

“To Be an *Homme de Famille* in *Petit-Canada*: Ethnicity and National Identity among New England’s Working-Class Migrant Men from Quebec, 1880-1920”

FlorenceMae Waldron, Ph.D., Franklin & Marshall College

waldr005@umn.edu / fwaldron@fandm.edu

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Approximately one million French Canadians left Canada for the United States from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, nearly three-quarters of them (720,000) from 1870 to 1930.¹ This exodus of one in three Quebec residents forever reshaped the landscape both of rural Quebec and of the U.S. cities to which these migrants flocked. Many of them went to New England, where jobs were far more numerous in the northeast’s growing industrial centers than in Quebec. Once in New England, the migrants faced challenges familiar to immigrant communities throughout U.S. history, many of which involved whether and how much to adopt the ways of their new home, and how to do so without losing their heritage.

Canada, like Mexico, occupies a unique place in immigration history during this era, in that the proximity of “home” narrows the geographic – and, I would argue, the mental – gulf between homeland and destination. That news, money, and individuals flowed freely between Quebec and New England, thanks to relatively inexpensive train travel that took hours instead of days or weeks, made possible a degree of maintenance of home-based ties that was much more difficult for overseas migrants during this period. Yet Canada’s role in U.S. immigration during this era remains largely ignored by scholars of international migration and is little known in the narratives of immigration history. My essay seeks to bridge this gap, by considering the ways in which the proximity of “home” influenced the ways in which French Canadian working men navigated the processes of adopting an “American” identity, and/or maintaining and nurturing an identity as “French Canadian” in American society.

With only a few exceptions, scholars have offered little insight into the thoughts and experiences of working-class *quebécois* migrants. Gary Gerstle’s well-known study of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, focuses on migrant working men faced in a unionized city, a notable exception for a migrant group that generally avoided any association with organized labor.² Likewise, the work of Yves Roby, much of

which has only been available in French until quite recently, pays little attention to the experiences of working-class men.³ Yet if we are going to understand the full range of this migrant group’s experiences, we need to find ways to test the conclusions these scholars have drawn to see if the experience of the average working-class *canadien* migrant was comparable. Those trying to study this population face considerable challenges. Working-class *quebécois* migrant men left few records of their existence; for example, it is community leaders whose voices tend to dominate the migrant press, and thus existing scholarship. This essay offers a preliminary attempt to add the experiences of working-class migrant men back into this conversation – here, by focusing primarily on heads of household, whom the migrants referred to as *hommes de famille* or “family men.”

One of the major themes that dominates the extant scholarship on French Canadian migrants to the United States is the persistence of a French Canadian identity and allegiance to Quebec. Even as migrants became naturalized American citizens, and later produced offspring who were U.S. citizens by birth, they retained a keen attachment to their homeland and a notable detachment from the rest of American society; this cultural insularity remained intact until the post-World War II era.⁴ Quebec’s proximity certainly played a crucial role in this cultural persistence, which French Canadians on both sides of the border referred to as *survivance* – that is, survival of their French language, Catholic religious beliefs, and French Canadian cultural values, or *langue, foi, et mœurs*.

French Canadians had a distinct advantage over transoceanic migrants during this era, when it came to maintaining the intensely close ties to their homeland that have characterized more recent waves of “transnational” international migrants.⁵ Even as early as the 1880s – long before such modern technologies as telephones, airplanes, faxes, and the internet made it easier for immigrants to stay in touch with “home” – French Canadians could send out letters or money first thing in the morning knowing that they would arrive in Montreal or Quebec City the same evening. Newspapers and periodicals from Quebec City reached migrant communities just as quickly. Likewise, a trip “home” for these migrants was inexpensive and took a matter of hours on a train, rather than weeks of travel on an ocean liner.⁶ As a result, many French Canadian migrants and their descendants did make annual pilgrimages back to

Quebec, to visit with friends and extended family, well into the twentieth century; these visits certainly helped to nurture an ongoing sense of connection with the homeland.⁷ Moreover, the nearness of “home” made it possible for more prominent emigrant families to send their children back to Quebec for their secondary education, which reinforced the emigrant elites’ connections to Quebec while ensuring that their American-born offspring developed similar attachments.⁸

For the working-class majority of male migrants, though, the nearness of “home” functioned somewhat differently. Home’s proximity was less a source of cultural renewal, and more a very real place to which one might hope to return someday, or retreat if things in New England did not work out as planned. As this reality suggests, a number of practical matters influenced whether working-class immigrant men developed a sustained attachment to their new lives in the United States, and the extent to which they continued to see Quebec as their true “home” in a very real sense. Among the factors this essay explores are the characteristics of men’s initial migration to the United States, the economic opportunities that awaited them, and the implications these opportunities had for the overall shape and structure of the local community.

