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*Division of Marketing and Communications*

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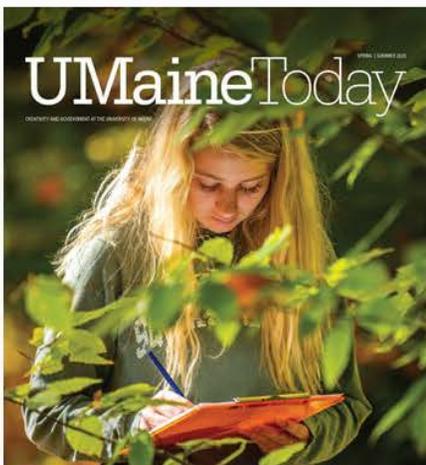
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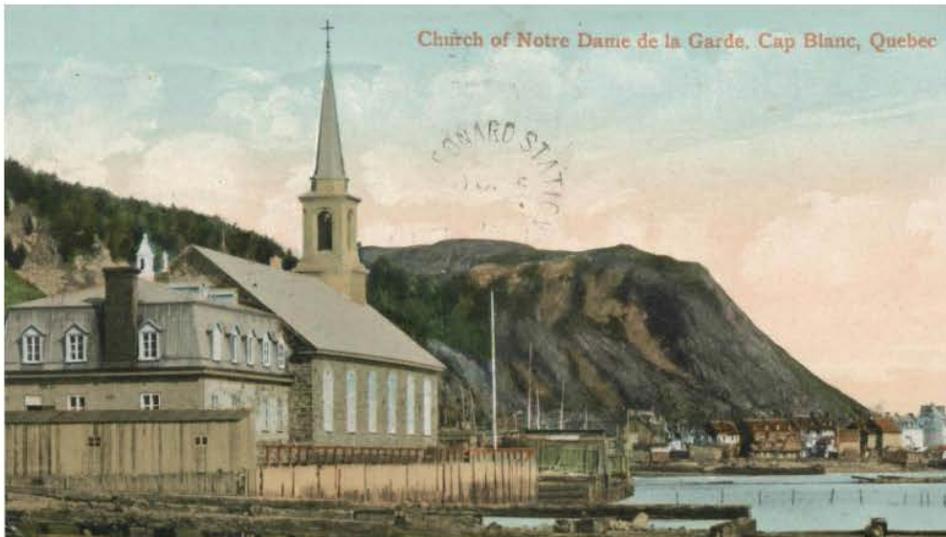
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## UMaine Today



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## First-ever online, bilingual portal to Franco American archives launches this spring

March 12, 2021

Franco American Programs at the University of Maine will collaborate with four other institutions in the region to launch the first-ever online, bilingual portal to Franco American archives and history collections from repositories across North America this spring.

Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain, formerly known as the Franco American Portal project, will offer access to various primary sources about the French-Canadian, Acadian and Québécois(e) diaspora communities of the Northeast. Available records will include letters and other correspondence, scrapbooks, family and business records, newspapers, photographs and other media depicting Franco-American history, culture and people.

Information about the project can be found at [francoportal.org](http://francoportal.org).

"This online, bilingual portal to Franco American archives, manuscripts, and finding aids begins with our partners' bilingual, materially diverse collections as the portal's originating cache," says Susan Pinette, director of UMaine's Franco American Programs.

The National Endowment for the Humanities provided an almost \$60,000 grant to help finance the development of Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain. The University of Maine at Fort Kent Acadian Archives, the University of Southern Maine Franco-American Collection, the French Institute at Assumption University in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the Msgr. Wilfrid H. Paradis Archives & Special Collections at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire, partnered with UMaine to develop it.

The project team is seeking other institutions willing to contribute to the portal by sharing access to their materials depicting Franco American history.

"We also recognize, however, that Franco American primary sources exist outside of our partners' care," Pinette says. "In fact, thousands of records documenting the lives and activities of Franco Americans beginning in the nineteenth century can be found in over 75 other major collecting institutions



throughout the United States and Canada, including the Library of Congress, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ), New York Public Library, Harvard University and more.

“It is our intention to place all of these materials and their home repositories in conversation with one another through our portal. Making plain the contents of Franco American collections and their locations collaboratively will cast light on the truly national and international scopes of Franco American history and life,” Pinette says.

Primary sources detailing the French-Canadian, Acadian and Québécois(e) diaspora of New England can sometimes be difficult to find. The digital, bilingual archive portal will make them more visible, searchable and accessible to researchers, educators, students, genealogists and the general public.

Users will be able to browse and search through the catalog of records featured on the website, which it will categorize by indicators like place, family name, subject or cultural theme. Once a user selects an item to view, the portal will connect them to that item at its original source in the digital sphere or a physical archive.

UMaine Franco American Programs will host a Zoom presentation for Franco American Digital Archives/Portal franco-américain at 7 p.m. on March 16. This online event is free and open to the public. Anyone can register for the event through the Franco American Programs’ events [calendar](#).

“This collaboration works hard to overcome barriers to the discoverability of Franco-American archival materials, and in doing so it aims to open them to new forms of study, and to improve access to pieces of our communities’ histories that may have become hidden,” says Jacob Albert, project manager for Franco American Programs who led development for the project.

For more information about the project and its contributors, contact Pinette, [spinette@maine.edu](mailto:spinette@maine.edu) or Albert, [jacob.albert@maine.edu](mailto:jacob.albert@maine.edu).

UMaine has been active in Franco American studies for more than 50 years. The university established the Franco American Centre in 1972, then created a Franco American Studies Program, still the only one of its kind in the U.S., in the 1990s.

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# Franco American Portal Project

Building a discovery tool for Franco American collections

## Our Project

The Franco American Portal Project is a five-university collaboration to build an online portal to Franco American archival collections. [The result of this project, Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain, is currently in development and will be launched in Summer 2021.](#)

Our project addresses the need for online access to Franco American cultural history by: *locating and identifying* archival materials that concern French-Canadian, Québécois(e), and Acadian diaspora communities in the US Northeast—wherever these materials have been collected around the world; *bringing together* information about these collections and their contents in an organized, searchable, and culturally conscientious way; and *making accessible* these collections and their contents by directing the public toward their digital presence and the institutions that collect and preserve them.

## Our Team

The Franco American Portal Project is funded by the University of Maine and supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is a collaboration between UMaine, University of Southern Maine, University of Maine at Fort Kent, Assumption College, and Saint Anselm College: [five institutions in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts](#) that coordinate Franco American research and steward significant archival materials from the French-Canadian and Acadian diaspora in the US.

Meet our [project staff, advisory board, and student collaborators.](#)

## Timeline

The Franco American Portal Project began in December 2018 with its first advisory board meeting. [A beta version of the portal is now available for trial and exhibition.](#) In April 2020, the Franco American Portal Project was awarded a [Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.](#)

## For More Information

To learn more, contact Jacob Albert, UMaine Franco American Programs, at [jacob.albert\[at\]maine.edu](mailto:jacob.albert@maine.edu). [Read where this project has been featured in the press.](#)

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