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## Origins of a Missing Church Bell

By Earle Lockerby

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Earle LOCKERBY

### INTRODUCTION

*We have lately also purchased a bell from a vessel wrecked upon the coast - its weight is 65 lbs and if we had ordered it directly from England we should have had to pay at the very least 10£ sterling.*<sup>1</sup>

So wrote the Rev. H.B. Swabey in 1858 from Port Hill, Prince Edward Island in preparing his annual report to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, a missionary arm of the Church of England. The bell to which Rev. Swabey referred, having a diameter of about 34 cm, was procured for the newly completed St. John's Anglican church at Foxley River, Lot 11, PEI, the forerunner of the currently existing St. John's Church building in that community.<sup>2</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, at the National Maritime Museum in London, resides a larger ship's bell, recovered from a Spanish warship, *San Josef*. The inscription on this 45 cm diameter bell, "Jesus Maria Joseph Ano de 1792," clearly has religious connotations.<sup>3</sup> Did this bell ever hang in a church in Spain or elsewhere? Probably not, since the ship was captured by the British in 1797, only five years after the bell was founded. There are many documented cases in which church bells have come from ships and some in which ship's bells have come from churches.

1. Rev. H.B. Swabey to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 2 January, 1858, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Series C, Box 1/11, Nova Scotia 1848-1858, National Archives of Canada, (NAC), MG 17, B1, microfilm reel No. A-183.

2. J. Clinton Morrison, Jr., *Along the North Shore* (St. Eleanors, PEI, 1984), p. 182-7.

3. Personal communication, Barbara Tomlinson, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England, 8 March, 2000. The museum acquisition number for this bell is EQA0482.

There are also cases in which church bells change hands as a result of war, ending up in the churches of the victors.<sup>4</sup>

Against this backdrop two church bells in PEI and particularly noteworthy. One, which may be termed the St. Peters Harbour bell, presently hangs in the Roman Catholic church at Rollo Bay and is known to date back to the French regime on PEI, or Île-Saint-Jean, as the Island was called during the French regime. The other, which belongs to Princetown United Church at Malpeque and bears a Latin inscription dedicated to St. John the Baptist, has a more obscure origin. The St. Peters Harbour bell is undoubtedly a very important artifact of Acadian life on Île-Saint-Jean - a significant object through which Island Acadians can collectively connect to their ancestors who lived on the Island during the French regime which ended in 1758. Some Islanders, not all of them Acadians, have ascribed an Acadian pedigree to the Princetown bell. If such ascriptions were to accord with historical reality, then the Princetown bell, being in its original cast form, would be of even greater importance to the Acadian community than the St. Peters Harbour bell. Some appreciation of the level of public interest which exists in the Princetown bell, particularly on the Island, may be gained from the fact that during the last dozen years this bell has been the subject of three articles in two national magazines, 40 editorials, news items or feature articles in Island newspapers and even seven newspaper cartoons.<sup>5</sup> It has also been the subject for interviews and news reports on both radio and television.

4. After the French fortress of Louisbourg was captured in 1745 by New England soldiers, a bell from the fortress chapel was taken to Portsmouth, NH where it continues to serve St. John's Episcopalian Church. In a Lutheran church in Lunenburg, NS may be found a bell which was taken from Louisbourg after its fall to the British in 1758. A bell now in the Parks Canada interpretation center at Fort Beauséjour once served in an Acadian church near the fort. Some years after the fort was captured by the British in 1755, the bell was put to use in St. Mark's Anglican Church at nearby Mount Whatley. See Clarence-J. d'Entremont, "Les cloches acadiennes," *La Société historique acadienne, Les Cahiers*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1968, p. 25-32. See also Pacifique de Valigny, *Chroniques des plus anciennes églises de l'Acadie*, Montréal, 1944, p. 91-3; John Clarence Webster, *The Forts of Chignecto* (Shediac, NB, 1930), p. 82-3.

5. The articles appearing in national magazines may be found in *MacLeans*, Vol. 102, No. 49, 4 December 1989, p. 10; *The United Church Observer*, New Series, Vol. 53, No. 8, February 1990, p. 10-11, and Vol. 59, No. 5, November 1995, p. 14.

For some generations claims have been made by some members of the Princetown Congregation that their bell was recovered directly from a shipwreck or was found on the shifting sands of the shore in the vicinity of Malpeque, having originated from a shipwreck, a provenance somewhat similar to that of the bell of St. John's Anglican Church at Foxley River, some 30 km to the west.<sup>6</sup> Others claim a different origin for the Princetown bell. They believe it possible that prior to the deportation of Acadians from Île-Saint-Jean in 1758, this bell was in use at an Acadian church in the settlement of Malpec (parish of Ste-Famille), located in the region of the present Port Hill, PEI.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there are some Islanders who have claimed unequivocally that the bell has such an Acadian origin

It is the Princetown bell, and the traditions or mythologies which have enveloped it, which are the principal subject of this paper. However, new exploring this subject, new information relating to the St. Peters Harbour bell and its probable history is also presented. In addition to providing factual information about both bells, the paper probes the two claimed origins of the Princetown bell. The theory of an Acadian provenance is the much more specific of the two - it relates to a narrow time frame for arrival of the bell in PEI (1753-1758) and definitive events concerning the establishment of a parish and church at Malpec, the process whereby the Acadian settlers there might have acquired a church bell, and their subsequent abandonment of the settlement in 1758. The theory of a shipwreck provenance is, on the other hand, much more generalized and vague, eg., broad latitude exists as to when and where the shipwreck may have occurred and information is lacking as to nationality of the ship. Consequently, with respect to enquiring into these competing claims, there is considerably more scope for addressing the theory of an Acadian origin.

6. Rev. J.C. Crowdis, *The Prince Town United Church* (Halifax, 1958), p. 19; Jean MacFayden, *For the Sake of the Record* (Summerside, c. 1980), p. 78.

7. The community of Malpeque is on the eastern shore of Malpeque Bay, while Malpec was located on the western side. The word Malpeque obviously comes from Malpec.

## THE PRINCETOWN CONGREGATION AND ITS ACQUISITION AND LOSS OF A BELL

Malpeque in Prince County is a rural community whose boundaries correspond roughly to those of Princetown Royalty, designated in 1765 by surveyor Samuel Holland as the principal town for Prince County. Though Princetown assumed only briefly the role envisaged by Holland, the term "Princetown" is still used locally to refer to the western extremity of the community that is Malpeque. More importantly in the context of this paper, the term Princetown survives in the name of Princetown United Church and the Princetown Congregation.

British settlers first came to the Princetown area in 1770. The earliest settlers were mostly Presbyterian and were from the southern part of the Kintyre peninsula in Argyleshire, Scotland.<sup>8</sup> Not only was Princetown, or Malpeque, one of the first settlements under the British regime in PEI, the Princetown Congregation was one of the earlier congregations, Presbyterian or otherwise, formed on the Island outside of Charlottetown and is said to have been formed in 1791.<sup>9</sup> Until the congregation had its first settled minister, the Rev. John Keir in 1808, a Protestant clergyman, not always a Presbyterian, made occasional visits to Princetown. The earliest such visit was by the Rev. John Eagleson, an Anglican minister based at Cumberland, NS, who conducted a number of baptisms at Princetown in 1773.<sup>10</sup> The first church of the congregation is said to have been a log structure built around 1794. This church was replaced about 1810, and in 1870 the construction of the present Princetown United Church, the third in the congregation, was completed.<sup>11</sup>

It is not known when the Princetown Congregation acquired a bell for their church. Extant church records show that in June 1840 payment was

8. A.B. Warburton, *A History of Prince Edward Island* (Saint John, 1923), p. 152-3. See also W.E. Lockerby, ed., *Pathways to the Present* (Hamilton, PEI, 1989), p. 10-15.

9. Crowdis, *Prince Town United Church*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

10. C.F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.* (London, 1901), p. 114. See also Eagleson to Hind, 27 December 1773, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Series B, Box 25, Nova Scotia 1771-1779, p. 538-42.

11. Crowdis, *Prince Town United Church*, *op. cit.*, p. 19; see also Malpeque Historical Society, *Malpeque and its People* (c. 1982), p. 52-6.

made to one Neil McKay for "taking down Church Bell."<sup>12</sup> There is no indication why this bell was taken down or whether and when it might have been rehung. It is quite possible that the bell which was serving the congregation in early 1840 is in fact the same bell which has hung in the steeple of the existing Princetown United Church until recent times.

Within recent decades, representatives of the Acadian community on PEI have sought to acquire the bell as an artifact of the Ste-Famille parish church for display at the Acadian Museum at Miscouche, PEI.<sup>13</sup> The most recent approach was made by the Acadian Historical Society of PEI to the Board of Trustees of Princetown United Church in 1980.<sup>14</sup> As the Society's request was viewed by the Board as based on conjecture and assumptions in regard to a purported Acadian origin of the bell, the Board responded by stating that it could not entertain the Society's request in the absence of conclusive and documented evidence to support the claim of an Acadian origin. No further communication was received from the Society.<sup>15</sup>

In October 1989 Princetown United Church was forcibly entered and its bell was stolen. Once the theft was discovered by church officials and local media soon after had publicized the theft, the RCMP recovered the bell and restored it to representatives of Princetown United Church who rehung it in

12. Prince Town Church, Account Book Beginning 1825, p. 79.

13. J.-Henri Blanchard to Rev. George Russell (President of the Maritime Conference of the United Church), 12 August, 1966, Prince Edward Island Archives and Records Office (PARO), Accession No. 2330, C-1.

14. J. Edmond Arsenault (President of the Société historique acadienne de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard) to Clair Crozier (addressed in the letter as Chief of the Board of Stewards, Princetown United Church, but in reality Chairman of the Board of Trustees), 24 December, 1980. Virtually all of this communication has been printed in *La Voix Acadienne*, Summerside, 22 April 1981, p. 8.

15. The Society subsequently sought the assistance of the Centre d'études acadiennes (CEA) at the Université de Moncton in conducting historical research which would support the Acadian claim. It would appear that either the research was not conducted or it failed to turn up any credible supporting evidence. See J.-Edmond Arsenault to Ronald LeBlanc, 13 November, 1981, CEA, 733 Fonds Société historique acadienne de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard. See also J.-Edmond Arsenault, letter to the editor, *La Voix Acadienne*, Summerside, 21 October, 1981, p. 4.

the church steeple.<sup>16</sup> Approximately one year later there was a second incident of break and enter at the church and again the bell was stolen. Its whereabouts remain generally unknown.

#### PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRINCETOWN BELL

The Princetown bell is rather small, having a diameter of 42 cm at the mouth and a height of 31 cm from the mouth to the top of the crown. Made of bronze, the bell has an argent and two canons atop the crown.<sup>17</sup> These are cast into the crown and serve as a structure from which to suspend the bell. The clapper, which is of iron, terminates at its upper end in a loop which passes through another metal loop, the latter loop having been cast into the underneath side of the crown. A bronze bell of the above dimensions typically weighs approximately 45 kg.<sup>18</sup>

A distinguishing feature is a Latin inscription in block letters (of a style known as antiqua capitalis) and in two bands reads as follows: INTERNATOS MVLLIERVMNON SVREXIT MAIOR IOANNES BAPTISTA. A floral mark serves as a stop in each band between the words NON and INTER in the upper band and between BAPTISTA and SVREXIT in the lower. The inscription translates as "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." Similar Biblical scripture may be found in Luke 7:28 and Matthew 11:11.

A comparison of the physical features of the Princetown bell and of bells known to have been used at Louisbourg, in Acadia and in other places in French North America is not particularly helpful in terms researching the origin of the Princetown bell. A number of these bells have been

16. According to a newspaper report at the time, the bell had been deposited upon the steps of the Acadian Museum at Miscouche by persons unknown and museum staff had taken it inside for "safekeeping." When it became known some weeks later that a police investigation was underway, the RCMP were informed of the bell's whereabouts. See *The Journal-Pioneer*, Summerside, 22 November 1989, p. 1.

17. The argent is the centrally located appendage at the top of the bell. On a very small bell the argent alone serves as the part used to suspend the bell. On larger bells there are one or more pairs of canons, or braces, which are attached to the argent. These provide reinforcement to the argent and form a part of the suspension assembly. The crown is the part of the bell from which the clapper is suspended.

18. Léonard Bouchard, *Le Québec et ses cloches* (Québec, 1990), p. 311.



The Princetown Bell (Source : coll. E. Lockerby)

described by Rev. Clarence-J. d'Entremont.<sup>19</sup> The sizes, profiles and ornamentation of the bells vary greatly, no two appearing to resemble each other particularly closely. Table 1 lists, along with the Princetown bell, most of the bells which are known to derive from the French regime in the Maritime Provinces and Maine, and for which a significant amount of knowledge exists concerning physical characteristics, including ornamentation and inscriptions.

Bells known to have been placed in the steeples of French churches in the Maritime Provinces and Maine during the French regime varied from 26 cm to over 120 cm in diameter at the mouth and weighed from 30 to more than 1000 kg. Only one of these bells shares with the Princetown bell the distinction of having an inscription in Latin. None resembles the Princetown bell in having Biblical scripture in its inscription. The Princetown bell bears little resemblance to the St. Peters Harbour bell, other than being of similar size.

#### SHIPS' BELLS AND THEIR USE IN CHURCHES

Ships have utilized bells for many centuries to mark time, call crew to prayer, indicate distress, warn of danger and for other communication. Hundreds of ships' bells dating from the age of sailing ships reside in maritime museums in many countries. Perhaps surprisingly, there appears to be little or no correlation between the size of a bell and the size of the vessel to which it belonged. Ships' bell diameters can be 15 cm, or less, but at the other end of the spectrum there are examples weighing up to one ton - equivalent to a diameter of about 1.2 m.<sup>20</sup> On average, ships' bells tend to be smaller than church bells, but there are many church bells which are smaller than many ships' bells. It has been held by some who argue an Acadian origin for the Princetown bell that it is too large to have come from a ship. This is simply untrue.

At the Tall Ships 2000 celebration in Halifax, NS in July 2000 there were three vessels which had bells larger than the Princetown bell. Through some research which really only "scratches the surface," the author has

19. Clarence-J. d'Entremont, "Les cloches acadiennes," *op. cit.*, p. 22-47.

20. Karl Weber, *The Ship's Bell* (New York, 1972), p. 2. For weight/diameter relationship see Bouchard, *Le Québec et ses cloches*, p. 310.

TABLE 1  
A SUMMARY OF BELLS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS: THE PRINCETOWN BELL  
IN RELATION TO BELLS WHICH HAVE SURVIVED FROM THE FRENCH REGIME

	Used in French Church/Mission	Latin in Inscription	French in Inscription	Biblical Scripture in Inscription	Religious Motif on Bell	Date on Bell	Name of Foundry on Bell	Name of Foundry Location on Bell	Fleur-de-lis on Bell	Floral Pattern on Bell	Royal Insignia on Bell	Name of Bell Given on Bell
Princetown Bell	-	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
St. Peters Harbour Bell 1723	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
Medium-Sized Bell from Louisbourg Chapel 1735	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Small Bell from Louisbourg Chapel 1735	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Ingonish Bell 1729	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
Fort Beauséjour Bell 1734	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Maine Bell Pre-1721	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Beauport Bell 1666	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
Meductic Bell*	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N

\* Severely damaged by fire in 1902; no longer known to exist.

become aware of more than 25 ships' bells, mostly in museums, which are larger than the Princetown bell, the largest having a diameter of 80 cm. In Atlantic Canada examples of ships' bells which are as large as, or larger than, the Princetown bell may be found at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic at Halifax (a 44 cm diameter bell from the *Niobe*) and at a museum on Grand Manan Island, NB (41 cm diameter from the *Warwick*). Another ship's bell, of French origin, at the former museum was recovered in 1855 from a shipwreck which occurred in 1797, and was used in a local church for some years.

History is replete with examples of ships' bells later being used in churches - a phenomenon not uncommon near the seacoast in many parts of the world.<sup>21</sup> Morris has written of some 18 ships' bells converted to church use, mostly in England and Scotland, including bells from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one of which hangs in Canterbury Cathedral.<sup>22</sup> In the Scilly Isles off the southeast tip of Cornwall in England there were in 1878 five churches. No less than four of these had bells recovered from shipwrecks. Two of these dated from the 1740s and were just slightly smaller than the Princetown bell.<sup>23</sup>

A temple in Japan boasts a bell of European origin dating from 1517. It was a ship's bell and bears inscriptions of a religious nature, further evidence that a religious inscription may not necessarily denote that the bell was originally used in a church.<sup>24</sup> A bell inscribed "Ceres 1729" (name of ship and year the bell was cast) was washed onto a beach in Cornwall in 1929.<sup>25</sup> This provides evidence that a ship's bell can be washed ashore many years after the ship was wrecked. In 1757 a bell, taken from a British vessel seized by French forces at Louisbourg, was put to use in a church there after being blessed by a priest.<sup>26</sup> This bell was about the same size as the Princetown bell.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

22. Ernest Morris, *Bells of All Nations* (London, 1951), p. 73-4; Ernest Morris, *Tintabula* (London, 1959), p. 101.

23. Edwin Hadlow W. Dunkin, *Church Bells of Cornwall: Their Archaeological and Present Condition* (London and Derby, 1878), p. 22-3.

24. Weber, *The Ship's Bell*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

25. Morris, *Bells of All Nations*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

26. Archives Nationales, Paris, Archives des Colonies (AC), Série G<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 410, Parish of Louisbourg, 2<sup>nd</sup> Register, p. 26 (entry dated 12 September, 1757).

### POSSIBILITIES THAT THE PRINCETOWN BELL WAS RECOVERED FROM A SHIPWRECK OR SHORE

Malpeque is on the Gulf of St. Lawrence which has been the resort of European traders, fishermen and hunters of marine mammals since the sixteenth century. For close to four centuries warships and merchant ships have passed through the Gulf on their way to the St. Lawrence River. One result of this marine activity is literally thousands of shipwrecks in the Gulf and upon its shores. A single storm, the Yankee Gale of August, 1851, resulted in the wreckage of more than 120 American schooners on the north shore of PEI.<sup>27</sup> The number of vessels lost prior to 1840 in the Gulf would no doubt number in the hundreds.

The reference to St. John the Baptist in the inscription of the Princetown bell has been interpreted by some as an indication that it is from, or was intended for, a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist. This is not necessarily so. The inscription of the Princetown bell could, but does not necessarily, denote that it was from, or intended for, a vessel by the name of St. Jean Baptiste. During the French regime in North America, ships by this name were not uncommon. In 1670 France issued a permit to the ship *Saint Jean Baptiste* to sail to eastern Canadian waters.<sup>28</sup> The mighty armada of ships which sailed from France to Acadia in 1746 under the Duc d'Anville included a troop transport named *St. Jean Baptiste*.<sup>29</sup> A well-armed privateer by the name *St. Jean Baptiste* was captured by the British in 1742.<sup>30</sup> In 1748 a ship by this name arrived at Québec from France.<sup>31</sup> These examples represent but a few instances of recorded history involving

27. Ed MacDonald, "The Yankee Gale," *The Island Magazine*, No. 38, Fall/Winter 1995, p. 17-25. Though this storm postdates the Princetown Congregation's acquisition of a bell, it provides graphic evidence of the dangers to shipping in the Gulf during the age of sail.

28. "Passport for the Vessel, Le St. Jean Baptiste," 26 April, 1670, AC, Série B, Vol. 2, p. 67v. See also, E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York Procured in Holland, England and France by John Romelyn Broadhead*, Vol. X (Albany, 1855), p. 788.

29. James Pritchard, *Anatomy of a Naval Disaster* (Montréal and Kingston, 1995), p. 232.

30. Arthur G. Doughty, ed., *An Historical Journal of the Campaign in North America by Captain John Knox*, Vol. 1 (Toronto, 1914), p. 20.

31. O'Callaghan, *Documents...*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

French ships named *St. Jean Baptiste*.<sup>32</sup> However, the Princetown bell may well have been used on a vessel not bearing this name.

It is possible that the Princetown bell did not belong to a ship wrecked in the Gulf, but rather was being carried as cargo by such a ship. If so, it could have been destined to Québec where Saint Jean Baptiste is a popular name for churches and parishes, or to northern New Brunswick where there are several parishes by this name.<sup>33</sup> Alternatively, such cargo could have been intended for a vessel being built in Québec - in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries rigging and other items of equipment for such vessels were usually imported from Europe.

### THE CLAIM OF ACADIAN ORIGIN AND ITS BASIS

The first known record of the claim that the Princetown bell served the parish of Ste-Famille at Malpec during the French regime on Île-Saint-Jean is that of Justice A.E. Arsenault in the late 1940s.<sup>34</sup> Of the half dozen or so historians who prior to 1968 have produced significant works on the history of the Acadians of Prince Edward Island, including their pre-1758 religious history, only two, John MacMillan and J.-Henri Blanchard, have made any reference to such bells or made claims regarding them.<sup>35</sup> MacMillan, an Island-born priest and historian of the early Roman Catholic church on PEI, wrote only of the St. Peters Harbour bell and has in effect treated it as an

32. See also Archives départementales de la Gironde, Admirauté de Guyenne, Série 6B, Attributions judiciaires, Vol. 1361, 18 May, 1747, NAC, MG6, A17; John Dunmore, *French Explorers in the Pacific*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1965), p. 24-6; *Extracts from Journals Relating to the Visit to New Zealand of the French Ship St. Jean Baptiste in December 1769 Under Command of J.F.M. de Surville*, transcribed and translated by Isabel Ollivier and Cheryl Hingley (Wellington, 1982), p. 3.

33. St. John the Baptist is one of the most common names of churches in both French and English Canada. In Atlantic Canada and Québec there are some 35 parishes with this name.

34. See Carrie Ellen Holman, *Our Island Story* (Sackville, NB, 1949), p. 44. See also "Memoirs of the Hon. A.E. Arsenault," *The Guardian*, Charlottetown, 1 February, 1951, p. 4; also the book, A.E. Arsenault, *Memoirs of the Hon. A.E. Arsenault* (Charlottetown, 1951), p. 2-3.

35. John C. MacMillan, *The History of the Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island from 1835 Till 1891* (Québec, 1913), p. 295-6; J.-Henri Blanchard, *The Acadians of Prince Edward Island 1720-1964* (Charlottetown, 1964), p. 64-5.

isolated case. He did not see this bell as one of a set, nor did he write of any tradition concerning several church bells being sent by France to Île-Saint-Jean. Blanchard, on the other hand, not only claimed that such bells were sent, but claimed that the Princetown bell is one of them.

Rev. H.-R. Casgrain, who in the late nineteenth century produced a comprehensive French-language history of the Acadians of Île-Saint-Jean during the French regime, made no such claim.<sup>36</sup> Neither did Rev. J. Wilfred Pineau, another Island-born priest and historian of the early Roman Catholic Church on Prince Edward Island.<sup>37</sup> Most recently, Francis C. Blanchard wrote that bells "were promised" for new churches on Île-Saint-Jean of which the church at Malpec was one.<sup>38</sup> And Georges Arsenault wrote that four bells "were requested."<sup>39</sup>

Though several proponents of an Acadian origin of the Princetown bell have argued that tradition supports their claims, none of the above-mentioned authors who wrote prior to 1964 have referred to the existence of any such tradition.<sup>40</sup> Earlier than all of these works is a brief history of the various Roman Catholic parishes of Prince Edward Island compiled by Rev. A.E. Burke in 1887 or thereabouts. It includes anecdotes, traditions and folkloric information along with "harder" history. Burke writes of the discovery of the St. Peters Harbour bell, yet makes no mention of any other bells, requested, promised or otherwise.<sup>41</sup> This lapse would be surprising if indeed there had been on PEI in the nineteenth century any tradition or common knowledge concerning any Acadian church bell or bells other than the St. Peter's Harbour bell.

36. H.-R. Casgrain, *Une seconde Acadie* (Québec, 1894).

37. J. Wilfred Pineau, *Le clergé français dans l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard 1721-1821* (Québec, 1967).

38. Francis C. Blanchard, "The French and Acadian Period," in Michael F. Hennessey, ed., *The Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island 1720-1979* (Charlottetown, 1979), p. 10.

39. Georges Arsenault, *The Island Acadians 1720-1980* (Charlottetown, 1989), p. 47.

40. For recent references to a "tradition," see Francis C. Blanchard, editorial, *La Voix Acadienne*, Summerside, 29 November 1989, p. 4 and Reg Pendergast, letter to the editor, *The Journal-Pioneer*, Summerside, 4 April 1991, p. 4.

41. A.E. Burke, *Histories of Parishes of Prince Edward Island*, typed manuscript at the Robertson Library, University of Prince Edward Island, undated but c. 1887.

Having just visited the locale of the ancient Malpec and viewed the remains of the old church basement and of Acadian wells, school inspector and educator Jean-Octave Arsenault in 1893 was clearly moved by what he had seen. With pride he reminisced to the publisher of an Acadian newspaper about the vestiges of the church and cemetery at the former Malpec. He apparently made no mention of a still-existing church bell or of there being a bell at Malpeque or Princetown with connections to his ancestors.<sup>42</sup>

J.-Henri Blanchard produced two general histories of the Acadians of Prince Edward Island. The first was published in French in 1927 and made no mention of any bells.<sup>43</sup> The second, published in 1964, is essentially an English translation of his earlier work, with some updating and additional information. It is only in the latter history that Blanchard claimed that the Princetown bell was once used at Malpec in the church of La Sainte-Famille.<sup>44</sup> This could suggest that Blanchard may have been influenced by A.E. Arsenault, and that any Acadian "tradition" concerning the Princetown bell may have come about only during the last half century.

Whether a tradition concerning this bell has existed since the time of the deportation or not, and despite the fact that the claim linking the Princetown bell to the parish of Sainte-Famille is narrowly based within Island Acadian historiography, such claims, usually unequivocal, continue to be made.<sup>45</sup> An upsurge in the frequency of these claims occurred during the months following the thefts of the bell from Princetown United Church, and they

42. *L'Impartial*, Tignish, PEI, 17 August 1893, p. 2.

43. J.-Henri Blanchard, *Histoire des Acadiens de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard* (Moncton, 1972).

44. J.-Henri Blanchard, *The Acadians of Prince Edward Island*, *op. cit.*, p. 64-5.

45. See, for example, Antoinette DesRoches, *150 Miscouche, I.P.E. 1817-1967* (1967), p. 5; Jean H. Doiron, *Rustico, Father Georges-Antoine Belcourt, The Farmers' Bank* (1982), p. 36. A recent publication mentioning the Princetown bell does not make the outright claim that it has an Acadian origin but comes close. See David Le Gallant, *Histoire des Acadiens de Mont-Carmel* (Summerside, 1998), p. 4-5. The claim's emotional dimension is evident from an annual report of the president of the Acadian Historical Society of PEI which contains the following words: "Les vainqueurs n'ont rendu aux pionniers Acadiens revenus de l'exil, ni leur cheptel, ni leurs maisons, ni leurs anciennes terres; leur rendront-ils un jour la cloche baptisée de leur ancienne église?" See La Société historique acadienne de l'Î.-P.-É., *Rapport annuel du président*, septembre 1981, CEA, 733 Fonds Société historique acadienne de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.



were not confined just to letters to the editor and editorials in Island newspapers. They gained currency through publications and projects within elements of the community involved in the promotion of Island Acadian heritage.<sup>46</sup>

The claim which ascribes an Acadian origin to the Princetown bell is predicated upon two pieces of factual information:

1. A letter in 1753 from an official at Louisbourg to the minister in France responsible for colonial affairs, requesting that four bells be sent to Île-Saint-Jean.
2. The discovery in 1870 of a bell of French origin which was unearthed by a plough at St. Peters Harbour, PEI, near the known site of a church built during the French regime.

A third point that could be made (but has not) is that it is rather improbable that the Princetown bell was expressly made for the Princetown Congregation. Given the anti-Papist views of many Presbyterians in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Princetown Congregation is unlikely to have ordered a bell with a Latin inscription. In other words, the bell is likely to have been made for some other application - for another church or a ship - and to have been somehow acquired by the Princetown Congregation.

The letter requesting bells is from the financial commissary, Jacques Prevost, at Louisbourg and is dated 31 October, 1753. In translation a portion of it reads as follows:

*... the arrival of priests was an occasion for inexpressible joy; everyone vied with each other in devoting himself to the supply of necessary materials for the construction of the parish churches of Pointe-Prime, Rivière du Nord Est and Malpec; the church at St. Pierre had been erected before the last war and it was therefore a question of repairing it only. Mr. Girard serves the first parish, Mr. Cassiet the second, Mr. Dosque the third and Mr. Peronel the fourth. These churches are*

46. Noteworthy are an item in *Le Patrimoine*, No. 17, novembre 1990, p. 2, published by the Association du Musée acadien de l'Î.-P.-É. and a heritage display staged in 1990/1991 at the historic Farmers Bank at South Rustico, PEI. See also *La Société historique acadienne de l'Î.-P.-É., Rapport annuel du président, septembre 1981*, CEA, 733 Fonds Société historique acadienne de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.

*completed but the parishioners being too poor to contribute more, hope, my Lord, that you would generously assist them to decorate the churches and that you will not refuse them four bells that they earnestly request. I have left them off the General State of requests, but if you would arrange to ship them, I would take care of informing Mr. Normand in advance.*<sup>47</sup>

The reference to *four* bells in Prevost's letter is very clear, as is the date of the letter itself, and the letter has been available to Island researchers for more than a century.<sup>48</sup> Despite this, several authors, including two who have been in the vanguard of those ascribing an Acadian origin to the Princetown bell, have written in a garbled fashion on the subject. Justice A.E. Arsenault wrote of *three* bells presented by the King of France.<sup>49</sup> In the very same paragraph he also claimed that during the French regime some of Malpec's parishioners lived at present day Malpeque. This assertion is erroneous as indicated by information reported by the surveyor Samuel Holland.<sup>50</sup> Carrie Holman wrote "There is a bell in the belfry of the United Church in Malpeque which was sent out, Mr. Justice Arsenault says, with two others by King Louis XIV."<sup>51</sup> Louis XIV however died in 1715, five years prior to the beginning of organized settlement on Île-Saint-Jean. J.-Henri Blanchard wrote "In the year 1752 four bells were sent from France for the Acadian

47. Prevost to Minister, 31 October 1753, AC, Série C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 33, p. 284v. Rivière-du-Nord-Est is the current Hillsborough River - the church of this parish, known as Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est, was located at the present Scotchfort. The war referred to was the War of the Austrian Succession and involved Britain and France on opposite sides. It ended in 1748. Le Normand de Mézy was the intendant at Rochefort, France, and had previously held office at Louisbourg.

48. A typed transcript of the letter has existed in the archives of the Bishop of Charlottetown since 1877. More recently, copies of the letter in original or transcript form have existed at St. Dunstan's University (now University of Prince Edward Island), the Centre d'études acadiennes at the Université de Moncton, the Parks Canada archives at Fortress Louisbourg National Historic Site and the National Archives in Ottawa.

49. "Memoirs of the Hon. A.E. Arsenault, *The Guardian*, Charlottetown, 1 February 1951, p. 4; A.E. Arsenault, *Memoirs of the Hon. A.E. Arsenault* (Charlottetown, 1951), p. 2-3.

50. Holland reported 36 houses and 1100 cleared acres on the western side of Malpeque Bay (Lots 13 and 14). He reported that both Lot 18 and Princetown Royalty on the eastern side were devoid of houses or cleared land. See Samuel Holland, "Land Grants in Prince Edward Island," Orders in Council (Imperial), Part II, p. 13, 14 and 22, in *Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa, 1906).

51. Holman, *Our Island Story*, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

parishes of Isle Saint-Jean."<sup>52</sup> Aside from the leap of faith which has the four bells *being sent*, their dispatch, according to Blanchard, occurred some two years before it would have been possible for the authorities in France to have responded to a request late in 1753 from the other side of the Atlantic.

In order to look further into the claim, based as it is on a request for four bells and the discovery of one bell, it is first necessary to review briefly the development of Île-Saint-Jean and the establishment of its parishes and churches. Since the history of the French regime on Île-Saint-Jean has been well covered by others, only those aspects germane to an appreciation of the claim will be recounted here.<sup>53</sup>

#### DEVELOPMENT OF ÎLE-SAINT-JEAN AND ITS CHURCHES

The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 confirmed French sovereignty over both Île-Royale (Cape Breton) and Île-Saint-Jean and British sovereignty over Acadia. Not long thereafter France decided to establish a fortress at Louisbourg and to make Louisbourg the center of the French presence in what are now the Atlantic Provinces. Île-Saint-Jean became a dependency of Louisbourg. France soon came to view Île-Saint-Jean as having important potential for the fishery, for the provision of agricultural produce to Louisbourg, and as a colony to which mainland Acadians could be encouraged to immigrate.

The first organized settlement began in 1720 under the auspices of the Comte Saint-Pierre who had close connections to the court of King Louis XV. Port-LaJoye on the west side of Charlottetown harbour became both the administrative site and location of a small military garrison. Here a chapel dedicated to St. John the Evangelist was built and two Sulpician priests were attached to Port-LaJoye. The keeping of a register of baptisms,

52. J.-Henri Blanchard, *The Acadians of Prince Edward Island*, op. cit., p. 64-5.

53. The most comprehensive and scholarly treatment of the French regime on Île-Saint-Jean may be found in D.C. Harvey, *History of the French Regime in Prince Edward Island* (New Haven, CT, 1926). For a history of the church during this period see John C. MacMillan, *The Early History of the Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island (Québec, 1905)* and Pineau, *Le clergé français*, op. cit.. The latest general history of the Acadians of Prince Edward Island is that of Georges Arsenault, *The Island Acadians*.

marriages and deaths began in 1721 and continued to 1758, the year the French regime ended. This register has survived.<sup>54</sup>

Several French settlers had independently established themselves by 1719 at St. Peters Harbour (Havre-Saint-Pierre). Although Port-LaJoye was to remain the administrative and military center on the colony, settlement at Havre-Saint-Pierre began to expand with the arrival of the Comte Saint-Pierre's settlers. The fishery was the Comte's main preoccupation and Havre-Saint-Pierre was better suited for the fishery than Port-LaJoye. From the beginning, Havre-Saint-Pierre was the center of the fishery on Île-Saint-Jean. Since trade was based on the fishery, a few merchants settled at Havre-Saint-Pierre. Though the Comte abandoned his fishing enterprise on Île-Saint-Jean by 1724, Havre-Saint-Pierre continued to grow at a faster rate than Port-LaJoye. By 1734 the population of the former was more than four times that of the latter. Because of yearly troop rotation between Port-LaJoye and Louisbourg, Port-LaJoye was characterized by a somewhat more transitory nature in relation to population stability and social development that was the case at Havre-Saint-Pierre, the commercial center of Île-Saint-Jean.

Havre-Saint-Pierre clearly was established as a parish and had its own church from an early date. The register for the parish has survived.<sup>55</sup> The first entry in the register is dated 19 July 1724 and one entry of that year indicates the existence of a church building at that time. Entries in the register continued until 1758. Some of the time Havre-Saint-Pierre had its own priest and at other times it was served by the priest from Port-LaJoye. In its religious life, Havre-Saint-Pierre enjoyed more stability than Port-LaJoye. Four years is the longest period that any one priest served at Port-LaJoye - Félix Pain from 1727 to 1731. Mathieu-François Le Paige served at Havre-Saint-Pierre for seven years (1732-1739) and Gabriel Le Moign for five years (1739-1744). During the 12-year period of Le Paige and Le Moign, no less than nine different clergymen performed the rites of the church at Port-LaJoye.

54. Parish Register of Port-LaJoye, AC, G<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 411.

55. Registres des baptêmes, mariages et sépultures de la paroisse de Saint-Pierre-du-Nord, dans l'Île-Saint-Jean, Série GG, (Nos. 255-256), Archives départementales d'Ille et Vilaine, Rennes, France, (NAC, MG 6, B4, 1, Microfilm Reels F-817 and C-2970).

By 1728 three families had settled at Malpec, a settlement which grew fairly rapidly over the next three decades.<sup>56</sup> Historians have cited 1753 as the year when a parish was established at Malpec - it being the fall of that year when Bernard-Sylvestre Dosque arrived as resident priest and the year that a church is said to have been erected. However a *curé de Malpec* (the Récollet, Samuel Riou) is known to have been established there in 1745, if not earlier, and in that year made reference to the "parish of Malpec."<sup>57</sup> Further, the parish of Malpec was founded, not by Dosque in the autumn of 1753, but by a priest named DuGuay sometime previously.<sup>58</sup>

In 1732 a group of investors from France, headed by Jean-Pierre Roma, set up a trading, fishing and agricultural enterprise on Île-Saint-Jean. The base of this operation, as well as Roma's residence, were located at Trois-Rivières, now Brudenell Point near Georgetown. Roma received a concession also at Havre-Saint-Pierre where he established the fishing arm of his business. In 1732 he had ten fishing vessels based here, no doubt a major portion of the fishery conducted from that port.<sup>59</sup> Roma's operation on Île-Saint-Jean continued until 1745.

During the period 1749 to 1755 the population of Île-Saint-Jean swelled rapidly as a result of an influx of Acadian farmers and their families from the mainland. The flood of new immigrants put major strains on the colony as it struggled to accommodate them. In 1752 and 1753 new parishes were organized at Pointe-Prime and near the present Scotchfort, the latter parish being Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est.

About the time that Prevost made his request for four bells, Jacques Girard, the priest at Pointe-Prime, wrote to Prevost, advising him of the dire straits in which the new settlers found themselves. In the sad picture of

56. Census of 1728, AC, G<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 466, No. 36a and 37.

57. See entries in register for Saint-Pierre-du-Nord for 15 and 16 August 1745.

58. L'Isle-Dieu to Mgr. H.-M. de Pontbriand, 20 June 1754, *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec*, 1936/37, p. 377. Blanchard mistakenly wrote that prior to 1752 there was only one organized parish, Port LaJoye, on Île-Saint-Jean (See *The Acadians of Prince Edward Island*, *op. cit.*, p. 39). In fact in 1752 there were already three parishes in existence, and two new ones were formed about that time, not four as believed by Blanchard. This misconception apparently led to his linking the four bells requested by Prevost to the four "new" parishes.

59. Dubuisson to Minister, 15 November 1732, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 13, p. 195.

misery drawn by Girard, the newly-arrived settlers lacked tools and implements, and the children were quite naked, without shoes, socks or shirts. Although it was October only, these people were frequently found by the priest huddled together amid the ashes from their fires, attempting to keep warm.<sup>60</sup> Frequently there was not enough food to go around. As best it could, Louisbourg struggled to provide assistance to the new settlers - a considerable portion of the total population of Île-Saint-Jean - in the form of food, clothing and tools.

By 1753, however, both France and Louisbourg had preoccupations other than Île-Saint-Jean. French officials were apprehensive about the British having established major fortifications at Halifax from which harbour British warships were flexing their muscles. Also, a flash point was building at Chignecto where British and French forces had constructed opposing forts on opposite sides of the Missiguash River. And there was political and military posturing in regard to the boundary between British Acadia and so-called French Acadia. An uneasy truce became increasingly uneasy and war-like from 1753 until 1756 when war was officially declared. Two years later Louisbourg was captured by the British and in September 1758 British soldiers under Andrew Rollo arrived on Île-Saint-Jean to embark the inhabitants aboard transport vessels and to deport them to France.<sup>61</sup>

By the end of October about two-thirds of Île-Saint-Jean's population had been deported while about one-third had managed to flee from the Island to the mainland - to Miramichi and, particularly, to the Bay of Chaleur. The deportation involved all parishes except Malpec. Because of the remoteness of this parish from Port-LaJoye, the base of Rollo's operations and the anchorage of the transport vessels, and on account of his running out of time, Rollo was forced to forego deporting the inhabitants of Malpec. Whereas the settlers of other parishes were hastily taken into custody, or fled on very short notice, those of Malpec were able to evacuate their settlement on a more planned and organized basis. Consequently, many, if not all of the people of Malpec who removed themselves to the

60. Girard to Prevost, 24 October 1753, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 33, p. 288.

61. Earle Lockerby, "The Deportation of the Acadians from Île-Saint-Jean, 1758," *Acadiensis*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, 1998, p. 45-94; Earle Lockerby, "The Deportation of the Acadians from Île-Saint-Jean, 1758," *The Island Magazine*, No. 46, Fall/Winter 1999, p. 17-25.

mainland were able to take their livestock and some other possessions with them.<sup>62</sup> Those who chose to take refuge in the woods may well have been able to take with them some of their livestock and most prized possessions. Like most of his parishioners, Father Dosque was able to relocate to the mainland. He was the only priest on the Island at the time of Rollo's arrival who was not deported.

### THE ST. PETERS HARBOUR BELL AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Acadian church bells were occasionally buried to keep them from falling into the hands of British or New England soldiers or raiders.<sup>63</sup> The bell discovered by a ploughman at St. Peters Harbour was quite likely buried by parishioners of Havre-Saint-Pierre prior to their being taken into custody by Rollo's soldiers. This bell is important because for those who claim an Acadian origin for the Princetown bell, the existence of the St. Peters Harbour bell is seen as proof that the four bells requested by Prevost were delivered to Île-Saint-Jean and as a validation of their contention that the Princetown bell is one of the four.

According to Blanchard, the bell was cracked when unearthed in 1871, and was given to the Parish of Saint Alexis at Rollo Bay, PEI.<sup>64</sup> However, according to information dating from the period, after its recovery this bell was used for some years at St. Peters, PEI, before being exchanged for the bell of Saint Alexis Parish.<sup>65</sup> It later became cracked and in 1882 was sent to the foundry of Meneeley and Co. in West Troy, NY for recasting.

This bell, which currently resides in the steeple of the Saint Alexis church, has a diameter of 43.5 cm, making it slightly larger than the Princetown bell. The dimensions and profile of the recast bell quite possibly are not the same as in the original, since the inscription apparently has not been faithfully reproduced. A document which dates from before the bell was recast indicates that the inscription was JESVS MARIA IOSEPH, P. COSSE

62. Rollo to Edward Boscawen, 10 October 1758, NAC, MG 23, H2 (Chatham Papers), Vol. 6, p. 94-6.

63. Clarence-J. d'Entremont, "Les cloches acadiennes," *op. cit.*, p. 24, 30, 33.

64. J.-Henri Blanchard, *The Acadians of Prince Edward Island*, *op. cit.*, p. 64-5.

65. *The Weekly Examiner and Island Argus*, Charlottetown, 23 November 1883, p. 1.



The Havre-Saint-Pierre Bell (Source : coll. E. Lockerby)

MA FAIT I AN 1723, plus some lettering said to be undecipherable.<sup>66</sup> The inscription on the recast bell is:

†  
IHS

†Jesu †Marie †Joseph †

P. Cosse m'a faite, Michelin 1723

‡En 1870 j'ai été retirée des ruines d'une église d'un ancien village Acadien, I.P.E. En 1882 les paroissiens de Rollo Bay m'ont fait refondre par Meneely et Cie de West Troy, N.Y., en souvenir de leurs ancêtres de l'Acadie.<sup>67</sup>

The inscription indicates that the bell was actually discovered in that year, not 1871. The 1870 date also agrees with another reference which predates Blanchard's work by more than half a century, dating from less than two decades after the event.<sup>68</sup>

For a number of reasons it may be concluded that the bell discovered at St. Peters Harbour may well have come to Île-Saint-Jean long before Prevost made his request for four bells:

- a. As Prevost's letter states, the church at Havre-Saint-Pierre was erected prior to 1745. As explained earlier, a church existed here by 1724, if not a year or so earlier. It is very possible that it was the Comte Saint-Pierre himself who arranged for the erection of the church, since the terms of his grant contemplated the building of one or more churches.<sup>69</sup> The year of manufacture of the bell discovered near the former site of the church,

66. "Memorandum re Old Church Bell Found at St. Peters Bay," unsigned and undated, but c. 1878, PARO, Acc. No. 2702, Item No. 887. The clapper of the bell may well be the original one.

67. Blanchard's transcription of the inscription is not accurate. See Blanchard, *The Acadians of Prince Edward Island*, op. cit., p. 65. In his transcription, "1870" has been changed to "1871"; "Jesu" to "Jésus"; "Michelin" to "Mechlin"; "faite" to "fait"; verb tenses have been changed in two instances; "ancien" has been omitted; and "Meneely" has been misspelled. It is not unknown for church bells and ships to be similarly named. A French ship named Jesus Marie Joseph passed through the Gulf of Lawrence in 1758. See "Divers Achepts et Dépenses, Ile Royale 1758," AC, F<sup>1</sup>, Vol 44.

68. Burke, *History of the Parishes*, op. cit., section on Mission of St. Alexis, Rollo Bay.

69. Letters Patent, AC, Série C<sup>11</sup>G, Vol. 12, p. 59-60v.

ie., 1723, fits very well with the church having been put into use in 1724, the same year that the parish registry entries began.

- b. The Comte Saint-Pierre's close connections to the court of King Louis XV would have facilitated the acquisition of a bell for the church at Havre-Saint-Pierre. In addition to giving his name to the settlement, he may have given a bell.
- c. Given that Havre-Saint-Pierre was the largest and wealthiest of the parishes on Île-Saint-Jean, and counted among its parishioners merchants and traders who had access to both France and Québec and sometimes journeyed there themselves, the parish would have been in a reasonable position to acquire a bell at some point during the one-third of a century that the settlement was in existence prior to Prevost's request of 1753.
- d. If the church at Havre-Saint-Pierre was still lacking a bell by the time that Roma arrived on the Island, it is possible that he provided a bell. He had substantial business interests at that settlement and was obviously interested in the religious well-being of his workers in the Company of the East of Île-Saint-Jean. To this end he brought two priests to the Island at his own expense, an undertaking that would have matched the number of priests already maintained on the Island at government expense.<sup>70</sup> One of Roma's priests may have been stationed at Havre-Saint-Pierre since one would have sufficed at Trois-Rivières.
- e. In 1751 Louis Franquet, an engineer based at Louisbourg, visited Havre-Saint-Pierre. On the way there he stopped in the area at which the parish of Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est was in the process of being formed and assisted the inhabitants in the selection of a site for a parish church.<sup>71</sup> Following Franquet's return to Louisbourg he wrote the minister responsible for colonization, requesting a bell for the new parish of Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est.<sup>72</sup> If the church at Havre-Saint-Pierre

70. Jill MacLean, *Jean Pierre Roma of the Company of the East of Isle St. Jean* (Charlottetown, 1977), p. 16.

71. "Le voyage de Franquet aux Îles Royale et Saint-Jean," *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec*, 1923/24, p. 117-118, 121-122.

72. Franquet to Minister, 25 May 1752, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 32, p. 283.

lacked a bell, one would presume that Franquet would have requested two bells.

- f. Franquet described the church at Havre-Saint-Pierre as “*grande et solide*.” There is evidence from 1753 that it was well equipped with articles required for religious use. Records from that year show that of the four parishes located some distance from Port-LaJoye, three of them had no *chapelle*.<sup>73</sup> The word *chapelle* can mean “chapel,” or, collectively, certain items needed within a chapel for religious ceremonies or divine service. Since all of the parishes had completed churches by the fall of 1753, it may be concluded that in this instance *chapelle* refers to church accoutrements, or liturgical accessories, and that the church not lacking in such was that of Havre-Saint-Pierre. Such items may have included a bell.

There is a good deal of circumstantial evidence that the church at Havre-Saint-Pierre may have already had a bell in 1753. Therefore the discovery of a bell in 1870 near the site of this church provides scant proof that Prevost’s request was fulfilled. If this parish already had a bell at the time of Prevost’s request, and there were only three new parishes, then what explanation can there be for four bells being requested? A reasonable answer is that one of the bells was intended for the church at Port-LaJoye, while the other three were required at Malpec, Pointe-Prime and Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est.

#### A BELL FOR THE CHURCH AT PORT-LAJOYE

There is no indication that the church at Port-LaJoye had received any bell suitable for use in church steeple at any time up until Prevost’s request for four bells in 1753. On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that the parish was for much or most of its existence greatly lacking with respect to church-related facilities. The following sequence of events concerning church facilities at Port-LaJoye not only support the proposition that this church is unlikely to have had anything more than a hand bell to summon

73. “Tableau de l’état actuel des missions ..., Colonie de la partie méridionale de la Nouvelle-France au Canada - année 1753,” *Documents sur l’Acadie, Documents inédits sur le Canada et l’Amérique, Le Canada français*, Vol. 3, 1890, p. 185.

its parishioners, but illustrates well how official government correspondence records requests granted as well as requests made. It also illustrates the multiplicity of references to such matters in incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Though a church was erected at Port-LaJoye in 1722, by 1726 it apparently still lacked the basic liturgical accessories.<sup>74</sup> In that year the commandant at Port-LaJoye requested the minister in France to send these necessities, and later that year the request was echoed by officials at Louisbourg.<sup>75</sup> The following year the commandant again wrote that it was “absolutely essential” that these items be sent.<sup>76</sup> In 1729 a request for these items was referred to by the Minister in a letter to officials at Québec.<sup>77</sup> Two months later the Minister advised Louisbourg officials that “the church plate for Ile St. Jean” is being sent.<sup>78</sup>

In 1729 a shipment of items for the church at Port-LaJoye arrived. There exists a detailed inventory signed by both the commandant and Father Félix Pain. The items received included an altar stone, chalice, a small silver ciborium, cruets, crucifix, two badly torn surplices, a lamp, a mortuary cloth, etc. The final item on the list is “*une cloche fort petite*.”<sup>79</sup> Given its tiny size, it would appear to be little more than a *clochette* or handbell. According to an authority on Acadian bells, such handbells were not infrequently used in Acadian churches, particularly in those lacking a larger church bell suitable for ringing in a *clocher*, or church steeple.<sup>80</sup> The following year the commandant complained to the minister that the items which had been sent were almost unusable.<sup>81</sup> A long list of items still needed was submitted by Father Pain.<sup>82</sup> In 1731 Father Pain again submitted

74. Most historians suggest that this church was erected within the first year or two of the arrival of the Comte Saint-Pierres’ settlers. MacMillan however states that this church was built in 1722. See MacMillan, *Early History*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

75. De Pensens to Minister, 20 November 1727, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 9, p. 252; St. Ovide and Le Normant to Minister, 15 December 1727, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 9, p. 37.

76. De Pensens to Minister, 31 October 1728, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 10, p. 157.

77. Minister to Beauharnois, 15 March 1729, AC, Série B, Vol. 53, p. 124.

78. Minister to St. Ovide and Le Normant, 22 May 1729, AC, B, Vol. 53, p. 583.

79. De Pensens and Frère Félix Pain to Minister, 1729, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 10, p. 237-8.

80. Clarence-J. d’Entremont, “Les cloches acadiennes,” *op. cit.*, p. 33.

81. De Pensens to Minister, 30 November 1730, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 11, p. 95.

82. Pain to Minister, 1730, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 12, p. 187.

his list, there being 26 different kinds of articles required for the church at Port-LaJoye.<sup>83</sup> A proper church bell was not among them - given the difficulty in obtaining even small items, such a bell probably would have been out of the question.

There was not only a problem with liturgical necessities. By 1733 the church at Port-LaJoye was in such a state of disrepair as to be unusable. The commandant, De Pensens, reported to the minister that the priest had been compelled to hold divine service in an ill-suited house which lacked the items needed for daily service, particularly candles.<sup>84</sup> That year the Chief Engineer at Louisbourg sent off to the minister general plans for the construction of new buildings, including a church, at Port-LaJoye.<sup>85</sup> Also that year De Pensens reminded the minister that more than a year ago he had sent him a memorial regarding a church at Port-LaJoye. Undoubtedly, complained De Pensens, the Minister had not judged it fitting to give the matter his attention.<sup>86</sup> The request for a new church was eventually granted. In the spring of 1734 the minister informed De Pensens that he had approved the design for certain of the requested buildings, including the new church and new lodgings for the priest. This was confirmed in a separate communication to Louisbourg.<sup>87</sup>

There must be considerable doubt that at the time of Prevost's request for four bells the church at Port-LaJoye possessed a bell to call the parishioners to worship. If it in fact did not, then it would seem unlikely and inappropriate that Prevost would neglect to include a bell for Port-LaJoye among those he requested for various parishes on Île-Saint-Jean.

#### REACTION TO PROVOST'S REQUEST

The first point to note is that there seems to be some tentativeness, hesitancy or lack of priority concerning Prevost's request for four church bells. He did not himself ask for the bells; rather he merely relayed a request

83. Pain to Minister, 1731, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 13, p. 268.

84. De Pensens to Minister, 27 April 1733, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 14, p. 376.

85. Verrier to Minister, 1733, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 14, p. 337.

86. De Pensens to Minister, 18 September 1733, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 14, p. 379.

87. Minister to De Pensens, 4 May 1734, AC, B, Vol. 61, p. 611; Minister to Le Normant, 4 May 1733, AC, B, Vol. 61, p. 610.

from the colonists. For whatever reason, he did not see fit to include the bells on the General State (*état general*) of requests, or proposed budget put forth by Louisbourg to the ministry.<sup>88</sup>

Secondly, no documentation has been discovered in which Prevost's request was acknowledged, referred to, or otherwise commented upon. The same is true for Franquet's request about 18 months earlier with respect to a bell for the new parish of Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est.<sup>89</sup> Had Franquet's request been granted, Prevost would not have needed to request a bell for this parish.

Thirdly, shortly before Prevost requested bells for Île-Saint-Jean, the President of the Navy Board in Paris informed Prevost and the governor at Louisbourg that the King's finances were in a "cramped state."<sup>90</sup> Within months of receiving the request, government officials in Paris were exhorting Prevost and the governor to "practise economy."<sup>91</sup> It might be contended that a letter in early 1753 provides evidence that the French government allocated a generous amount of money for religious articles for the churches on Île-Saint-Jean, and that this allocation, or part of it, would have been available approximately a year later to support the acquisition of bells for the churches. This was a letter dated 30 March to Le Normant from the President of the Navy Board, advising that 2,740 livres had been allocated to pay for religious articles to be supplied to Île-Saint-Jean.<sup>92</sup> However in a letter written only two days later to the Bishop of Québec, the Abbé L'Isle-Dieu stated that over 2,680 livres had been granted by the government for three chapels on Île-Saint-Jean, and noted that the total amount had already been drawn.<sup>93</sup>

88. Normally, the *état general des fonds* was the basis for obtaining the king's authorization of expenses. As prepared by colonial officials, it was a sort of "wish list." It normally got pared down before it received royal approval. See James Pritchard, *Louis XV's Navy 1748-1762* (Kingston and Montreal, 1987), p. 185.

89. Franquet to Minister, 25 May 1752, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 32, p. 283.

90. President of the Navy Board to Raymond and Prevost, 17 July 1753, AC, B, Vol. 97, p. 19.

91. Minister to Drucourt and Prevost, 8 June 1754, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 99, p. 22.

92. President of the Navy Board to Le Normant, 30 March 1753, AC, B, Vol. 98, p. 57.

93. L'Isle-Dieu to Mgr. De Pontbriand, 1 April 1753, *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec*, 1935/36, p. 383. Abbé L'Isle-Dieu was the Paris-based Vicar General of the Bishop of Québec. Since L'Isle-Dieu refers to three chapels only, it is logical to conclude that they were at Malpec, Pointe-Prime and Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est, i.e., Havre-Saint-Pierre and Port-LaJoye were not included.

Fourthly, the "esteem" in which the priests at Louisbourg were held by officials in Paris would probably not have helped Prevost in getting his request for church bells honoured. In 1751 L'Isle-Dieu wrote to the minister, complaining that the priests at Louisbourg were "neglecting everything: [religious] institutions, confessions, administering of sacraments, visits and consolations to the sick, teaching of the catechism to the children - nothing gets done; it is a scandal to the colony, prejudicial to the well-being of the state and a detriment to religion."<sup>94</sup>

Finally, just because something is requested, it does not mean that it is supplied. It is clear from the records that officials in the colonies made a great many requests for all sorts of things and that in many instances they were not supplied. Franquet's request for a bell is a good example. An abundance of other examples could be cited, but several, only, will be used here to make the point.

Colonial officials frequently requested food and it is true that France sent large amounts. Nevertheless, it is clear that for this most basic and essential need, Louisbourg's requests were frequently not met. This is evident from frequent letters sent by Louisbourg officials to Paris requesting rations for the troops and food deliveries for the colonists. The fact that food shortages existed so commonly on Île-Royale and Île-Saint-Jean, to the point of famine on some occasions, provides ample evidence that official requests for food were frequently not met. It is evident, also, that despite repeated pleas from Port-LaJoye and Louisbourg, notably in 1734 and again in 1751, little, if anything, was ever done by French authorities to strengthen the defenses of Île-Saint-Jean.

In Prevost's letter of 31 October 1753 the paragraph immediately following that in which four bells are requested, reads as follows:

*I have taken the liberty several times of representing to you the urgent need of sending a good surveyor to establish the boundary lines of all the properties [on Île-Saint-Jean]. Mr. Franquet saw the necessity of it and can confirm to you the chaotic situation, the details of which I have provided in 1751. If this is not remedied quickly, matters will worsen, and*

94. L'Isle-Dieu, "Memoire to Minister," 23 May 1751, *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec*, 1935/36, p. 311.

*it will become impossible to disentangle the just interests of each property holder.*

It is evident that, despite having made the request for a surveyor on several occasions, dating back at least two years earlier, Prevost's requests had not been met. As a matter of fact there had been a string of requests for a surveyor going back to 1749. Between that date and 1751 there had been five requests, including two by Prevost's superior, the governor.<sup>95</sup>

In 1740 both the governor and Prevost wrote to the minister, stating that "The Indians of this village [Malpec] have urgently asked us for one [a priest] and we are conveying their complaints that one has been promised to them every year without the promises being kept."<sup>96</sup> In their letter the governor and Prevost requested approval and funding for a church for the Micmac established at Malpec. Authorities at Louisbourg had designed the proposed 40 foot by 20 foot structure and had made a cost estimate. The request for a church was never granted, though two years later, a priest was sent.

As a final example of Louisbourg's frequent inability or difficulty to have its requests met, one need only consider a request for a facility having immense strategic and military importance. Louisbourg was intended to become the Gibraltar of North America. Its harbour was routinely used by many of the warships of the French navy, by large transports bringing soldiers and valuable supplies to Louisbourg, and by numerous other vessels involved in the commercially important fishery and in general trading. The harbour of Louisbourg is located on a rocky coast which frequently experiences fog.

In 1727 the governor at Louisbourg made a request to the minister for the erection of a lighthouse at the entrance to the port.<sup>97</sup> Since the fortress had been under development for almost a decade before that date, this may

95. Desherbiers to Minister, 5 November 1749, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 28, p. 83. Franquet to Minister, 13 October 1750, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 29, p. 306; Prevost to Minister 1 December 1750, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 29, p. 182; Prevost to Minister, 28 November 1751, Vol. 30, p. 294; Raymond to Minister, 14 April 1751, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 31, p. 11.

96. Bourville and Prevost, 17 October 1740, Desherbiers to Minister, 5 November 1749, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 22, p. 36.

97. St. Ovide and Le Normant to Minister, 15 December 1727, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 9, p. 37.



not have been the first request for a lighthouse. The records show that it was not until the passage of another seven years before a lighthouse finally went into operation at Louisbourg.<sup>98</sup>

It is clear that many requests made by officials at Louisbourg went unfulfilled, whether church related or not, and whether made during good times or bad. It is also clear that during the months and years after Prevost's request for bells was made, the times were not good, particularly on Île-Saint-Jean, and there were many unfulfilled needs more critical and basic than church bells, even for such a devout people as the Acadian settlers. Political and military matters, as well as the supply of even subsistence quantities of foodstuffs, were becoming uppermost in the minds of officials on both sides of the Atlantic. It was also a time of spending cutbacks. Given all of this evidence, it is imprudent to assume that the minister reacted positively to Prevost's request and responded by dispatching the church bells requested.

#### POSSIBILITIES FOR CONFIRMATION OF DISPATCH OF BELLS

Having regard to both the availability of various types of records and their apparent degree of completeness (absence of gaps over time), there are two sets of documents which offer good possibilities for confirming that the bells requested in 1753 by Prevost were sent to Louisbourg or Île-Saint-Jean. These are the correspondence from the minister to officials at Louisbourg and others, and the correspondence from L'Isle-Dieu to government officials in Paris and to the Bishop of Québec. When people, such as priests, or material goods, such as foodstuffs and medicines, were being sent out to Louisbourg, this was generally noted in letters from the minister and his staff, or from L'Isle-Dieu, directed to officials in North America. This was no less true in the 1750s than it was in the 1730s when religious articles were sent from France to the church at Port-LaJoye. A few examples dealing with missionary affairs illustrate the point - in the majority of cases these relate to Île-Saint-Jean or even to Malpec.

98. St. Ovide and Le Normant to Minister, 21 October 1734, AC, C<sup>11</sup>B, Vol. 15, p. 68.

In 1752 a letter from government officials in Paris to the Superior of Foreign Missions indicated that four additional priests were required for missions dependent on Île-Royale.<sup>99</sup> In 1752 and 1753 there were at least five references in letters of government officials in Paris to the sending out of priests to Louisbourg to serve in dependent missions. The approximate date of embarkation of the priest Cassiet, who served in the parish of Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est, and Dosque, who served at Malpec, are thus known.<sup>100</sup> In more than a dozen of his letters L'Isle-Dieu refers to the supply of priests to the parishes of Île-Saint-Jean.

The accidental drowning of the priest Michel Courtin, who at one time served the Micmac at Malpec, is noted in no less than four letters from colonial officials at Louisbourg. At least five letters issued by government officials in Paris refer to this event. Elsewhere one may find a detailed inventory of all the items comprising the deceased Courtin's estate.<sup>101</sup>

With regard to religious articles for the new chapels on Île-Saint-Jean, in at least six letters written in March 1753 by the minister's office there is reference to the supply of such items. Similarly, they are referred to in no less than six of L'Isle-Dieu's letters in the spring of 1753, generally in the context of the necessary materials, equipment and other needed items having been gotten ready and dispatched.<sup>102</sup>

In 1753 the dispatch of medicines and religious books required by the missions of Île-Saint-Jean and elsewhere are mentioned at least twice in letters from government officials in Paris and in at least seven letters of L'Isle-Dieu. During a time when missionaries were attempting to have the Indians practice agriculture, supply to the Micmac of pick-axes with which

99. President of the Navy Board to Superior of Foreign Missions, 10 April 1752, AC, B, Vol. 96, p. 48v.

100. For Cassiet see President of the Navy Board to Lalane, 20 July 1753, AC, B, Vol. 98, p. 132v. For Dosque, see President of the Navy Board to Robert, 24 March 1753, AC, B, Vol. 98, p. 54.

101. "Le Sieur Courtin, prêtre missionnaire des sauvages de l'Île-Royale et de l'Acadie, Inventaire après décès, 1734," AC, Série E, Dossiers Personnels, Carton E 96.

102. For L'Isle-Dieu's letters see *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec*, 1935/36: L'Isle-Dieu to President of the Marine Council, 21 March 1753, p. 378; 26 April 1753, p. 398; 9 May 1753, p. 399; 30 May 1753, p. 403. L'Isle-Dieu to Mgr de Pontbriand, May 1753, p. 405; 31 May 1753, p. 408.

to grub the soil is mentioned in no less than six letters. One of these, from the minister, refers specifically to the Indians of Malpec.<sup>103</sup>

As a final example of confirmations occurring in official government correspondence, one may indeed point to a particular bell. The example concerns an event which occurred during a time period which closely parallels that which is of interest with respect to Prevost's request for bells. In a letter from Prevost and the governor, dated 19 November 1752, the minister is informed that a bell (which had obviously become cracked) was being sent back to France for recasting.<sup>104</sup> There is reference to the same bell in a letter dated 8 April 1753 and written by one of the minister's officials, confirming receipt. Records also exist of the recast bell having arrived back at Louisbourg in 1754.<sup>105</sup> This is but one example of a number of instances in which bell shipments are referred to in official correspondence relating to Île-Royale and Acadia.

The absence of any mention of the bells being sent, despite the ample opportunities for their dispatch to be recorded, would strongly suggest that Prevost's request for bells for churches in Île-Saint-Jean was not granted.

#### EVENTS AT MALPEC IN 1758 AND THE SEVERAL DECADES FOLLOWING

In the late summer and fall of 1758 the inhabitants of Malpec, numbering probably between 400 and 500, were no doubt fearful of a fate similar to that then happening to settlers farther east on Île-Saint-Jean, and were therefore under great pressure to flee. At the same time, it would seem that there was rather limited contact between the Malpec settlers and Rollo's troops. According to Rollo, "numbers have fled to Canada and carried off great quantities of Cattle by the means of 4 Schooners which ply from Magpeck [sic] to ye Continent."<sup>106</sup> Movement to the mainland of most of the

103. Minister to Le Normant, 26 May 1733, AC, B, Vol. 58, p. 524.

104. Raymond and Prevost to Minister, 19 November 1752, AC, C<sup>1</sup>B, Vol. 32, p. 12.

105. President of the Navy Board to Rostan, 8 April 1753, AC, B, Vol. 98, p. 67; "État sommaire des cargaisons [sic]," 1754, AC, Série F<sup>2B</sup>, Vol. 11, p. 33; see, also, Christopher Moore, "Commodity Imports of Louisbourg, Fortress of Louisbourg," *Manuscript Report Series No. 317* (Ottawa, 1975), p. 81.

106. Rollo to Boscawen, 10 October 1758, PAC MG23, H2 (Chatham Papers), Vol. 6, p. 94-6.

parishioners, together with their livestock and other belongings, would have required some weeks. Blanchard has written that, according to tradition, the Acadian church bells on Île-Saint-Jean were buried "carefully in the ground so they would not fall into the hands of the English invaders."<sup>107</sup> The tradition of Acadian bell burying is generally linked to the sudden flight or imminent capture of parishioners in the face of advancing British or New England troops. In such cases the parishioners were simply not in a position to take their bells with them. In some cases of imminent approach of hostile forces, however, church bells have been carried off by fleeing parishioners. Clarence-J. d'Entremont cites three cases of this, one being a bell from the church at Beaubassin (near the present day Amherst) which at 110 kg weighed almost two and one-half times as much as the Princetown bell.

Had there been a bell at Malpec, the parishioners would have had plenty of time to take the bell with them. Indeed, one would expect that they would have taken it, considering the religious attachment that would have existed to any such bell, and the fact that the settlers took livestock with them. Father Dosque, before departing for the mainland, would have had a special interest in seeing that the bell was not left behind.

If it is supposed, however, that the bell was buried near the church or elsewhere in the parish, there would have been ample opportunity for its later recovery by some of the parishioners. As stated earlier, a few of the parishioners, rather than fleeing to the mainland, took refuge deep in the woods. They emerged from hiding within a year.<sup>108</sup> After 1763 when Britain and France signed the Treaty of Paris, some of the former residents of Malpec returned from the mainland.<sup>109</sup> A census taken in 1768 showed ten

107. J.-Henri Blanchard, *The Acadians of Prince Edward Island, op. cit.*, p. 64-5.

108. The priest Pierre Maillard visited Île-Saint-Jean in 1759 to minister to the remaining French population. This suggests that by then they had emerged from their hiding places. See Rev. Angus Anthony Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*, Vol. 1 (Antigonish, 1960), p. 70-1. Some had "surrendered themselves" to, and had received food provisions from, the commander at Fort Amherst by the winter of 1759/60, if not earlier. See Adlam to Whitmore, 6 May 1760, Public Record Office, London (PRO), Admiralty 1, Vol. 1835.

109. "Le journal des visites pastorales de Mgr Joseph-Octave Plessis, en Acadie, 1811, 1812, 1815," *La Société historique acadienne, Les Cahiers*, Vol. 11, Nos. 1,2,3, March, June, September 1980, p. 81.

Acadian families in the Malpeque Bay region.<sup>110</sup> By 1772 an estimated 50 Acadian families were living on the Island, principally along the shores of Malpeque Bay.<sup>111</sup>

It was late 1770 before British settlement began in the region of Malpeque Bay. It would seem very probable that Acadians living in this area during the decade or so prior to 1770, many or most of whom would have been former parishioners of Malpec, would have recovered their buried bell, if it had existed, during this period. Had this not been done prior to 1770, it is difficult to conceive of it not being done soon after British settlement began in the area, as it became apparent to the Acadians that some of the new settlers were beginning to occupy, or intending to occupy, lands which had previously been occupied by Acadians.

The church at Malpec was still standing in 1768 at the time of Charles Morris' survey.<sup>112</sup> If the inhabitants who vacated the parish in 1758 had simply left the bell hanging in the church (improbable in itself), it would indeed be surprising if those parishioners who returned to the Malpeque Bay area would not have retrieved it soon after, or failing that, to have rescued it upon the first indication of British activity, be it in connection with surveying or settlement. To have not done so would have exhibited a lack of concern for, or interest in, the bell - quite uncharacteristic of a people who are known elsewhere to have taken the pains to bury their bells before surrendering themselves, or to take them along with them when retreating from advancing enemy soldiers.

If the Acadians living in the Malpeque Bay region had for some inexplicable reason left the bell hanging in their church until the mid-1760s, then survey crews of either Samuel Holland or Charles Morris might have carried it off. If such were indeed the case, it would be difficult to explain how the bell could subsequently be acquired by early British settlers in the

110. Isaac Deschamps, "Census of Island of St. John, 1768," enclosed with Francklin to Hillsborough, 31 July 1768, PRO, Colonial Office (CO) 217, Vol. 45, p. 229.

111. MacMillan, *Early History*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

112. Charles Morris, Jr. to John Butler, 12 January 1769, CR 114A/562, Seymour of Ragley Papers, Warwickshire County Record Office, Warwick, England (WRCO) and "A Plan [of part] of Lott Number Thirteen on the Island of Saint John, 1768," CR 114A/567, Seymour of Ragley Papers, WRCO. Microfilm of both documents available as 3485/1, PARO.

Malpeque Bay area - the people who later formed the Princetown Congregation. Holland and his crew withdrew from the Island in 1765 immediately upon completion of their survey. Similarly, Morris and his crew withdrew to their base at Halifax in 1768. If the bell had been taken from the church by British soldiers in 1758, or subsequently while they were garrisoned at Fort Amherst, it is hard to explain how the bell would have found its way to the Princetown Congregation. The British troops at Fort Amherst were withdrawn each year and replaced with fresh troops from Louisbourg. By 1770 there were no longer any British troops garrisoned on the Island.<sup>113</sup>

There was a significant Acadian presence in the Malpeque Bay region, not only prior to 1759, but also from the early 1760s onward. These Acadians knew their territory well, while any visitors or newcomers did not. Even after British settlers began to arrive they would have been preoccupied almost exclusively for the first year or two with attempting to provide for their basic requirements. Unlike the Acadians, they would have had little, if any, intimate knowledge of the area. Given these circumstances, it is most unlikely that, had a French bell been in the Malpeque Bay area, the British settlers would have somehow wrested it from the Acadians against their will. Indeed, it would have been a considerable number of years before the British settlers would have possibly had a need for a church bell. The first church established by the British settlers in the Malpeque Bay area is believed to have been erected at Princetown about 1794. This is more than a third of a century after any French bell, had it existed, might have been left behind at Malpec by its devoted owners.

#### NON-APPEARANCE OF "COMPANION" BELLS

According to those who claim that the Princetown bell is a former Acadian bell, it and the bell recovered at St. Peters Harbour are two of the four bells sent to Île-Saint-Jean in response to Prevost's request. If that is indeed correct, then what became of the bells acquired by the churches at Pointe-Prime and Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est?

113. Patterson to Hillsborough, 25 October 1770, CO 226/1, p. 19.

Father Cassiet, who was serving at Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est, was one of the priests who was deported from Île-Saint-Jean. He arrived safely in France. In 1764 he testified that he and his parishioners had had to collect at very short notice what few belongings they were allowed to take with them, and that the parish register and other church valuables were hurriedly buried in the ground.<sup>114</sup> Cassiet made no mention of a bell being among the items buried. Had a bell been among them, one might expect that it would have been mentioned. Except for the parish register, the bell would have been the most significant item buried - aside from being the largest and heaviest, it would have been the most symbolic and treasured.

The areas where the churches of these two parishes stood have been cultivated for many decades. If a bell had been buried near either of these locations, it is surprising that, unlike the bell of the church at Havre-Saint-Pierre, neither has been discovered. Frost action over almost two and a half centuries would be expected to have brought these bells to within reach of a ploughshare.

There exists the possibility that if these two churches had bells, they were carried off either in 1758 by Rollo's soldiers, or subsequently by soldiers from Fort Amherst. If so, these bells no doubt left the Island with the soldiers. There are examples of this sort of thing happening with church bells - they are sometimes treated as spoils of war - but usually they turn up somewhere else. The three bells thus taken from the garrison chapel at Louisbourg may today be found in a church at Portsmouth, NH (though this bell has been recast), a church at Lunenburg, NS, and at a museum in Montréal.<sup>115</sup> Elsewhere in Canada, a bell taken from Québec in 1759 now hangs in All Hallows Church, Tottenham, England.<sup>116</sup> A bell taken from the French church at Batoche, Manitoba by militia from Ontario during the Riel Rebellion was brought to Millbrook, Ontario, where it remained in the town

114. *Nova Francia*, Vol. IV (Paris, 1929), p. 186-7.

115. Clarence-J. d'Entremont, "Les cloches acadiennes," *op. cit.*, p. 25-7.

116. Benjamin Sulte, "La cloche de Québec," *Bulletin des recherches historiques*, Vol. 14, 1908, p. 54-5. See also *The Evening Telegram*, Toronto, 21 December 1907, p. 22.

fire station for many years and later in the Royal Canadian Legion Building.<sup>117</sup> In all of these cases the origin of the bell was not questioned.

There is simply no trace of any bells from the parishes of Pointe-Prime and Saint-Louis-du-Nord-Est. This is consistent with these parishes never having had a bell and with Prevost's request for bells, including one for Malpec, not having been granted.

## CONCLUSION

There is a great deal of circumstantial evidence which, when taken all together, suggest that it is improbable that Prevost's request for bells for churches on Île-Saint-Jean, including that at Malpec, was granted and that the bells were delivered. If, despite this evidence, it is presumed that the Acadian church at Malpec did have a bell, then an analysis of the various scenarios which might have befallen the bell during the latter part of 1758, or during the decade or so following, would suggest that it is improbable that the bell was somehow acquired by early British settlers who came to the Malpeque Bay area. Given these two improbabilities, one must therefore conclude that it is very improbable that the bell of Princetown United Church at Malpeque, PEI once served the church of the pre-1758 community of Malpec.

The claim that the Princetown bell is of Acadian origin rests on a very tenuous line of reasoning. The recovery of an Acadian bell at St. Peters Harbour and the assumption that it is one of four requested by Prevost in 1753 is a key element in the line of reasoning which would ascribe an Acadian origin to the Princetown bell. Yet there is no indication that the St. Peters Harbour bell, although undoubtedly of Acadian origin, is in any way connected to Prevost's request. Indeed, there is plenty of circumstantial evidence which suggests otherwise.

The late Clarence-J. d'Entremont, an Acadian priest, was undoubtedly a very knowledgeable authority on Acadian bells. In his treatise of this subject, he pointed out that less than half of Acadian churches had bells. In the Chignecto area, for example, of the eight churches only two, or one

117. *The Toronto Star*, Toronto, 25 October 1991, p. A13; also, CBC radio program, "As it Happens," 24 October, 1991.

quarter, are known to have had a bell. Those who rely on tradition concerning bells at Malpec, Pointe-Prime and Rivière-du-Nord-Est might contemplate Father d'Entremont's observation that "*la légende cependant en a enfouies qui ne seront jamais découvertes, pour la bonne raison qu'elles n'ont jamais existé.*"<sup>118</sup>

The claim that the Princetown bell came from a shipwreck, or from the shore as a result of a shipwreck, has not been shown to have any definite historical basis. Such a proposition is vague in that there is no known identity of the ship from which it may have come, exactly where on the shore it may have been recovered, or when - the time frame for a ship carrying the Princetown bell being wrecked could extend over more than three centuries. It is improbable that information will come to light which would resolve these uncertainties.

At the same time it is entirely plausible that the Princetown bell did come from a shipwreck. There are numerous examples of ships' bells being recovered and being put to use in churches, and the number of ships known to have been wrecked on the north shore of Prince Edward Island and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is very large. While the Princetown bell is larger than many ships' bells, its size is not inconsistent with that of many sailing ships that would have sailed in the Gulf. Many church bells are the subjects of tradition, legend and mythology. The Princetown bell is one of them. Though stories about the origin of this bell may enrich a community's folklore, it is dangerous and inappropriate to rely on such information as a guide to historical truth.

On balance there is a greater probability that the Princetown bell is from a shipwreck than from the Acadian church at Malpec. However, it is certainly not impossible that the bell has yet some other origin. Regardless, for a very long time the bell has indisputably been an important and ancient church accoutrement in the Princetown Congregation. Like its present whereabouts, the bell's provenance remains shrouded in mystery. Though its origin may ever remain a mystery, it is to be hoped that its whereabouts will not.

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118. Clarence-J. d'Entremont, "Les cloches acadiennes," *op. cit.*, p. 22.