First, several key changes over time in who migrated, and the circumstances they faced in the migration process, had a direct bearing on whether emigrants were more likely to develop lasting ties to the United States, or remain forever attached to their homeland in Quebec. In the late nineteenth century, many migrant men came with their families, in response to short-term economic crises in Quebec. The male heads of these working-class households envisioned a temporary stay in the U.S. that would enable them to amass the cash they needed to pay off debts back home; although some later decided to stay in the United States, permanent resettlement was not their initial goal.⁹ The autobiography of illiterate French Canadian *habitant* Félix Albert, as dictated to his parish priest in New England, describes a pattern of back-and-forth migration between the two countries that census records confirm.¹⁰ In the 1900 U.S. census manuscript returns, larger families evidence a pattern of children born in Quebec alternating with those born in various New England states, indicating that the family moved back and forth several times between the two regions over the course of several years or decades.¹¹ For these individuals, ties to the

Quebec homeland clearly remained strong, whereas any allegiance they developed to the United States over the years had to compete with the ongoing pull of Quebec that kept drawing them back.

In contrast to many migrants in the late nineteenth century, those who arrived in the early decades of the twentieth century were often more predisposed to stay in the United States from the moment they left home. Although return migrants outnumbered émigrés from Quebec in the first two decades of the twentieth century, a renewed surge of outward migration in the 1920s was notably different from earlier waves in that these émigrés were more likely to be young, single, and in search of a new life and a fresh start. This shift in motives had begun to emerge as early as the 1890s, when Quebecois emigrants increasingly began to view relocation to the United States as a long-term solution, rather than a short-term fix, to their economic situation.¹² As one newspaper editorial asserted in 1891, “The *habitants* of Quebec are abandoning their province of birth in great numbers because their chances of creating a future for themselves are greater in the United States than in their homeland...Most of these immigrants are coming here to establish themselves here permanently.”¹³ A 1920 article advocating naturalization put it more bluntly, and more unequivocally: “Having left our country without hope of return, we cannot remain isolated, without family or homeland” (emphasis added).¹⁴

The bleak and hopeless futures they envisioned for themselves if they stayed in Quebec is what most seems to have set many of the post-1900 migrants apart from their nineteenth-century counterparts. No longer did working-class men (and women) hope to save enough money from their U.S. sojourn to be able to resume lives in the homeland they loved, on the land they called theirs. In contrast, as historian Bruno Ramirez has written, for young immigrant men like Bruno Noury, “[H]is small village of Manseau, Quebec, offered so little opportunity that the scene of young people saying farewell to their dear ones had become a familiar one.” It was “lack of work,” plain and simple, that made Noury’s decision to leave Quebec in 1921 “an easy one.” In describing his own departure, Noury, who noted that going to the U.S. was the option that most of his village’s unemployed youth chose, recalled that “those who couldn’t leave would tell us, ‘lucky you, lucky you.’”¹⁵ Like many other migrants at the time, Noury realized that a life on the land in Quebec held no future for him; as a result, he and many other young single migrants in the

early 1900s were convinced from the start that life in *les états* held more options for them. This perspective on their departure meant that from the start, such migrants were more likely to affiliate themselves with their new lives in the U.S. than look back to what they had left behind in Quebec. At the same time, the existence by the early 20th century of well-developed community infrastructures in New England helped to integrate them to life in the United States, thereby mitigating the sense of alienation that had driven some earlier migrants back home.¹⁶

