

Grand-Pré – Heart of Acadie  
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## **Past and Present**

Beginning in the 1500's, Acadie or Accadie appeared on various European maps – between present day Philadelphia and Cape Breton Island.

Acadie came to mean the coastal regions of northern Maine, southern New Brunswick and all of mainland Nova Scotia.

Today, there are an estimated 3 million people of Acadian descent in Canada, the United States and France.

Nova Scotia is the heart of old Acadie – northern New Brunswick, the 'French Shore' of St. Mary's Bay, and Rustico and Mont-Carmel on Prince Edward Island.

Grand-Pré – place of beauty, place of bounty, place of tragedy, heritage and tourism. Operates on multiple levels, often simultaneously.

Grand-Pré – vast meadow. Acadians looked at salt marshes and recognized the untapped agricultural potential. The first settlers arrived in early 1680's and dyking began soon after.

Last British attempt at a deportation 1762. First region was Chignecto.

Acadians vulnerable to policies and actions decided in Halifax, Boston, Louisbourg, Quebec, London, and Versailles.

A distinctive Acadian society took root in the 1600's.

## **Acadie and Grand-Pré**

Name could be connected with Mi'kmaq. Many locations end with ekatie – which means place of – Tracadie, Shubenacadie.

Theory that Acadie is European in origin stems from fact that Giovanni da Verrazzano, a Florentine explorer (service of French king, Francois I), designated a broad swath of eastern seaboard of North America as Acadie in 1524.

Variations: La Cadie, Lacadye, Acadie.

- 1598** French tried to settle in the region we know today as Atlantic Canada. Other European mariners as well: Basque, Breton, Norman, Spanish, Portuguese and English off Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Came to fish cod and trade furs with aboriginal peoples.
- First French colony – Sable Island – lasted until 1603 when 11 survivors (out of 250) return to France to explain what had happened.
- 1604** Pierre Dugua, Sieur de Mons, led a settlement to St. Croix Island (river forms a border between modern-day Maine and New Brunswick). Almost half perished.
- 1605** Changed location – Port-Royal. Timber framework dismantled and shipped to Port-Royal. Area called Mi'kma'ki. The two peoples became friends and trading partners.
- 1607** Trading monopoly was revoked and French left.
- 1610** When they returned in 1610 they saw that the Mi'kmaq had looked after their place. Same year Mi'kmaw leader, Membertou, adopted Roman Catholic faith. Many of his people followed his example.
- Order of Good Cheer was established.
- Canada's first play: Marc Lescarbot's, Le Théâtre de Neptune.
- 1613** A raiding party from Jamestown, Virginia looted and burned habitation. Burned what remained on St. Croix Island. English determined to prevent French from settling territory they claimed.
- Only a few Frenchmen remained. Charles de Biencourt, who inherited his father's Port-Royal estate remained and Charles de la Tour who carried on a fur trading business at Cape Sable.
- 1629** A group of Scottish settlers settled in today's Fort Anne area, along Annapolis and Allain Rivers. Stayed only 3 years. Influence: coat of arms granted to Sir William Alexander by Charles I in 1625 still serves as the province's coat of arms and was the inspiration for the present-day flag of Nova Scotia.
- 1632** Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye in Europe. Port-Royal handed back to France.

In 1630's LaHave was principal settlement of the French with Isaac de Razilly at its head. Razilly died in 1636, venture discontinued.

After this, Charles de Menou d'Aulnay and most of the settlers relocated to Port-Royal, establishing themselves where Scots had placed their fort in 1629.

**1650's** The migration of families from France to Acadie in the 1630's marked a dramatic shift. As of 1650, there were approximately 50 families of European origin in the region (about 400 people).

Majority of earliest permanent settlers were from Central-West region of France (Poitou, Aunis, Saintonge). Also Basques, Bretons, Normans, Scots, Irish, English.

Several instances of intermarriage. Multiplicity of origins, backgrounds, customs, accents, combined to form a people who began to see themselves as no longer French but a distinctive new people – Acadians.

### **Beyond the Clichés**

Acadians were fishermen, merchants, traders and woodcutters. Range of crafts and skills (coopering, milling and blacksmithing). Looked after large herds of cattle, sheep, and pigs. They built boats. Operated wind and water mills. Involved in trade.

Acadians traded with:	British admin. at Annapolis Royal
	aboriginal peoples
	New Englanders
	French from Ile Saint-Jean (P.E.I.)
	French from Ile Royale (Cape Breton Island)
	French from Canada (St. Lawrence River)

**1710** The British established a garrison at Port-Royal and renamed the place Annapolis Royal in honour of Queen Anne.

**1713** Treaty of Utrecht – British viewed most of the area of Nova Scotia as theirs. British administration did not approve of the Acadians trading with the French.

## Acadian Occupations

Acadians tended to spread out – typically beside salt marshes.

The most populous communities were along the Baie Française (Bay of Fundy) and near Dauphin River (Annapolis River). Many wanted to get away from Port-Royal because it was home to government officials and it was a military target.

First new area to be settled because of problems at Port-Royal was the Chignecto region, beginning in the 1670's. Acadians established Beaubassin, Petitcoudiac, Shepody.

**1680's** The first Acadians relocated to Les Mines (along Minas Basin) where Grand-Pré and Pisiquid would develop. This area came to be known as the 'granary of Acadia'.

Some also made their way to Cobequid – now Truro, Old Barns area.

Many also lived on scattered coves: Cape Sable, LaHave, Chebucto, Chezzetcook and Tatamagouche.

The world that existed in 1680 would be somewhat different in 1710, 1730, and in 1755. Acadians were under constant pressures. The swinging pendulum of different governing regimes – French to English and back again. Acadia was a borderland between two rival empires as well as a homeland of different aboriginal peoples.

**1680's** Pierre Melason dit La Verdure  
Wife: Marie-Marguerite Muis d'Entremont

Moved to Grand-Pré. His brother, Charles, stayed at Port-Royal in village called Saint Charles (national historic site today).

Procureur fiscal for people of Les Mines (seigneurial agent). He did not cooperate with 1671 census-takers. Became a recognized leader and local figure of influence and authority.

Pierre Terriot  
Wife: Cécile Landry

Founded a settlement on Rivière Saint-Antoine (today's Cornwallis River). People began to settle along the different rivers and creeks that flowed into Minas Basin:

Rivière Saint-Croix  
 Rivière de l'Ascension  
 Rivière Pisiquid (Avon River)  
 Baye de Cobequid (Truro area)  
 Rivière de Gasparots (Gaspereau River)  
 Rivière aux Canards  
 Rivière des Vieux Habitants (Habitant Creek)

Les Mines became the principal agricultural centre.

**1687-88** Recorded a total of 48 different villages or settlements.

By the 1700's, Acadians would outnumber the aboriginal population, especial in the community at Grand-Pré.

Acadians placed great value on their independence and wanted to distance themselves from the watchful eyes of the reigning French or British administrations.

By the early 1700's Grand-Pré was the most populous settlement in the Les Mines area.

One sawmill and 7 or 8 grist mills by 1699.

**1690-1710** New Englanders launched 6 separate attacks against Acadie.

**1704** Benjamin Church attacked Grand-Pré.

### **Taking Land from Sea**

Acadians took advantage of the salt marshes. The sea covered the marshes for several hours at a time twice per day. Marshlands had to be dyked to keep sea from flooding the land and then rainwater gradually washed the salt out of the soil. Leaching took 2-3 years. Acadians provided soil far more fertile than cutting down trees.

Dyking goes back many centuries – ancient technique known to Europeans and Chinese.

Tides were among the highest in the world.

Acadians became known as défricheurs d'eau – those who reclaim land from the sea.

The first dyke was located on the edge of the uplands – near the Memorial Church.

- Reaped wheat, oats, barley, rye, corn, hemp, hay and peas.
- Raised cattle, sheep, horses, pigs and poultry.
- Planted potagers or kitchen gardens.
- Produced root crops such as cabbages, herbs, and vegetables.
- Grew apple and pear orchards and flax
- introduced the French willow

### **The Nature of Acadian Society**

Dyking was done by males. Turned to the forest for hunting, trapping and to obtain firewood and lumber. They built homes, sheds, mills and boats. Entered into a fur trade with Mi'kmaq. Made paths and roads and trails linking major settled areas. Relied on the sea for transportation and fishing.

