterville to go work in his mother's brother's store in New Hampshire for a few years and then later returned to Waterville.¹¹² Such fluidity appears to have been typical of the Syrian-Lebanese communities in New England during the turn of the century. It is also significant to note that many other Syrian-Lebanese settled in towns just outside of Waterville. These people either owned stores or farmed and were attracted to the greater Waterville area because of the growing Syrian-Lebanese community there. Some examples of these towns include Fairfield, Winslow, Madison, and Vassalborough.

Lebanese in Waterville. He grew up just outside of Waterville and his mother was a Lebanese woman from the Waterville Lebanese community.)

¹¹² Waterville Public Library, 1976 *Lebanese Oral History Project*

Waterville was an important textile center during the late nineteenth century; many French-Canadians were already working hard in the mills and the Syrian-Lebanese immigrants were attracted to the opportunities in the woolen and cotton mills. In Waterville, Syrian-Lebanese worked at the Hollingsworth & Whitney, Lockwood Cotton Textile Company, and the Wyandotte Worsted Woolen Mill. Many of those who worked at the Wyandotte were weavers. The Syrian-Lebanese who moved to town settled primarily in the Head of Falls, King Court, Front Street-Temple Street area. This section of town is adjacent to the Kennebec River—as is the French-Canadian Plains area. The Head of Falls neighborhood consisted mainly of tenement buildings and was in the area that once was the Native American village of Ticonic. The Wyandotte factory was also located in this area. The foot bridge that spanned the river went directly from the Lebanese enclave over to the Hollingsworth and Whitney mill yard. Some French-Canadians also lived in this area, however there were clear divide lines between the French and the Syrians.¹¹³ Additionally, this section of town

¹¹³ NOTE: From this point on I will refer to the Syrian-Lebanese as just Syrians because this is what they were labeled as in the US and in particular in Waterville they were always called Syrians until 1946 when they consciously began calling themselves Lebanese because of the establishment of a separate country of Lebanon. Eric Hooglund provides an excellent description of why the immigrants in Waterville came to be called 'Syrian': "The Arabic-speaking immigrants generally did not consider themselves Arabs, nor were they called Arabs by other ethnic groups in Maine. Legally speaking, those who had arrived in the United States before 1918 were subjects of the Ottoman Empire, commonly referred to as Turkey. Thus, some Americans called immigrants from the area "Turks." None of the Arabic-speaking Christians, however, thought of themselves as Turks. Before World War I, they had identified themselves upon the basis of religious affiliation, and not upon the basis of nationality. Thus, in the old country they were Maronite or Orthodox of Melchite or Protestant. In a new country, where they were surrounded by different peoples who identified themselves on the basis of ethnicity, it became necessary for the Arabic-speaking immigrants to find a similar identity. As early as the 1890s they had begun to refer to themselves as 'Syrian.'" Hooglund also explains that in 1899 the term Syrian was officially adopted by the US officials to identify Arabic-speaking immigrants from Ottoman Syria. (See: Hooglund, Eric. J. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 87-

was known as the Syrian, and later as the Lebanese, section of town. Lebanese immigrants around the country often owned and operated dry goods stores, grocery stores, and stores carrying oriental goods such as laces, embroideries. Some also owned small manufacturing enterprises specializing in items such as lace goods, pillow covers, belts, dresses, umbrellas, and petticoats. Still others ran restaurants and hotels, or specialized shops such as candy or tobacco stores.¹¹⁴ In Waterville many Syrians owned businesses as well. Some people both owned a small store and worked in the mill. Often times these small stores were in the front of people's homes.

The vast majority (two thirds) of Syrians settling in Waterville were Maronite Christians. Of the remaining one third, about twenty percent were Greek Orthodox, around ten percent were Melchite (Greek-rite Catholics), and the rest included some Protestants and a few Muslims.¹¹⁵ The Syrians faced a problem regarding where to worship in Waterville. The immigrants went to St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, which was the oldest parish and served the French-Canadians in the town, or else did not go to church at all. There was a Greek Orthodox Church in Bangor and the priest was sent down to Waterville to administer to the needs of some of the Syrian Greek Orthodox families.¹¹⁶ Many did not feel entirely welcome in this very foreign church setting and when the

88.)

¹¹⁴ Moses, John G. [The Lebanese in America](#). p. 29-37. NOTE: While much of this information is general information about the Lebanese communities in the US, I believe it is true of the Waterville community as well.

¹¹⁵ Hooglund, Eric J. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 87.

Sacred Heart Parish was formed most of the Maronites began attending church services there and left St. Francis de Sales.

During the early years of Syrian immigration to Waterville the people who settled had a great deal in common. Most were young—more than seventy five percent were under 25 years of age when they left their native villages. Many were related or were from neighboring villages, yet even those who were only friends formed quasi-familial relationships very fast. The group itself was not large—by 1915 the size of the Arabic-speaking Syrian community had grown to two hundred¹¹⁷—and the families were all tightly linked together. They were bonded by a clear set of circumstances; they were far from home, working hard, most were illiterate in Arabic and in English (many did not know English at all), and yet they placed a high value on education. Eighty percent of the adult males became wage laborers in factories or in small work shops.¹¹⁸ The Syrians had left their country for similar reasons and found themselves working at similar jobs and living side by side in the rural Maine. People continued to come to the area until about 1920, after which time the community had time to solidify, grow, and make a mark on the city of Waterville.

¹¹⁶ Person D. *Personal Interview*. 1/7/99

¹¹⁷ Hooglund, Eric J. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 94.

¹¹⁸ Hooglund, Eric J. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 87.

Chapter VI. Early Twentieth Century: 1900-1945

Around the turn of the century, Waterville was a vibrant city that could be characterized as an industrial center. Educational institutions were being opened, churches constructed, and more specialty stores were opened in the downtown area. The Syrian-Lebanese and the French-Canadians both had established identifiable communities by 1900 as well. The French-Canadian community had an older and a newer element, and it was the second wave or that newer element that was beginning to settle down at the same time as the Syrian-Lebanese were. Previously these groups were transient in the area, traveling between Waterville, their home countries and other French-Canadian or Syrian-Lebanese communities in the Northeast. Now the groups were geographically defined within the town, each having their own separate space. The members of the communities were having children, establishing businesses within their neighborhoods, hosting events within the community, and many had worked for a number of years in the Waterville industries. The local industries that employed many of the immigrants were particularly strong around 1900, offering many jobs and encouraging workers to remain in Waterville as a steady labor supply. As people had children, it became harder to be more mobile and the children—even in the French-Canadian community

where traveling to Canada was relatively easy—had no desire to return to a homeland they had never seen before.

By World War I the world balance of power was changing dramatically and after the war the US entered into a phase of extreme isolationist policies. Many immigration quotas were passed, which especially affected people coming from the former Ottoman province of Syria. During the war, few immigrants in the US traveled across the Atlantic to visit their homelands, the Syrian-Lebanese included. It was no longer as easy to travel over seas and even the border between the US and Canada was becoming more patrolled whereas it had been virtually an open border all throughout the nineteenth century. With the advent of isolationism—which was a drastic change from the more overt, imperialistic attitudes that had typified US foreign policy in the previous decades—and immigration quotas the social atmosphere within the US changed. For both the Lebanese and French-Canadians, there were few new immigrants to continually infuse the Waterville communities with the traditions and language of their native homes. This period from about 1900 through World War II is distinct in terms of the kind of identities people in Waterville had and is a very important interim period between the scenario described in the nineteenth century and the post-World War II era.

Ethnic Enclaves: Head of Falls & The Plains

As mentioned previously, the immigrants in Waterville each had their own distinctive neighborhoods. While the focus of this paper is only on the French-Canadian and Lebanese populations, it must be noted that there was a sizable Polish population in Winslow and small numbers of Greek, Italian, Irish, and Jewish people in Waterville. The French-Canadians settled in the Plains, the lowest level in the town with several hills rising above where the rest of the town is located, while the Syrian-Lebanese lived in the Head of Falls area. While the numbers of these people were not large enough to warrant a designated neighborhood, it appears that many lived on the outskirts of the defined French and Lebanese territories. The term "ethnic enclave" is used here to describe the development of a certain kind of neighborhood or ethnic community. This term refers to the fact that some immigrants are able to transplant institutions from their countries of origin and pool capital and start small businesses. It also claims that some ethnic groups can "-employ capital, professional skills and labor from within their own immigrant ghettos to create viable economic structures that offer better pay, more promotional opportunities and greater chances of self-employment for the residents than had they gone into the mainstream American labor market."¹¹⁹ In this way an alternative route of

¹¹⁹ Kwong, Peter. "Manufacturing Ethnicity." p. 365.

mobility is create that is separate or autonomous from the process of assimilation into American life.

Certainly some ethnic groups are able to do this more than others depending upon the numbers of people, where they choose to settle, what their skills were prior to immigration, etc. As Peter Kwong mentions in his article “Manufacturing Ethnicity,” some scholars argue that African Americans were unable to develop these kinds of associations as well as other groups in the US—for example European Jews—because slavery had destroyed these networks. In the case of the Lebanese and French-Canadians in Waterville ethnic enclaves were certainly established. Mutual assistance groups were formed within each community and social hierarchies developed within each group. However, the two enclaves were particularly different from one another. First, the Lebanese were fewer in number and while many had been poor peasants they knew how to weave silk and could transfer this skill to weaving woolen goods. They also moved over a twenty year period from many of the same villages in Lebanon. They were mostly young and formed bonds quickly upon arrival in Waterville. This stands in marked contrast with the French-Canadians who came in successive waves. The members of the first wave were more enterprising and generally did not come because of severe economic need, which was the trademark of the subsequent wave out of Quebec. The French-Canadians were more stratified from the beginning and their position in Waterville society has remained more intact over time than has the Lebanese position. The French-

Canadians can be compared with the Chinese in New York City who Peter Kwong studied; in both enclaves “-ethnic support and mutual-assistance exist, [however] those who have wealth, education, and arrived here earlier, established a dominant position to speed up their capital accumulation by exploiting less fortunate co-ethnic newcomers.”¹²⁰

Both the Lebanese and French-Canadian enclaves were located near the Kennebec River. The Kennebec had been used throughout the 1800s for water power, the saw mills, grist mills, iron works, and other industries were located on its banks. Now as Lockwood, Hollingsworth & Whitney, and Wyandotte grew up along the river banks even more industrial activity was centered around the river. Often times in industrial towns rivers quickly became polluted and the Kennebec River was no exception. Living next to the Kennebec was the least desirable and this is precisely the space that the French-Canadians and Lebanese were wedged into. The population in each of these areas was extremely tight-knit, many people worked together, there were small neighborhood shops, social clubs, religious groups, and people who spoke French and Lebanese with each other, respectively. The lines were well demarcated between the French-Canadians, Syrian-Lebanese, and Yankees. Each operated in distinctive social units that rarely intersected at this point in time. The immigrant groups were gaining some power through their establishment in the town, their increasing familiarity with “American” life, and with their ability

¹²⁰ Kwong, Peter. “Manufacturing Ethnicity.” p. 366.

to slowly carve out their own niche and establish their own physical symbols—such as churches and schools—within Waterville. The establishment of such symbols signifies that the immigrants were settling in the town for good and provides a rallying point for the ethnic community. It also indicates their level of power in that they used communal money and resources to create their own structures. Even though these new structures and the people themselves were bounded within neighborhoods, the Lebanese and Franco-Americans solidify as groups to be contended with in Waterville at this point in time.

The Syrian-Lebanese in Head of Falls

For the Syrian-Lebanese community in particular, World War I was a turning point. During 1914 the Ottoman Empire joined with the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires in the war and this virtually halted all movement in the Middle East. The tide of immigrants from this region was cut off during the war. As Eric Hooglund explains:

During the war a major famine ravaged Syria. It was precipitated by a combination of drought, Anglo-French policies of blocking Turkish-controlled ports, and Turkish policies of requisitioning grains and punishing the Arabic-speaking population for suspected disloyalty to the imperial government based in Istanbul. Syrian immigrant communities throughout the United States collected medical supplies, foodstuffs, and clothing to send to Syria to aid the victims of famine. In Waterville, nine of the immigrant men served in the US

army, and the Syrian community as a whole bought generously of the Liberty Bonds sold to finance the war.¹²¹

After the war, only about twenty people from the region immigrated to Maine. Additionally, with the implementation of the Immigration Quota Act in 1924 the quota for immigrants from the newly created French-controlled states of Syria and Lebanon was one hundred persons per annum. For the Waterville group, this translates into a virtual cut-off of immigrant flow. However, during the period from 1915-1940 the number of Syrian families doubled from about thirty to sixty, or from about two hundred to three hundred persons.¹²² This increase is partially due to the birth of children but most likely Syrian-Lebanese who had once been more transient, moving from town to town throughout New England, chose Waterville to settle in permanently during this time.

The earliest immigrants had lived in Head of Falls and adjacent King Court near the edge of the Kennebec River. Some of the houses were so close to the banks of the river they were on stilts. This neighborhood was bounded on the other side by Front Street and the side streets between Temple and Union Streets (which connects Front Street to Main Street and the downtown section of Waterville). During the early 1920s more people moved out of the Head of Falls and King Court area to more solidly constructed homes in the Front Street area.¹²³

¹²¹ Hooglund, Eric J. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 94-5.

¹²² Hooglund, Eric J. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 95.

¹²³ NOTE: While the Syrian-Lebanese neighborhood was expanded out of Head of Falls-King Court area to include these other streets, the neighborhood as a whole seems to have still been collectively referred to as Head of Falls (or Head-of-the-Falls).

There appears to have been some correlation between the houses in the Front street area being owned by the more upwardly mobile Syrian-Lebanese and there was some neighborhood rivalry between the kids (and perhaps their parents) from these different sections of the larger Syrian-Lebanese community.¹²⁴

Many people in this neighborhood worked at the nearby Wyandotte factory and some families ran small convenience stores out of the first floor of their homes. One such store that began in the first floor of a home is Joseph's Market, which is still in operation today as a general convenience store and specialty meat market. Peter Joseph related how his father, who worked in the Wyandott factory, ran the store and had his children help out. The children would work during the early morning before school and sell items to people as they walked to work. The store sold items such as cigarettes to the factory workers who would buy just one cigarette for \$.01 because they could not afford a whole pack (which would cost \$.10).¹²⁵ During the 1930s especially more stores were opened in the neighborhood including a bakery, coffeehouses, restaurants, and grocery stores. In addition to store bought foods, many people in the neighborhood had small garden plots in which to grow fruits and vegetables to supplement their diets.¹²⁶

Arabic was the language of the Syrian-Lebanese and it was spoken regularly on the streets in Head of Falls. During the 1920s some Syrian-Lebanese

¹²⁴ Person E, Person F, & Person G. *Personal Interview*. 1/25/99.

¹²⁵ Person E. *Personal Interview*. 1/25/99

¹²⁶ Person G. *Personal Interview*. 1/25/99.

in Waterville subscribed to an Arabic newspaper printed in New York City. Even more important, for about a year during the late 1920s a newspaper that was printed in both Arabic and English was begun by four younger immigrants who were literate in both languages. It was a monthly paper and was typeset in Boston. Again, Hooglund describes:

Informants who remembered the paper recall that it was typeset in Boston. Informants who remembered the paper recall that it contained articles about political developments in Lebanon and Syria, which by then had been set up as two separate entities both dependent on France. It featured, in addition, general-interest articles about other Arabic-speaking communities, especially in New England. The paper ceased publication when the owner of the Arabic-language printing shop in Boston died, and it proved difficult to find another shop that provided typesetting in Arabic.¹²⁷

A few families made efforts to educate their children in Arabic, however on the whole many of the immigrants were illiterate in their own language. Often times letters would come from Syria and literate people in the community would be called upon to read the Arabic script for the person receiving the letter. A few literate people in the community, including Marie Nagem, taught Arabic to the children and would write letters in Arabic for those who wanted to send them to the old country.¹²⁸

One aspect of the emerging community was the establishment of clubs in the area. In particular the Lebanon Youth Society (LYS) was founded in 1916. This club was chartered in 1921 by the state of Maine and membership was open

¹²⁷ Hooglund, Eric J. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 97.