Although the circumstances surrounding a man’s departure from Quebec thus helped to influence his thoughts on *les états* when he arrived, the circumstances he found upon arrival also helped to determine how likely he was to develop strong attachments for his new home, or keep his sights firmly fixed on the land he’d left behind. In my larger research project on the evolution of identity among French Canadian migrants in New England, I have focused in particular upon Lewiston, Maine, and Worcester, Massachusetts, because the differing economic circumstances of these destination cities had a major impact on the processes of identity formation for the immigrants in each location. This is especially clear when comparing census returns for the two cities, although extant oral histories such as Bruno Noury’s testimony, above, offer additional evidence to support the trends that emerge from census data.¹⁷

Lewiston was typical of the destination of many Quebecois migrants, in that it was a textile-mill town whose economy revolved around cloth production and related industries. Such cities were popular destinations for French Canadian migrants from the 1870s on because they were always in need of mill workers, and most mill jobs did not require the skills, literacy, or English that many rural Quebecois migrants lacked.¹⁸ But while mill towns were a good way to make a quick buck, the textile economy favored certain workers over others. Because mill owners had long known that they could hire women or children for many mill jobs, and get away with paying them less than they’d pay an adult male, these destinations provided a less friendly work environment for working-class men. Not only were there fewer jobs available for adult men across the board, but those jobs that were available were often less secure and paid less than was true in other cities, because the local reliance on underpaid female and child labor

tended to depress men’s wages and curtail their work options across the board.¹⁹

In contrast, Worcester was a somewhat atypical destination for French Canadian migrants, in that its industrialized economy was far more diversified and less dependent upon a single industry. Like Fitchburg, Massachusetts and other “atypical” destinations that attracted large numbers of French Canadian migrants, Worcester had fewer employment options for women and children, but far more decent-paying jobs available to unskilled French Canadian men. Although women and children still worked in Worcester’s garment and textile factories, their rates of employment were far below those of their counterparts in other New England cities.²⁰ Moreover, the predominance of small-scale businesses, locally funded and representing a wide range of industries, increased competition for workers while adding stability to the overall employment landscape. Thus job opportunities tended to be more stable, wages were often higher, and the prospects for improving one’s lot in life were overall more promising for working-class Quebecois men in cities like Worcester than they were in textile-mill centers.²¹

Census data suggests that Worcester’s better job opportunities and higher wages may indeed have led to higher rates of naturalization for French Canadian migrants, especially among the working classes. In comparing naturalization rates for Quebec-born male heads of household in the Lewiston 1900 census to those for their counterparts in Worcester, rates of naturalization were higher in Lewiston for virtually all occupational categories (Tables 1-2). In Lewiston in 1900, fewer than 50% of French Canadian-born male heads of household had applied for naturalization (47.3%); figures were particularly low among farmers, day laborers, and men without occupations, although they were also below 50% for factory operatives.²² In contrast, over half of Worcester men (53.9%) either had become U.S. citizens or were in the process of doing so. In addition to the fact Worcester contained far fewer unemployed men and day laborers – an occupational category known for its instability and poor wages – naturalization rates were noticeably higher among day laborers, factory operatives, and unemployed men in Worcester. Although working-class men in the service industries (as well as skilled craftsmen) had slightly lower naturalization rates in Worcester, rates of naturalization for these groups still remained well above 50%.²³

Table 1. Naturalization Status of Quebec-Born Male Heads of Household, Lewiston, 1900, by occupational category

Occupational Category	Not naturalized as a US citizen (includes unknown/blank responses)		Naturalized as a US citizen, or has taken out initial papers to naturalize		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Professional/Technical	3	15.0%	17	85.0%	20
Farmer	9	64.3%	5	35.7%	14
Managers/Officials/Proprietors	20	39.2%	31	60.8%	51
Clerical and Kindred Agents	3	33.3%	6	66.7%	9
Sales Workers	12	28.6%	30	71.4%	42
Skilled Craftsmen	99	42.5%	134	57.5%	233
Operatives	253	54.2%	214	45.8%	467
Service Workers	21	35.0%	39	65.0%	60
Laborers	200	67.1%	98	32.9%	298
Non-occupational response	37	69.8%	16	30.2%	53
Total	657	52.7%	590	47.3%	1247

SOURCE: Lewiston-1900 database.

Table 2. Naturalization Status of Quebec-Born Male Heads of Household, Worcester, 1900, by occupational category

Occupational Category	Not naturalized as a US citizen (includes unknown/blank responses)		Naturalized as a US citizen, or has taken out initial papers to naturalize		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Professional/Technical	1	8.3%	11	91.7%	12
Farmer	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Managers/Officials/Proprietors	8	25.8%	23	74.2%	31
Clerical and Kindred Agents	0	0.0%	4	100.0%	4
Sales Workers	5	21.7%	18	78.3%	23
Skilled Craftsmen	204	47.6%	225	52.4%	429
Operatives	42	44.2%	53	55.8%	95
Service Workers	15	37.5%	25	62.5%	40
Laborers	69	60.5%	45	39.5%	114
Non-occupational response	4	57.1%	3	42.9%	7
Total	348	46.1%	407	53.9%	755

SOURCE: Worcester-1900 database.

Qualitative data from oral histories reinforces the conclusion that male heads of household were more likely to naturalize in cities that promised more opportunities for work at wages high enough to support a family – that is, cities like Worcester, as opposed to Lewiston, Manchester (New Hampshire), and other cities where textile production and similar industries dominated the economic landscape.

Interviews of return migrants conducted during the 1970s and 1980s in Quebec indicate the discomfort

men felt when their family members earned more than they did, as well as the strong desire many of them had to return to their homes in Quebec, where they felt as if they had greater control over their own lives as well as their family members. Mme Plante was unmarried and twenty-four when her father decided the family had amassed enough money to return to Quebec, over the vehement objections of Mme Plante and her siblings, who “wanted to stay [in the U.S.]...because [there] we were earning money!”²⁴ Likewise, Antonia Bergeron was the first in her family to emigrate to the United States when, at age fifteen, she convinced her reluctant parents to let her relocate to the mill city of Manchester with some neighbors. Slowly her siblings and mother followed; her mother, who had no problem finding gainful employment, did laundry in a convent in Manchester all day, and cleaned at a local church. Her father, reluctant to leave his life on the farm, was the last to emigrate – and the first to return to Quebec.²⁵ For these men, the limited opportunities they experienced after emigration were hardly enough to outweigh the comfort of a life they knew, and often had left behind only reluctantly.

Yet another factor may also explain Worcester’s higher naturalization rates: the higher rates of exogamous marriage. These distinct marriage patterns were also a product of Worcester’s employment environment. Because of the availability of work in its textile mills, Lewiston, like many of the other New England cities to which French Canadians migrated, attracted certain migrants in particular. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Lewiston’s French-Canadian-ancestry population was predominantly young, and more likely to be female than male; fully 79% of Lewiston’s French Canadian community was under the age of 30 in 1880, compared to less than 65% of the Lewiston population as a whole.²⁶ The preponderance of women in Lewiston’s French Canadian community was especially pronounced in 1880, particularly within the age groups most likely to be working in Lewiston’s textile mills. Over 55% of Lewiston’s French Canadian community was female in 1880; the imbalance in the sex ratio was the most pronounced among 20- to 29-year-olds, where women outnumbered men by 3:2.²⁷ Although these tendencies became less pronounced over time, they persisted into the twentieth century. The fact that women outnumbered men, both in Lewiston as a whole but especially among French Canadians of marrying age, meant that male migrants had no trouble finding a *canadienne* marriage

partner.

In contrast, French Canadian men in Worcester faced noticeably bleaker prospects for finding a French Canadian wife. Because the types of jobs available to the Quebecois migrants in Worcester made it a less profitable choice for families with surplus women, Worcester was more likely to attract *canadiens* than *canadiennes*. However, in the late nineteenth century, this imbalanced sex ratio did not extend to the city as a whole, as it did in Lewiston. Whereas Quebecois men outnumbered their sisters in Worcester in 1880, the ratio of men to women was approximately 1:1 in the Worcester population at large that year; furthermore, women in their twenties outnumbered their male counterparts among the general population of the city. Thus, if a young Quebecois male in Worcester wanted to marry, broadening his search beyond the French Canadian community could actually increase his chances of finding a spouse.

Table 3 Ethnic background of wives of French Canadian men living with their spouses, by city, 1880

	Lewiston		Worcester	
	N	%	N	%
French Canadian	619	98.1%	709	89.2%
Not French Canadian	12	1.9%	86	10.8%
Total	631	100.0%	795	100.0%

SOURCE: NAPP/MPC “1880 US Census Complete Count.”

And as Tables 3 and 4

show, this is exactly what happened.

For French-Canadian-ancestry

households where both husband and

wife were present, over 98% of

Lewiston men in 1880 were married

to Quebecois women. However, in Worcester, the same was true for just 90% of Quebecois men that year; one in ten had instead married a woman of a different ethnic background (Table 3).²⁸ Although rates of exogamous marriage were lower for Worcester’s French-Canadian-ancestry men in 1900, they were still more than twice as high as rates in Lewiston, which had remained relatively stable (Table 4).²⁹

Table 4 Ethnic background of wives of French Canadian men living with their spouses, by city, 1900

	Lewiston		Worcester	
	N	%	N	%
French Canadian	1477	97.8%	1016	92.3%
Not French Canadian	43	2.8	85	7.7%
Total	1520	100.0%	1101	100.0%

SOURCE: Lewiston-1900 database; Worcester-1900 database.

Thus, it would appear that a

notable number of French Canadian

men in Worcester chose to

overcome an unfavorable imbalance

in the sex ratio in the late 1800s by

marrying non-French-Canadian women. This reality had the potential to pose a far greater threat to French Canadian identity than any other aspect of the migrants’ daily existence. *Survivance* remained as central to the migrant communities as it was to their *compatriotes* in Canada. Since the key elements of *survivance* were maintaining the Catholic faith, use of the French language, and French Canadian *mœurs* or customs, marrying a woman who did not speak French and had not grown up immersed in a French Canadian cultural environment was tantamount to cultural treason. As one newspaper article warned in 1880, “Compatriots, let us never forget this important truth: A people who lose their language will soon forget how to retain their nationality.”³⁰ Although the rates of exogamous marriage grew considerably – among both men and women, in both Lewiston and Worcester’s French-Canadian-ancestry communities – into the early twentieth century, they tended to remain higher for men than for women, and were always higher in Worcester than in Lewiston.³¹ The fact that more French Canadian men were marrying women of other backgrounds in Worcester may partly explain why more working-class men in Worcester envisioned a future for themselves in the U.S., to the point that they were willing to become citizens.

In conclusion, a variety of factors influenced whether working-class male migrants from Quebec either retained strong attachments to their homeland, or developed a sense of allegiance to their lives in the United States. Because this population left few indications of its thoughts, actions, and motives in sources such as the migrant-language press and other publications, a creative and critical approach to other sources of data – from the qualitative accounts found in extant oral histories to the quantitative data that one can cull from census returns – is essential if we are going to better understand this population’s actions as well as the thought processes that helped to shape them.

¹ Yolande Lavoie, “Les mouvements migratoires des Canadiens entre leur pays et les Etats-Unis au XIXe et au XXe siècles : Étude quantitative,” in *La population du Québec: Études rétrospectives*, ed. Hubert Charbonneau, (Montréal: Éditions du Boréal Express, 1973), 76-78; Bruno Ramirez, “L’émigration canadienne vers les Etats-Unis, perspective continentale et comparative,” in *Amérique sans frontières: les Etats-Unis dans l’espace nord-américain*, ed. Catherine Collomp and Mario Menéndez (Vincennes: Presses Université de Vincennes, 1995), 98; Yolande Lavoie, *L’émigration des Québécois aux États-Unis de 1840 à 1930* (Québec : Éditeur officiel, 1979), 45. Lavoie’s estimate in “Les mouvements migratoires” of one million emigrants represents the total migration from 1840-1940.

² Gary Gerstle, *Working Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

³ E.g., Yves Roby, *Les Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre, 1776-1930* (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 1990); idem, *Les Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre: Rêves et réalités* (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion,

2000). While Mary Richards translated the latter book for English publication in 2004 as *The Franco-Americans of New England: Dreams and Realities* (Sillery: Septentrion), the bulk of this prolific scholar’s work, in which the attitudes and perspectives of the migrant communities’ leadership predominates, remains available only in the original French.

⁴ Scholars such as Yves Frenette explain the “rupture” of Franco-American connections to Quebec in the post-World War II era through two events: the Great Depression, which effectively cut off new migration (and the cultural renewal that came with it) from Quebec, and World War II, which afforded many young Franco-Americans widespread exposure to larger American society beyond their ethnic enclaves, through military service and migration beyond the *petits-Canadas* where they lived in search of wartime work. Nonetheless, as late as 1947 French Canadians were considered wholly unassimilable; French conversations were still the norm in the late 1950s in cities such as Lewiston, where large numbers of Quebec migrants had settled; and even in the mid-1960s, linguists noted that Franco-Americans had been far more successful than other ethnic groups at preserving their native language because of the well-integrated networks of community institutions, from churches to ethnic societies, that had formed the fabric of *survivance* from the start. Frenette, “La grande mutation identitaire des Franco-Américains,” *Cap-aux-Diamants: La revue d’histoire du Québec* 61 (printemps 2000): 10-11; James Hill Parker, *Ethnic Identity: The Case of the French Americans* (Lanham, New York: University Press of America, 1983), ix; Herve-B. Lemaire, “Franco-American Efforts on Behalf of the French Language in New England,” in Joshua Fishman, ed., *Language Loyalty in the United States* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 253-254. As Mark Paul Richard has noted, though, the very institutional structures that supported *survivance*, such as ethnic churches and parochial schools, also served to facilitate the migrants’ acculturation to American society; Richard, “From Canadien to American: The Acculturation of French-Canadian descendants in Lewiston, Maine, 1860 to the Present” (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 2001).

⁵ As the leading theorists have defined it, transnationalism is “a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations, create social fields that cross national boundaries”; moreover, those migrants who develop transnational identities “find themselves confronted with and engaged in the nation building processes of two or more nation-states. Their identities and practices are configured by hegemonic categories, such as race and ethnicity, that are deeply embedded in the nation building processes of these nation-states.” In particular, they emphasize the technological developments in recent decades, from the expansion of telephone use and commercial air travel to the development of fax and email as instantaneous forms of communication, as the underlying factors in creating the intensity of interactions between home and host societies necessary for such dual loyalties to develop. Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, “Chapter Two: Theoretical Premises,” in *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Langhorne, Pa.: Gordon & Breach, 1994), 22, 24-25; Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, “Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration,” in *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*, ed. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 1992), 8-9; see also Frederic Wakeman, Jr., “Transnational and Comparative Research,” *Social Science Research Council Items* 42:4 (December 1988): 85-88, and Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo, and Patricia Landolt, “The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22:2 (March 1999): 217-237. In recent years, interdisciplinary conversations among anthropologists and historians have led to a greater awareness within both camps that earlier migrants’ ongoing ties to their homelands maintained some of the closeness characteristic of more recent migrants’ ongoing attachments, even without the benefit of the modern technologies that have facilitated these connections for more recent U.S. arrivals; the cross-disciplinary work of historical anthropologist Nancy Foner and others has done much to further such comparative discussions. See Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York’s Two Great Waves of Immigration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁶ As Charles Lalime noted in his 1882 testimony before the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor (hereafter, MBSL), when he explicitly compared the “seven or eight hours’ ride” to Quebec, a train fare that cost only a few dollars, with the journeys of European immigrants who “have come from across the ocean.” MBSL, *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor* (Boston: Rand, Avery, & Co., 1882), 81.

⁷ Both the migrant-language press and the oral recollections of Franco-Americans confirm the prevalence of these trips. In both the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migrant community leaders and organizations regularly organized annual holiday excursions back to Quebec, which they advertised in local French-language newspapers; these trips often involved booking a special train at a group discount to transport the passengers back and forth. While working-class migrants (particularly in the nineteenth century) may not have had the literacy skills

to read their local French newspaper, or the time and money to afford even these modestly-priced expeditions, anecdotal evidence of regular return trips to Quebec abounds for all classes of the migrant communities. The birth patterns in a number of larger migrant families, where children’s country of birth alternates between the U.S. and Canada in U.S. census returns, highlights the fact that such return trips home were more characteristic of a pattern of cyclical or return migration, rather than just regular short-term holidays in the homeland: see, for example, the manuscript census returns for Lewiston, ME for 1900, where family birth patterns reflecting a tendency toward return or cyclical migrations are not uncommon.

