



Franco-Americans

THERE ARE at least two million people of French Canadian origin living in New England. These Franco-Americans (as they prefer to be called) are the descendents of those who came to work in the mills in the mid-19th Century. Today they remain a strong and highly identifiable force. A French-language bi-weekly newspaper, *Le Travailleur*, is published in Worcester, Massachusetts, but while many Franco-Americans speak French, it is as a second language. The New Englanders have produced dozens of major political figures — Congressman, Senators, governors — and other notables, such as Jack Kerouac, the founder of the Beat Movement in literature.

[EARLY DAYS IN NEW ENGLAND]

"Near the factory are the mill tenements, alike as to form and colour and size, aligned; row upon row like soldiers. They seem like the toys of a giant. . . . From them flee the workers in the morning, to return at nightfall, fathers, children, often the mother. In the evening, and of a Sunday, the trolley invites one to ride. In the centre of the city, there may be a theatre with its attractive and mysterious announcements. The stores show in their windows the latest styles. There are the newspapers from New York and Boston. There are the poolrooms, and there one can smoke a congenial pipeful with one's friends. . . . There is no home life. The children work, give

part of their earnings to their parents, and in return receive the full confidence of the father and mother. The atmosphere of freedom is everywhere. Ah, this is a far cry from Québec, where the rows of farms reach from one parish to the next, and where the parish is a circular horizon with the church as a pivot." An anonymous French Canadian in New England, in the late 19th Century.

The Métis

IN THE 1600s, when New France was still new, it tried to limit the number of young men who could run through the woods, trading with the Indians.

It issued *congés* — licenses — for trading but the young men went anyway, licensed or not. By 1700 a third of them were traveling far, *coureurs de bois*, to the Red River. Many did not bother to travel back; they hunted buffaloes, married Indian women and founded the Métis — the New Nation — and sought government recognition as a political unit. Scottish and English traders adopted their life style and their children became Métis too but the Eastern forces of civilization would not let them be. The rebellions began — the first, it is said, inspired by Jean-Louis Riel, grandson of Lagimodière, a famous *coureur de bois*. His son, Louis, led the two major rebellions, in the 1860s and the 1880s. Between rebellions he lived in exile in Montana, teaching in a school for the children of Canadian immigrants. He returned to Canada when the first railway crossed the Prairies and the old Métis way of life was



dissolving under the stress. The second rebellion was crushed and Riel was hanged, but the Métis persevered and tens of thousands of their descendents live today in Manitoba and throughout western Canada.

Les Acadiens

THE ACADIANS are not Québécois. The first, Huguenots, arrived in Passamaquoddy Bay, in what is now Nova Scotia, in 1604, four years before the founding of Québec. The main colony of 300, "men of high quality", came between 1632 and 1635. They and subsequent arrivals settled in Port Royal valley, Canso, Cape Sable and the coast of Minas Bay where, among other things, they built an elaborate and ingenious dike network which is still used to control the forty-foot tides of the Bay of Fundy.

The Acadians were and remained peaceful farmers but they were badly used by the vagaries of war. The British took Acadia eight times and the last time, in 1710, they kept it and made it Nova Scotia. The Acadians were at first allowed to continue their peaceful ways but when France built a mighty fortress, Louisbourg, opposite Cape Breton, the British became alarmed and in 1755, when the Acadians refused military service, the British decided to exile them. Historians estimate that some 16,000 were sent from home and many, perhaps half of them, died of starvation. The first five thousand were sent to New Brunswick, to Prince Edward Island, to New England and, as prisoners, to England. A few

were sent to Australia, some to the Magdalen Islands, and some to the Ohio Valley, from whence about 300 went down the Mississippi to Louisiana — a voyage which inspired Longfellow's poem *Evangeline*. Many went to France and in time 4000 of those re-migrated to join the tiny band in Louisiana. There are today a million descendents of the Acadians in Louisiana and their culture and language are still intact. There are nearly 400,000 of them in the Maritimes, half in New Brunswick.

The Acadians in the Maritimes remained almost totally isolated, poor and deprived of education until the mid-19th Century. Their first college was founded at Memramcook in 1864, the first newspaper in 1867. The early graduates of the college became the leaders in new fights for the rights of Acadians in politics, school and the church. The first Acadian bishop was invested in New Brunswick in 1912.

Today the Acadians have representatives in each of the three Maritime legislatures and one, Louis Robichaud, was the Premier of New Brunswick from 1960 to 1970. There is a good French-language teachers' college in New Brunswick, there is the Acadian university at Moncton and there is a thriving daily newspaper, *L'Evangeline*. In the words of Father Anselme Chiasson, Director of the Université de Moncton, "The future is bright in New Brunswick and there is hope in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. . . . The Acadians came back, established themselves and survived."

The Louisbourg fortress is in the process of being restored at a cost of \$12 million, but it no longer alarms the British.