¹²⁸ Person H. *Personal Interview*. 1/21/99.

to men in the Syrian-Lebanese community, including those non-Syrian-Lebanese men who married Syrian-Lebanese women. The members were the most prominent men in the community which increased the activities and visibility of the club during the 1920s and 1930s. LYS had its own building where men would gather to talk and play games. The society raised money for charitable causes, promoted community social events, and was generally a pivotal group for the community during these decades. The Syrian-Lebanese women had a comparable group called the Rosary Sodality. This women's group served many of the same functions as the LYS, for example providing charity and organizing social functions.

Another key organization for the Syrian-Lebanese community was the Syrian Athletic Club (SAC) which was established during the 1930s by the Syrian-Lebanese men who had been born and raised in Waterville. They represent the first generation who went to public school and were bilingual. The SAC blended the interests Syrian-Lebanese culture with enthusiasm for American popular sports and music. The club had a football team that played the teams from other social clubs in the area and also held dances. The SAC had rooms in a tenement building in Head of Falls where the young men would congregate.¹²⁹ In addition, the Boys Club in town was an important institution for the Syrian-Lebanese boys. The club was located in what is today the Concourse (a large parking lot and shopping complex), on the opposite side of

Main Street from the Syrian-Lebanese section of town. They played sports at the club, especially basketball and many were in the harmonica band. During the 1930s most of the Syrian-Lebanese boys were members and they dominated the club, meaning the French-Canadian and Yankee boys in town did not frequent the club building.¹³⁰

Another important aspect of the Syrian-Lebanese community is the establishment of a Maronite church in their neighborhood. Initially the majority of the immigrants—who were Maronite Catholics—attended the St. Francis de Sales church, the oldest Catholic Church in Waterville. Some of the Syrian-Lebanese children even went to the St. Francis de Sales parish school started by the Ursulines. They learned French while at the school, however many recall being excluded by the French-Canadian children at the school. The fact that Syrian-Lebanese people were interacting with French-Canadians in a common religious space is of great importance. However, the services were conducted in French and were vastly different from Maronite ritual in very fundamental ways. When the Sacred Heart Catholic parish was founded in 1905 by dividing the St. Francis de Sales parish, all non-French Catholics in Waterville were expected to attend, including the Syrian-Lebanese.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Hooglund, Eric J. “From the Near East to Down East.” p. 98.

¹³⁰ NOTE: There is a possibility that the SAC and the Boys Club I refer to are the same organization. Only Eric Hooglund’s book referred to the SAC. In all of my interviews people referred to the Boys Club as a club that was identified with the Syrian-Lebanese boys. It provided them with a place to gather after school and play sports. It seems unlikely that there would be two such organizations that were so central to the community, however I cannot discern from my information if the two were actually one or if they were truly separate organizations.

¹³¹ NOTE: The establishment of this second Catholic parish in Waterville was particularly controversial and

During this time, a Lebanese Maronite priest began to make visits to Waterville from Canada. Initially he came every few months to hear confessions and would stay in rooms provided by the Sacred Heart parish. Around 1924 many Maronites began to hold services at the Ferris family's home on the corner of Front and Temple Street. Shortly thereafter the services were again moved to the Knights of Columbus building. In 1926 the last Syrian-Lebanese Maronite children were baptized at Sacred Heart.¹³² After this point in time the Maronite people formed their own religious community. While the Catholic churches in town still communicated, the Syrian-Lebanese people no longer attended services in the Roman Catholic parishes.

In 1927 with the help of Father Joseph Awad—who appears to have been sent to help by the visiting Canadian priest—land was bought on the corner of Appleton and Front Streets to establish a parish. The house located on the land was remodeled to serve as a Maronite church. The St. Joseph's Maronite church rapidly emerged as the center point of the Syrian-Lebanese community. "The Maronite rite services were a direct link to a religious heritage that the children born in Maine had not experienced before 1924. The public dinners of Syrian food, organized by the women of the church to raise money for church projects, attracted Syrians, both Maronite and non-Maronite, from other Maine towns."¹³³ Additionally, the church along with the Lebanon Youth Society sponsored the

discussed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs on the French-Canadian community.

¹³² Person G. *Personal Interview*. 1/25/99.

¹³³ Hooglund, Eric. "From the Near East to Down East." p. 98.

Hafli or the Mahrajan, a huge two or three day event with Arabic music, belly dancing, sword fighting, and Lebanese foods. A replica of a Lebanese village was set up by the church youth. The event was held on the Central Maine Fairgrounds in the undeveloped western part of town (where Seyton Hospital stands today). The event drew people from Syrian-Lebanese communities in Maine and throughout New England; people would travel great distances to attend this event.

In 1933 Father Awad returned to Lebanon and was succeeded by Father Philip Nagem who was from Waterville. Father Nagem was the prime mover behind convincing the Syrian-Lebanese, who had gone by the term Syrian since their arrival in the US, to begin to call themselves Lebanese. He had been educated in Lebanon during the 1920s when France was in control of the new territory referred to as Lebanon. Many people in Lebanon at this time were concerned with identity and a nationalist movement had arisen in the country. Father Nagem had been immersed in this nationalistic atmosphere and upon return to Waterville he told the people in Waterville about the idea of an independent Lebanon. Most of the members of the community in Waterville hailed from the section of the Ottoman province of Syria that became French-controlled Lebanon after World War I. Thus Father Nagem encouraged people to identify as Lebanese. Most people still used the term Syrian until the early 1940s. After World War II Lebanon became independent and at this time the community in Waterville began to firmly identify as Lebanese. Some members

of the community recall the priest discussing the issue of calling themselves "Lebanese" from the pulpit of the Maronite church.¹³⁴ The Syrian-Lebanese people—who were Turkish by citizenship when they arrived, who were Arabs because of the language they spoke, and who were called Syrians because of the historic province they came from—found a new identity as Lebanese a few decades after they arrived in the US. They had to learn a new word for themselves as the politics in their homeland changed throughout this century. From this point forward in this paper, the Syrian-Lebanese people will be referred to as Lebanese.

Father Nagem emphasized the need for a school and he placed high importance on pride in one's heritage. By 1938 a small parish school was opened and in the 1940s a building was purchased to house the school. An arrangement was made with the Ursuline nuns and they served as teachers in the school. Many of the Lebanese in Waterville will highlight an emphasis on education as a prime identifier of their community as a whole. The first generation immigrants were determined to have their children educated and within one or two generations Lebanese people were moving out of the mills and into more professional jobs. Many attribute this economic mobility directly to the Lebanese recognition that education was the key to success in the US. However, this emphasis on education was particularly male-oriented and the Lebanese daughters were encouraged to stay home and raise families. Whereas

¹³⁴ Person H. *Personal Interview*. 1/21/99.

some Lebanese women had worked in the local factories, the ideal was to have the women remain in the home and this increasingly was the case during 1930s and 1940s. Importantly, those Lebanese who were marrying and having children during the 1920s-1940s tended to be particularly patriotic and believed in the American Dream. In contrast, their children were more inclined to be critical of working conditions and were not as staunchly patriotic as their parents.

The French-Canadians on the Plains

During this same period the French-Canadian neighborhood on the Plains continued to grow and solidify. The Plains was a much older community and some of the attributes that the Head of Falls area was gaining around this time were already present in the area. However, the growing numbers of French-Canadians in Waterville added to the complexity and richness of French-Canadian life in the Plains. There were new clothing stores, a movie theater, bars, a butcher, barbers, a cobbler, and pharmacies being opened in the area. Some of the notable establishments on Water Street include: O.J. Pelletier's grocery and dry goods store, Peter Marshall's (Mercier) ladies' garment and dry goods store (later Reny and Marshall Dry Goods Co.), Belliveau Brother's grocery, George Daviaus pharmacy, Dubord and Brunelle's Men's Clothing

store, and Joseph Tardif and Son's carbonated beverage plant.¹³⁵ By 1900 some stores on Main Street were owned by French-Canadians. Laverdiere's Variety Drug Stores stand out as the prime example. Laverdiere's began in Waterville and expanded throughout Maine and New England during the mid-1900s. Other French establishments on Main Street include: Drapeaus Electrical Appliances, Donald R. Michaud's Fuel Co., and M.G. Morissette and Sons.¹³⁶ The presence of French-Canadian businesses on Main Street show that some members of the population were becoming entrepreneurs and not laboring in the factories. Yet the presence of French businesses in the downtown area did not mean that boundaries between the French and the Yankees had altered. As Albert Fecteau described in his 1952 thesis: "Many of the leading business establishments are still in Yankee hands, however. Many still bear the old trade names such as Arnold's Hardware, Redington Co. and Emery Brown Co. These, plus new concerns such as Stern's Department Store, Levine Men's Clothing Store, Dunhams, [which are Jewish-owned] and the usual chain stores constitute the bulk of Waterville's business center."¹³⁷

There were several French language newspapers in Waterville during the years of the second migration. The following excerpt provides a sense of the trajectory of French language newspapers in Waterville:

¹³⁵ Fecteau, Albert. The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine. p. 36.

¹³⁶ Fecteau, Albert. The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine. p. 37.

¹³⁷ Fecteau, Albert. The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine. p. 37.

The pioneer French journalist in the city was M.A. Leger who, in association with E.O. Robinson, published the first issue of the *Waterville Sentinel* on December 1, 1880. This was the initial competition to the then existing *Waterville Mail* [the dominant English newspaper]. In 1897, Waterville saw another French journal, a weekly publication, *La Sentinelle*. This paper, published by Dr. Avila-O Boulay, lasted but a year. In 1911 appeared another French weekly called *La Revue*. Its publisher was Alfred Langlois, Jr. This was also a short-lived endeavor. Several other French publications appeared meanwhile. These were *Le Maine Francaise*, a weekly product of the Elm City Publishing Co., and *Le Reveil*. Neither succeeded and consequently disappeared after a short duration. On September 3, 1929 there appeared another French journal, *Le Franco-Americain*. The editor of this new weekly was Mr. Jules Savarin. This publication met great difficulties at first but eventually surmounted them. It grew until it had members in Winslow, Fairfield, Oakland, Augusta, Winthrop, Lewiston, Auburn, Rumford, Biddeford, and Saco, and even in Aroostook County. The directors of *Le Franco-Americain* were Ernest Morissette, president, Napoleou Marcou, secretary, Jules Savarin, treasurer, Joseph Hebert, assistant-treasurer, F. Harold Dubord, Napoleon Emond, Dr. Harvey Bourassa, Dr. R.R. Rurcotte, Mrs. Wilhermine D'Argy, directors. The publication met with such success that it established its own printing shop at 13 Appleton Street. The Journal, however, changed hands several times until it was discontinued in 1947.¹³⁸

During the Prohibition Era of the 1920s there were literally dozens of bars and saloons on Water Street in the Plains. There were bootleggers who were well known in the area and many had nicknames that they went by. Drinking became a problem for many French-Canadians; many men would come home from working in the mills and drink throughout the night. One interviewee surmised that it was “church, work, and drink” that were the three pivotal aspects of French-Canadian life.¹³⁹ While this was not the case for every family, the effects of excessive alcohol use must have weighed heavily on the community as a whole.

¹³⁸ Fecteau, Albert. The French Canadians of Waterville, Maine. p.54.

¹³⁹ Person B. *Personal Interview*. 1/21/99.

As was the case with the Lebanese section of town, the French-Canadians who lived closest to the Kennebec River were the poorest. All along the river there were tenement buildings, many of which were on stilts and went down over the steep banks. In some of these buildings there were more apartments below the ground level (that is down over the cliff) than there were above ground level (Water Street would be what was considered ground level).¹⁴⁰ The farther away from the river people lived, the more affluent they were. Thus those French-Canadians living on Summer Street had "made it," they had geographically reached the next hill level in town and likely had jobs outside of the factories which placed them metaphorically on another social hill above those French living on the Plains below. According to some informants, the five hill levels in Waterville extending from the shores of the Kennebec up to Mayflower Hill correspond with a levels of wealth, affluence, and social standing. The Yankee elite largely lived on Silver Street around 1900 and as the western part of town and the streets leading up Mayflower Hill were constructed, the elite kept moving up as it were. The French and Lebanese who "made it" also moved up the different hills in the town as time went on. Some French-Canadians lived in the Head of Falls area, but there was a clear dividing line between them and the Lebanese. Head of Falls was clearly the Lebanese

¹⁴⁰ Person I. *Personal Interview*. 1/22/99.

part of town and it is likely that the French living in the area identified with the French from the Plains.¹⁴¹

The French had several social clubs that were very active around this time. These clubs were for a variety of social, religious, and financial purposes. The earliest social club was *La Societe de Bienfaisance Saint Jean-Baptiste de Waterville* and it dates back to 1875. This organization focused on accumulating resources to benefit French-Canadians who were ill and needed support. It also helped widows and their children in case of death of a husband. In 1890 *L'Union Lafayette* was founded. By 1902 it had become a social and insurance order with two hundred and ninety members, however it was dissolved in 1910. The *Richelieu Lodge No. 4* was founded in 1896, but this too was dissolved in the early 1900s. Also in 1896 the *Knights of Columbus* was founded; it is a social, fraternal and insurance order and is one of the most powerful Catholic organizations nationally. The *Foresters of America* was also founded in 1896 and it interestingly had two lodges, the Court Canada (later known as the Catholic Order of Foresters), whose members were French-Canadian, and Court America. The following three insurance organizations were founded by and exclusively for French-Canadians: *La Societe des Artisans Canadiens-Francaise* in 1900, *The Maccabees* in 1901, and *L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique, Conseil Charland* (this

¹⁴¹ NOTE: One items that is difficult to account for is the fact that there were several houses in the section of town where the Concourse parking lot now stands. While this area is not considered to be part of the Plains or Head of Falls, it is near the St. Francis de Sales church and some informants indicated that French-Canadians lived in this area. It is unclear what kind of neighborhood this would have been but it is worth noting that at least some French lived there. In contrast, nearby Silver Street was considered to be the street

is a national organization) in 1909. In 1911 *L'Association d'Epargnes de Waterville* was created to encourage purchasing of property to gain greater revenues. In addition to these French-only societies and social clubs many French-Canadians joined the local Elks, Rotary, Lions, and Kiwanis Clubs. The Elks Club came to be affiliated with French-Canadians due to the high percentages of French members.¹⁴²

The second wave of French immigrants from Quebec, those coming during the second half of the nineteenth century, seem to have brought with them a strong sense of *la survivance*. While the earlier immigrants may have been affected by *la survivance*, the second wave was more a migration of families who were often all from the same village. The reality was that people would pour off the trains from Canada and be surrounded by their entire social world. They could most effectively maintain *la survivance* because everyone they had social relationships with—their family, friends, and church leaders—were with them in the US. The idea of creating *petit canadas* that were virtual fortresses mentioned previously was far more prevalent around 1900. Yet in the case of Waterville, there was a pre-existing French-Canadian community upon which *la survivance* mentality was suddenly cast.¹⁴³ The result was a quasi-fortress, the Plains was

of the wealthy and important Yankees in town.

¹⁴² Fecteau, Albert. [The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine](#). p. 50-1.

¹⁴³ NOTE: This is not to suggest that members of the Waterville French-Canadian community did ascribe to *la survivance* during the earlier period. It is likely that many of the people in the first wave did promote maintenance of French language, culture, and faith. However, the concept of *la survivance* appears to be much stronger and more clearly developed with people who left Quebec during the late 1800s.

certainly a distinct French area and it was practically outside of the town, but not as outside of the town as many other *petit canadas* across New England were.

Of critical importance to the French-Canadian community was the establishment of two new Roman Catholic parishes. In 1905 Bishop O'Connell declared that a new parish would be established in Waterville and named Sacred Heart. This would be formed by dividing the older St. Francis de Sales parish. This situation did not arise out of a particular need for a new church, rather it arose out of a conflict that was being waged throughout the Catholic church in New England between the Irish and the French-Canadians. Prior to the major influx of French-Canadians during the second half of the nineteenth century the Irish immigrants in America had established many Catholic churches with Irish leaders. By and large all the members of the Catholic hierarchy in New England were Irish, which created major problems for the staunchly Catholic immigrants who held onto the concept of *la survivance*. The French-Canadian Catholic church was the centerpiece of village life in Quebec, the controlling force of the French people, and their bargaining power with the English rulers. In New England, the French-Canadians faced an Irish-controlled hierarchy that was not friendly to them and which conducted religious affairs in the English language. All of these factors combined to create a particularly hostile environment. As Yves Roby explains:

[T]he question of language was the main problem. The French Canadians felt estranged in parishes where the [Irish] pastor preached and made public announcements in a language which they did not know. They suffered from their inability to be understood in the confessional and deplored the fact that the pastor could not be their privileged counselor and guide as he had been in Quebec.¹⁴⁴

The struggles of Irish and French-Canadians throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cannot be emphasized enough. However, Waterville stands out as distinct in this respect. In 1900 around half of Waterville's population was French-Canadian¹⁴⁵ and in contrast there was a small percentage of Irish people. Waterville has the oldest French-Canadian settlement in Maine, as mentioned previously (and excluding Aroostook County), and it was located particularly close to Quebec. This meant that the French-Canadians in Waterville were the ones in control of their parish from the beginning and they were far more tied to the "mother" church in Quebec than other French-Canadian settlements elsewhere in New England. However, around 1900 the Waterville French-Canadian community became more established and the churches in town more tied to the Diocese of Maine, which brought the French-Canadians in town more under the jurisdiction of the Irish-led American Catholic church. Previously Bishop James A. Healy—the first black Catholic bishop in the US—had been the bishop in Portland and had helped keep the

¹⁴⁴ Roby, Yves. "Franco-Americans and the Catholic Hierarchy." p.201.

¹⁴⁵ NOTE: There are differing estimates regarding the actual percentages of French-Canadians in Waterville. Many official sources recorded the percentage to be around 45% (see: Quintal, Claire. Steeple and Smokestacks: The Franco-American Experience in New England. p. 73) however many people claim the numbers to be much higher, especially considering how common it was to alter names from French-sounding to English-sounding ones in Waterville.

balance between the French-Canadians and Irish in Maine. He was bishop from 1875-1900 and there was little contention in Maine between the two groups as long as he was bishop. Bishop Healy mastered the French language and genuinely sympathized with the French-Canadians whom he knew were disadvantaged in the American Catholic church.¹⁴⁶

After Bishop Healy's death in 1900 the new Irish Bishop O'Connell was in charge in Portland. The first contention between the Irish and French-Canadians in Maine was the issue in Waterville. When O'Connell declared that a new parish was to be created he also declared that it was to be national and not territorial. A territorial church means that the church serves all the people living in the area surrounding the given church whereas a national church usually is ministered to one nationality regardless of where they live in a given town. St. Francis de Sales served all 3,000 Catholics in Waterville in 1905, only 265 of whom were Irish.¹⁴⁷ Ultimately the parish was being formed with favoritism towards the Irish minority in town and yet at the same time it was for all the non-French population in the town, which meant that the Syrian-Lebanese were shuffled over to the new Sacred Heart parish as well. The idea was to have all services at Sacred Heart be in English. However—despite trying to create a national church—the French-Canadians living near Sacred Heart were also expected to attend the church. This meant that there would be

¹⁴⁶ Guignard, Michael. "The Case of the Sacred Heart Parish." p. 22-23.

¹⁴⁷ Guignard, Michael. "The Case of the Sacred Heart Parish." p. 23.

1,200 French-Canadians in the new parish as compared with the 256 Irish. For this reason, a bilingual priest was selected. However, several French-Canadians in Waterville were outraged and petitioned Diomedede Falconio, the apostolic delegate at Washington, to reverse Bishop O'Connell's decision. Many French-Canadian newspapers throughout Maine reflected the sentiments of Waterville French when they wrote that this tactic was yet another Irish attempt to Anglicize the Francos.

Throughout this difficult period Father Charland of St. Francis de Sales tried to remain helpful to his people and yet obedient to his superiors. He found that when the new bilingual Irish priest arrived in 1905 to work at Sacred Heart the French-Canadians living near Sacred Heart refused to attend his church and accept the sacraments from him. In 1908, after ceaseless tension, Diomedede Falconio resolved the dispute by upholding the division and requiring all the French-Canadians in the jurisdiction of Sacred Heart to attend the new English-speaking church. *La Justice*, a French-Canadian newspaper, declared that the French who had to attend Sacred Heart were “condamnés à s'irlandiser” (condemned to becoming Irish). Throughout New England at this time many French-Canadians were faced with similar situations and it was not uncommon for many French to simply give up attending church rather than be forced to worship in an Irish parish.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ NOTE: The information from this paragraph was taken from: Guignard, Michael. “The Case of the Sacred Heart Parish.” p.21-33.

The Sacred Heart parish served the north end of town more, and as mentioned earlier there was also a contingent of French-Canadians who lived in the north end near their jobs at Maine Central Railroad. It appears that the French-Canadians in the northern part of the town were more quickly “Anglicized” which can perhaps be attributed to their proximity to the English Catholic church. Some evidence also suggests that the more affluent French-Canadians whose ancestors were among the first French to migrate from Quebec lived more in the north section of town. These first wave immigrants tended to anglicize their names and can be thought of as existing at the top of the French-Canadian hierarchy in the town. These upper class, wealthier French were more accepted in the town and some looked down upon their fellow French-Canadian new-comers.¹⁴⁹

Notre Dame parish is the third French-affiliated Catholic church in Waterville. A history from the Mt. Merici convent explains that in 1899 the pastor of the St. Francis de Sales church purchased land in the Plains and two years later a parish was formally established there. However, the same document claims that the parish was founded in 1910 and that in 1911 sisters from the Ursulines of Jesus order in Chavagnes, France came to run the parochial convent and school at Notre Dame. Other sources date the founding of the parish at 1911. In either case, this new parish built a church directly in the Plains on Water Street. St. Francis de Sales had always been located well

¹⁴⁹ Person B. *Personal Interview*. 1/21/99.

away from the Plains and now there was a new church directly within the community. In 1913 the Notre Dame church-school was destroyed by fire, yet within the year a new building was built. Many people recalled that the sanctuary of the church was located on the second floor of the building and people had to go upstairs for Sunday Mass. In 1922-4 the Notre Dame parish and school were moved to Silver Street which again was located outside of the Plains. The reason for moving appears to be for the need of a better church and school building and for a better home for the Ursulines of Jesus affiliated with Notre Dame.

For French-Canadian children, there was a great deal of emphasis on preservation of the French language and cultural heritage. Much of this was done through parochial schools. Mount Merici continued to provide bilingual education throughout this time, as did the newer Notre Dame school. For French-Canadian children, the most prestigious career path was to enter into service of the Catholic church. Young boys were encouraged to go to school in Alfred, Maine where the Brothers of Christian Instruction had a school to train priests. For young French-Canadian women, becoming a nun was also an upwardly mobile route and brought a great deal of honor to the woman's family. Nuns could study and pursue scholarly activities without criticism and they were not constrained by ties to family or a husband. The Catholic church can be viewed as restraining for women in some senses, yet in others it offered opportunities not otherwise available to Franco-American women. Returning

to Quebec was still very much a dream of many French-Canadian families during the early part of the twentieth century. In conjunction with this, the families were still bound up in the authority of the church. In Canada being a member of the church hierarchy was the most prestigious position one could hope to attain and, through *la survivance*, the church hierarchy was still considered the ultimate by French-Canadian families in Waterville. For children in Waterville, joining the ranks of the French Catholic church was the most upwardly mobile and prestigious career route they could generally strive for. However, this often meant that the children were sent back into Quebec for final training and the most sought after jobs were generally in larger churches in Quebec. This route kept the star French-Canadian children removed from the US schools and from mobility within the general public sphere in the US. It also kept these aspiring church leaders oriented back towards Quebec rather than focused on the community they lived in.

The Industrial Sector: Working Conditions & Labor Relations

Waterville was one of the most rapidly growing industrial cities in Maine around 1900. Publications such as the *Waterville Mail*, *The Daily Kennebec Journal*, and the *Bangor Industrial Journal* all cite Waterville as a prosperous, growing industrial community. In particular, Maine Central Railroad grew dramatically

around this time; between 1899 and 1901 between 500 and 1000 new cars were built by MCRR at the shops in Waterville.¹⁵⁰ Waterville served as a central point for the east-west and north-south traffic of goods in the state, thus Maine Central chose Waterville as its headquarters in 1886 and continued to grow well into the twentieth century. The following newspaper excerpts from the *Daily Kennebec Journal* in January of 1900 indicate the level of growth of MCRR around this time:

[O]n account of the rush of work in the motive power department at the Maine Central shops, a new rule calling for night work has been issued, the men being instructed to bring their suppers with them and work until 9 o'clock in the evening.

A short time ago it [the freight business] was so heavy that it was necessary to run three shifters during the day and two at night to keep the tracks cleared and the trains made up. Special trains are almost an every day occurrence.¹⁵¹

The prosperity of MCRR went hand in hand with the thriving industries such as Lockwood, Hollingsworth & Whitney, Hathaway Shirt Company, Sawyer Publishing Company, Waterville Iron Works, Noyes & Goddard Store Foundry, Wyandotte (also called Riverview in some sources) Woolen Company, and Wittemore Furniture Company. Waterville also had four prosperous banks at this time, the Ticonic National Bank founded in 1831, the Peoples National Bank

¹⁵⁰ Cloutier, Robert O. [The Industrial and Business Development of Waterville, Maine From Colonial Settlement to 1900](#). p. 100.

¹⁵¹ Cloutier, Robert O. [The Industrial and Business Development of Waterville, Maine From Colonial Settlement to 1900](#). p. 100-101.

founded in 1855, the Waterville Savings Bank founded in 1869, and the Waterville Trust Company founded in 1889.¹⁵²

All of this economic activity and prosperity could not have been accomplished without the hundreds of laborers in the factories. For both Franco-Americans¹⁵³ and Lebanese who worked in factories during this era factory work was the focal point of one's life. The expansion of industries did not generally go hand in hand with healthy and safe working conditions. Workers lacked legal protection and yet these factory jobs were virtually the only ones made available to them as they immigrated to Waterville. Important also to bear in mind when looking at working conditions is that Waterville industries actively recruited French-Canadians in Quebec and their sole purpose for moving to Maine was to work as factory labor. From the beginning, this placed them in a particular framework in the town which factory owners and bosses—who were obviously prosperous around the turn of the century—had a vested interest in maintaining.

In the local industries such as Lockwood the average work day was around 12 hours per day. Most of the bosses and foremen around 1900 were Yankee men who worked to keep the Franco-Americans, Lebanese and other immigrant workers in line. Child labor was common in Waterville and the pay significantly lower than the pay in other local jobs held by Yankees. For the

¹⁵² Cloutier, Robert O. The Industrial and Business Development of Waterville, Maine From Colonial Settlement to 1900. p. 101-102.

¹⁵³ NOTE: The term Franco-American is applied to descendants of French-Canadians who live in the US.

Franco-Americans the jobs in the mills and at the railroad paid more than they could earn in Canada and this reality kept them working under poor conditions, which the mill owners knew. This fact gave the owners and bosses a great deal of leverage over the workers because they knew that both the Francos and Lebanese needed the jobs and could not petition for change out of fear of losing those jobs.

At Lockwood, Hollingsworth & Whitney, and Wyandotte the workers would often go in before the sun rose and work in large rooms with particularly loud machinery. The workers were on their feet constantly, with only a short lunch time break to really socialize and sit down. At Lockwood, the workers usually had to bring a change of clothing because at the end of the day they were covered from head to toe in small scraps of cotton. For women who worked in Waterville's large industries, there were definite issues of sexual harassment. The bosses could easily physically intimidate women and it was not uncommon for the men in charge to touch them inappropriately. Again, due to the dependence on these jobs, women were often forced to accept these threats and continue working without complaint. Women usually would work during their teens until marriageable age. Once married, women usually continued to work in factories until they had children. Even after having children, women would come back to work periodically and some married women worked as fill-ins in

From this point on, this term will be used instead of French-Canadian.

case another worker got ill or had to leave work unexpectedly.¹⁵⁴ The issue of child labor in Maine factories and mills was addressed in the 1907 and 1909 Maine Child Labor Laws. Prior to 1907 the minimum age for working in a mill was 12, and afterwards it was 16. These legal changes affected the mills because they had come to rely upon child labor. As a result of these laws, the mills were forced to hire workers who were above 16 years old. These laws created inspection agencies run by the state that periodically checked up on the working conditions and labor standards of mills. Despite investigations at the factories and mills, the working conditions remained unsafe and dismal. Also, throughout this period there was often irregular enforcement of these laws and it became common-place to alter birth certificates so that children as young as 7 could work in the mills.¹⁵⁵

Nationally around the turn of the century many people were becoming involved in union activities. However, in Maine, there were few "mammoth" industries that would allow for strong unions with large memberships to be formed.¹⁵⁶ Waterville in particular was a difficult place to set up unions due to the wide variety of jobs industrial workers held in the area. There were several Waterville industries employing laborers of different ethnicities, but the members of the ethnic groups were not employed by one or two large

¹⁵⁴ NOTE: These characterizations of the women workers were more typical of Franco-American workers than of Lebanese.

¹⁵⁵ Bernier, Margaret. A Labor Study of the Franco-American Community of Waterville, Maine from 1890-1940. p. 23-25

companies. This served to lessen the potential unity of the ethnic laborers because there was not one common cause to fight for. With so many members of the ethnic communities holding different kinds of jobs, each of which had its own down sides and benefits, there was no way to unify the workers. The fact that three of the industries were split along gender lines (Lockwood and Hathaway employed predominantly women while MCRR employed only men) caused even more divisions because the conditions and treatment of workers in these settings varied dramatically. In conjunction with this, the industries existing in Waterville were not well connected with one another—there were no situations in which raw material was processed by one plant and then made into a marketable product at another. All the industries depended on the railroad company to deliver goods, but overall there was a lack of cohesiveness between the industries themselves that heightened the difficulties inherent in the formation of unions.

Many of the Lebanese and Franco-Americans who worked in the mills will often describe their years of work as "fun times" in which they joked around a great deal and enjoyed their time. In many of the oral histories and interviews, this response to what life was like as an employee in one of Waterville large mills is typical. How people choose to label and remember events is particularly significant, especially when many of the people who described their

¹⁵⁶ Bernier, Margaret. A Labor Study of the Franco-American Community of Waterville, Maine from 1890-1940.

work years as fun could also list multiple examples of discrimination and abuse of the workers by the industrial bosses. In addition, it is important to recognize the power of the "mill culture" itself. There were layers of ritual wrapped around the daily activities in the mill; people were controlled by the sound of whistles in the mill and by verbal commands from their supervisors. There was also a strict code in the Waterville mills between the workers themselves. Certain workers emerged as leaders amongst the workers and established a certain amount of influence over his/her peers. This can be thought of as a semi-autonomous field, meaning that while the workers were subjected to certain kinds of limitations and moldings set by their bosses they simultaneously crafted their own world view and mode of activity (or code) that was separate. This code implied that people had to act in accordance with the established norms; to step out of line meant a person could be physically or mentally punished. The employers had their own expectations for the workers, and the workers had their own for one another.

In the case of many of the Franco-American women who worked at the Hathaway company, there were multiple examples of the bosses attempting to keep the workers in a relegated position and keep them divided. First, the women were doing piece work, which meant that they would only be paid for the amount of work they completed each day, regardless of complications that might occur such as a machine breaking (the women were taught how to repair their own machines so that if the machines broke the women would have

incentive to repair them well and rapidly). If a woman was a final inspector of the shirts, she knew that if she sent back a shirt because it had a flaw the woman who had made the shirt would have to re-do the shirt on her own time with no pay. This position of final inspector was particularly rough for the woman, because she knew that she would essentially be the cause of problems for one of her co-workers. Also, another tactic of the Hathaway company was to move the women around so that they did not become too competent at any one particular job. The goal of the company was to keep the women skilled only to a certain level; if any of the workers became more skilled they would have to pay them more and they could potentially demand more from the company. The whole system was planned so the workers could never be above average.

Some women would counter-act this situation by taking home batch tickets, which indicated the number of shirts they had worked on that day. Once a woman had a certain number of batch tickets in her area that indicated she was getting too skilled at a job, the woman would be switched. By taking home some of the batch tickets, the women were lying about how many shirts they had worked on; they were also risking the wrath of their employers because the bosses took the liberty of searching their purses when they entered and left the factory. They would then bring the tickets the next day and incorporate them into their new pile of tickets—it was a constant process of trying to not appear too skilled at a job. For those women who were slower, the more skilled women

would often help them out by giving them some of their batch tickets.¹⁵⁷ In some cases, this was done out of genuine concern for a fellow worker. At other times if a woman was particularly skilled at her job she might give batch tickets to a less-adept co-worker so that she (the more skilled one) would end up with an average number of batch tickets at the end of the day and would not appear to be too skilled. This is just one example of how the Franco-American women would counter-act the techniques of the elite employers who were working to keep the women in a marginalized, controlled position.