⁸ Robert G. LeBlanc, “A French-Canadian Education and The Persistence of *La Franco-Américanie*,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 8.2 (Spring/Summer 1988), 49-64.

⁹ Bruno Ramirez and Jean Lamarre, “Du Québec vers les États-Unis: l’étude des lieux d’origine,” *Revue d’Histoire de l’Amérique Française* 38:3 (Winter 1985): 421-422.

¹⁰ Félix Albert, *Immigrant Odyssey: A French-Canadian Habitant in New England*, bilingual edition of *Histoire d’un Enfant Pauvre*, intro. by Frances H. Early, tr. by Arthur L. Eno, Jr. (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1991; orig. published by the author in 1909).

¹¹ Personal database for Lewiston, Maine created from *United States Manuscript Census of Population 1900 and 1900-1901 Directory of Androscoggin County* (Auburn, Maine: Merrill & Webber, 1900).

¹² Ramirez and Lamarre, 421-422.

¹³ In original: “Les habitants de Québec abandonnent leur province natale en grand nombre parce que leurs chances de se créer un avenir sont plus grandes aux États-Unis que dans leur patrie...La majorité de ces immigrants viennent ici pour s’y fixer à demeure.” “Encore le ‘Catholic Review’,” *Le Travailleur*, 1^{er} mai 1891, p. 2. The term *habitant* is the traditional French Canadian word, dating back to the French regime, for those small landholders who settled on and farmed the Quebec countryside; the word evokes the image of the archetypal Quebecois at the center of the nineteenth-century Quebec leadership’s campaign to sustain the traditional rural lifestyle in the province. While it was likely an exaggeration to say that “the majority” of migrants planned permanent residence as early as 1891, more of them did bring long-term intentions to the U.S. with each passing year.

¹⁴ In original: “Ayant quitté notre pays sans espoir de retour, nous ne pouvons demeurer des isolés sans famille et sans patrie.” Although this article was originally from another periodical (*L’Union*, the official publication of the Woonsocket-headquartered Union St-Jean Baptiste d’Amérique, a nationwide Franco-American fraternal organization), the editors of Lewiston’s *Le Messager* apparently agreed with its conclusions strongly enough to reprint it more than once. “La Naturalisation,” *Le Messager*, 23 janvier 1920, p. 7; “A propos de naturalisation,” *Le Messager*, 2 août 1920, p. 5.

¹⁵ Bruno Ramirez, with the assistance of Yves Otis, *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 70.

¹⁶ On the development of community infrastructures within the French Canadian migrant communities of Lewiston and Worcester, and the role these structures played in integrating immigrants into life in the U.S., see John McClymer, “The Paradox of Ethnicity in the United States: The French-Canadian Experience in Worcester, 1870-1914,” in *Immigration and Ethnicity: American Society – “Melting Pot” or “Salad Bowl”?*, ed. Michael D’Innocenzo and Josef P. Sirefman (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992), 19; Yves Frenette, “Understanding the French Canadians of Lewiston, 1860-1900: An Alternate Framework,” *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* 25:4 (Spring 1986): 205, 207-213, 218, 222; idem, “La genèse d’une communauté,” 339-340; Paul Raymond Dauphinais, “Structure and Strategy: French-Canadians in Central New England, 1850-1900” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 1991), 203-204, 218-223.

¹⁷ As part of my larger research project on French Canadian migrants from New England, I have spent a significant portion of the past decade building databases of all French Canadian inhabitants of Worcester and Lewiston at twenty-year intervals (1880, 1900, and 1920), based primarily upon census manuscript returns but also upon supplementary information contained in city and county directories, as well as the directories produced by Worcester’s French Canadians over the years. Although the Worcester-1920 database remains at this time in its early stages, I have drawn upon data from the other five in the course of preparing this essay. I am indebted to my former research assistants for their time and effort in compiling and coding much of the data in the Lewiston-1900, Worcester-1900, and Lewiston-1920 databases; likewise, I am indebted to the North American Population Project staff at the University of Minnesota, who shared with me their raw (uncoded) data for these two cities for 1880, since this data served as the foundation for my 1880 databases.

¹⁸ James P. Allen, “Migration Fields of French-Canadian Immigrants to Southern Maine,” *Geographical Review* 62:3 (July 1972), 371; Albert Faucher, “L’Émigration des canadiens français au XIX^e siècle: Position du problème et perspectives,” *Recherches sociographiques* 5 (septembre 1964), 285. The textile mills deliberately tapped Quebec as

a source of labor to meet their industry’s growing needs, even going so far as to send recruiters to Quebec looking for families willing to migrate: Iris Saunders Podea, “Quebec to ‘Little Canada’: The Coming of the French Canadians to New England in the Nineteenth Century,” *New England Quarterly* XXIII:3 (September 1950), 368; Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 18-19.

¹⁹ Paul R. Dauphinais, “Structure and Strategy: French-Canadians in Central New England, 1850-1900” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 1991), 88.

²⁰ For example, nearly 90% of French-Canadian-ancestry girls ages 14-19 worked for wages in Lewiston, Maine in 1880, compared to only 59% in Worcester that same year; by 1900, though employment levels had dropped for this group in Lewiston to 81.3%, this rate was still much higher than that of Worcester, which had fallen to 56.3%. Likewise, rates of employment among adult women, both married and unmarried, were noticeably higher for *canadiennes* in Lewiston than for their Worcester counterparts. Databases for Lewiston, Maine and Worcester, Massachusetts compiled from North Atlantic Population Project and Minnesota Population Center, “1880 United States Census: Complete Count Microdata,” Preliminary Version NAPP-US-0.1 [computer files] (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [distributor], 2001) <<http://www.pop.umn.edu/napp/1880/>>; Lewiston-1900 database; Worcester-1900 database; FlorenceMae Waldron, “I’ve Never Dreamed It Was Necessary to *Marry!*: Women and Work in New England French Canadian Communities, 1870-1930,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24.2 (Winter 2005), 40-41 (see esp. Tables 1-4).

²¹ Dauphinais, 84; furthermore, as Charles W. Estus and Kenneth J. Moynihan point out, French Canadian men’s employment was evenly distributed across Worcester’s economic landscape, rather than concentrating predominantly in a single industry or business. See “Beyond Textiles: Industrial Diversity and the Franco-American Experience in Worcester, Massachusetts,” in *Steeple and Smokestacks: A Collection of Essays on the Franco-American Experience in New England*, ed. Claire Quintal, 164-178 (Worcester, Massachusetts: Assumption College, Institut français, 1996).

²² Lewiston-1900 database.

²³ Personal database for Worcester, Massachusetts created from *United States Manuscript Census of Population 1900* and the French Canadian city directory for Worcester in 1900, *Le Worcester Canadien: Directoire des canadiens-français de Worcester*, vol. XIV (Worcester, Massachusetts: J. Arthur Roy & Fils, 1900).

²⁴ In original: “Nous autres, on voulait rester encore...parce qu’on gagnait de l’argent!” As quoted in Rouillard, 27.

²⁵ Bergeron, in *Amoskeag*, 60.

²⁶ Lewiston-1880 database; Worcester-1880 database.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Lewiston-1900 database; Worcester-1900 database.

³⁰ In original: “Compatriotes, ayons sans cesse cette vérité devant les yeux : Un peuple qui perd sa langue ne saurait conserver longtemps sa nationalité.” *Le Courrier de Worcester*, 2 septembre 1880, p. 2.

³¹ These observations draw upon preliminary analyses of the Lewiston 1900, Worcester 1900, and Lewiston 1920 databases. In order to facilitate further analysis and interpretation of the results, I first need to collect information on the ratio of men to women in the Lewiston and Worcester populations as a whole during these years – something I have yet to do. As increasingly shrill newspaper articles indicate, the fear of exogamous marriages was a growing one throughout New England’s “Little Canadas” in the early twentieth century, particularly in the years after World War I. For example, see “Le mariage d’aujourd’hui,” *Le Messager*, 31 octobre 1919, p. 3; “Américanisation,” *La Justice* (Sanford, Maine), reprinted in *L’Opinion Publique*, 2 juillet 1930, p. 4; “Vive la Canadienne!,” *Le Messager*, 25 septembre 1933, p. 3; “Gardons-nous de ce Danger!,” *Le Bulletin* (Biddeford, Maine), reprinted in *Le Messager*, 13 octobre 1933, p. 3.