

The Golden Age: Acadian Life, 1713-1748

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The years between the Treaty of Utrecht and that of Aix-la-Chapelle comprise the period of Acadian history remembered by the exiles of 1755. All over the age of ten at the time of the deportation would retain some remembrance of what life had been like in Acadia; and their memories would form the basis of beliefs about their past. The article, in reconstructing the daily life of Acadians between 1713 and 1748, brings out the demographic and material dimensions of their community. Life may not have been untroubled or luxurious, but the last decades were a time of expansion and growth.

La période de l'histoire acadienne dont les exilés de 1755 devaient se souvenir s'étend du traité d'Utrecht à celui d'Aix-la-Chapelle. Chaque exilé de plus de 10 ans au moment de la déportation aurait gardé une image de la société d'antan. Cette image alimenta les croyances en un « âge d'or » acadien. L'article décrit la vie quotidienne des Acadiens entre 1713 et 1748, et tout particulièrement les aspects démographiques et matériels de leur existence. Celle-ci n'était, certes, ni paisible ni luxueuse, mais les dernières années furent quand même caractérisées par une certaine prospérité économique et une nette croissance démographique.

Until the 1950s Acadian history was most frequently written either as epic or as case study—as the drama of a people or as an example of the political and diplomatic struggles between great powers. The tragic nature of the deportation in 1755 seemed the obvious and fundamental starting point for all that the Acadians experienced since, and equally the culmination of everything that had occurred in their previous history. In the last thirty years, however, an ever-increasing number of scholarly works have been devoted to the examination of Acadian history from much more complex perspectives. These include attempts to analyze not merely 1755 as an event of major importance in the war between English and French for North America, but also works centred upon Acadian language,¹ folklore,² geography,³ sociology,⁴ as well as upon Acadian history as the history of a developing community.

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1. For example, Geneviève MASSIGNON, *Les Parlers français d'Acadie*, 2 vol. (Paris: C. Klincksieck, n.d.).

2. For example, Antonine MAILLET, *Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie* (Québec: Presses de l'université Laval, 1971); Anselme CHIASSON, *Chéticamp, histoire et traditions acadiennes* (Moncton: Éditions des Aboiteaux, 1962); Catherine JOLICŒUR, *Les plus belles légendes acadiennes* (Montréal: Stanké, 1981).

3. A. H. CLARK, *Acadia: the Geography of Early Nova Scotia to 1760* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), and J. C. VERNEX, *Les Acadiens* (Paris: Éditions Entente, 1979).

4. Jean-Paul HAUTEŒUR, *L'Acadie du Discours* (Québec: Presses de l'université Laval, 1975).

Acadian studies have, in fact, come to an impressive maturity over the past thirty years. This maturity is magnificently documented in the work edited by Jean Daigle, *Les Acadiens des Maritimes*, where some twenty scholars present complex essays outlining the problems, the work done and the work to be done in every area of Acadian studies from history to folklore, from political science to material culture.⁵ The result of all this publication is, of course, the temptation, if not the necessity, for present scholars to look at past syntheses of Acadian history, to discover where the new information demands new theories and to build, if not entirely new interpretations of the Acadian past, at least interpretations which are more richly decorated and more densely structured.

This challenge is as dangerous as it is irresistible, for the amount of material is considerable indeed. As a result, this paper is a cautious one. Its main aim is to paint Acadian life between 1713 and 1748 in such a way that the reader may sense the complex nature of the Acadian community during these years. This was the period to be remembered by the community in exile after 1755. All those over the age of ten or eleven in 1755 would have had some knowledge of these years. It was the time that would be recalled in exile and the time which would form the basis for the stories of past life as the Acadians once more established themselves in the Maritimes. It spanned the decades from the Treaty of Utrecht to that of Aix-la-Chapelle, during which years the lands on which the Acadians lived turned from being the border between two empires to the frontier between enemies.

The political geography of "Nova Scotia or Acadia", as the lands were called in the contemporary international treaties, had meant turmoil for its inhabitants from the outset of European colonization. As J. B. Brebner wrote, these lands were "the eastern outpost and flank for both French and English in North America". They made, in his words, a "continental cornice". Throughout the seventeenth century this cornice frequently changed hands between English and French. It became a true border, for whatever name it was given and whatever limits were claimed, it lay "inside the angle between the St. Lawrence route to French Canada and the northern route to New England which branched off from it south of Newfoundland."⁶ Those who settled there in the seventeenth century would quickly find their situation akin to such people as the Basques caught between France and Spain, the Alsatians moulded by French and German designs, and those who lived on the borders between England and Scotland or England and Wales.

It was the French who began the first permanent settlement in the area in 1604. Whatever the international designation of the colony over the next century, its non-Indian people would be called the Acadians. While predominantly French-speaking and Catholic, they were nevertheless a people who also absorbed English-speaking migrants such as the Melansons⁷ and the Caisseys.⁸ They also had a

5. Jean DAIGLE, ed., *Les Acadiens des Maritimes: Études thématiques* (Moncton: Centre d'Études Acadiennes, 1980). See my review in *Histoire sociale—Social History*, XVI (May 1983): 192-94.

6. J. B. BREBNER, *New England's Outpost* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), pp. 15-16.

7. While there has been considerable debate about whether this family had Anglophone roots (for example, see CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 101), there now seems no doubt of their origins. For details of their ancestry as recorded in declarations made by their descendants in Belle-Île-en-Mer after the

considerable knowledge of the Protestant religion, and it is very probable that some of the families who joined them from near Loudun in the 1630s were of the reform church.⁹ By the end of the century the Acadians had known one lengthy and legitimate period of English rule, 1654-1668, as well as a number of much shorter periods of English control as a result of raids out of Massachusetts. By 1700 the Acadians were, as the detailed work of Professors Daigle and Reid has shown,¹⁰ almost as accustomed to dealing with the officials of England as those of France. Thus the defeat of Subercase in 1710 and the subsequent transfer of the colony once more to English control by the treaty of Utrecht was for the Acadians yet one more step in a complicated ritual, an exchange of control over them from France to England, something which had happened before and would most probably be reversed in the not too distant future.

This fundamental belief in the mutability of power, this dominant sense of the probability of alternate French and English control of the colony, became the cornerstone of Acadian politics during the years 1713 to 1748. It was the basis for the Acadian action over requests made by the English officials that they swear an oath of allegiance to the King of England. From the Acadian viewpoint, it would have been folly indeed to engage in any action which would bind them irrevocably to one Great Power when the other was still not only obviously in the neighbourhood, but even more obviously still interested in the future status of the colony and its inhabitants. Thus the Acadians built a policy compounded of delay and compromise. The oath to George I was first rejected outright; among other reasons they presented for the refusal, the Acadians of Minas remarked that "pendant que nos ancetres ont étés sous la domination angloise on ne leur a jamais exigé de pareille Sermente . . ."¹¹ Later on oaths were taken to George II, but in such circumstances as to enable the Acadians to believe that they had been granted the right to remain neutral. In fact, as Brebner pointed out, the practice of both English and French of referring to them from 1730 on as either "les français neutres" or "the Neutral French" indicates that this accommodation was generally tolerated, if not accepted, by those in power during these years.¹²

However it might have looked to outsiders, the question of neutrality was serious enough to the Acadians. It was in fact a consistent policy that was first enunciated in 1717 by the Acadians of Annapolis Royal and later adhered to by

deportation, see M.P. and N.P. RIEDER, *The Acadians in France*, 3 vol. (Metairie, La.: M.P. & N. Rieder, 1972), 2: *passim*.

8. Bona ARSENAULT, *Histoire et Généalogie des Acadiens*, 2 vol. (Québec: Le Conseil de la vie française en Amérique, 1965), 2: 550.

9. This is suggested, in particular, in the reports of discussions with the second Mme La Tour, in Candide de NANTES, *Pages glorieuses de l'épopée Canadienne: une mission capucine en Acadie* (Montréal: Le Devoir, 1927), pp. 150f.

10. Jean DAIGLE, "Nos amis les ennemis: relations commerciales de l'Acadie avec le Massachusetts, 1670-1711" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 1975); and John REID, *Acadia, Maine and New Scotland: Marginal Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

11. This document, headed "answer of several French inhabitants, 10 February 1717", is printed in the *Collection de documents inédits sur le Canada et l'Amérique publiés par le Canada français*, 3 vol. (Québec: Le Canada français, 1888-90), 2: 171. The collection was published anonymously, but its editor is known to be the abbé Casgrain. The original of the document is in the Public Records Office, London (hereafter PRO), CO/NS 2, as part of the Nova Scotia government documents.

12. BREBNER, *New England's Outpost*, p. 97.

them, and others in time of war. On being asked for an oath of allegiance to George I, the response of Annapolis Royal Acadians was a refusal, the reasons given being that matters of religious freedom were not yet clarified and danger from Indians, who were bound to disapprove friendship between Acadian and English, led to fears for Acadian security. Nevertheless, the response continued, "we are ready to take an oath that we will take up arms neither against his Britannic Majesty, nor against France, nor against any of their subjects or allies."¹³ In 1744 when hostilities broke out between English and French in North America, Mascereene, then the lieutenant-governor of the colony, wrote to his masters in London: "These latter [i.e., the French inhabitants] have given me assurances of their resolutions to keep in their fidelity to his Majesty".¹⁴ Mascereene was convinced that had the Acadians not remained neutral during the hostilities, the colony would have fallen to the French.¹⁵ Certainly there is more than enough evidence to show the Acadian dislike of the war, including a most strongly worded letter from those of Grand-Pré to the French, pointing out forcibly that the village preferred peace to war, tranquillity and food to soldiers fighting across their farmlands.¹⁶

There is no doubt that between 1713 and 1748 the majority of the Acadians strove to live on their land truly as neutrals, giving loyalty to neither French nor English. This policy procured for their communities nearly thirty-five years of peace, but its final failure in 1755 has overshadowed its earlier success. It is worth emphasizing that it was a policy, not merely a series of inconsistent, unconnected reactions to the demands made by English and French. It was transmitted by delegates from the several Acadian communities to the English officials on a number of separate occasions and, as has been suggested, adhered to during a time of considerable pressure in the 1740s. It was a policy that produced peace and quiet for the Acadian communities, however catastrophic it finally proved to be. Its evolution and development gave the Acadians a knowledge of political action and a sense of their independent reality that would prove invaluable to them when they confronted the vicissitudes of the deportation.¹⁷ Above all, it was the framework for the expansion and development of the Acadian communities between 1713 and 1748.

The demographic expansion of the Acadians during these years is a commonplace in one sense; in another it is something acknowledged rather than fully understood. As Gysa Hynes wrote in 1973, "the rapid natural increase of the population of the Acadians during the period from 1650 to 1750 . . . has long been recognised, but no historian has explored the demography of Acadia before the Dispersion."¹⁸ As

13. T.B. AKINS, ed., *Selections from the Public Documents of the Province of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1869), pp. 15-16.

14. Mascereene to the Lords of Trade, 9 June 1744, printed in *Collection de Documents inédits*, 2: 80.

15. This was also the opinion of the French officer in charge of the attack on Grand-Pré, Duvivier. He defended himself at his court-martial on the charge of failure, by protesting that Acadian neutrality had rendered his task impossible. Robert RUMILLY, *Histoire des Acadiens*, 2 vol. (Montréal: Fides, 1955), 1: 304.

16. Letter from the inhabitants of Minas, Rivière aux Canards and Piziquid to Duvivier and de Gannes, 13 October 1744, printed in *ibid.*, 1: 304-5.

17. The full story of the Acadian years in exile remains to be told, but some indication of the strength of the community is given in Naomi GRIFFITHS, "Acadians in Exile: the Experience of the Acadians in the British Seaports", *Acadiensis*, IV (Autumn 1974): 67-84.

18. Gisa I. HYNES, "Some Aspects of the Demography of Port Royal, 1650-1755", *Acadiensis*, III (Autumn 1973): 7-8.

a result, while it is generally agreed that the Acadian population probably doubled every twenty years between 1713 and the early 1750s without the aid of any considerable immigration, there has been little real analysis of this development.¹⁹ Gisa Hynes's excellent article was a pioneer study relating above all to Port Royal/Annapolis Royal and has not been followed by much else. Enough raw material does exist, however, to outline the tantalizing landscape waiting to be fully explored, a demographic territory which differs significantly from contemporary Europe and also, in some considerable measure, from that of other colonial settlements in North America.

It is a debatable point whether the longevity of the Acadians or their fertility should receive most comment. At a time when only 50 percent of the population reached the age of 21 in France, 75 percent reached adulthood in Port Royal.²⁰ Further, while mortality did take its toll during the middle years, death coming through accident and injury rather than epidemic, old age was a common enough phenomenon. In fact at the time of the Treaty of Utrecht, when the French were making every effort to withdraw the Acadians from land ceded to the English and to establish them on Isle Royal (Cape Breton), one of the priests noted that the Acadians refused to go because

It would be to expose us manifestly [they say] to die of hunger burthened as we are with large families, to quit the dwelling places and clearances from which we derive our usual subsistence, without any other resource, to take rough, new lands, from which the standing wood must be removed. One fourth of our population consists of aged persons, unfit for the labour of breaking up new lands, and who, with great exertion, are able to cultivate the cleared ground which supplies subsistence for them and their families.²¹

The presence of an older generation in the community meant a rich heritage of memories of past politics. Any Acadian over forty-two in 1713 would have been born when the colony was controlled by the English, for the terms of the Treaty of Breda were not honoured by Temple until 10 January 1671. Any Acadian over twenty-five would have personal memories of the stormy raids by New Englanders

19. For a good overview of what is available, see Muriel K. ROY, "Peuplement et croissance démographique en Acadie", in DAIGLE, *Acadiens des Maritimes*, pp. 135-208.

20. HYNES, "Demography of Port Royal", pp. 10-11. In recent years scholarship about demography has been prolific. One of the most readable accounts of the French reality during the late seventeenth century is that of Pierre Goubert: "In 1669 the average expectation of life is something over seventy years. In 1661 it was probably under twenty-five . . . Out of every hundred children born, twenty-five died before they were one year old, another twenty-five never reached twenty and a further twenty-five perished between the ages of twenty and forty-five. Only about ten ever made their sixties." Pierre GOUBERT, *Louis XIV and Twenty Million Frenchmen* (New York Random House, 1972), p. 21. On the demography of New England, see esp. James H. CASSEY, *Demography in Early America: Beginnings of the Statistical Mind, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969). Cassedy points out that the demographic scale was at first weighted towards mortality, but at a different time for each colony, "this precarious balance righted itself". The incidence of disease, malnutrition and frontier warfare were demonstrably greater for New England than they were for Acadia. The conditions of life along the St. Lawrence were much closer to those along the Bay of Fundy. In the eighteenth century the population of Canada doubled every thirty years. In Acadia, however, the increase was even higher: it doubled every fifteen years between 1671 and 1714, and every twenty years between 1714 and 1755. Furthermore, migration was a minimal factor in Acadian demography after 1710. On Canada, see Jacques HENRIPIN, *La population canadienne au début du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Institut national d'études démographiques, 1954); on Acadia, see ROY, "Peuplement", p. 152.

21. Father Felix Pain to the governor of Isle Royale, September 1713, printed in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 187.

on their villages and of the French counter-measures. The reality of life on a border would be a commonplace for Acadian reminiscences in a community whose people lived long enough to remember.

If Acadians could see relatively long life as a possibility, they could also see life itself as abundant. From the travelling French surgeon-poet Dièreville to the almost equally travelling English official, Governor Phillipps, the observations were the same. In 1699 the Frenchman wrote that "the swarming of Brats is a sight to behold."²² The Englishman commented in 1730 on the Acadians' ability to increase and spread "themselves over the face of the province . . . like Noah's progeny."²³ Present day research has confirmed the accuracy of these impressions. Gisa Hynes discovered in her analysis of Port Royal that four out of five marriages were complete, that is "were not disrupted by the death of husband or wife before the onset of menopause."²⁴ In these marriages, if the women were under 20 on their wedding day, they had some ten or eleven children; those wedded between 20 and 24, nine children; and those married in their late 20s, seven or eight children.²⁵ For the population as a whole, it is probable that the average family in the colony had six or seven children.²⁶

These bare statistical bones of Acadian family life can now be covered first with the skin of individual family genealogy and then clothed with the fabric of community life. As an example of the first, there is the life of Claude Landry, born in 1663, the youngest of some ten children of René Landry of Port Royal, who himself had arrived in the colony sometime in the 1640s from Loudun.²⁷ When he was about eighteen, Claude married Catherine Thibodeau, whose father had been an associate of Emmanuel LeBorgne and come to the colony from around Poitiers in the 1650s.²⁸ She was the fifth child in a family of sixteen, eleven of whom reached adulthood.²⁹ Catherine was apparently fifteen when married and bore her first child within the year. She had some ten children in all, eight of whom lived to maturity.

The young couple moved very early in their marriage to Grand-Pré where they brought up their family and watched their children's children flourish. When Claude Landry died in 1747, aged eighty-six, his grandchildren through the male line numbered forty-six and his great-grandchildren, also through the male line, eleven. Claude's last child, a son, had been born in 1708; his first grandson was born in 1710. Between 1717 and 1747 there was only one year in which no birth is recorded for his sons, and it is not unlikely that one of Claude's two daughters

22. Sieur de DIÈREVILLE, *Relation of the Voyage to Port Royal in Acadia or New France*, ed. J.C. WEBSTER (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1933), p. 93.

23. Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), MG 11, CO 217, vol. 5, Phillipps to the Board of Trade, 2 September 1730 (PAC reel C-9120).

24. HYNES, "Demography of Port Royal", p. 10.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

26. CLARK, *Acadia*, pp. 200f, arrived at somewhat different statistics, concluding that the average family size was closer to four or five.

27. MASSIGNON, *Parlers français* 1: 45; ARSENAULT, *Généalogie*, 1: 432, 433; 2: 666.

28. *Ibid.*, 1: 518.

29. This calculation rests partly upon the assumption that the Acadians followed a common contemporary practice of using the name of a child that died for the next-born of the same sex.

might have had a child that year. 1735 saw the birth of the first great-grandchild within the male line.³⁰

The growth of such extended families was supported by a healthy mixed economy, based upon farming, hunting and fishing with enough trade, both legal and illegal, to make life interesting. In Grand-Pré the Landry family was part of the flourishing development which Mascarene had described in 1730 as "a platt of Meadow, which stretches near four leagues, part of which is damn'd [*sic*] in from the tide, and produced very good wheat and pease."³¹ Westward this great marsh is edged by the massive presence of Cape Blomidon, the tides of the Bay of Fundy curve across its northern shore, and wooded uplands circumscribe its other boundaries. Between 1710, when the first grandson was born, and 1747, when Claude died, the population of the area grew from well under a thousand to something more than four thousand.³² The community lived in houses scattered across the landscape, not grouped close together in a village. Charles Morris, who was commissioned by Governor Shirley of Massachusetts to make a survey of the Bay of Fundy area in 1747, reported that the dwellings were "low Houses fram'd of timber and their Chimney framed with the Building of wood and lined with Clay except the fireplace below . . ." ³³ Very often the houses sheltered a mixture of families, and the sheer work required to provide them necessities of life must have been considerable.³⁴

The daily life of both men and women would be governed by the seasons, for the frame of the economy was what was grown and raised for food and clothing. Fishing, hunting and trade could and did provide important additions to this base, but the standard of living of the majority of the Acadians depended upon the produce of their land-holdings. At the very least a household would possess a garden, and from the seventeenth century on travellers had noticed the variety and abundance of vegetable grown. Dièreville, whose evidence is of the close of the seventeenth century, remarked upon the wealth of cabbages and turnips,³⁵ and another report of the same period lists the gardens as including "choux, betteraves, oignons, carottes, cives, eschalottes, navets, panets et toutes sortes de salades."³⁶ Most families would have also an amount of land varying in size between that of a small-holding and a farm, depending on where the community was in the colony and what level of resources the family in question could command. A. H. Clark considered that the households of Grand-Pré and the surrounding area usually had five to ten acres of dyked and tilled farmland within the marsh, supplemented with an orchard situated on the upland-slopes. Morris reported the marshlands to be "Naturally of a Fertile Soil . . . and . . . of so strong and lasting a Nature that their Crops are not Diminished in ten or twenty years Constant Tillage".³⁷ The crops sown included

30. ARSENAULT, *Généalogie*, 1: 518; 2: 666, 667f.

31. PAC, MG 11, CO 217, vol. 2 (PAC reel C-9119).

32. These figures are my own estimations, based upon the work of CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 216, and the overview by ROY, "Peuplement", pp. 134-207.

33. "A Brief Survey of Nova Scotia" (MS in Library of the Royal Artillery Regiment, Woolwich, n.d.), 2: 25-26, cited in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 217.

34. There is considerable debate about the kin system of these households. Grandparents can only have lived in one home, and there is still debate on how siblings linked house-keeping arrangements.

35. DIÈREVILLE, *Relation*, p. 256.

36. PAC, MG 1, Series C 11 D, vol. 3, pp. 199-203, Villebon to the Minister, 27 October 1694.

37. Cited in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 237.

most of the grain crops common to western Europe: wheat, oats, rye and barley, as well as peas, hemp and flax. Writing in 1757 another traveller remarked on the abundance of fruit trees, apples, pears, "cherry and plumb Trees", and noted that "finer flavoured apples and greater variety, cannot in any other country be produced."³⁸

Working with the land, whether garden or farm, did not only imply digging and ploughing, weeding and gathering. There was also the care of livestock. Poultry was everywhere about, as much for feathers as for the eggs and meat. Down-filled mattresses and coverlets were a noted Acadian possession, and the export of feathers to Louisbourg a common item of trade.³⁹ Pigs rooting around the houses were so common that few surveyors interested in estimating Acadian wealth even bothered to count them. A number of observers, however, remarked on the Acadian liking for fat-back (*le lard*), which could be cooked with cabbage or fried and added to whatever vegetables were available.⁴⁰ Sheep were also numerous, raised for wool rather than for meat. Most households would also possess cows and a horse. The estimation of the total livestock in the colony varies widely since the Acadians, like most peasant populations, had no great wish to inform any official of the true extent of their possessions. Life must have been sustained at considerably more than bare subsistence, however, since extant records show that in the 1740s the Acadians, particularly those of Grand-Pré and of the Minas basin in general, were able to export cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry to Louisbourg.⁴¹ While the authorities at Annapolis Royal thundered against such trade, they also admitted that the Acadians were no worse than others, noting that "there is so great an illicit Trade carried on by the People of Massachusetts Bay and New Hampshire."⁴² As has been suggested, the trade that existed was enough to make life for the Acadians interesting, and the goods imported included not only necessities such as "Spanish Iron, French Linnens, Sail Cloth Wollen cloths", but also "Rum, Molasses, Wine and Brandy."⁴³

The sum of this evidence suggests an excellent standard of living among the Acadians, something which showed, of course, in the population increase of the first half of the eighteenth century. While there is little evidence of luxury, there is less of poverty. The staples of life, food, shelter and clothing were abundant, even if the abundance was available only after hard work. Further, the absence of conspicuous consumption and the lack of development of towns and industry in no way meant an absence of specie. It is clear from the records of the deportation itself that Acadians took coinage with them into exile.⁴⁴ The Acadian community did not have the rate of economic growth that the New Englanders possessed, but

38. Captain John KNOX, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759 and 1760*, ed. A.G. DOUGHTY, 3 vol. (Toronto, 1914-18), 1: 105.

39. PAC, AC 2B, p. 12, "Supplies from Acadia entering Louisbourg, 1740", printed in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 259.

40. L. U. FONTAINE, *Voyage de Sieur de Diéreville en Acadia* (Québec, 1885), p. 56.

41. "Supplies from Acadia", in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 259; and "Report of custom collector Newton" (PAC, AC, NSA-26, 29-33), printed in A. SHORTT, V. K. JOHNSTON and F. LANCTOT, eds., *Currency, Exchange and Finance in Nova Scotia, with Prefatory Documents, 1675-1758* (Ottawa, 1933), pp. 223-24.

42. PAC, AC, NSA-26, 52, cited in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 258. See also the chart of Louisbourg trade on pp. 324-25.

43. PAC, AC, NSA-26, 51, cited in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 258.

44. For example, the Acadians sent to Maryland and South Carolina were able to purchase ships. See PAC, NS A/60, "Circular to the governors on the continent, July 1st, 1756, Halifax".

it provided amply for the totality of individuals. Fishing and hunting added to the resources of the households. Charles Morris remarked that the population around Grand-Pré "had some shallows, in which they employed themselves in the catching of Fish just upon their Harbours, being out but a few days at a Time; This was rather for their Home Consumption than the foreign Market . . ." ⁴⁵ Clark remarked that the Acadians were "particularly interested in salmon, shad, gaspereau, and the like during their spring runs up the rivers and creeks . . ." ⁴⁶ As for hunting, it was less the meat that was immediately valued than the furs. Game was sought in order to sell it in Annapolis Royal, ⁴⁷ but "avec les fourrures d'ours, de castor, de renard, de loutre, et de martre", they had material which gave them "non seulement le confort, mais bien souvent de jolis vêtements." ⁴⁸ Dièreville had also commented on the way in which the Acadians made shoes from sealskin and the hides of moose. ⁴⁹

Given the considerable work necessary to turn the resources of their environment into food and clothing for the family, it is extraordinary that the Acadians should have been criticized for being idle. ⁵⁰ The tools they worked with were scarcely labour-saving devices and were basically of their own manufacture. Clark has listed the main implements available to them as "pickaxes, axes, hoes, sickles, scythes, flails, and wooden forks and rakes," as well, of course, as spades, essential for dyke-building. ⁵¹ They were known as competent carpenters and joiners, and the census made by the French during the seventeenth century reported the existence of blacksmiths, locksmiths and nailmakers among them. ⁵² Working basically in wood, the Acadians built their own houses, barns and the occasional church, made their own furniture, including enclosed beds which must have provided considerable privacy in the crowded households, tables, chairs, chests, kegs and barrels, as well as looms and spinning-wheels. ⁵³ There was a remarkably fluid, though not entirely egalitarian social structure. Considerable importance was attached to the actual possession of land, and the recognition of proper boundaries. ⁵⁴

Specie did not serve as a major regulator of the internal economy. The available evidence shows that it was rare indeed for Acadian communities to pay one another, except in kind, for goods and services rendered. The gold gained through trade, or through wages from French and English officials, was kept for trade and most reluctantly handed over for any other purposes, especially rents and

45. MORRIS, "A Brief Survey", 2: 4, quoted in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 244.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

47. FONTAINE, *Voyage*, p. 56.

48. Observations made by Moise de Les Derniers shortly after 1755 and printed in CASGRAIN, *Un pèlerinage au pays d'Évangéline* (Paris, 1889), App. III, p. 115.

49. DIÈREVILLE, *Relations*, p. 96.

50. It was Perrot who first commented upon this in 1686 (PAC, AC, C11D-2[1], 119, *mémoires généraux*); and many later observers, such as Dièreville and Phillipps, insinuated similar flaws.

51. CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 232.

52. PAC, MG1, series C11D, vol. 2, pp. 96-106, report of Menneval, 10 September 1688.

53. R. HALE, "Journal of a Voyage to Nova Scotia Made in 1731 by Robert Hale of Beverley", *The Essex Institute Historical Collections*, XLII (July 1906): 233.

54. Comments on the litigious nature of the Acadians span all regimes. See CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 198, and BREBNER, *New England Outpost*, p. 140.

taxes.⁵⁵ Labour relations among the Acadians tended to be either barter-based (perhaps two days' digging or ploughing in exchange for some quantity of seed grain), co-operative (three or four people engaged in quilt-making or fishing, the resultant produce being divided equitably), or communal (several households joined together to build another dwelling and ready to be reconvened for such a purpose whenever the occasion warranted). The social ambience produced by such labour relations encouraged the development of a community where family connections were as important as the particular attainments of an individual. Marriage would be seen as the connection between kin rather than the limited engagement of two individuals of particular social status. As Dièreville remarked, to his considerable surprise social barriers seemed to have no part to play in the regulation of marriage.⁵⁶

In sum, Acadian life between 1713 and 1748 centred around the demands and rewards of family and land, although this did not mean isolation from a wider environment. During these decades the care and nurture of children must have been the dominating factor in the lives of most Acadians, male or female. A child born every two or three years on average in individual families meant the arrival of a child almost every year in multi-family households. Even with the importation of some yard goods, the provision of clothes and coverings for the children demanded continuous thought and activity. Records emphasize the extent to which the Acadians were self-sufficient in this area. Dièreville remarked on the way in which they made their own outfits, including caps and stockings.⁵⁷ Raynal, writing for Diderot's *Encyclopaedia* with information supplemented by the memorials of those Acadians exiled to France, asserted that they depended for their daily clothing on "leur lin, leur chanvre, la toison de leurs brebis."⁵⁸ From diapers to shawls, from shirts to shifts, with considerable liking for mixing black with red for ornament, and binding their skirts with ribbons,⁵⁹ the Acadians spun, wove, knitted and sewed their garments. Even with every economy between one generation and the next, even with children fully accustomed to hand-me-downs, the sheer number of bonnets and mittens, stockings and shoes, cloaks, coats, and trousers, shirts, blouses and jackets that would be needed is difficult to envisage.

Organizing the clothing was probably as much a year-round occupation for the women as the provision of meals was their daily chore. Grains were usually ground at grist-mills rather than within each household, although there is a tradition that most families possessed pestles and mortars capable of making coarse flour for porridge.⁶⁰ Bread would be baked in each household and was considered by Isaac Deschamps to have been the staple of Acadian diets.⁶¹ Linguistic studies by Massignon show that doughnuts and pancakes were also common. She discovered references to documents dated 1744 referring to *croxsignoles*, a form of doughnut, as part of

55. In particular, note the trouble that Subercase faced collecting taxes, in SHORTT et al, *Currency*, p. 16.

56. DIÈREVILLE, *Relation*, p. 93.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

58. Guillaume Thomas François RAYNAL, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (Paris, 1778), 6: 309.

59. Moïse de les Derniers, cited in CASGRAIN, *Un pèlerinage*, p. 155.

60. MASSIGNON, *Parlers français*, 2: 548, 1316. The *bûche à pilon* is illustrated in Paul DOUCET, *Vie de nos ancêtres en Acadie—l'alimentation* (Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1980), p. 17.

61. DESCHAMPS, cited in CLARK, *Acadia*, p. 237.

the Acadian diet.⁶² It is also probable that those who came to the community from Normandy and Ile-et-Vilaine brought with them a taste for buckwheat pancakes, something that was certainly common among Acadians in northern New Brunswick at the close of the eighteenth century.⁶³ There is a strange debate about whether the Acadians grew potatoes before 1755, since a number of popular guides such as the *Guide Bleu de Bretagne* refer to them introducing the vegetable to France.⁶⁴ Again, it is certainly true that the potato was a staple of Acadian diets by the opening of the nineteenth century,⁶⁵ but more evidence is needed before one can accept that it was a common food for the Acadians fifty years earlier. Milk was abundant⁶⁶ and the Acadians found in exile that they had been particularly fortunate in this respect.⁶⁷ Its plenteousness must have been a great help in coping with what was known as the *pourginés d'enfants*.⁶⁸

This charming word for a numerous family invites consideration of the emotional climate in which families grew and developed. The evidence here is, at present, somewhat sketchy. The extent to which the Acadians cared for one another during their exile, seeking news of brothers and sisters as well as advertising for husbands and wives, suggests the importance of family relations.⁶⁹ As to the actual treatment of children during these decades, one has very few concrete details. It is possible that the reputation the Acadians had for long and faithful marriages was not coupled with a bitterness against those whose lives followed other patterns. One of the few cases relating to children that reached the English officials at Annapolis Royal between 1720 and 1739 was one where grandparents fought for the privilege of raising an illegitimate child.⁷⁰ The folklore research of Jean-Claude Dupont reveals a considerable amount about children's toys and games current in the nineteenth century, and it is probable that some of these, at least, were also part of Acadian life during the eighteenth century. Certainly the early mobile-rattle, a dried pig's bladder filled with peas and hung so an infant could bat it about and watch it swing, listening to its noise, which Dupont has reported for the nineteenth century, would have been a useful toy to have in the house in the eighteenth century.⁷¹

There were, of course, the usual arguments and quarrels among the Acadians, the kinds of disputes common to any group of people. The court records of Annapolis show not only debates over landholdings and boundaries, but also slander actions, particularly between women, and at least one appeal for aid to control a nagging wife.⁷² But the tenor of life was undoubtedly rendered easier by the ready supply

62. MASSIGNON, *Parlers français*, 2: 550, 1320.

63. *Ibid.*, 2: 551, 1322; Ph. F. BOURGEOIS, *Vie de l'Abbé François-Xavier LaFrance* (Montréal, 1925), p. 83.

64. *Les Guides Bleus: Bretagne* (Paris, 1967), p. 662.

65. BOURGEOIS, *Vie de l'abbé LaFrance*, p. 83.

66. DIÈREVILLE, *Relation*, pp. 266, 110.

67. Records of the complaints of Acadians exiled to Brittany, described by Naomi GRIFFITHS, "Petitions of Acadian Exiles, 1755-1785: A Neglected Source", *Histoire sociale—Social History*, XI (May 1978): 215-23.

68. MASSIGNON, *Parlers français*, 2: 648, 1702.

69. GRIFFITHS, "Petitions of Acadian Exile", pp. 218f.

70. A. M. MACMECHAN, ed., *Nova Scotia Archives, III: Original Minutes of H.M. Council at Annapolis Royal, 1720-1739* (Halifax, 1908), pp. 112, 122.

71. Jean-Claude DUPONT, *Héritage d'Acadie* (Québec: Leméac, 1977), p. 172, and *Histoire populaire de l'Acadie* (Montréal: Leméac, 1979).

72. MACMECHAN, *Nova Scotia Archives, III*, pp. 3, 17.

of necessities, a supply which might depend on continuous hard work but one that was available. There was no major shortage of food for the Acadians between 1713 and 1748; shelter was readily available; clothing was adequate; and, above all, there were no major epidemics. Even when plague did reach the colony its ravages were confined, both in 1709 and 1751, almost exclusively to the garrisons.⁷³

Quite how the Acadians escaped the general epidemics of the eighteenth century has yet to be fully determined. It is obvious from the mortality rates they suffered during the early years of exile that during the first half of the eighteenth century they had acquired no community levels of immunity to smallpox, yellow fever or typhoid. When those diseases struck as the exiles reached Boston, Philadelphia, South Carolina or the British seaports, a third or more of the Acadians died.⁷⁴ Yet the idea that this vulnerability developed because of the more or less complete isolation of the communities from outside contact is a theory which demands a great deal more examination. The Acadian tradition of trading-cum-smuggling which was established in the seventeenth century took at least some of the men regularly enough to Boston and probably to points south.⁷⁵ In the eighteenth century this activity was continued and Acadian connections with Louisbourg were also developed. The fact that between 1713 and 1748 no large body of immigrants came to the area has tended to overshadow both the trickle of newcomers to the settlements and the continuous nature of the relationships between this "continental cornice" and the wider world. The parish records of Grand-Pré examined by Clark show that of the 174 marriages for which detailed information is available almost exactly one-third involved partners either from elsewhere in the colony or from abroad, sixteen coming from France, eight from Quebec and three from Cape Breton.⁷⁶ As for travellers, most of the settlements encountered them in the form of soldiers and traders as well as government and church officials. Given the normal rate of the spread of infections during these decades, it is extraordinary that no epidemics seem to have come to the settlements via contact with Boston or Quebec, Annapolis Royal or Louisbourg.

If the life of the Acadian settlements was much more open to outside influences than has been generally thought, it was also much less controlled by religious devotion than has been generally supposed. There is no question that the Acadians cherished the Catholic faith. There is also no doubt that they were as much trouble to their priests as any other group of humanity might be. The immense political importance of the Catholic religion to the community has overshadowed questions about its social importance. Acadians' delight in litigation was not their only cross-grained trait. Quarrels that sprung up through their drinking were also matters that concerned their pastors. A report of the archdiocese of Quebec of 1742, which drew particular attention to this flaw, also inferred that bars (*cabarets*) were not only open on Sundays and feast-days, but also kept open during the celebration of

73. W.P. BELL, *The "Foreign Protestants" and the Settlement of Nova Scotia: The History of a Piece of Arrested British Colonial Policy in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 44-45, 64-83, 328-35.

74. GRIFFITHS, "Petitions of Acadian Exiles", pp. 216f.

75. Jean DAIGLE, "Les Relations commerciales de l'Acadie avec le Massachusetts: le cas de Charles-Amador de Saint-Étienne de la Tour, 1695-1697", *Revue de l'Université de Moncton*, IX (1976): 353-61.

76. CLARK, *Acadia*, pp. 203-4.

Mass.⁷⁷ This same report also went on to condemn some of the Acadian communities that allowed men and women not only to dance together after sunset but even permitted the singing of "des chansons lascives". The lack of detail in the report is frustrating: was the alcohol spruce beer? Cider? Rum? Were the *cabarets* found in the front room of the local smuggler, or did Grand-Pré have something close to a village hostelry? Was the dancing anything more than square-dancing? Was the music played on flutes, whistles and triangles only? Or were there also violins? And the songs—which of the presently known folklore airs might they have been: "Le petit Capucin"? "Le chevalier de la Tour ronde"?

Considerably more work needs to be done in the relevant archives before the nature of Acadian beliefs before 1755 can be fully described. The document just cited suggests only that the Acadian interpretation of Catholicism before 1755 owed very little to Jansenism. This would be scarcely surprising. There is little indication, even with the present evidence, that the Acadians indulged in major projects of ostensible devotion, either public or private. There are no stone churches built by them before 1755 nor are there any records of vocations among them before that date, either to the priesthood or to the religious life. Religion among the Acadians seems to have been a matter of necessity but not a question of sainthood, an important and vital ingredient in life, but not the sole shaping force of the social and cultural life of their communities.⁷⁸

For, in sum, the life of the Acadians between 1713 and 1755 was above all the life of a people in fortunate circumstances, the very real foundation for the later myth of a "Golden Age". The ravages of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were remarkably absent, for famine, disease and war barely touched the Acadians during these years. There was sufficient food for the growing families and apparently enough land for the growing population. One's nearest and dearest might have been as aggravating as one's kin can often be, but circumstances not only did not add the burdens of scarcity to emotional life but in fact provided a fair abundance of the necessities. Certainly the daily round for both men and women must have been exhaustingly busy; but work did have its obvious rewards and, for both sexes, it would be varied enough and carried out with companionship and sociability. While the season would often have imposed harsh demands for immediate labour, for seeds must be sown, crops gathered, fish caught and fuel cut as and when the weather dictates, the year's turning would also have brought its own festivities and holidays. Massignon's work suggests that the Acadians kept the twelve days of Christmas, the customs of Candelmas as well as the celebrations common to Easter.⁷⁹ The long winter evenings knew card-playing, dancing and pipe-smoking, as well as story-telling and sing-songs. The spring and summer months would see the celebrations of weddings and the most frequent new-births. Quarrels, scandals,

77. TÊTU et GAGNON, *Mandements, lettres pastorales et circulaires des évêques de Québec, 1888*, pp. 15-16, reprinted in E. de GRACE, G. DESJARDINS, R.-A. MALLET, *Histoire d'Acadie par les Textes*, 4 fascicules (Fredericton: Ministère de l'éducation du Nouveau-Brunswick, 1976), 1 (1604-1760): 19.

78. A most interesting question which needs further investigation and which reinforces the theory of Acadian respect for, but not subservience to, the Catholic church, is the matter of dispensations for marriage between second cousins accorded at Annapolis Royal between 1727 and 1755, the usual reason for such dispensations being pre-marital pregnancy. Cf. CLARK, *Acadia*, pp. 203-4, *passim*.

79. MASSIGNON, *Parlers français*, 2: 691-99.

politics, the visits of priests, the presence of Indians, people whose children occasionally married with the Acadians and who instructed the settlers in the use of local foods,⁸⁰ the presence of the English, now and again also marrying with the Acadians,⁸¹— there is no doubt that Acadian life before 1755 was neither crisis-ridden nor lapped in the tranquillity of a back-water. It was instead a life of considerable distinctiveness. It was a life rich enough to provide the sustenance for a continuing Acadian identity, based not only upon a complex social and cultural life, but also upon the development of a coherent political stance, maintained throughout the settlements over a considerable period of years. It is not surprising that, fragmented in exile, the Acadians remembered these years and that this remembrance would be built into their future lives.

80. Not only fiddle-heads but also *titines de souris* (*salicornia Europaea*) and *passe-pierre* (*saxifraga Virginiensis*). See *ibid.*, 1: 183.

81 KNOX, *Historical Journal*, 1:94-6, quoted in A.G. DOUGHTY, *The Acadian Exiles* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1916), p. 40.