At Maine Central Railroad (MCRR), there was a similar, obvious situation of controlling the workers and keeping them in a subordinate position. The Franco-American men could only work on the gravel trains and in the car shops. The higher paying jobs of the engineers were out of their reach, even if they had the skills for those jobs. The first strike in Waterville was conducted at MCRR in 1922. The car shop workers held a walk-out which the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and Federated Shop Crafts helped organize. Strike breakers were brought in, and there was a great deal of fighting throughout the strike period, although the *Waterville Morning Sentinel* did not record much of the violence. The strike lasted from July 1 to September 23, 1922 and very few concessions were actually made by MCRR. The workers were really suffering without their jobs, some were even starving throughout this time. When the strikers returned to

¹⁵⁷Person J. *Personal Interview*. 1/20/99.

work, many of them lost their seniority over the non-strikers and some were not even re-hired. The strikers were branded as "scabs" which became a stigmatizing label in Waterville for many years to come.¹⁵⁸

During the 1930s, there was severe unrest both in Waterville and across the nation due to the economic depression. The federal government helped assuage the economic crisis by stepping in and taking more control over industry and public works projects. However, this was a slow process and in the meantime the skyrocketing unemployment led to political unrest. In many instances, the subordinate ethnic groups found a forum and the power to speak out for their rights because their former employers were weakened. In Waterville, the national unions such as the CIO and AFL were slow to take hold, however some workers began to organize themselves. Two central figures at this time were George Jabar and Bernard Ezhaya, Lebanese men who began organizing laborers around 1933. By 1934, Jabar had helped organize a textile strike in Central Maine. The workers were affiliated with the United Textile Association of America and in Waterville they targeted the Lockwood company. Jabar and his picketers—most of whom were Franco-American—marched outside the Lockwood mills. These strikers were from other mills and were called "flying squadrons." The goal was to win over the majority of the Lockwood workers. Some of the Lockwood workers were not interested in

¹⁵⁸ Bernier, Margaret. A Labor Study of the Franco-American Community of Waterville, Maine from 1890-1940.

striking, however they were too fearful to walk to work because of the potential for violence. The police were called in to violently repel the strikers and eventually the National Guard was even called in to quell the disruptions. At points, these officials even used tear gas and clubs against the picketers. There were mass gatherings during this strike to hear Jabar speak, people yelled in French and English, and during much of this time there were a great many spectators who watched the workers go into the mill each morning while the picketers yelled at them to them to strike.

Ultimately the Lockwood workers were never won over by the picketers. The Lockwood Company's strategy was to give their workers almost the same things that the unionized mills had, but just a little less. The Lockwood bosses truly did not want the workers joining unions. They wanted to keep the seniority system in which the bosses could do as they pleased, including sexually harass the predominantly female work force. In unionized contexts, women had more of a forum to express their grievances against the bosses. The bosses at Lockwood wanted to prevent this kind of forum from developing.¹⁵⁹ The Lockwood Company was never successfully unionized, although Jabar and his followers did have success at the Wyandotte Worsted Company. Wyandotte became successfully unionized, as did other woolen mills in Central Maine.

¹⁵⁹ Bernier, Margaret. A Labor Study of the Franco-American Community of Waterville, Maine from 1890-1940. NOTE: Much of the detail in these paragraphs is from the Bernier thesis; thus far this thesis provides the only information I have found on this subject.

Jabar went on to become the president of the CIO in Maine and remained active in labor issues throughout the state.¹⁶⁰

The third and final strike that occurred in Waterville occurred in 1937 at the Hathaway shirt factory. The workers there staged a walk-out because they were trying to form a union and the company was blocking their efforts. The company stated that it would not recognize any union the workers organized as being the “-sole collective bargaining agency” for the workers.¹⁶¹ Again, George Jabar was involved as were many Franco-Americans. The workers wanted to join the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and the Hathaway owners—Ellerton Jette and Edward Leighton—worked hard to prevent this from happening. The workers wanted to join the national union because it would provide them with more protection; if they joined more local ones, the Hathaway bosses could find ways to get around the stipulations set up by the local unions. Ultimately the Hathaway workers lost the strike and did not join the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. Instead they formed their own independent union within the Company, but this did not result in the resolution of their major concerns. After 1940, there were far more successful unionizations in Waterville. Hathaway workers did finally join the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in 1945, and the MCRR workers were allowed to be affiliated with the AFL by 1946.

¹⁶⁰ Person K. *Personal Interview*. 1/15/99.

¹⁶¹ Bernier, Margaret. *A Labor Study of the Franco-American Community of Waterville, Maine from 1890-1940*. p. 74

Tensions Within the Triumvirate: Discrimination and Alliance Amongst the Yankees, Lebanese, and Franco-Americans

With the establishment of solid ethnic neighborhoods with stores, entertainment, places of worship and with the growth of industry the interactions between the three main ethnic groups in Waterville shifted away from the nineteenth century model. Franco-Americans and Lebanese were making their marks on the town, they were learning English and some of their children were attending public schools along side the Yankees. As factories grew so too did the machine-like handling of the workers within the factory. Workers lives were regimented by the sounds of loud machines, by the shouts of their bosses, and by the bells that called them to and from work each day. From the end of the nineteenth century through World War II factory life became more standardized and workers' roles more defined throughout the industrial Northeast. Factories had been similarly structured during the nineteenth century, however now they had a more stable population of laborers rather than laborers who came through town, stayed for a few years and then moved on. Additionally, large-scale industrialization had swept through the Northeast during the latter half of the nineteenth century and by around 1900 the factories had become permanent institutions in towns as had the ethnic enclaves that

sprang up around them. At this time workers were also gaining the right to organize and articulate their concerns through strikes. Although unionizing and strikes were largely unsuccessful in Waterville, the fact that attempts were made indicates that workers had achieved a certain minimal level of organization.

These changing situations caused the boundaries between ethnic groups to shift. One example of changing ethnic roles was the election of a Franco-American mayor, F. Harold Dubord, in 1929. Mr. Dubord was one of the early French graduates of Waterville High School, he attended Colby College, and went on to Boston University Law school. He helped out in the family clothing store on Water Street after finishing his studies in Boston and then later founded his own law practice. He soon became involved with politics. He served on the Board of Education and acted as Clerk of the City Council before becoming mayor from 1929-1933. After his post at mayor, he became involved with state level politics.¹⁶² He was the first of several Franco-American mayors in Waterville. This is just one example of how ethnic boundaries were changing. In 1870 it would have been very unlikely that a Franco-American would be elected to be mayor. However, at this time people were put together in new contexts and by tracing the points of contention one can begin to grasp the forces involved as well as how ethnic boundaries are formed and maintained.

As was the case throughout New England, members of the Yankee group typically looked down upon the immigrant communities:

Yankees...whose roots were in preindustrial Waterville...tended to look down upon all the immigrants...The prejudice rarely involved blatant discrimination; rather, it was more subtle. The immigrants themselves were generally unaware of the extent of the prejudice because their limited knowledge of English tended both to discourage contact with the Yankees and to cause them to miss linguistic cues. Their children, however, grew up fluent in English and readily comprehended speech nuances and gestures that were intended to express insults and/or disdain.¹⁶³

Stereotypes abounded about the ethnic groups. Franco-Americans were called “Frogs” and “dumb Frenchmen.” The large size of Franco-American families—which was necessary for family survival both on Quebec farms and in Waterville factories—was looked down upon, labeled as a peculiarity and as a source of Franco poverty. Additionally, Franco-Americans throughout New England were labeled as quiet and docile people, which made them good workers. Instead of looking at the multiple ways in which Franco-Americans were not given a voice, the Francos were labeled by the Yankee elite as simply being docile. The Lebanese were called “black Syrians” and were often stereotyped along the same lines as Jewish people. Many Jewish and Lebanese immigrants began as peddlers, and some opened up stores as they settled down. Additionally, many Jewish and Lebanese immigrants came to the US with marketable skills which allowed them to be propelled ahead of other immigrant groups. In Europe many Jewish people had been involved in textiles and they were able to transfer this skill to the US. Likewise some Lebanese were familiar with textiles, and in

¹⁶² Fecteau, Albert. The French Canadian Community of Waterville, Maine. p. 47.

¹⁶³ Hooglund, Eric J. “From the Near East to Down East.” p. 101.

particular the silk trade. Many Lebanese who arrived in Waterville were able to take on jobs as weavers in the woolen mills because they already possessed some training as weavers. The fact that Lebanese people were racialized as black is significant given the dominant black-white racial paradigm that exists within the US. Additionally, being lumped together with Jewish people meant that they became the target of Anti-Semitic discrimination as well.

One of the most obvious arenas for inter-group relations was in Waterville factories. The scenario described above with the Lebanese gaining more skilled—and thus higher paying—jobs certainly created tensions with the Franco-Americans in the mills. The competition for more prestigious and higher paying jobs created problems between the two groups. The rivalry often was played out in the form of physical fights and derogatory slurs that were hurled back and forth. The passage below from an interview with Said J. Namer (a Lebanese man) depicts the ethnic tensions around this time:

Q: Now how did the Lebanese and American people mix at Cascade Park? Alright?

A: Oh yes, they done very well. There was Lebanese people who were well-liked, well-liked by everybody. But to begin with, I don't know what you'd say. When we used to go to the cotton mill there was some of the young kids who used to meet us on the way, right by the...there used to be a park where the rotary is now, and you'd meet a bunch of bad-influence kids. They used to beat us, but they didn't beat the hell out of us, but they used to bother us.

Q: They used to pick on the Lebanese men going along?

A: They'd pick on the Lebanese. They'd meet them with snow-balls. Every Lebanese used to have a stick under his arm in order to protect himself, years ago...Me and Jimmy George, we was going to work (the cotton mill), yes the cotton mill. The ground was covered, no more snow. A little here, a little there. There was rock. I picked up a rock of cement, you know what I mean,

when I come over with the snow, and I hit the guy right there. He went down, and they never bothered us no more.¹⁶⁴

The dividing lines between the groups were clearly drawn during the early 1900s. The Yankees were present only in the factories as managers and were not directly involved in physical confrontation or conflict. The Yankee society had its own neighborhoods, churches, and social gatherings that were far removed from the other groups in the town. However, one way in which the power relationships in the town can roughly be mapped out is through the public schools. As mentioned previously, both the Lebanese and the Franco-Americans had established religious schools for their children. However, not all the children attended these schools and it appears to have been typical for a child to attend a mixture of public and private schools throughout his or her educational years.

The public schools represent a microcosm of the ethnic make-up in the town and the children endured many of the tensions their parents felt in factories and in public spaces around the town. One of the problems faced by Franco-Americans that is mentioned over and over again is the issue of language. The French dialect spoken in Waterville can be traced back to the region of Beauce in Quebec. The style of French spoken in this region differs greatly from the French that has developed in France over the past four hundred years. In American public schools, the style of French that is taught as a foreign language is the

¹⁶⁴ Waterville Public Library, 1976 *Lebanese Oral History Project*. Tape 4.

dialect used in France. Specifically it is the dialect used around Paris, often referred to as Parisian French. In the Waterville public schools, Parisian French was taught by people whose first language was English. The Franco-American students who took French class were mocked and told they did not speak French accurately. Often times they were placed in first level French courses which was particularly derogatory. Many people can relate stories of being humiliated by teachers and classmates alike in French class because of their accent and style of speaking French. Rather than being appreciated for already being bilingual, Franco-Americans were belittled in the classroom. Another problem that arose out of this is that Franco-American students who were in Parisian French classes often did begin to learn the style of French spoken in France and altered their accents. However, as soon as they returned home after school and spoke to their parents in the Parisian French the parents would chastise them for speaking in that manner. Parents did not want their children speaking in that “sophisticated” and foreign way. For the Franco-American children this was a no-win situation. Many felt so humiliated both at home and in school they opted instead to only speak English, although they were targeted still because they spoke English with an accent.

In public school, especially at the high school, the Yankee children were perceived as occupying the top rung while the Anglicized Franco-Americans and the Lebanese occupied some intermediate position. The Franco-Americans from the Plains area were definitely at the bottom of the social ladder. The

Lebanese boys were more dominant in sports, especially football and basketball, and this provided them with a great deal of prestige. It was with a team of predominantly Lebanese players that the Waterville basketball team won the New England Championship in 1944-45. The Franco-American boys had a baseball club called the Pilgrims during the early 1900s and had several stars on the football team at the high school. However, the most important sport for the Franco-American boys was hockey. Franco-American boys led the Waterville high school to many hockey championships.

Despite these athletic successes, there appear to have been some tensions regarding ethnic mixing on the sporting teams. Some people recalled there being an issue made over the fact that most of the boys on the basketball team were Lebanese and apparently some of the Lebanese boys were taken off the team and replaced with non-Lebanese.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, one Lebanese woman recalled how after she joined the cheerleading squad one of the other women on the team left the squad and the high school itself to enroll in a private institution. While there was no direct evidence that this was because a Lebanese woman had joined the cheerleading squad, it was hinted that this may have been the reason.¹⁶⁶

Some people growing up during the 1920s-1940s in Waterville viewed neighborhoods as the single most important aspect of a person's identity. There

¹⁶⁵ Person E, Person F, & Person G. *Personal Interview*. 1/25/99.

¹⁶⁶ Person G. *Personal Interview*. 1/25/99.

seem to have been gangs in the North and South sections of town which often came into conflict. Some students recall there being very clear divide lines between the Franco-American and Lebanese students at North Grammar and South Grammar Schools. Tekla Karter recalls some of these issues in an interview during 1976:

Q: Were the Lebanese kids treated any differently than the non-Lebanese kids?

A: I remember in my young days when we used to go to Redington Street School, there were a lot of nationalities living in the area of Head of Falls and Front Street. Especially on the Lockwood side. There were Greek people there, too, and they used to way-lay us when we'd go to school and push us around and many a morning my father had to walk the whole Head of the Falls crowd to school.¹⁶⁷

These incidents in schools, factories, and public spaces around Waterville help to highlight the relationships between the various communities. The roles the people in a given group play are determined by the historical circumstances they are given. What the people do within the given set of circumstances or parameters in their lives is their own choice, their own creation. They create their own world view out of a specific range of possibilities that are presented to them.

The Ku Klux Klan

¹⁶⁷ Waterville Public Library, 1976 *Lebanese Oral History Project*. Tape 11.

In addition to the issues mentioned above, the presence of the KKK in Maine had a profound influence on the Catholic (primarily Franco-American Catholic), Jewish, and Black populations. While some KKK-like activities occurred in Maine during the 1800s, the KKK truly gained a great deal of power and influence in Maine and throughout the rest of the country during the 1920s. The Klan reorganized around this time and increased its range of hatred to include Catholics, Jews, Blacks, and foreigners. New Klaverns were established throughout the country and extensive literature was published supporting Klan ideals. In particular, the Klan became obsessed with the notion of a Catholic conspiracy headed by the pope and the church hierarchy.¹⁶⁸ For example, parochial schools were targeted because they were thought to instill anti-American sentiments into Catholic children and keep them tied to Rome. Groups such as the Knights of Columbus were also targeted as suspicious. Books such as John Higham's Strangers in the Land added to the idea of a Catholic conspiracy.

In Maine the Klan was linked to politics during the 1920s and “[e]stimates of the size of the Klan in Maine vary from 15,000 to 60,000 members with an unknown but presumably large number of Klan sympathizers.”¹⁶⁹ With the end of World War I, the US returned to its isolationist policies that had

¹⁶⁸ Randel, William Peirce. The Ku Klux Klan: A Century of Infamy. p. 187

¹⁶⁹ Whitney, Edward Bonner. The Ku Klux Klan in Maine 1922-1928. p. iii.

typified the country during the 1800s. As mentioned previously, harsh and blatantly racist quotas were established for immigration which reflected the anti-immigrant and anti-alien sentiments of the time. In many urban areas across the US, including cities in Maine, immigrant groups were gaining some political power at the lower levels. The Klan used this fact to imply that the immigrants were taking over positions that were rightfully "American" and to engender hatred and distrust towards these immigrant groups.

Edward Whitney suggests in his thesis that Maine experienced its most rapid industrialization during the early 1900s and that in conjunction with this urban areas swelled. The state shifted from a rural to an urban emphasis and he suggests this set the stage for Klan sentiments to arise:

[T]he rural elements in society which had previously been both socially and economically predominant now found their positions usurped by other groups (due to the sudden growth of importance of urban areas and their population concentration and corresponding social dominance.) This theory postulates that the Klan was a means of resisting the loss of status felt particularly by the rural dwellers. In Maine the same type of person remained in firm control at least in the political realm; all of the major political candidates of both parties continued to be native-born Anglo-Saxon Protestants. However, the fear of alien domination and a loss of status became more and more evident, particularly in the ravings of Klansmen and Klan sympathizers about the increasing domination and corruption of politics and social life by the Catholics, the only sizable "alien" group in the state.¹⁷⁰

In conjunction with this, Maine endured an economic crisis after World War I that especially affected farming in the state. Farming had flourished during the war, however by 1921 the war-time markets had faded, crop prices dropped, and

¹⁷⁰ Whitney, Edward Bonner. The Ku Klux Klan in Maine 1922-1928. p. 15-16.

inflation increased. The value of farm property decreased and Maine was losing farmers at a rapid rate. Young people especially left the state in search of better economic opportunities. Additionally, while industries were generally on the rise in the state, they did not fare as well as industries in other parts of the country around this time. Thus throughout the state there appears to have been a great deal of unrest during the 1920s as well as during the larger depression of the 1930s.

Whitney calculates that there were around 650 Klan members in Waterville in the early 1920s, with Bangor, Lewison and Auburn having around 1,000 members each and with Portland numbering around 4,000. The Klan became officially part of the larger KKK network in Maine sometime in 1922 and it reached its peak of activity and membership around 1924-25. Some estimate that in 1925 Maine had a total Klan membership of around 150,141.¹⁷¹ Percival Baxter was the governor in Maine during the early '20s and initially he publicly attacked the organization. However, as the Klan gained influence, he toned down his accusations. Most alarming, however, was the Klan's support of governor Owen Brewster who entered into office after Baxter. The Klan publicly supported Brewster, and while Brewster himself never publicly claimed to be a KKK member he also never denounced the support given to him by the Klan.

¹⁷¹ Doty, C. Steward. "The KKK in Maine was not OK." Bangor Daily News. June 11-12, 1994. NOTE: The article also explains that in 1925 there were 37,000 Klan members in Rhode Island, 65, 590 in Connecticut, 75,000 in New Hampshire, 80, 301 in Vermont, and 130,780 in Massachusetts.

Many people in the state believed he was a Klan member and this issue surrounded his political career.¹⁷²

One other key point regarding the Klan in Maine is the participation of women in Klan activities. In 1923 Eugene Farnsworth, Klan leader, formed the Women of the Ku Klux Klan which was connected to the men's KKK group in Maine but which was independent of the national KKK.¹⁷³ This gave the Klan an aura of being a family organization which added to its popularity. The Klan in Maine hosted a number of social events which whole families would attend. For example, Farnsworth and others attempted to turn Columbus Day into a Klan holiday in Portland. The mayor of Portland refused to grant the Klan its own parade on this day, but the Klan responded by holding a huge event on private property replete with carnival events, bands, a bazaar, and—of course—flaming crosses. People from all over the state attended.¹⁷⁴

Aside from the details of the Klan's rise in Maine, the very fact of the Klan presence is a clear indication of the kinds of boundaries erected against those targeted by the Klan. The history of the Klan in Maine is not well known and yet “-the hooded and sheeted members of the KKK were a very real threat in Maine and New England.”¹⁷⁵ There were numbers of parades and demonstrations including cross burnings in public spaces in towns. It was a clear sign that the elite Yankee Protestants wanted to maintain their position and that they feared

¹⁷² Sleeper, Frank. Around Waterville. p. 26.

¹⁷³ Whitney, Edward Bonner. The Ku Klux Klan in Maine 1922-1928. p. 38.

¹⁷⁴ Whitney, Edward Bonner. The Ku Klux Klan in Maine 1922-1928. p. 39.

losing it. The following excerpt provides some understanding of how the Klan articulated its feelings against Catholics and others:

Franco-American loggers of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) turned back 40 hooded Klansmen from Greenville in the zero temperatures of February 1924. In Fairfield [a town adjacent to Waterville], on July 1, 1924, Ku Klux Klan forces and Franco-Americans battled each other with rocks and clubs before a fiery cross was torn down. In September 1924, Franco-Americans defended Biddeford from the Ku Klux Klan storming the bridge from Saco....

Yankee New England may have forgotten the Ku Klux Klan or relegated it to a benighted region somewhere else. Its memory and its effect, however, lived on. Older Franco-Americans can quickly recall the trauma they and their parents experienced at the hands of the Klan in those dark years. They remember being hidden under beds and in closets, and behind locked doors in the darkened houses of the Petits Canadas of New England. The sheets and hoods disappeared, but the “dumb Frenchmen” jokes, “frog” as an ethnic slur, and hostility to spoken French remained.¹⁷⁶

The above description accurately depicts the long-term effects of the Klan and other discriminatory activity in this century. One informant from the Waterville Franco-American community mentioned that her grandfather was doing roof repair many years ago at the Episcopal church and came across KKK paraphernalia in the church attic. He was surveying the repair work with the Episcopal priest at the time when they both came across old boxes with pamphlets, books, and other items related to the Klan. The Episcopal priest was apparently new in the area and knew nothing about the items.¹⁷⁷ Regardless, this example shows that the Klan likely had strength in Waterville. The fact that the Klan existed in the town and had support provides a critical dimension to

¹⁷⁵ Doty, C. Stewart. “The KKK in Maine was not OK.” *Bangor Daily News*. June 11-12, 1994. p. A15.

¹⁷⁶ Doty, C. Stewart. “The KKK in Maine was not OK.” *Bangor Daily News*. June 11-12, 1994. p. A15.

¹⁷⁷ Person L. *Personal Interview*. 11/12/98.

understanding ethnic relations in the town. There is no direct evidence from the information on the Klan in Maine that the Lebanese specifically would have been targeted; however it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the Klan would have directed some of its hostilities and nativist sentiments toward the "black Syrians' in town.

Chapter VII: The Post-War Era—1945-1973

World War II represents a pivotal moment in world history and the global power structure. The war stretched over several continents and involved dominant nations and their colonies; immediately following the war the economy was restructured, nations were created and shifted, and new ideologies were formed. For the US, the war was a way to launch the country out of the depression that had plagued the previous decade. In many ways the depression of the 1930s can be seen as a crisis of capitalism and the response of the Roosevelt administration was to save the economy through bureaucratic regulation. In essence, the New Deal put an end to the more laissez-faire style that had marked the US from the late 1800s through 1929. In the US during World War II, the economy was revitalized by the massive industrial production for the war effort; the country was hauled out of the depression mode and rejuvenated by the war-time demands. In the post-war period, the US needed to maintain the same levels of production to keep the economy alive. The entire US society began to be geared towards mass-production and mass-consumption. Also, the US economy became geared more towards big business, big government, and big labor. Big business had been the trademark prior to the 1929 crash, and big government had picked up the pieces during the 1930s and established a secure bureaucracy. Labor unions became more nationally united, which was spurred

on by the merger of the AFL and the CIO in 1935. The result after the war was a partnership between these three entities which had previously been at odds with one another.

Internationally, the world became politically polarized between the US and the USSR after 1945 as these two countries rushed to gain control of the rest of the people and resources around the globe. During the war, the US had developed a high-production economy which had helped pull the country out of depression. To keep the US economy afloat, the same kind of production levels needed to be maintained. Additionally, the US was propelled into a new strategic position of power after the war. By maintaining high production rates, the US generated resources and money that were used to gain control around the world. This in turn secured resources from abroad and kept the "communist enemy," the USSR, at bay. In order to keep up with the high-production economy, a new kind of worker had to be molded in the US. Workers needed to be acclimated to routinized labor, a highly structured schedule, long hours, and—most importantly—had to use his/her wages to purchase goods. Making workers into consumers would help complete the circle of economic activity. Forging a new type of worker who would be given a fixed hourly wage and a set time of work was the post-war agenda. The term Fordism has been used by some to refer to "the long postwar boom, from 1945 to 1973, [which] was built upon a certain set of labour control practices, technological mixes, consumption

habits, and configurations of political-economic power.”¹⁷⁸ The implementation of Fordism took several decades, yet by the end of World War II a framework had been laid out to implement the policies. Fordism was brought “-to maturity as a fully-fledged and distinctive regime of accumulation. As such, it then formed the basis for a long postwar boom that stayed broadly intact until 1973. During that period, capitalism in the advanced capitalist countries achieved strong and relatively stable rates of economic growth.”¹⁷⁹

The national government also began to encourage understandings of a single, specific “American” history and to unite the citizens under the umbrella term “American.” The government also started to define what an “American citizen” should be like, what attributes every citizen should possess. In conjunction with these trends, the “American Dream” becomes solidified in terms of encouragement of specific, common goals such as owning a home, a car, and maintaining a steady job. Socially and ethnically, the US was at a major turning point. As Karen Brodtkin-Sacks explains: “The postwar period was a historic moment for real class mobility and for the affluence we have erroneously come to believe was the US norm. It was a time when the old white and the newly white masses became middle class.”¹⁸⁰ As the example of Waterville shows, many of the Euroethnics (to use Brodtkin-Sacks’ term) were not considered to be “white” before World War II. If anyone was considered to be

¹⁷⁸ Harvey, David. “Political-economic Capitalist Transformation”. p. 124.

¹⁷⁹ Harvey, David. “Political-economic Capitalist Transformation”. p. 129.

¹⁸⁰ Brodtkin-Sacks, Karen. “How Did Jews Became White Folks?” p. 88.

white, the Yankees were. There was no way that in any given US city prior to World War II the people of English, Irish, Jewish, French-Canadian, Italian, and Lebanese descent would have considered themselves to be members of the same race, minority, or ethnicity. Yet shortly after the war, all of these groups are suddenly linked together and generally referred to as white Americans. The degree of inclusiveness of these groups into this white category varied from locality to locality, however in the national sense this new white inclusive group was generally accepted.

Brodkin-Sacks raises the following questions and suggestions surrounding this issue:

Did Jews and other Euroethnics become white because they became middle class? That is, did money whiten? Or did being incorporated in an expanded version of whiteness open up the economic doors to a middle-class status? Clearly, both tendencies were at work...Although changing views on who was white made it easier for Euroethnics to become middle class, it was also the case that economic prosperity played a very powerful role in the whitening process.¹⁸¹

Certainly the ethnics in Waterville were affected by these trends, and in fact have always been affected by the network of national trends. However, the US government, along with its partners in big business, made a far more concerted effort to create a national identity and consciousness than had been attempted in the past. Much of this was accomplished through the rapid development of mass media. Thus people in Waterville were certainly a part of the new national

trends and the ethnic groups in Waterville qualified for becoming white. Waterville also benefited from the overall economic prosperity of the country even though many of the area's most successful industries began to wane during this period.

Industrial Decline in Waterville and the GI Bill

For the textile companies in the Northeast, there was a slow but steady decline that began in the 1930s and then picked up speed throughout the post war era. Much of this decline was due to the southern competition. The textile mills in the south, where the raw materials were located, took away the competitive edge the northern mills had enjoyed for decades and drastically hurt the local Northeastern economies. In Waterville the Lockwood cotton mill closed down in 1957 and with the introduction of the highway system and more use of the automobile, the railway system lessened in importance. Shortly after Lockwood closed down, the Hathaway factory moved into Lockwood's mill number two. The other companies also were down-sizing their activities, especially as they became more mechanized and needed fewer laborers. In 1954 the Hollingsworth & Whitney paper company merged with Scott Paper

¹⁸¹ Brodtkin-Sacks, Karen. "How Did Jews Become White Folks?" p. 86-87.

company, a larger national corporation. These trends are directly in-line with national developments.

While many Franco-Americans and Lebanese continued to work in the local factories, many others moved into other economic spheres. The boundaries that determine the kind of ethnic conception one forges were shifting yet again. Many Yankee, Lebanese, and Franco-American men from Waterville fought in World War II. As a result they were eligible for the GI bill that would pay their way through college. The GI bill was cited repeatedly by members of the Lebanese and Franco-American community in Waterville as a major turning point. The GI bill supplied the sons of factory laborers with the means to attend college, and a college education meant socio-economic mobility. A small number of Lebanese and Franco-American students used the GI bill to enroll at Colby College, which moved from College Avenue downtown up to the vast expanse of Mayflower Hill during the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁸² College education propelled some Lebanese and Franco men into professional positions. They became engineers, doctors, lawyers, dentists, owned real estate, opened insurance companies, and became larger-scale entrepreneurs. They were branching into professions that had previously been held by Yankees only. Franco-American and Lebanese identity rapidly changed as a result of the economic boom, rise of the middle class, new definitions of what it meant to be

¹⁸² NOTE: Small numbers of Lebanese and Franco-Americans had enrolled at Colby prior to this time, however the numbers appear to be very small.

American, and the new category of white American. Where only 10 years prior the Franco-Americans and Lebanese were entirely shut out from some jobs—such as engineers for MCRR—they suddenly began to be allowed into these jobs during the late 40s and early 50s.

While it is difficult to measure the comparative levels of socio-economic mobility of the Lebanese and the Franco-Americans, the Lebanese appear to have been more upwardly mobile. However, it is difficult to make this assertion since the Lebanese population in Waterville was less than 5% whereas the Franco-Americans constituted about 50% of the population. When taken as a collective group the Lebanese on the whole became middle class and of the professional class within one or two generations. Certainly a contingent of Francos also took advantage of the GI bill and secured social mobility for themselves, however there were still many Franco-Americans working as laborers in Waterville who remained on the poorer end of the spectrum. There appears to be some correlation between socioeconomic mobility and the Franco-Americans who lived in the North end of town. This may be because the first wave immigrants had settled here or because of the influence of the English-speaking Sacred Heart church. Regardless, there were still many Francos, especially those from the Plains, whose options remained limited.

From Television to the Social Movements of the '60s: Growing Up Franco-American and Lebanese during the Post-War Era

Franco-American and Lebanese youth began to have more in common during the 1950s than they had had in previous decades. Both groups grew up during a time when the government made huge efforts to create national sentiments and symbols and to standardize the experience of being American. According to national labeling, Franco-Americans and Lebanese were both considered to be white groups. However, stereotypes about the groups did not fade away; instead, they became more subtle. While Lebanese and Franco-Americans could not have passed as white Yankees in 1920, in 1960 many Lebanese and some Franco-Americans found themselves in a new white, middle-class category along with most of the Yankees. Money and the state "whitened" and as members of these two communities were given a wider spectrum of career paths and educational opportunities, older categorical designations for the two groups slipped away. The Yankee, Lebanese, and Franco-American children during the 1950s all grew up watching the same television shows, they learned the same history in the public schools, and danced to the same music on the radio. There was a commonality of experience between the three groups that had never existed to this degree before.

However, despite these changes, the boundaries between the groups did not dissipate. Money and social mobility may have whitened the ethnics, but prejudice and dominance factors still remained. The following three excerpts

from Rhea Coté Robbins' recent book Wednesday's Child captures the feelings of a young Franco-American woman growing up on Water Street during the 1950s and 1960s. Rhea grew up in the Plains in Waterville and after attending school at the University of Maine worked for a number of years as the editor of *Le Forum* at the Franco-American Center.¹⁸³ Rhea's statements portray the more subtle side of discrimination that has become increasingly difficult to visibly see in Waterville.

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My mother-in-law is one of these women [factory workers]. Thirty-three years of sewing one part or another of men's shirts. The high quality kind. Hathaway shirts at the C.F. Hathaway Shirt Factory on Water Street. Their ads show Grecian, fine-chiseled featured men with impeccable suits and baby-soft cured leather shoes and gloves. Camel's hair long coats. White silk neck scarves. The retirement check of this woman after giving a lifetime to the sewing mill is \$137 a month, and after six months of retirement, she no longer qualifies for health insurance. She is forced to buy her own health insurance plan independently. The shirts sell for \$50 to upwards of \$70 apiece in the men's shops which sell quality clothing. I was destined for the men's shirt factory mill. As so many of my neighbor women were destined.

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Waterville, a township on the Maine map, is not a large land mass, but it is heady on its own fumes because of the Ivy League school which makes its home there—Colby College. The workplace for many Franco-Americans as cooks, janitors, secretaries and maids. Zamboni drivers. Toilet bowl cleaners. Salad prepares. Rarely do Franco-American children attend Colby College. Although children or workers can attend for free. Few choose to stoop to that level of social climbing. Who would they talk to when they came back from that foreign land, and while there, who would understand them? The French body language is all different than what is bodily believed in at the Ivy League school. The gestures of being brought up French do not prepare a child to compete in the world of high finance, Jaguars, the smell of money emanating from the leather of the shoes and lying down in bed with creamy-skinned,

¹⁸³ NOTE: A more detailed discussion of the Franco-American Center at UMO appears in Chapter 8.

silken-haired silver spun women. Or, men. So Colby is safely tucked away from the onslaught of the French who took up residence in Waterville to work in the mills. The women of my neighborhood were the playthings of the Colby men. “The girls on Water Street” were girls the Colby men were told to avoid. They might get the crabs. I am one of those women who the Colby men were told to avoid on a Saturday night. Their spirits stank when they walked in our neighborhood. It was the rotting shoe leather.

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Maman, at least, has someone to fight with and then, there were the times when things were O.K. between her and dad. Like when they work on their flower together. Or their lawns. The place where I come from, *chez-nous*, looks like a park. People would walk down the street from their hot, third floor apartments with their babies to let them run around on our lawn and around the pond dad had dug and piped water to from the stream in the woods running off the cemetery. It was their place of calm. And beauty. How ironic. All I want to do is be a white girl. A girl from Mayflower Hill. A girl with an English name. An English identity. An English sexuality. An English sensibility. An English everything. Instead, I have French as French could be.

These words vividly depict the lines between the Yankee dominant group and the Franco-Americans. The line has moved out of the visible realm and into a more psychological one.

Gregoire Chabot is another Franco-American writer who captures the essence of how Francos have felt during the post-war era. He grew up in Waterville, attended Colby, has worked in theater and broadcasting and today does freelance writing. His play “Un Jacques Cartier Errant” (Jacques Cartier Discovers America) involves the return of the ghost of the French explorer Jacques Cartier. The action takes place in a Franco-American bar where Cartier begins to ask questions all about the history of the French in North America in an attempt to understand who the Franco-Americans are and why they are in the

position they are in. In the following excerpt from the play the character Ti-Jean hits upon the sentiments held by many Franco-Americans:

Listen, Mister Cartier. I've read a little bit about my family's history. The first Coté was a trapper and woodsman under French rule. He worked night and day, and struggled like hell just to get by. My great grandfather was a farmer when the English were in charge. He worked night and day, too, and struggled like hell just to get by. My grandfather came down here to work in the mills for the Americans. He worked night and day, and struggled like hell just to get by. I work in the mills too. But I don't earn enough there, so I have to have a night job. Want to know how I'm doing? Like every one of my ancestors, I'm struggling like hell just to get by.¹⁸⁴

When interviewed, many Franco-Americans highlighted the television as a major factor that pulled apart the fabric of the Franco-American home. In Gregorie Chabot's play "Sans Atout" (No Trump) a television is listed in the cast of characters. The character of the television is described as a "hypnotic Anglophone presence." TVs brought the English language directly into French-speaking homes. Now Franco-American children heard English at home as well as in public and at school. This was one of the final blows to the community. The ridiculing of French-speaking students in public schools which was present during the early 1900s continued in this era and contributed to the rapid loss of the French language amongst the children growing up at this time. The following excerpt from the *Sunday Journal* in Lewiston aptly describes how Franco-American students felt:

Many second-generation Franco-Americans recall painful experiences from high school in the 1950s and 1960s, where they learned that their language and lineage were viewed as second-class. Some spent much of their young adulthood worried about their French roots.

Norm Renaud, 53, grimaces as he recalls how entering Lewiston High School in the early '60s was "a rude awakening." Until then, he had enjoyed the sense of belonging offered by local French-Catholic schools and community. Everyone around him spoke French.

But public school was different.

"We had French accents," he recalled. "We spoke French to some of our friends in the hallways, and the Anglos and WASPs would point their fingers at us and say, "We don't speak French here"...We were Francos, so we didn't fit in with the well-dressed, the mill overseers' kids, the shoe-shop foreman's kids, or the retail owners' kids...We felt vibes, big time."

Students segregated naturally between Franco and non-Franco and the two groups didn't socialize, he said. Non-Franco girls turned him down for dates, saying, "My parents don't want me to go out with French kids."

Unable to cope with the stress of being ostracized some close to Renaud dropped out of school, others—including his sister—transferred back to St. Dom's, then the French private high school.

"They would call me Frenchy." Roger Bouffard, 51, remembers the nickname given him by his new classmates at Lewiston High School. "They would say, "Which part of Canada are you from?"

"Without a doubt we were embarrassed about speaking with a French accent," said Richard Courtemanche..."We thought it was a handicap. We were forever trying to hide it...People used to put Frenchmen down."¹⁸⁵

According to some Franco-Americans who grew up during this time, the Franco-American community had been operating under the mentality of *la survivance* for so long that many of them clung to it without really assessing how much it suited their needs anymore. For many of the Franco-American children in the 1950s and 1960s, the notion of *la survivance* had nothing to do with the McCarthyist-communist scare, with the civil rights marches, or rock n' roll. In Waterville in 1950 the entire French infrastructure was still in place, meaning one could operate entirely in French to do anything—to go to the bank, to the

¹⁸⁴ Chabot, Gregoire. "Un Jacques Cartier Errant." p. 22

¹⁸⁵ *Sunday Journal*. "A Renaissance". 11/9/97. p. A1.

grocery store, to church, or in the train station.¹⁸⁶ Any store on Main Street that wanted to do well, whether it was owned by Franco-Americans or Yankees or Lebanese, would hire a French-speaking employee to serve the needs of any Franco-American who came to shop in the store. In 1950 all of the Franco-American children spoke French at home and used English on the streets and in schools. Yet within about ten or fifteen years, this entire infrastructure had fallen apart. Bits and pieces of it survived, however English and "American life" dominated.

Many Francos attribute this to the "all or nothing" mentality that the Francos who had grown up before World War II possessed.¹⁸⁷ For a young Franco growing up in 1950, the options were either to cling to the world of *la survivance* that their parents ascribed to or to choose to integrate themselves into American society. Most chose to abandon the world their parents had lived in. The fact that this generation had the option of denying their "Frenchness" and blending in with the Anglo world is key. It indicates a radical change in the boundaries of the group. A generation before, this option did not exist: if one was born a Franco-American, the label remained for life. For this new generation some of the French label certainly remained, yet a large percent of young Franco-Americans were able to lose their French accent and adopt the exterior appearance of "American-ness" or "English-ness."

¹⁸⁶ Person M. *Personal Interview*. 2/14/99.

¹⁸⁷ Person A. *Personal Interview*. 1/26/99.

As these young Francos began coming home speaking English and adopting American music and ideologies, Franco-American culture began to recede. Culture here means that the kinds of obvious attributes a Franco-American in Waterville would have had in the 1940s and early 1950s such as operating in an entirely French-language realm or attending church regularly. A new Franco-American culture was formed, however few associated it with being French; instead it became associated with class and wealth. The women who still work at the Hathaway Shirt Company today in 1999 are predominantly from Franco-American backgrounds. They would likely not identify themselves as Franco-American, they do not speak French and likely do not view the Catholic church as the epicenter of their lives. However, they still operate within some of the same boundaries that their ancestors did and create their world view out of the limited realm of possibilities they are given.

While the Lebanese did not have the notion of *la survivance*, the television and world their children were exposed to helped thrust American life into their neighborhood. The use of the Arabic language may have fallen into disuse more rapidly than French because the numbers of Lebanese were fewer and they operated in a town where the two dominant languages were French and English. Yet just as with the Francos the tight community that had been formed around religion began to fade away. Many of the children growing up in these communities describe how they rebelled and did turn away from the kind of life their parents had led. In the 1950s the Maronite church was still a strong force in

the Lebanese community, yet soon its power was eclipsed. In 1954 a new church building was built on the site of the old St. Joseph's church (which had been in a converted house). The church operated a parochial school from 1938 through 1969. This school placed some of the Lebanese children in direct contact with Maronite traditions. Sacred Heart began a parochial school in 1953. With the founding of this school, each of the Catholic-oriented churches in Waterville—Sacred Heart, Notre Dame, St. Francis de Sales, and St. Joseph Maronite—had its own parochial school. In 1969, the decision was made to consolidate all of the schools into one school, the Catholic Consolidated School.¹⁸⁸ This was in operation until 1973, when the cost of maintaining the private school proved to be too great. Further, there was a decline in the enrollment and in the availability of sisters to teach.¹⁸⁹

As the church ceased to hold its dominant role, so too did other long-standing norms. During this post-war era intermarriage became a common occurrence. Marriage outside of the ethnic group seems to have been relatively uncommon or even taboo during the early 1950s, but this situation began to rapidly change from the late 1950s onward. Most of the Lebanese people at this time and subsequently have married non-Lebanese. Those non-Lebanese women who married Lebanese men were considered to have "become Lebanese" in a sense. Women married into the community and many attended

¹⁸⁸ NOTE: Mt. Merici Academy remained separate from the Consolidated School and is still in operation in 1999.

¹⁸⁹ Bourassa, Sister Rita. History: Province of the Northeast United States.

the Maronite church or learned how to cook Lebanese foods. While Lebanese people married both Yankee and Franco-Americans, the marriages to Franco-Americans seem to have been more commonplace, especially Lebanese men marrying Franco women. Unfortunately this is a difficult situation to assess and not enough data was gathered to make any generalizations about intermarriage. What is significant, however, is that the barriers between the groups had changed to such a degree that people whose parents or grandparents may have fought each other in the factories were now being married. This shows incredible amount of change within the realm of what is permissible and what is not. In a sense, the old forces that had shaped these two groups were blown away and new forces created an entirely new social framework.

Urban Renewal

In the 1960s, Waterville began an urban renewal project that would alter the face of the town significantly. Many communities throughout New England around this time were proposing large-scale projects which were largely funded by federal money. The major goals of these projects paralleled the new American philosophy of the times—consumption, consumerism, and growth of businesses and industry. In the case of Waterville, the major reason cited for

urban renewal was that the influx of automobiles was too much for the old city infrastructure to manage. There was not enough parking in the downtown area nor were the roads sufficient to accommodate the growing numbers of vehicles. In 1960 the Urban Renewal Authority was created in Waterville. The executive director was Paul Mitchell—a Lebanese man from the area—and the chairman was Bradford Wall. The project was labeled the Charles Street Urban Renewal Project, and later in 1965 another phase of the project was called Head of Falls Urban Renewal. Initially, the project was supposed to be completed by 1966, however it continued on into the early 1970s and ultimately was never fully completed.

Millions of federal dollars were given to Waterville to complete this project. The Urban Renewal Authority also took out loans for the project which were to be repaid once the land was opened up in the downtown area and sold to private developers. It cannot be emphasized enough how much this project re-shaped the town of Waterville. It also stretched on for over a decade and aroused considerable opposition amongst the townspeople. What the project ultimately did was get rid of Charles Street and demolish all of the houses and buildings on and near that street. The result was the Concourse, a huge super parking lot with a Zayers and other large retail stores. The entire parking lot once held homes and businesses and streets, some of which were moved while others were simply wiped out. Alice's Cafe, a popular restaurant with students and others in the town, was demolished as were many buildings in the town

which dated back to the mid-1800s. For example, the building used by the YMCA Boy's Club (which had been so popular with the young Lebanese boys) was originally built by Timothy Boutelle in 1842. Boutelle was one of the wealthy leaders in Waterville's early years; he was an attorney and real estate owner and he built this home as a wedding gift for his daughter.¹⁹⁰ Many historic buildings were destroyed, much to the dismay of Waterville Citizens. The Congregational Church was also taken down rebuilt on upper Main Street.

All of these changes took a great deal of negotiation and often frustrated people in the town. Some people claimed that Waterville's history and its charm was being destroyed; others stated that the urban renewal was simply removing slum areas that were vastly in need of improvement anyway. Still others were generally uncertain about the project which was further exacerbated by the slow pace of the project. Most of what people saw year after year was the removal of buildings and construction. Many people who were displaced from their homes complained that no adequate housing was being created elsewhere for them to move into. Mrs. Rose Warren contested the right of the Urban Renewal Authority to take her land on Temple Street. She took her complaints through the court system and it went as far as the Maine Supreme Court. In the end, the Court upheld the Urban Renewal Authority's right of eminent domain and Mrs. Warren lost her land. The following editorial by George Lessard reflects some of the concerns Waterville citizens had during this time:

¹⁹⁰ *Morning Sentinel*. "YMCA Boy's Club." 8/13/65.

I am shocked to think that any organization would ever receive an award for the support of urban-renewal such as that received by The Bangor Daily News.

As I understand it, the original purpose of urban renewal was to removed slums and blight from our nation's cities and to provide substantial low-cost housing. I ask, is it doing this? I believe not!

In nearly every area where an urban-renewal program has been started, people have been moved from one "slum" dwelling into another. Of the thousands of homes destroyed by urban-renewal only a small percentage have been replaced. (It has been estimated that only 20 percent have been rebuilt.) Furthermore, the rents of the new "low-cost" units are often times much higher than people with moderate incomes can afford to pay. In fact, in many areas, such as Waterville for example, it is not low-cost housing that is being built, but, that it is a plan to rejuvenate the business district...¹⁹¹

The editorial continues on to question how the city can compensate for loss of tax revenues during this time and ultimately labels urban renewal as an "outrageous, national hoax." Regardless, the Urban Renewal Authority pressed on with state and federal support. The Maine state highway commission was involved in creating new roadways and mapping out traffic flow. Approximately 900 new parking spaces were created as well.

The summary report of the project for the town planning board explains that "-one of the reasons for planning is to prepare a program of development in order to increase the orderliness of the community."¹⁹² The report also indicates that there is no room for industries to grow in their traditional locations next to the river, thus the new goals are to keep industry away from residential areas as well as to accommodate the new use of cars for transportation. The moving of

¹⁹¹ *Morning Sentinel*. "Shocked at Urban Renewal Award." 4/3/65.

¹⁹² Planning and Renewal Associates. A Comprehensive Plan, Waterville, Maine. p. 15-16.

the Wyandotte Worsted Co. onto West River Road and out of the old Lebanese neighborhood in the early 1970s is a direct example of these new goals. The report interestingly labels the houses on Mayflower Hill Drive as being of "excellent quality" and encourages expansion of this type of housing in the town. In contrast the South end of town (the Plains) is the most densely populated and is the "-only sizable residential section of Waterville where the lack of grass and trees is noticeable."¹⁹³

What all of the newspaper articles and the final report fail to discuss is the fact that much of the area under scrutiny was the Lebanese neighborhood and part of the Franco-American neighborhood.¹⁹⁴ Most of the buildings that were referred to as slums and were deemed "unsafe" housing were formerly Franco-American and Lebanese homes. This physical act of tearing down the buildings was very emotional for many of the Franco-Americans and Lebanese. Even for those who no longer lived in the neighborhoods the massive destruction signified the end of an era and the end of a certain understanding of what it meant to be Lebanese or Franco-American in Waterville. In particular, the Lebanese area suffered the most. Today a park and a parking lot stand where Lebanese homes once stood side by side. The streets where Arabic was spoken

¹⁹³ Planning and Renewal Associates. A Comprehensive Plan, Waterville, Maine. p. 16.

¹⁹⁴ NOTE: The Plains itself was largely untouched by the renewal, however Franco-Americans lived in Head of Falls and some lived in housing that was torn down and replaced by the Concourse parking lot-shopping plaza. Additionally, the tenement buildings in the Plains that were located on the edge of the Kennebec and that had levels below Water Street were torn down around this time. There was no specific reference to this in the Urban Renewal Authority reports or in the newspaper clippings that I reviewed, however it is a fair assumption that these were torn down as part of this project. The houses on Water Street and through the rest of the Plains, however, remain today.

and young Lebanese immigrants walked to the factory each day are erased, and there is no marker to commemorate these buildings or the people who once thrived in this area. The urban renewal project virtually erased a huge piece of Waterville's physical structure. It also stands as another testament to the silencing of the history of the Lebanese and Franco-American people.

Chapter VIII: The Changing Tide—1973-Present

The past three decades in Waterville have seen significant changes from the attitudes and atmosphere held in the town earlier in the century. In 1900 Waterville was an industrial mecca and prosperity was the buzz word of the upper classes. In the 1960s Waterville reached its highest levels of population as industries in the area had their last moments of prosperity and high production rates. Lockwood had closed down in the 1950s and Wyandotte closed in the 1980s after phasing back on labor needs for a number of years. In 1960 the Hathaway company was purchased by Warner Brothers Co. (later called Warnaco) and nearly closed down in 1996, though it was saved by major efforts throughout the state. Scott Paper Company was bought by Kimberly-Clark in the early 1990s and in 1997 the mill was shut down permanently after several years of down-sizing. These industrial powerhouses had been a primary factor in drawing the Lebanese and Franco-Americans to the area. As these industries phased out during the post-war period, the need for labor which had been so prevalent throughout Waterville's history was removed. The need for labor and the options given to the Franco and Lebanese laborers had helped shape how communities were formed. Today, this prominent labor need no longer exists in the same fashion, which leaves room for a re-configuration of both communities.

The Eclipsing of Industry in Waterville

From the 1970s onward there has been a significant shift in the orientation of the US economy. Generally, the shift has been away from manufacturing to a service-oriented economy. The trend has been for US industries to go "off-shore" into third world areas where the labor is cheaper and where there are fewer factory safety, health, or environmental standards to be met. Additionally, many of these new factories are located in free trade zones and are given special low tariff rates if the products are shipped into the US. For many manufacturing towns in the Northeastern United States—where factories had been relocating to the South for the past few decades—the movement off-shore was a final blow to the local economies. In Waterville today only the Chinette Company (formerly known as Keyes Fiber)¹⁹⁵ and the Hathaway Shirt Factory survive as local industries. As the rest have left the infrastructure surrounding them has declined and there is a great deal of unemployment. Those individuals and families who were dependent on the mills during the 1950s through the 1990s suffered a great deal as the mills closed. Several people mention the fact that they had a certain wage level, industrial skills, and some benefits from

¹⁹⁵ NOTE: Today Chinette employs approximately 500 people. The factory still makes paper plates and other products as it always has, however it makes them out of recycled papers rather than out of wood pulp. (Info from the Security Dept. at the Chineette Factory, 4/14/99).

companies such as Scott Paper. When Kimberly Clark Co. bought Scott Paper and slowly sold it off piece by piece, there was a domino effect on the local economy. Every year the number of unemployed rose and there were no local jobs available with comparable salaries for the workers. Families were entrenched in the area with homes, mortgages, car payments, and children in school.

As the economy has shifted, new kinds of pressures have been put onto the groups of people who have been outlined in this paper. By and large there appear to have been very few Lebanese working in mills after the 1950s and 1960s. Many Lebanese had gone on to school and entered into more professional, middle-class jobs. Some Franco-Americans did the same, however a large portion of the Franco population remained on as mill workers. As factories closed, it was largely Franco-American workers who suffered. The closing factories did not affect the Lebanese population as much. The Lebanese have certainly moved into a different socio-economic niche, one in which their boundaries have been standardized to generally agree with the rest of white, middle-class America. For some Franco-Americans, this is also the case. However, the story is far different for those Franco-Americans who remained on the lower end of the spectrum. For people who have lost stable factory jobs in the last two decades there is very little local opportunity to gain comparable jobs. Many of the people in this position appear to be trapped by a new series of walls that keep them very far away from those in middle class, mobile niches.

Although the following quotation applies to New York City and Puerto Rican workers, it may provide some parallels with the situation in Waterville during the 1990s:

[T]he transformation from manufacturing to service employment—especially in the professional office work setting—is much more culturally disruptive than the already revealing statistics on reductions in income, employment, unionization, and worker’s benefits would indicate. Low-level service sector employment engenders a humiliating ideological—or cultural—confrontation between a powerful corps of white office executives and their assistants versus a mass of poorly educated, alienated, “colored” workers.¹⁹⁶

Many people in this latter category who are of Franco-American descent today work, for example, in Waterville’s fast food restaurants or as cleaning, maintenance, and dining hall staff at Colby College. Still others carry on in their traditional roles, as evidenced by the large percentage of Franco-American women who continue to do piece work at the Hathaway making shirts for top-label companies such as L.L.Bean, Polo Ralph Lauren, and Calvin Klein.

The Erasing of Otherness

The Lebanese and Franco-Americans came to understand that they deviated from the established hegemonic norms in Waterville society; in essence

¹⁹⁶ Bourgois, Philippe. “From Jibaro to Crack Dealer: Confronting the Restructuring of Capitalism in El Barrio.” p.128

they were the Other. There were many factors involved that kept them in that position and most of these factors were beyond their control. Once boundaries began to shift and the Lebanese and Franco-Americans were able to escape their prior categorizations and become "American", many seized the opportunity. Many of the Franco-Americans and Lebanese in a sense had internalized their own oppression; as subordinate groups they participated in the maintenance of the hegemonic system. They came to believe the dominant rhetoric, to believe they were inferior. During this time period, the new goal encouraged by the dominant group was to become more and more "American" and to forget the past. The majority of Franco-Americans and Lebanese followed along with this; many agreed that they were the Other and that they needed to change.

One example of this is that many Francos truly believed their version of the French language was inferior; they would call it inferior and would not teach it to their children. They did not believe their history to be valid enough and they also did not want to share the difficult stories about their struggles with their children. Many Franco-Americans came to believe that they should not aim too high with their lifetime goals. There were many cruel jokes and ethnic slurs made about Franco-Americans in Maine. Oftentimes the Franco-Americans would speak half in French and half in English to one another and they were ridiculed by the Yankee elite for this. Additionally the derogatory terms "Frog" and "Dumb Frenchman" were widely used. The psychological aspects of this cannot be ignored; many Franco-Americans dealt with their status and the verbal

abuse by denying their roots (by changing their names, moving far away, etc.) and by accepting the inferior label. The following exemplifies this:

While working a second job at McDonald's in the '70s, Paré recalled how some teen-aged coworkers put themselves down. "If someone was clumsy and dropped a box of french fries, they would say, "Sorry, I'm French."

..."I would rather have been anything but Franco-American," Susann Pelletier remembers thinking as a college-bound Lewiston High School student in the 1960s. "I felt there would be many doors closed to me. It would take a gargantuan effort to be successful as a Franco-American."¹⁹⁷

The struggles of the past and the divisions that used to exist are reduced and unrecognized in popular understandings of history. There is this idea that any vestiges of Otherness apply only to the older generations today and not to those born since the 1950s. One member of the Lebanese community who grew up during the 1960s describes her parents' generation of Lebanese as the "old guard." She spoke lovingly of the Lebanese community, of the memories from her childhood, and the events centered around food that they still share.¹⁹⁸ However, she obviously sees herself as separate from them in fundamental ways; she loves and cherishes the Lebanese community that she knows so well, but does not see members of her generation as really being part of the community. Others echo her sentiments when they associate Lebanese ethnicity and community as something in the past that will be gone for good once this "old guard" passes away.

¹⁹⁷ *Sunday Journal*. "A Renaissance." 11/9/97. p. A6.

¹⁹⁸ Person N. *Personal Interview*. 1/20/99.

Franco-Americans Reclaim their Voice in Maine

For some groups the 1960s and 1970s was a time to embrace ethnic heritage, recognize the forces that shaped it, and reclaim their identity. In the atmosphere of social movements for civil rights, women's equality, peace in Vietnam, and independence in many colonies throughout the world, Franco-Americans in Maine also spoke out against their history as the "white niggers" of the North.¹⁹⁹ At the University of Maine in Orono in 1972 the Franco-American Center was founded by a group of Franco-American students who were interested in the recognition and empowerment of their group. The Franco-American Center describes its goals as the following:

The University of Maine Office of Franco-American Affairs was founded in 1972 by Franco-American students and community volunteers. It subsequently became the Franco-American Center. From the onset, its purpose has been to introduce and integrate the Maine, Regional, and United States Franco-American Fact in post-secondary academe and in particular the University of Maine. Given the quasi total absence of a base of knowledge within the University about this nearly one-half of the population of the state of Maine and more than 15 million in the US, this effort has sought to develop ways and means of making this population, its identity, its contributions and its history visible on and off campus through seminars, workshops, conferences and media efforts—print and electronic. The results sought have been the redressing of historical neglect and ignorance by returning Franco-Americans their history, their language and access to full and healthy self realizations. Further, changes within the University's working, in its structure and curriculum are sought in order that those who follow may experience cultural equity, have access to a culturally authentic base of knowledge dealing with

¹⁹⁹ Glazer, Nathan, and Daniel P. Moynihan. Ethnicity: Theory and Experience. p. 21.

French-American identity and the contribution of this ethnic group to the society.

Yvon Labbé is the director of the Franco-American Center and has been involved with the Center since its inception. Over the last two decades he and others have worked with the University of Maine at Orono to provide recognition for Franco-Americans, to give them a forum, to collect information, and most importantly to devise Franco-American Studies courses. In 1995 the Franco-American Center in conjunction with the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce signed the Franco-American Partnership Project Agreement. This Agreement seeks to develop Maine's connection with the global market. Since then, steps have been taken to use the FFA (Le Forum Francophone Des Affairs—The Francophone Business Forum) as a development tool in the state. The FFA's USA branch is located in Lewiston, Maine and the goal is to link up with the French business, community, and cultural heritage that already exists in the state of Maine.

For some, re-claiming a Franco-American identity in Maine, learning about Franco-American history, and tapping into international French-speaking business opportunities is the goal of the present. However, for most people of French-Canadian ancestry the struggle they and their ancestors experienced in Maine is not something they want to remember. As a result, many of the children being born today know nothing of their Franco-American past. The following excerpt from *Le Forum*, the monthly newspaper run by the Franco-American Center at Orono captures some of these ideas. This first appeared in

the February 1985 edition of *Le FAROG Forum* (the name recently changed to *Le Forum*) and was written by Rodney Labbé, a UMO student:

When I was asked to write a regular column for Le FAROG FORUM, I really didn't know how to react. I've never given much thought to my French heritage since becoming an adult; in fact, I've oftentimes considered it more of a burden than a benefit. So I approached the request for a column with caution. What in the world could I say that would interest the paper's Franco-American readership? Eventually, I decided to use the column as a means of self-expression. My story is typical of many Franco-Americans in Maine today. I am a product of a predominantly French community (Waterville) and was exposed to the Canadian influence at a very young age. All my blood relations are of French descent, and some have extreme difficulty dealing with the English language. Their dialect is a bizarre mixture of English and French. Thank God I never learned to speak like them...during my teenage years, they personified all that I found undesirable about my so-called "roots." I grew to dislike everything "French." The mere mention of a French word conjured up images of my relatives clucking like a bunch of chickens in their sing-songy style. I kept expecting one of them to lay an egg. Along those lines, as a boy, I couldn't understand why my father's mother continued to embrace the French language. She'd lived in Maine for a good part of her life and, from what I could tell, never made an attempt to learn English. My aunts and uncles and cousins were asked to speak only French when visiting her and since I did not know anything but English, I was usually shoved off to one corner. It wasn't much fun to visit "Mere-Mere". I felt out of place in her foreign words, as if I'd been plunked down among strangers. When I was old enough, I begged to stay home. Since then, I've developed a nebulous background for myself. While I'm certainly not ashamed to admit I'm French, I do bristle when someone expects me to be bilingual simply because of my last name (that happens quite a bit here at UMO). I've taken great pains to eliminate any French twang from my voice. Essentially, I've manufactured a whole new cultural identity for myself, with roots that are not French at all, but distinctly American. By clinging to my French background, I would be seriously handicapping myself. I want to live in an Anglo-American society. I really have no burning desire to be "French." I'll leave that role to my relatives in Waterville. All this must sound traitorous, and perhaps it is. Everyone makes choices, and mine was to conform rather than fight. My parents, who are bilingual, never spoke French around us except at Christmas (undoubtedly to discuss presents). If they had, then things might be different for me--but I don't think so. I long ago set my sights on a place in the "Anglo" world. I've found that place and am fairly comfortable, but in the process I've given up a huge chunk of my French heritage. Does it bother me? Not really. I'm not alone. Both my sisters have done much the same with their lives. We don't speak French. In our minds, we're citizens of the United States foremost, and English is our native tongue. The hold-over Canadian traditions just don't fit into our scheme of things. Today the great "melting pot" offers up individuals who have formed an American culture. That's where I proudly

find myself. Well, enough of that. As you can see, this column will be controversial at times. It won't please everyone, but that's not my intention. Hopefully, I'll provide you with a little food for thought. Until next time, take care.²⁰⁰

While not all Franco-Americans would agree with this article, it illustrates sentiments common to many members of the group. First, the youth today do not understand their roots, they do not speak the language and often have not been told any oral histories. They cannot relate to their relatives and do not understand what position and range of experiences those relatives are coming from. Yet, they still feel discrimination on some level. Rodney Labbé definitely saw his French ethnicity as a handicap and made becoming part of the Anglo world his goal. Perhaps more significantly, he had the option of "passing" for Anglo if he worked hard enough. He was given a drastically different set of options and blockades than his grandparents and even his parents. He could leave his Frenchness behind in a way that Franco-Americans could not in 1870, 1910, or even in 1950.

Another important group which was founded in Maine in 1995 is the Franco-American Women's Institute (FAWI). FAWI's focus is on the lived experience of being a Franco-American woman today, as well as on the reclamation and celebration of the lost history of the Franco-Americans and to address some of the continuing issues today. The FAWI brochure reads:

²⁰⁰ Labbé, Rodney. "Selective Perceptions" reprinted in *Le Forum*, October 1998.

The Franco-American Women's Institute is an organization, a group of women who gather together. The Franco-American Women's Institute is also an archival place or a recording place. The women come together as Franco-American women—Quebecois, Acadian, Metis, and Mixed Blood—in a way which encourages them to be voiced while collecting a record of their, their daughter's, *maman's* and *mémère's* existence.²⁰¹

This group seeks to blend all aspects of Franco-American women's lives—their writing, recipes, sewing, birthing practices, and folk tales—together into one forum.

One particularly important point is that for many Franco-Americans, discussion of a past that involved heavy work in the factories and a great deal of hardship is a commonly shared memory. Franco-Americans remained entrenched in the category of cheap labor for a long time and some remain as such, albeit in a largely service-oriented economy. One example of the pervasiveness of association with mill life in the Franco-American community was related by a woman whose father spent most of his life working for Scott Paper during the post-war era. She recalls him telling her that on his last day of work before he retired he left the mill buildings and swore he would never return. He took his tools and threw them into the Kennebec River.²⁰² Bitterness shines through his actions and it is this kind of knowledge and memory of hardship that is still so pervasive in the Franco community in Waterville and other similar towns in Maine. Along these same lines, the psychological

²⁰¹ From: FAWI brochure, courtesy of Rhea Coté Robbins. The brochure is also located on-line at the FAWI website: <http://members.aol.com/FAWI2000/main.html>.

²⁰² Person O. *Personal Interview*. 1/4/98.

collective memory of discrimination is retained in the community although it is rarely openly spoken about. In particular, the knowledge that the KKK marched openly in the streets of Maine towns and overtly expressed hatred towards the Franco-Americans remains within the community. This kind of information is not always verbalized from one person to another, one generation to the next; however, on the psychological level everyone is affected. If a grandparent lived in fear and witnessed some acts of KKK hatred directed towards the Franco-Americans, they may not tell every detail to his/her grandchildren. However, the information is transmitted on some level, either stories are partially told on rare occasions or else grandparents will refuse to speak about the subject, which makes a powerful impact on younger generations. Additionally, the KKK is still active in Maine; for example, within the last few years there have been incidents involving the Klan in Rumford where there was a cross burning. When incidents involving the Klan arise in the state today, members of the Franco-American community still feel fear and it provides a visual example of the networks of discrimination which still exist against the Franco-Americans and others today.

The Lebanese American Dream

While the Franco-American community in Maine has developed organizations that provide a forum for them to voice their concerns and celebrate

their history, the Lebanese have a different outlook. Many members of the Waterville Lebanese community will highlight their emphasis on education and their belief in the American Dream as important factors in their ethnic group's history. Many believe that it was emphasis on education, hard work, and perseverance that helped them achieve the American Dream. The Lebanese emphasize their patriotism as a key factor for the group as a whole. The Lebanese do not seem to see themselves as still holding a separate identity in Maine today. They are very much a part of the American middle class. For some Franco-Americans, this is also true. Some believe they have achieved the American Dream through discipline and hard work. However, for some Franco-Americans there has been no achieving of the American Dream. Instead, for this group there are memories of parents who worked as loggers in the woods, as textile workers in mills. Hard labor, poverty, and discrimination are still very much living memories for members of the Franco-American community.

Thus for the Lebanese community, entry into the middle class through education remains the predominant memory they share when asked. In Waterville the number of Lebanese people in the town has dwindled over the past few decades. With only the hospitals and Colby College as the largest employers in the town, there is little to hold a young, educated, upwardly mobile population in the area. Certainly some have stayed, however many have gone to new areas in search of jobs that suit their qualifications. This is indicative of the fact that the Lebanese have collectively "made it" both socially

and economically. It is not because of their inherent group emphasis on education or their personal belief in the American Dream that helped them to achieve mobility, rather it was the structural position they occupied in Waterville from the beginning. They began as peddlers, then gained higher-paying jobs as weavers, and some opened stores. Their economic position was slightly better as a collective whole than the Franco-American position was as a whole. The opportunities that were open to the Lebanese allowed them to become an ethnic success story.

Even though the Lebanese have become molded into the white American group in a number of ways, they, like the Franco-Americans, still feel some nearly-imperceptible boundaries regarding their “Lebanese-ness.” For example, the demonization of Arabs and the Middle East in the US during the past few decades has adversely affected the Lebanese population in the US. For the older generations of Lebanese people in Waterville to hear anti-Arab sentiments is very frustrating and can be alienating.²⁰³ The Lebanese homeland has become synonymous with terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Very little positive information is given about the Middle East in US cinema, literature, newspapers, and TV programs. As Evelyn Shakir writes:

[T]he rejection experienced by Arab Americans in recent decades has had much to do not just with race and religion but with international politics, specifically the Middle East conflict between Arabs and Israelis. More than any other circumstance, that conflict has influenced the way in which Americans have

²⁰³ Person H. *Personal Interview*. 1/21/99.

come to view Arabs and, even more important, the way in which Arab Americans have come to view themselves.²⁰⁴

Part of the problem and the frustration for many Lebanese in the US is that the complexity of the historical situation in the Middle East is not fully understood or appreciated in the US. Gross generalizations are made, and often times it is Arab Americans who suffer for it. Even though the Lebanese in Waterville are a few generations removed from their homeland, some have visited Lebanon and at least know of a distant relatives in the country. When Israel invaded southern Lebanon in 1982, thousands of civilians were killed and a great deal of property was confiscated. Many of the Lebanese who settled in Waterville hailed from southern Lebanon. One woman related how a cousin of hers who she still keeps in touch with lost all of his land during that invasion and now lives in Beirut; he has never been compensated for his losses.²⁰⁵ All in all, while the Lebanese have largely become a success story in the US and are accepted as white middle-class Americans, the older boundaries can still resurface and are slow to entirely erase from popular memory.

The Triumvirate Remains

²⁰⁴ Shakir, Evelyn. Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States. p. 79.

²⁰⁵ Person H. *Personal Interview*. 1/21/99.

Today few people in Waterville associate themselves with the Franco-American or Lebanese community. Most people view it as a thing of the past, as something not related to them. However, these communities are not entirely gone, they have just become far less visible than they were during the early part of the twentieth century. Conflicts still arise today which flare up old ethnic boundaries. For example, once and a while one can find an editorial in the *Morning Sentinel* (Waterville's major newspaper) written in French expressing concerns specific to some Franco-Americans. For example, during the early 1990s there was some contention regarding the development of some of the land in the Head of Falls area. While the details remain unclear, the issue was highly politicized and the various groups involved in the incident fell partially along ethnic lines. Additionally, in December of 1998 the Waterville mayor Ruth Joseph was removed from her office. While there are many details regarding why the mayor was removed, some of the tensions fell strictly along "ethnic" boundary lines. Ruth Joseph was viewed as a Lebanese mayor, although she is actually of Franco-American descent and is married to a Lebanese man. Tensions were high surrounding this issue and those tensions partially relate to old struggles between Franco-Americans, Lebanese, and Yankees.

While the French community has largely been dismantled and one cannot operate in only the French language in the town, pieces of the French infrastructure remain. Occasionally, an older couple downtown will speak in French to one another as they walk along the side walk, or two older women will

speak French quietly to one another as they debate over which foods to buy in the grocery store. Yet, as one Franco-American explained, they do so today in hushed tones, when they think that no one else is looking or listening. This is indicative of the internalized oppression; they assume their French language is second-class, not worth boldly speaking on the street, and not worth celebrating.²⁰⁶ In another arena today the French language continues to be an issue. In early 1999 a bill was put before the Maine legislature to make English the official state language. The bill has some significant support, which worries many Franco-Americans and others around the state. For the French-speakers, this is yet another attack upon their existence in the state. Franco-Americans make up roughly forty percent of the state population; to make English the only language would be to continue to deny their status, their history, and their influence in the state. It would again relegate them to a lower class beneath the English-speaking elite. While fewer and fewer Franco-Americans today speak French as a first language, the bill is nevertheless perceived by many as a threat and a virtual slap in the face. Additionally, the bill may affect programs such as the bilingual education program that was recently started in the St. John Valley in Aroostook County.²⁰⁷

For the Lebanese in the area, the annual Hafli celebration still happens in Waterville. In 1998, a large local dance hall was rented out and a Lebanese band

²⁰⁶ Person A. *Personal Interview*. 1/26/99.

²⁰⁷ See: Hoose, Shoshana. "French Spoken Here, Proudly." *Maine Sunday Telegram*. 12/15/96

from Boston was hired to perform. Lebanese music and food were the focus of the festivities, which lasted for only one evening as compared with the two or three day events in the early 1900s. The Hafli still draws crowds from outside of the Waterville area. It indicates that some associations are still made along ethnic lines. The Hafli was sponsored by the St. Joseph's Maronite Church, the Rosary Sodality, and the Lebanon Youth Society. Finally, the following example indicates that the Franco-American and Lebanese communities still exert some influence, albeit subtle, on the atmosphere of the town. A family from Aroostook County was looking to relocate one of their businesses in the southern Maine area. They hailed from the town of Caribou where there is a small population of Lebanese people, some Yankees, and large numbers of Franco-Americans. In this particular family, the wife was Lebanese and the husband Franco-American. They chose Waterville to open their business because they felt most at home in the town due to the strong presence of a Lebanese and Franco-American community. Waterville felt much like their own home community and this was their prime reason for choosing this town over other options.²⁰⁸ Upon first glance, Waterville would not appear to have strong ethnic communities. There are no physical indicators in the public spaces commemorating the groups and few people talk about them when referring to the history of Waterville. Yet, the boundary lines in the town remain; they continue to change and exert influence.

²⁰⁸ Person P. *Personal Interview*. 2/12/99.

Chapter IX: Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to first establish the historical hegemonic structure that the Lebanese and Franco-Americans were inserted into upon their arrival. The second focus of the paper was to examine how these groups were incorporated or not incorporated into different aspects of social and economic life upon their arrival. Through this analysis the hegemonic boundaries within which the Lebanese and Franco-Americans have operated were revealed. The key to how groups become labeled (both in public and according to academic standards) as ethnic or minority depends when and how they enter into the given structure. To reiterate one must remember that ethnicity and minority are looked at as strategic categories that refer to social, class, and political affiliation—they are not the folk categories of "culture." They are categories in flux (although they fluctuate in different ways) and they are a direct reflection of the hegemonic process.

My research indicates that the Lebanese group is an ethnic group which underwent a radical change after World War II. The Lebanese group can still be identified in Waterville today, but it is receding. The label of ethnicity is just one of many labels a Lebanese person can have. It is also a label that is reserved for the older generations of Lebanese people. The Lebanese people born after 1950 or so do not think of themselves as being Lebanese or as knowing much

about the ethnic group. They view it as something of the past, something that is not present today. I suggest they do know quite a bit about the situation of the Lebanese in Waterville and that the group is still functional in the town in some respects; however it is evident that the Lebanese ethnic group is slowly fading and will likely not be evident at all in Waterville within another generation. The Lebanese immigrants entered into the structure of Waterville society certainly as poor immigrants; however, many of them came with weaving skills and had been peddlers or traveling merchants. They were able to use these skills from the start to their advantage; they clearly began from a better hierarchical position than the vast majority of Franco-Americans.

After World War II when the national hegemonic process in the US began to shift rapidly the Lebanese were established in a prime position to be propelled into the new white, middle-class category (yet another group created by the same kinds of forces that shape ethnicity and minority). For the Franco-Americans, the situation was vastly different. One cannot generalize about the Franco-Americans in Waterville—the group is too large and includes many people who occupy different structural positions. However, based on the research in the previous chapters, it is apparent that some Franco-Americans were able to also be propelled into this new white, middle-class American category. These Franco-Americans were typically descended from the families who came to Waterville during the first wave—those families that were more entrepreneurial and that did not work in the factories during the height of

industrial production. These Franco-Americans were not ones who had grown up on the Plains, they were members of more prominent families who may not have spoken French at home and who may have had an Anglicized last name. In many ways the first wave Franco-Americans can be thought of as an ethnic group. They occupied a high structural position in society and they had the luxury of shedding their ethnic label after World War II.

The Franco-Americans of the second wave are most definitely a minority group. In fact, I would suggest that most Franco-Americans in Maine would be considered a minority group. Minority status means that the Franco-Americans occupy the lowest rung of the social-economic-class hierarchy. They are at the bottom, they have historically been referred to as the "white niggers of the north." The labor of the Franco-Americans supports the society and economy of Maine just as much today as in 1900 and earlier. In Quebec the French are also certainly a minority in the sense that they were conquered by the British and relegated to the lowest rung in society socially, class-wise, and economically. Those French-Canadians who came from Quebec to Waterville during the second wave left one minority position and entered into another minority position. After World War II the second wave Franco-Americans in Waterville were not propelled into a new middle-class status. They remained as factory workers and as industries have left the region they have been the ones who have suffered. What has changed for this group is the fact that they no longer identify as being Franco-American. Yet even though they do not call themselves Franco-

American, the minority group in Waterville today that fills the supply of cheap labor is made up of the descendants of the Franco-American minority from the past. They may no longer speak French or consider themselves to be Franco-Americans, but they know what position they occupy and they know that their parents occupied the same one.

The analytic conclusions I have come to regarding ethnicity and minority in Waterville are soundly based upon both field work and research. However, as with any project, there are many more avenues that I could explore and there are certainly limitations to this paper. The fact that I am a Colby student and am not immersed in the daily functioning of the Waterville community limits my perspective. However, at the same time, being an outside observer places me in a unique position. I am able to comment upon all of the groups in the town and assess the situation objectively. I am only marginally a part of Waterville's social framework and thus I have an over-arching perspective that members of the Yankee, Lebanese, and Franco-American communities do not.

Certainly the Lebanese, Franco-American, and Yankee people in Waterville constitute the majority of the town's population. However, in order to more fully understand all of the subtle social nuances in the town it would be necessary to look at the other groups within the town. It would be especially important to look at the Irish considering the historic tensions in the Catholic church between Irish and French-Canadians. Also, there is a Jewish community in Waterville with several prominent members. The Beth Israel synagogue in

Waterville was built in 1905 and Jewish-owned stores—such as Sterns and Levines—figured prominently into Waterville’s downtown economy for a number of years. Additionally, the history of the Lebanese in Waterville mirrors the history of many Jewish groups in the US. It would be important to find out more about the Jewish history in Waterville and how this group figured into the social structure of the town. Sources indicate that there were Polish, Italian, Lithuanian, and Greek people living in Waterville as well. It would be useful to trace the history of these people to fully appreciate and understand Waterville’s social matrix. Also, throughout Maine there were immigrants from many other countries. While I only have information on the groups mentioned above it is important to recognize that people who immigrated from other areas may have settled in Waterville. They may not have been documented, they may have not stayed permanently in the town, or perhaps they were absorbed into one of the three larger groups. Regardless, it is important to recognize that these transient populations in Maine must have affected Waterville.²⁰⁹

Waterville is also closely tied to Winslow, Oakland (formerly West Waterville), and Fairfield in an economic and social sense. In fact today someone not familiar with the area has a difficult time knowing where one of the

²⁰⁹ NOTE: The complexity of this history is well documented in the following passage: “Maine did not become a major industrial state, nor did it become a major center for immigrants, but several thousand jobs were created in the generation leading up to World War I, and several thousand immigrant workers were hired to fill those positions. The greatest number of immigrants came from Quebec; in addition to French Canadians, many English and Scottish Canadians arrived from the maritime provinces. Other immigrants included Armenians, British, Chinese, Danes, Finns, Germans, Greeks, Irish, Italians, Poles, Russian Jews, Slovaks, Swedes, Turks, Ukrainians, and of course, the Syrians.” Hooglund, Eric. “From the Near East to Down East.” p. 89.

towns stops and another begins; the towns have blended together as infrastructures have developed over time. Due to this phenomenon, it would be important to look into the different immigrant communities in each of these towns in order to better understand Waterville itself. Many Polish people settled in Winslow. In Fairfield there is a large Franco-American population along with some Lebanese families. Certainly these groups interacted with the groups in Waterville. Exploring more of the local history beyond the confines of just Waterville itself would make this paper more comprehensive.

Another important topic for further investigation is the relationship between the Franco-Americans in the area with the French-Canadians Quebec. In the past few decades the French-Canadians—who are a minority group within Canada—have raised their voices and fought harder for self-determination. The French in Canada have been resisting since the English took control of Canada; however since the 1970s the French have been very forceful, very vocal, and have gained the attention of the international community. They have fought for their language rights and for recognition of their own particular history. They have made a great deal of progress and continue to do so within Canada today. Across the border their Franco-American counterparts have had a radically different experience. It would be most useful to study how recent developments in Canada have affected the Franco-Americans in Waterville (if at all) and to

better assess what kinds of connections the Franco-Americans have with Canada today.

Other parts of the Waterville history still remain unclear and need further investigation. For example, it would be important to learn more about what exactly happened to the Ticonic natives in the area. The history of the French traders in the area would also show how this region was a frontier and might provide more clues about the first wave of French-Canadians who settled in Waterville. The history of the railroads in the state would indicate a great deal about the economic activity in Central Maine. Tracing where the capital to establish MCRR in Waterville came from would show networks of social power more clearly as well. More detailed information about the establishment of the Yankee culture during the early 1800s would be useful. Questions still remain regarding how the hegemony worked prior to the influx of French-Canadians—who were the minorities and ethnics around 1800 in Waterville? Were they the Native Americans? Was there more differentiation between the Yankees themselves? I suggest that it is likely there was more differentiation between the Yankees themselves around 1800 and that as waves of new people came into the area they entered into Waterville society at the lowest rung. This is certainly what happened to the French-Canadians. Thus as more people entered, the Yankee group tended to fuse together more solidly. Thus there may have been hegemonic-like domination and subordination going on within the Yankee community earlier on. This is only a suggestion and would be an excellent

question to fuel more research for this paper. It would also provide another dimension to and appreciation for the historical and hegemonic complexity at work.

The examples stated in the last paragraphs are just some of the lingering questions I still have and directions that I would pursue if I had time for further research. It is important to recognize that more research could be done on this topic, yet at the same time this paper provides a useful working analysis of ethnic and minority group formation. The examples of the Lebanese and Franco-Americans in Waterville serve as a model of hegemony in process. This paper also serves to document the history of the Lebanese and Franco-Americans. It serves as a testament to the many forgotten histories in the world and hopefully will inspire others to uncover similar silenced histories.

Appendix

This section is a collection of tables, maps, and photographs relating to the content of this paper. I am certain that there are many more photographs from the Franco-American and Lebanese communities than are represented here, however I did not focus on gathering this type of material. My goal was to hear life stories and histories. However, I did come across a great deal of visual information and decided to enclose as much as I could in this appendix as a sort of supplement to the paper. The appendix information is divided into the following categories:

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N.B. : This large section is not included in this web version of the thesis.

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²¹⁰ NOTE: Grégoire Chabot is a playwright and author who has been involved in theater and broadcasting and now works as a freelance copywriter and communications consultant. He grew up in Waterville, attended Colby College for a time and finished his formal education at the University of Maine and University of Massachusetts/Amherst.

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Interviews

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Father Sam Najjar

Harold Vigue

Lillian Veilleux

Cynthia Mitchell

Marie (Fefa) Deeb

Rene Plante

Henri Poirier

Salim Mitchell

Paul Gregoire

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