



Grand Pré

NATIONAL
HISTORIC
PARK



Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

Issued under the authority of the
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QUEEN'S PRINTER AND CONTROLLER OF STATIONERY
OTTAWA, 1967

GRAND PRE
National Historic Park

Canadian Historic Sites Division
National and Historic Parks Branch

Grand Pré National Historic Park



Grand Pré Park and its historical associations have been preserved ever since 1908 when the Nova Scotia Legislature passed an act safeguarding the sites of Acadian history in the village. The property around what was believed to be the site of the ancient Acadian church was owned by J. F. Herbin, of Wolfville, a direct descendant of an expelled Acadian family. In 1917, the Dominion Atlantic Railway purchased the 14-acre tract that comprises the present park.

The Dominion Atlantic Railway enhanced the beauty of the park during its period of ownership. It improved the property and landscaped the grounds so that Acadians and tourists could recall the appearance and atmosphere of the Acadian district of Minas. Poplars were planted near the old willows that are said to be survivors from Acadian days, and to the west of the Memorial Chapel a modern apple orchard grows to remind visitors of the Acadians' successful orchards. Many kinds of iris and an unusual collection of flowering native plants and shrubs grow in the park.

A rose garden and a lily pool complete the ornamental landscaping that complements the graceful beauty of Evangeline's Monument and the Memorial Chapel, and the quaintness of "Evangeline's Well" with its wooden well sweep.

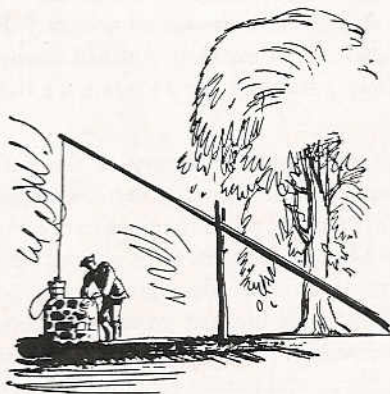
The statue of Evangeline was cast in bronze in Paris by Philippe Hébert, a great Canadian sculptor who was a direct descendant of one of the first Acadian families to settle at Port Royal. Hébert designed this statue in 1918 and 1919 but died before the work was completed; his son, Henri, carried on the work and the statue was unveiled at Grand Pré on July 29, 1920, by Lady Burnham. It was presented by the Dominion Atlantic Railway. The statue is a notable work of art. Looking on one side of it, one sees a young Evangeline. On walking round to the other side, one gradually sees Evangeline become old and saddened.

The symbol of the Acadians is the present church at the Nova Scotia village of Grand Pré. It is built on a site donated to the Acadians by the Dominion Atlantic Railway. In the formal lines planned to reflect mid-eighteenth century French architecture, the church preserves the memory of the original Church of St. Charles. It was built by the Société Nationale de L'Assomption over a period of eight years. Its cornerstone was blessed in 1922 and in 1923 the exterior was completed. In 1930 the interior of the chapel was finished and the historic museum opened to the public.

The first presentation to the chapel was the statue of the Madonna of the Assumption, the patroness of the Acadian people. It was executed in Padua, Italy, on the commission of the Acadians. The Memorial Chapel has never been used as a church. It has served as an historic museum including a representative collection of Indian and Acadian relics some assembled by J. F. Herbin, former owner of the Grand Pré Park property and a leading Acadian historian and poet. The museum collection includes maps, portraits, and documentary evidence of the Acadians, as well as relics of the first New England settlers in the Minas country.

A literary memorial to the Acadians that will live in people's minds—"Evangeline"—was written by the American poet, Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow over the period 1845-47. Longfellow's heroine is a fictional character who did not exist except in the imagination of her creator but she has been portrayed so vividly that many people believe the poem to be a true story. Longfellow's account, besides being entirely plausible and depicting in universal human terms the tragedy of the removal of the Acadians, is an epic poem devised within the historical framework of that stirring event of Canadian history. The



Great War. Prime Minister Borden lived here as a boy and took his elementary education at the village school. In Grand Pré are the house of the Prime Minister's grandfather, and the two homes of his parents, one in which Sir Robert was born and the other where he lived during his boyhood.

The Grand Pré Park is now a National Historic Park. It was deeded to the Federal Government in 1957 by the Dominion Atlantic Railway and the Société Nationale de L'Assomption and stands in testimony to one of the most extraordinary chapters of Canada's history.

