Acadiana marks anniversary of deportation of forerunners

Some of their names have been lost through the centuries — Acadian men, women and children herded onto boats from the shores of Nova Scotia, bound for no particular harbor.

Men like Jean Baptiste Semer, separated from his son and exiled with his wife, Anne Landry. Sent into exile from their home, but eventually reunited with his son, Jean Baptiste, in Louisiana.

Women like the Richard sisters, Marie, Marguerite and Elisabeth, deported to Virginia, then England, then France, eventually arriving in Louisiana in 1785.

Theirs and thousands more are the stories that built Acadiana.

The voices heard in Cajun song.

The spirits of faith, family and hope that continue to resonate...

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Today is the 250th anniversary of the issuance of the Deportation Order which started the expulsion of the Acadian people from Nova Scotia. Many Acadians, people of French descent who would not swear allegiance to Britain, eventually found their way to Louisiana.

Although the deportation order was issued on July 28, 1755, the expulsion of Acadians from Nova Scotia lasted for years. