

## ***Les Acadiens de la Rivière des Blonds***

### **The Acadians of Tryon River**

(Excerpts from "A Land of Discord Always", Chas. D. Mahaffie, Jr. Nimbus Pub., 2003)

It was the fish that first brought the Europeans to North America. Word soon spread throughout Europe about this bountiful resource from the sea, especially the cod. By 1504, the English, Basques, Spaniards and Portuguese fished the Atlantic coast.

Acadia had its beginning in 1604 when Pierre du Monts from France, with a grant from King Henry IV, fortified a small island in the St. Croix River (near present day St. Andrew's, NB). The king called this territory Acadie, possibly from the Micmac word *quoddy* meaning a "tract of land.

With skills learned in Europe, the Acadian people turned salt water marshes into farmland. Dykes were constructed to hold back the tides and ditches drained the marshes. The dykes were constructed with *aboiteaux* (gates which shut with the pressure of the salt water tide). At low tide, gates flaps opened allowing the backed up fresh water to flush the marshes, leaving behind lush meadowlands that produced fine crops of hay. Today, remnants of these dykes and ditches can be seen in many of the salt water marshes of the Maritimes, including the Tryon River.

By 1726, Acadians had crossed the Northumberland Strait to Isle St. Jean (now Prince Edward Island) to farm the fertile saltwater marshes here.



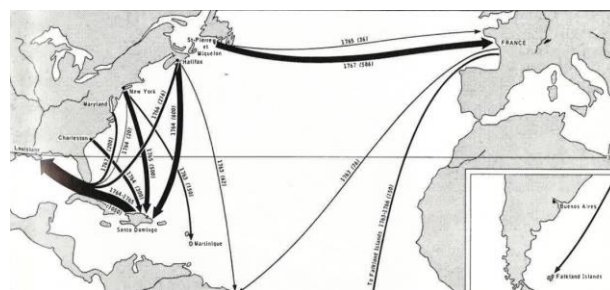
(Picture La Musee Acadien, PEI, 2019)

In 1744, the long peace between France and Britain was undone, and in 1750 they were still arguing over the territory just as they

had since 1613. Both sides glowered at each other across the Tantramar marshes. It should have been a time of truce and negotiations but for the Acadians it was a time of hardship and dilemma.

British Major Lawrence's persuasion was that the Acadians would have to take an oath of loyalty to the King. At a meeting of the council, Acadians were issued with an ultimatum to proclaim their loyalty to the British King, or they would have to leave. Their answer was negative; they would not take the oath unless it was accompanied with an exemption of bearing arms. The decision of the council was for deportation. Acadians would be scattered among the different colonies along the North American coast, with many returned to France.

Some Acadians made their way out before deportations started; perhaps two thousand made their way to Prince Edward Island. Others fled to northeastern New Brunswick and Quebec. Some vanished into the forests near home only to be forced to surrender by cold and hunger, or be captured during the English raids.



(canadiangeographic.ca)

Between 1749 and 1751, a continuous stream of immigrants arrived at Isle St. Jean (PEI) from the mainland. **A 1752 census made by Sieur de la Roque showed 2223 people in 28 communities.** Three years later, about 1400 more Acadians had arrived; those who had escaped the British soldiers. **Around 3000 people from Isle St. Jean (PEI) were deported to France and elsewhere in 1758.**

### **Census of Riviere des Blonds (Tryon River), PEI, 1752**

(More information can be found at:

[http://www.islandregister.com/1752\\_page12.html#riviere%20des%20blonds](http://www.islandregister.com/1752_page12.html#riviere%20des%20blonds))

Rivière des Blonds runs four leagues into the land to the north. Families are settled on both sides of the river, and at a league from its entrance the lands that have been cleared promise well and the rest is covered with all

descriptions of wood fit for construction purposes. There is a great deal of grass on the banks of the said river, which is navigable only by boat.

François Renauld, ploughman, native of l'Acadie, aged 25 years; he has been 21 months in the country. Married to Françoise Commeau, native of l'Acadie, aged 30 years. They have three daughters: Marie Tomic, aged 15 years, daughter of a previous marriage of said Commeau. Theotiste Reneau, aged 20 months. Rose, aged 5 months. In livestock they have two cows, two calves, three pigs, and one hen. The land upon which they are settled is situated on the north-west shore of the said river. It was given to them verbally by Monsieur de Bonneventure. They have made a clearing on it for the sowing of two bushels in the spring.

Pierre Robichud dit Cadet, ploughman, native of l'Acadie, aged 45 years, he has been 21 months in the country. Married to Suzanne Brasseau, native of l'Acadie, aged 45 years. They have eight children, three sons and five daughters: Pierre aged 15 years, Olivier aged 10 years, Phirmain Foelix, aged 19 months, Suzanne aged 19 years, Marie Rose aged 16 years, Marie Anne aged 14 years, Anastazie, aged 8 years, Marie Joseph la Blanche aged 3 years. In livestock they have one ox, one bull, two cows, two heifers, four pigs, and four fowls. The land upon which they are settled is situated as in the preceding cases. It was given to them verbally by Monsieur de Bonneventure. On it, they have made a clearing for the sowing of six bushels of wheat in the coming spring.

Alexandre Bourg, ploughman, native of l'Acadie, aged 43 years; he has been in the country 21 months. Married to Ursulle Hébert, native of l'Acadie, aged 36 years. They have six children, three sons and three daughters: - Joseph aged 16 years, Raymond aged 6 years, Grégoire, aged 30 months, Marie Magdelaine, aged 14 years, Anne Marguerite aged 10 years, Anne Radegonde, aged 8 years. In livestock, they have two oxen, one cow, two heifers, one calf, and five pigs. The land upon which they are settled was given to them verbally by Monsieur de Bonneventure. It is situated on the east bank of said river. They have made a clearing for the sowing of six bushels in the coming spring.

François Bourg, ploughman, native of l'Acadie, aged 35 years; he has been in the country one year. Married to Marguerite Hébert, native of l'Acadie, aged 38 years. They have five children, two sons and three daughters: - Charles aged 12 years. Jean aged 10 years. François, aged 6 years. Marguerite, aged 4 years, Marie aged one year. In livestock they have two oxen, one cow, one heifer, and four pigs. The land upon which they are settled is situated on the east bank of Rivière des Blonds. It was given to them verbally by Monsieur le Bonneventure. They have made a clearing on it for the sowing of six bushels of wheat.

Jean Bourg, ploughman, native of l'Acadie, aged 45 years; he has been in the country one year. Married to Marie Pitre, native of l'Acadie, aged 46 years. They have five children, three sons and two daughters: - Jean aged 17 years. François, aged 14 years. Charles aged 6 years. Marguerite, aged 18 years, Marie aged 8 years. In livestock they have three oxen, one cow, three heifers, and five pigs. The land upon which they are settled is situated as in the preceding cases. It was given to them verbally by Monsieur de Bonneventure. On it they have made a clearing for the sowing of six bushels of wheat in the coming spring.



**The Acadians, "Building a Home" circa 1720.**  
Courtesy, NS Dept. of Education

In Tryon, the 1752 census shows 5 families living in Tryon totaling 37 people. One year later, the census of 1753 records 60 persons residing along Riviere-des-Blonds. In 1758, Acadians were evicted from their Island farms and deported. When Captain Holland surveyed the Island in 1764, he found at "Riviere des Blonde" four hundred and fifty acres of cleared land, and 20 deserted houses evacuated by the Acadians when they were evicted from the Island six years previously. (See the two maps on the next page)



## Acadian Buildings – 1765 Holland Map *Courtesy Doug Sobey*



The French and English were the two main permanent settlers of the New World. For various reasons the Indigenous people felt less threatened by the French, and when Britain and France were at war with each other, the Mi'kmaq took the side of the French.

After the Mi'kmaq, the Acadians were the next peoples to live and farm along the salt marshes of Riviere des Blonds. Evidence of their work is still visible in the marshes today.

To harvest the marsh grass, they first had to stop the tremendous flow of the tides, through a system of dykes and ditches.

The name of the “Abido” bridge (seen from South Shore United Church on Hwy #10) comes from the Acadian word “Aboiteau”. An *aboiteau* is a hinged wooden sluice used to keep the salt water from flooding the marshes.

## 1765 Holland Map superimposed on modern map *Courtesy Doug Sobey*



## Acadians of Tryon River

The first European fishermen quickly established a greater contact with the indigenous peoples precipitating another important commerce, the exchange of commodities from the old world for the rich furs from North America.



Remains of original Acadian *aboiteau*, in Tryon River, below present day Hwy#10



Remnants of these dykes and ditches are seen in many of the salt water marshes of the Maritimes.





**THIS DYKE AT TRYON WAS BUILT ON THE REMAINS OF AN ACADIAN DYKE c1900**  
*Courtesy of Barb & Steve Clement.*

Dykes had *aboiteaux*, which shut with the pressure of the salt water tide. At low tide, the gates flaps opened, allowing the backed up fresh water to flush the marshes, leaving behind lush meadowlands that produced fine crops of hay. Marsh hay, harvested using scythes and sickles, was excellent feed for animals during long harsh winter months.



Scythe user



Hand held sickle



(The Acadians, "Saltmarsh Haying", Belleisle, NS. circa 1720. Courtesy, NS Dept. of Education)

The Common Reed was also harvested, to be used in thatching of roofs for Acadian homes.

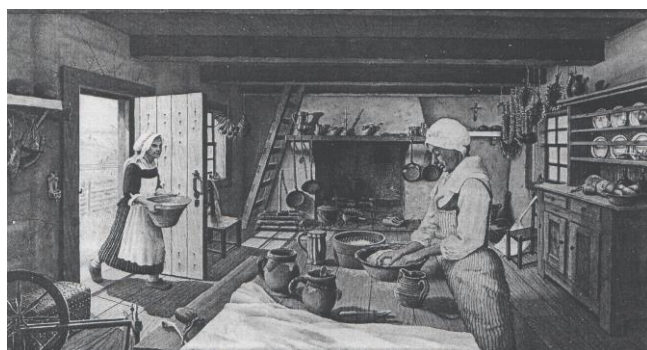


The Acadians, "The Home", Belleisle, NS. Circa 1720. Courtesy, NS Dept. of Education



**COMMON REED (*Phragmites Communis*)**  
*Courtesy of Jack Sorensen*

Rather restricted distribution on PEI. Usually found near old Acadian settlements. This patch on the Tryon Marsh has ditches around its perimeter



The Acadians, "Inside the Home", Belleisle, NS. Circa 1720. Courtesy, NS Dept. of Education

Island rivers such as Riviere des Blonds were ideal locations for Acadians. They were content to be left alone to farm, raise their families and practice their Catholic religion. Acadian influence quickly spread to other Island communities. The population rose to nearly 5000 settlers by 1758, the year of "La Grande Deportation".



**"Acadian Expulsion",**  
[www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca)

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