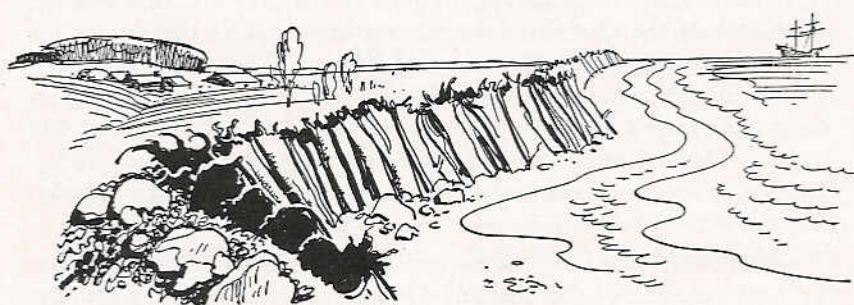
THE ACADIANS

Acadia was the name given to those parts of the Colony of New France that are today the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and parts of the Province of Quebec and the State of Maine. Its boundaries were never defined to satisfy the legal requirements of either the English or the French and provided an issue for strife between the two powers.

The first significant French settlement in Acadia was Port Royal founded in 1605. It was abandoned in 1607 and re-established three years later only to be destroyed by an English attack in 1613. Later Port Royal was the site of a small and short-lived Scottish colony. In 1632 Port Royal and Acadia were returned to the French but in 1654 passed once more into the hands of the English. The colony was again restored to France in 1667 but during the next 40 years it was besieged five times and permanently came under British control in 1710.

Although a few French settlers had remained in Acadia after the destruction of Port Royal in 1613, they led a precarious existence in the woods as trappers and *coureurs de bois*. The Acadians are mainly descendants of French colonists brought to Nova Scotia between 1632 and 1651 from Saintonge, Poitou, and Aunis (the district around the famous port of La Rochelle) in the west of France.

Until 1671, most of the French settlers tilled the land in the district around Port Royal. But the best agricultural land around the French base was soon entirely occupied by these settlers and discharged soldiers. The growing population spread into other parts now known as Nova Scotia



followed their agricultural pursuits; in the winter, they cut wood for timber, fuel, or fencing, trapped and hunted. The women carded, spun, and wove wool, flax, and hemp. As often as circumstances allowed, they gathered enthusiastically in each other's home for singing, dancing and story-telling. Entirely content with their simple life, they were ready always to exchange a joke or the latest gossip with a friend or offer kindness and hospitality to a passing stranger.

The Acadians lived together in equality, handling communal controversies through arbitration of the elders or the priest. To their traditional faith they clung tenaciously and were proud of the two churches at Grand Pré and Canard (the Acadian settlement near what is now the town of Wolfville).

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE DEPORTATION

The Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 gave the entire French colony of Acadia, with the exception of what is now Cape Breton Island, to Great Britain. The terms of the treaty gave the Acadians liberty to move with their belongings to any place they wished within a year, or remain in Acadia as British subjects enjoying "the free exercise of their religion according to the usage of the Church of Rome as far as the laws of Great Britain do allow the same."

The Acadians decided to leave rather than take an oath of fidelity to Queen Anne of Great Britain but did not do so because of a number of complicating factors. In the summer of 1713 they inspected the French settlement on Cape Breton Island and found it would be most impractical for them to leave their prosperous Minas farms for the inferior soil and uncleared land of Cape Breton. However, they stated they would leave Acadia at any personal sacrifice if forced to take the oath of loyalty to the British or if subjected to religious or economic persecution.

Meanwhile, the Military Governor realized the embarrassing implications of the intended departure of the Acadians. In all Nova Scotia, the only population was the Acadians and the pro-French Indians. If the Acadians left, they would take with them the Indians and the livestock from the farms. Acadia would be stripped of its agricultural industry, its inhabitants, and its Indians who engaged in considerable trade with the British. Economic ruin faced the colony, and its military garrison could be maintained only by expensive provisioning from Great Britain or New England or by reducing its requirements to the most primitive level. The Governor saw, too, that the French colony of Île Royale on Cape Breton Island would be so strengthened by the influx of Acadians that it would become a great threat to the military and economic survival of the English colony.

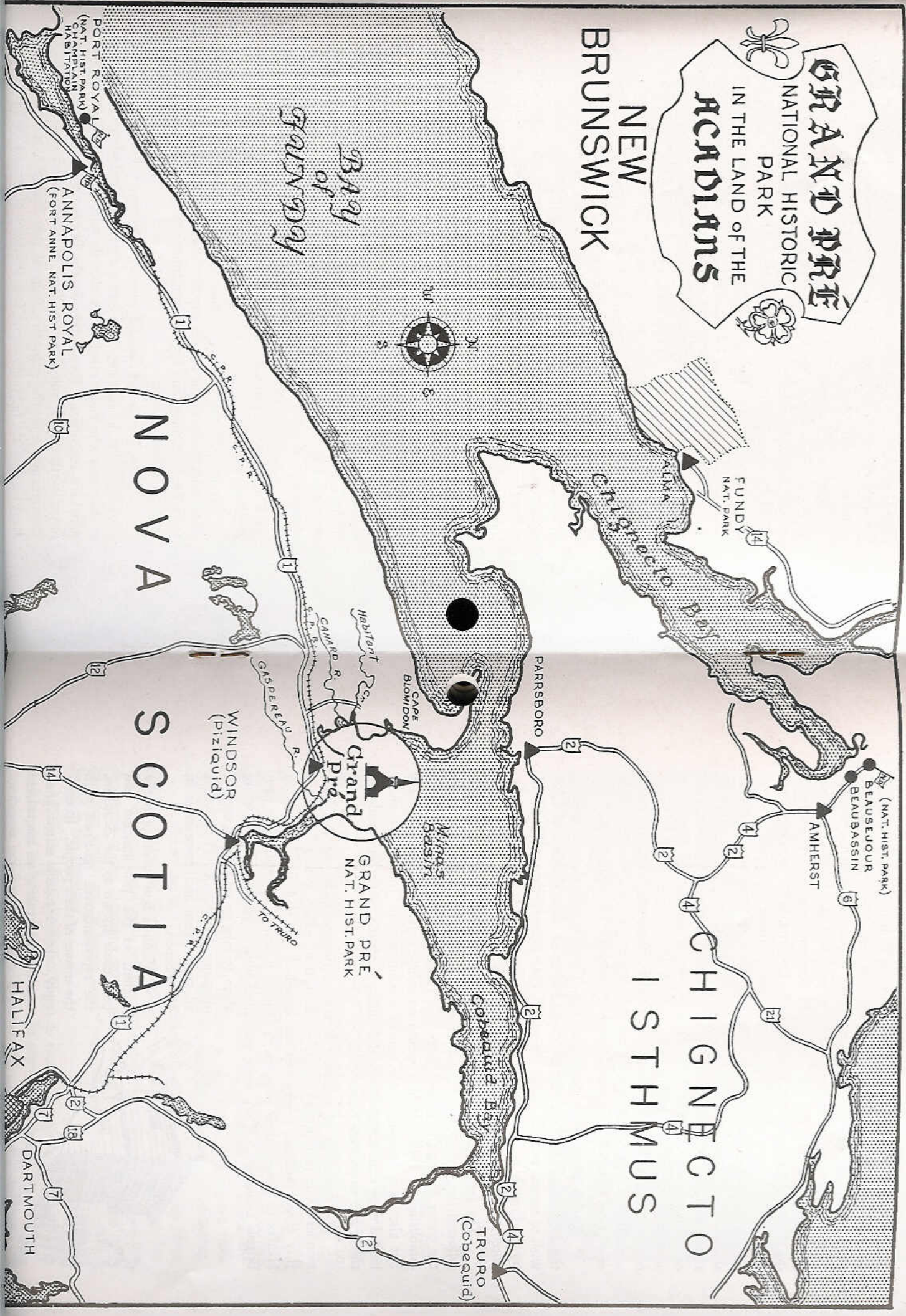
The position was more disconcerting as a result of Queen Anne's instructions that the Governor of Nova Scotia should allow the Acadians to sell their lands and belongings if they chose to move. This concession made it impossible to hope that new settlement would replace the Acadians.

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PARK
IN THE LAND OF THE
ACADIANS

NEW
BRUNSWICK

CHIGNICTO
ISTHMUS

NOVA
SCOTIA



A truly remarkable engagement of the war was the Battle of Grand Pré on February 10, 1747. Five hundred New England soldiers under the command of Col. Arthur Noble were quartered at Grand Pré. Although the Acadians had warned him of the possibility of an attack by the French, Col. Noble believed the severe wintry weather would make such an eventuality impossible. He did not include the determination and endurance of the French in his estimate of the situation. On January 21, 240 Quebecers and 20 Indians set out from Beaubassin on the Chignecto Peninsula. Moving on snowshoes and dragging their supplies with them on improvised sleighs, they struggled through trackless wilderness to make a surprise attack under the cover of night and a driving snowstorm. After 36 hours of strenuous fighting, the New England troops surrendered and were allowed to withdraw to Annapolis. At least five English officers and between 60 and 70 soldiers were killed and between seven and 10 French and Indians. A National Historic Monument, a few hundred yards south from Grand Pré National Historic Park marks this engagement.

War in Nova Scotia made the English review their policies toward the Acadians. Although the Acadians had given clear evidence of their wish to remain neutral during the war of 1744-48, they were still regarded by the English as aliens sympathetic to the French cause who presented a potential threat to the security of Nova Scotia.

The fate of the Acadians was finally decided by the events that followed the restoration of the Fortress of Louisbourg to the French by the treaty ending the 1744-48 war. To balance Louisbourg, Halifax was established in 1749. Halifax would serve not only as a British fortress but also as a beach-head for British settlement. In June, 1749, ships landed more than 2,500 settlers at Halifax, the first positive step made by the British to colonize Nova Scotia.

The foundings of a strong British settlement made the Acadians wonder what their future status in the British colony would be and in July three Acadian representatives travelled the trail from Minas to Halifax to present their respects to Colonel Edward Cornwallis, the new British Governor. They were presented with a proclamation ordering

them to take an unqualified oath of allegiance by October 15 or forfeit all their rights and possessions in Nova Scotia.

Within a few weeks after the content of the proclamation had been made known to the Acadians, the representatives returned with the answer of their people. In their reply, the Acadians stated their opposition to taking an unqualified oath because of the risk of vengeance by the Indians. They cited the oath





they had given in 1729 and 1730 to Governor Philipps and affirmed that if Governor Cornwallis offered the same oath, they would accept it. Unless the oath exempted them from bearing arms against the French and the Indians, they would leave Nova Scotia. Their uncompromising stand led Cornwallis to avoid bringing the issue of the oath to a head and a final decision was again postponed.

While the British were occupied with the settlement of Halifax and the Acadians were alarmed by the proclamation of Governor Cornwallis, the French moved into a commanding position on the Isthmus of Chignecto at the junction of the present Nova Scotia and New Brunswick borders. This territory was still populated by the Acadians although the question of its possession by France or Britain was unsettled. The French began building Fort Beauséjour and encouraged the Acadians to join them on the isthmus. To provide some control over the Acadians and check the raiding parties of French and Indians, a blockhouse was moved from Annapolis to Minas and placed within a triangular enclosure of picketing.

In the spring of 1750, the Acadians asked permission to leave Nova Scotia. Governor Cornwallis, realizing that the Acadians' decision had been influenced by French pressure and fearing the strategic advantage the departure of the Acadians would give the French, refused saying that passports could not be issued until "peace and tranquillity are re-established in the Province".

Early in 1750, the British began to establish control over their territory on the Isthmus of Chignecto. In advance of British occupation of Beaubassin, an Acadian village of about 100 buildings was destroyed by Micmac Indians commanded by Abbé Le Loutre, a French missionary to

the Micmacs living in the French territory of the isthmus. The village's inhabitants fled for shelter to Fort Beauséjour. The British troops, confronted with a "scorched earth" and overwhelming French superiority, withdrew until September when they established Fort Lawrence on the site of the burned village of Beaubassin.

The Acadians dwelt peacefully in Nova Scotia for the next four years. They were not asked for an unrestricted oath of allegiance and began to feel more secure. They turned to their normal agricultural pursuits with vigor and enthusiasm, providing enough grain and meat for the entire colony.

On June 2, 1755, a force of 2,000 New England volunteers laid siege to Fort Beauséjour. While the French stronghold and its small and unprepared garrison awaited the attack, a force of British soldiers raided Grand Pré and seized a quantity of arms and ammunition which they found in the homes of the villagers. A few days later, all the Acadians in Nova Scotia were ordered to surrender their firearms, used for hunting and personal protection, or face the penalty of being treated as rebels. In compliance, the Acadians gave their guns and pistols to the authorities as ordered.

Later they protested the order to Governor Lawrence. In their petition they argued that their guns were necessary to defend their families and their livestock from marauding animals and that their disarmed state was "but a feeble guarantee of our fidelity". Governor Lawrence made no reply until July 3. By that time, the French garrison at Fort Beauséjour had capitulated and had been transported to the French stronghold of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island.