Women brought them food and drink. Women carded, spun and wove the wool. Other clothing was made from bolts of cloth imported from Louisbourg and New England. Cared for the poultry and orchards. Looked after the household, prepared the meals, tended the garden and milked the cows and watched over flocks of hens, chickens and geese.

Building homes for newlyweds, braking linen, weaving fabric, butchering livestock, spring planting, fall harvests – opportunities for festive celebrations.

Smoked pipe and drank wine, spruce beer, rum and apple cider.

Sang and danced.

Travelled on snowshoes in winter and by canoes in summer.

Imported commodities: sugar, molasses, tobacco and rum from the French West Indies.

### **1720's, 30's and 40's**

Significant growth in the Acadian population. Surplus grain and livestock shipped to Ile Royale, Ile Saint-Jean and New England.

British did not like Acadians trading with French after 1710-13.

Prior to that date, Acadians traded with New England. French did not like that either.

## **Battle for Empire – Struggle for Survival**

### **After 1713**

Communities at Grand-Pré, Pisiquid, Beaubassin, Cobequid and vicinity of Annapolis Royal grew in size and complexity the 35 years following 1713. Peace reigned in general.

In 1740's Great Britain and France rekindled old conflicts.

1740-1748 - Austrian Succession

### **May 1744**

A French expedition out of Louisbourg, commanded by François du Pont Duvivier, captured the fishing community at Canso (close to Cape Breton Island). One of two English-speaking and Protestant settlements. Began an aggressive campaign at sea, capturing many English and New England fishing and merchant ships.

British left with only one base – Annapolis Royal.

### **1745**

French intended to capture Annapolis Royal. Soldiers from New England supported by British warships and surprised the defenders at Louisbourg. Dropped 'o' and called Louisburg. Setback for French.

### **1746**

French try to retaliate. Duc d'Anville, with 70 ships and 13,000 men, leave France to re-assert the French presence in the Maritime region. Incompetence, storms, and illness turned it into a failure.

New England troops arrived at Grand-Pré in autumn to protect Annapolis Royal.

French and Amerindian forces at Beaubassin surprised New Englanders camped at Grand-Pré. Capt. Coulon de Villiers led an expedition of 250 men and 50 Amerindian allies in mid-winter. They were joined by a small number of Acadians. 500 New England soldiers quartered in Acadian homes.

## February 11, 1746

Battle of Grand-Pré. Col. Arthur Noble killed.

### British Initiatives, French Response

**1748** Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle

More a temporary truce than lasting peace. The British returned Ile Saint-Jean and Ile Royale to the French.

**1749** British establish a stronghold at Halifax (Kipuktuk). Counter-balance to Cape Breton fortress.

The Halifax peninsula and the Dartmouth shore were fortified, as was the Acadian community of Pisiquid with Fort Edward. Grand-Pré region had its own small fort – known as Vieux Logis.

At Chignecto, British built Fort Lawrence.

**1749** French doubled their garrison at Louisbourg and again in 1755. Erected forts and posts at mouth of the St. John River and on both coasts of the Chignecto isthmus – Fort Beauséjour – west side of Missaguash River. Fort Lawrence was on the east side. This is where the sparks would first fly in 1755.

**1753** Lunenburg was founded by foreign Protestants.

English tried to make peace treaties with Indians. One signed in 1753, but did not work. British paid bounties for Indian scalps as French did at Louisbourg for British scalps.

French were not idle while British were expanding their presence in region.

### Acadians Caught in the Middle

Acadians were aware of the French and British moves of 1749 and 1750. They worried. It was obvious that the founding of Halifax marked the beginning of a new British determination to colonize Nova Scotia with loyal subjects.

Almost half of the total Acadian population voluntarily relocated from their home villages to go live in the French-controlled Chignecto region, on Ile Saint-Jean, and Ile Royale.

- expanding British military presence
- pressure from the French, Mi'kmaq and British for support
- outbreaks of guerrilla campaigns
- free rations from the French to come to Ile Saint-Jean and Ile Royale.

### **Unofficial War, but War all the Same**

#### **June 1755**

Anglo-French tension came to a head. Warfare began in Ohio Valley in 1754. British seized ships headed for Louisbourg.

English decide to capture French fort at Beauséjour. 2,000 troops from New England and 270 British regulars.

English commander, Lt. Col. Robert Monkton in command.

French commander, Louis Du Pont Duchambon de Vergor.

Surrendered on June 16, 1755. Baie Verte & Fort Gaspareau included.

### **The Perennial Question**

British authorities, under Gov. Lawrence, interpreted the participation of 200 to 300 Acadians as a sign of complicity on the part of the 'neutrals'.

He dismissed fact that the French commander admitted to having forced the Acadians to defend the fort.

After Halifax founded in 1749, definite hardening of British attitude toward Acadians.

English decided to settle Acadian question once and for all. All Acadians in the Chignecto region would be rounded up and deported.

## July 28, 1755

The Nova Scotia Council would take a decision to remove every Acadian from the British colony of Nova Scotia.

## June 1755

Acadians of Les Mines and Pisiquid asked to take their guns and pistols to Fort Edward. June 10<sup>th</sup>, 25 Acadians of Les Mines, Pisiquid and River Canard, sent a petition to Gov. Lawrence saying that they should be trusted and their weapons returned. British did not like this.

- June 24      44 Acadians of Les Mines, Pisiquid, and River Canard sent another petition asking for forgiveness if anything in the first petition showed a lack of respect.
  
- July 3        the Nova Scotia Council interrogated the Acadian deputies who went to Halifax to negotiate with the British. They were placed in confinement on Georges Island.
  
- July 13      Acadians in Annapolis region prepare another petition saying they will deliver their firearms to Maj. Handfield, British commander at Annapolis Royal.
  
- July 15      Nova Scotia Council decide that now is the best time for the Acadians to sign an Oath of Allegiance.
  
- July 22      Two new petitions made up by 203 inhabitants of Les Mines and 103 from Pisiquid.
  
- July 28      Nova Scotia Council asks deputies held prisoner to swear oath of allegiance and they refuse.

## Plans and Actions, August 1755

### August 11, 1755

Removal of Acadians began at Fort Cumberland (Fort Beauséjour). 250 males came, detained, and sent to Fort Lawrence. Order were to round up everyone in the Chignecto region. Acadians from Cobequid escaped. Vast majority fled to Ile Saint-Jean. (French colony till 1758). Gov. Charles Lawrence writes a letter to:

Lt.-Col. Winslow	in charge of Grand-Pré deportation
Capt. Alexander Murray	in charge of Pisiquid deportation

- 500 to North Carolina
- 1,000 to Virginia
- 500 to Maryland
- numbers would change later

Governors of the destination colonies knew nothing.

### **August 16, 1755**

Winslow set sail from Chignecto region for Pisiquid with 300 soldiers.

### **August 19, 1755**

Winslow arrives at Grand-Pré. Acadian population in area about 2,200. He needed to protect himself. His soldiers erected a palisade around the church, the priest's house, and the cemetery. So as not to upset the Acadians, he asked them to remove the sacred objects from the church.

### **The Tragedy Unfolds**

#### **September 4, 1755**

Lt.-Col. Winslow issued a "Citation" to the Acadian inhabitants of Grand-Pré saying that all men and boys aged 10 and older were to come to the parish church at 3 :00 p.m. the following day to hear an important announcement.

Capt. Murray used a similar ploy at Pisiquid (Windsor).

#### **September 5, 1755**

418 males proceed to the parish church. Winslow informed everyone that they and their families were to be deported and 'that your Lands and Tenements, Cattle of all Kinds and Live Stock of all Sortes are Forfitted to the Crown with all other of your effects Saving your money and Household Goods and you your Selves to be removed from this his Province.'

Result: shame, confusion, anger, shock.

## To The Transports

### September 10, 1755

Winslow feared an uprising. On Sept. 10 he ordered about 200 of the 418 and boys imprisoned to be separated from the rest and placed aboard five transport ships anchored in the basin.

Removal of Acadians did not proceed quickly. There was a shortage of transport ships and a lack of sufficient provisions. Large quantities of food were needed to sustain the 2,200 people that were to be deported.

October 8, 1755

Embarkation began. Families were supposed to remain together, but this was not possible.

### October 19-21, 1755

More families assembled at Budrot Point (between the Rivers Canard and Haibtant). Approximately 600 inhabitants from 98 families were brought to Grand-Pré. By late October over 1,500 Acadians were put on ships and sent out. 1,000 from Pisiquid also sailed out.

Bound for:	Pennsylvania
	Virginia
	Maryland
	Connecticut
	Massachusetts

To discourage the Acadians from returning, the English proceed to burn and destroy their villages. In the region close to Grand-Pré, some 700 houses, barns, and other structures were destroyed.

600 Acadians brought from Budrot Point were held sent out only in mid to late December. 350 on December 13 and the remainder a week later, December 20<sup>th</sup>.

In total, approximately 2,200 Acadians were deported. 1/3 of the more than 6,000 Acadians who were deported from Nova Scotia in 1755.

## Deadly Voyages

Wretched conditions aboard the transports : storms, food shortages, foul drinking water, contagious diseases and squalor.

English-speaking Protestants in the colonies worried about receiving French-speaking Catholics. They did not want the Acadians. In Virginia, the Governor and his people were so upset at the arrival of the Acadians that in May 1756 they shipped the Acadians to England. In communities where Acadians were accepted, they remained outsiders.

Back in the Les Mines area, some Acadians escaped deportation and fled to the woods. Many were found and killed. Most Acadians eventually surrendered or were captured. Fort Edward held these Acadians. Fort Cumberland and Fort Lawrence played the same role in the Chignecto area. Many Acadians fled to New Brunswick.

Once Acadians were apprehended, they were used as cheap labour to maintain and repair the dykes.

1760            Planters began to arrive in Nova Scotia. Acadians taught Planters how to build and maintain the dykes.

## Eight Long Years

Deportation continued sporadically till 1762. Entire village of Cobequid (in 1755) made their way to the French colony of Île Saint-Jean. In 1758, the British would take over Île Saint-Jean and deport about 3,100 Acadians there to France.

Some Acadians fled to Miramichi district of what is now northern New Brunswick.

## Survival and Adaptation

The Acadians had a will to survive. Such strength came from years of self-reliance and successful struggle against forces that often threatened their way of life. Acadians would later undertake journeys to find their loved ones (Louisiana, the West Indies, France, Quebec and back to the Martimes).

Acadians so shattered that many lost their sense of identity.

Seven Years' War ended in 1763. Louisiana became a Spanish colony, while Canada became Quebec. Roman Catholicism prevailed.

**1764**

Acadians received permission to resettle in Nova Scotia provided they swore allegiance to the monarch of Great Britain. Slowly they began to return from as far away as South Carolina and Georgia.

The Acadians survived and rebuilt their world.

**Creation of a National Historic Site**

Two reasons why Grand-Pré's pre-eminence: Winslow left a detailed journal of what happened at Grand-Pré and Longfellow's famous poem, *Évangeline*, was set in Grand-Pré. Published in 1847. The famous poet relied on Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *History of Nova Scotia* (1827) which did make great use of Winslow's account.

The poem had an impact on the Acadians' sense of their own worth and helped nationalism to grow.

**John Frederic Herbin**

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|------|--|
| 1907 | Herbin purchases the land believed to be the site of the parish church and cemetery of Saint-Charles-des-Mines.                |
| 1908 | Nova Scotia Legislature passed an Act protecting this area.  |
| 1909 | Erected a stone cross on the site to mark the cemetery using stones from remains of what he believed were Acadian foundations. |
| 1917 | Herbin and trustees sold the property to DAR on condition that church site be deeded to Acadians.                              |
| 1920 | DAR unveiled the statue of <i>Évangeline</i> .<br>Work of Quebec sculptor, Henri Hébert<br>Father, Louis-Philippe Hébert       |
| 1921 | At Acadian National Convention, Société mutuelle de l'Assomption took official possession of the church site.                  |
| 1922 | Société built Memorial Church. Acadians and their friends donated the required funds. Dedication: August 18 <sup>th</sup> .    |

- 1924 Dedication of Embarkation Cross. Actual embarkation one kilometre closer to the basin.
- 1930 Interior of the church was completed.
- 1936 Acadians visit from Louisiana.
- 1955 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the deportation.
- 1957 Government of Canada acquired Grand-Pré Memorial Park.
- 1961 Grand-Pré declared a national historic site.

Summary of book made May 2005 - BB