In the large scale military operations for the control of the Atlantic seaboard the Acadians' attitude was a crucial factor. If ties of blood were stronger than neutrality, the British position might become militarily untenable. It was at this junction that the Acadians sent representatives to Halifax. They were informed by the Governor that if they wished to show their obedience to the British, they must immediately take the oath of allegiance. They answered that they could not take the oath without consulting their people but were asked to give their oath within twenty-

four hours. The next day, they refused and were therefore imprisoned. After orders were sent to the Acadians to choose between taking the oath and being removed from Nova Scotia, a hundred Acadian delegates replied to Governor Lawrence on July 25 that they would take no oath of loyalty which did not exempt them from bearing arms. This second group of delegates was arrested and confined. A week later, Governor



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Lawrence ordered his military commanders at Beauséjour, Piziquid and Annapolis, to prepare for the deportation of the Acadian population of Nova Scotia.

LE GRAND DÉRANGEMENT (THE GREAT UPHEAVAL)

Col. John Winslow received his orders while at Fort Beauséjour. With 300 men, he embarked for Grand Pré and occupied the village on August 15. He selected the church at Grand Pré as his headquarters after ordering the Acadians to remove all sacred objects. Around the churchyard, the New England soldiers pitched their tents while their commander chose as his billet the priest's house, vacant since August 4 when the priest had been imprisoned.

Until September 2, in Grand Pré, as in the other Acadian centres of population, there was a restless quiet. The soldiers moved freely about the villages, the Acadians supplied rations to the quartermasters, but the grain stood unharvested in the fields and in the houses the people brooded sadly over the portent of the occupation of their beloved church, the arrest of their priest, and the imprisonment of their delegates at Halifax. When all men and all boys of ten and over were ordered on September 2 to gather at the Grand Pré church in three days, the troubled people could agree to only one course of action: full obedience to the order.

The fate of the Acadians was in the hands of the New England colonel of militia who sat at a table in the church at Grand Pré on the afternoon of September 5. Stunned, the 418 Acadian men and boys heard the orders of Governor Lawrence read by Col. Winslow:

"GENTLEMEN; I have received from his Excellency, Governor Lawrence, the King's Commission which I have in my hand, and by whose orders you are Conveyed together, to Manifest to you His Majesty's final resolution to the French inhabitants of this, his Province of Nova Scotia, who for almost half a century have had more Indulgence Granted them than any of his Subjects in any part of his Dominions. What use you have made of them you yourself Best Know.

"The Part of Duty I am now upon is what thoh Necessary is Very Disagreeable to my natural make and Temper, as I know it Must be Grievous to you who are of the Same Specia.

"But it is not my business to animadvert, but to obey Such orders as I receive, and therefore without Hesitation Shall Deliver you his Majesty's orders and Instructions, Vist.:

"That your Lands & Tennements, Cattle of all Kinds and Live Stock of all Sorts are Forfeited to the Crown with all other your Effects Saving your money and Household Goods, and you your Selves to be removed from this his Province.

"Thus it is Preremptorily his Majesty's orders That the whole French inhabitants of these Districts be removed, and I am Throh his Majesty's Goodness Directed to allow you Liberty to Carry your money and Household Goods as Many as you Can without Discommoding the Vessels you Go in. I shall do Every thing in my Power that all Those Goods be Secured to you and that you are Not Molested in Carrying of them of, and also that Whole Family Shall go in the Same Vessel, and make this remove, which I am Sensable must give you a great Deal of Trouble, as Easy as his Majesty's Service will

admit, and hope that in what Ever part of the world you may Fall you may be faithful Subjects, a Peasable and happy People.

"I Must also Inform you That it is his Majesty's Pleasure that you remain in Security under the Inspection and Direction of the Troops that I have the Honr. to Command."

"They were greatly struck," states Col. Winslow in his Journal, "though I believe they did not imagine that they were actually to be removed."

The deportation plan was put into action at the other Acadian centres but there was not the same submissiveness at all of them. In the villages of Chignecto, the Acadians generally ignored orders and fled to the woods. In what is now New Brunswick, a British party burned the village of Chipody and set the village of Petitcodiac on fire. While they were destroying Petitcodiac, the Acadians, angered at the destruction of their beloved church, attacked and killed and wounded 29 soldiers. From Cobequid (Truro), many of the Acadians fled to Île St-Jean, now Prince Edward Island. At Piziquid and Annapolis, however, there was no resistance.

The transport ships destined to carry the Grand Pré Acadians into exile arrived slowly. By September 7, there were five ships in Minas Basin, less than half the number needed. Col. Winslow placed 250 of the prisoners aboard these ships, selecting the young men. The separation of the men from their fathers and brothers caused anguish, and it was a sorrowing procession that was escorted by soldiers with fixed bayonets along the mile-and-a-half trail to the landing place on the Gaspereau River. When the prisoners had been embarked, the soldiers brought ninety married men to the waiting transports. These men



were kept aboard the ships until the final embarkation in October but were allowed daily visits by their relatives.

The final embarkation of the Acadians of Minas began on October 8. "Began to embark the inhabitants," Col. Winslow reported, "who went off solentarily and unwillingly, the women in great distress carrying off their children in their arms: others carrying their decrepit parents in their carts, with all their goods, moving in great confusion, and appeared a scene of woe and distress."

For twenty-nine days, the Acadians boarded the transports after making the tragic trek to the landing place on the Gaspereau. Finally, on October 27, a fleet of fourteen vessels set sail, carrying as many Acadians as could be crowded below decks. From the assembly points at



Annapolis Royal, Beauséjour, and Cobequid Bay, earlier sailings carried off the Acadians of other districts.

At least 6,500 Acadians were transported into exile in 1755. Behind them, they left their buildings, most of which had been set afire by the soldiers, their livestock, their crops, and many of their possessions. In 1758, after Louisbourg was captured, the Acadians who had taken refuge on Prince Edward Island were removed. The deportations continued for more than eight years and involved 14,000 Acadians. By 1763 when Britain and France signed a treaty of peace, there were only 2,000 Acadians left in New France.



The sudden uprooting of a population from a land in which they had lived for a century, the loss of lands and homes, and transportation to distant countries were severe blows, but they could have been borne had not the misery of the Acadians been compounded by the separation of families and their dispersal to countries whose people were both unprepared and unwilling to receive them.

Of all the American colonies, only Connecticut had been informed of the Acadians' arrival and made any preparations. Virginia refused to accept 1,500 who were to be landed there and the Acadians were transported to England. Boston received 2,000, New York 200, and Connecticut 300, and the remainder were distributed throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland, North and South Carolina, and Georgia. Little hospitality was accorded the penniless, bewildered "French Neutrals" who spoke an unfamiliar tongue and observed the rites of an unpopular religion. At most places they met with distrust and contempt.

Four ships never reached their destinations. One was sunk in a storm, and two others driven by the winds to San Domingo, where the Acadians were left. The fourth ship was captured by Acadians and sailed to the St. John River in New Brunswick. There the Acadians met others of their race who had escaped deportation.

The Acadians of Cape Breton Island and Prince Edward Island were deported after Louisbourg was captured by the British in 1758. They were transported to France and England. After the peace of 1763, all the Acadians in England moved to France and, except for 400 who settled at Belle-Isle-en-Mer in Brittany and established an Acadian colony that still exists, these people were scattered throughout the country. Later, some of these Acadians moved to San Domingo, French Guinea, the Leeward Islands, and the Falkland Isles.

Only in the French colony of Louisiana did the Acadians form a permanent and prosperous settlement. Reinforced by other Acadians from San Domingo, Guinea, New England, and France, the Acadian colony on the Mississippi grew and is still a distinct element of the State of Louisiana. Their descendants of the French Neutrals called "Cajuns" (a corruption of "Acadians"), now total more than 55,000.

Dispersal throughout the world did not spell the end of the Acadian population in Canada. Indeed, some of them escaped deportation by fleeing to the woods in Canada and remaining hidden for several years. After England and France ended their war in 1763, about 2,000 Acadians returned to Nova Scotia from the United States. Small groups followed in

later years. Accurate figures on the numbers of Acadians who settled in various parts of Canada are not available for study but it is possible that as many as 4,000 Acadians and their descendants were living in the Maritime Provinces, Gaspé, the Magdalen Islands, Newfoundland, and the French Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon by 1770, and about 3,500 in the Province of Quebec. Descendants of the Acadians live today in Digby and Yarmouth Counties of Nova Scotia, at Chezzetcook near Halifax, and in Cape Breton Island, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec. Despite all their travails, the Acadians remain a distinct, homogeneous group that retains many of the customs of the people of Minas, Beaubassin, Annapolis, Cobequid, and Piziquid.

Note:—Other National Historic Parks related to the Acadian history are Port Royal and Fort Anne, both in the Annapolis Royal area, Fort Beauséjour about midway between Sackville, New Brunswick, and Amherst, Nova Scotia, and the Fortress of Louisbourg, near Sydney on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia.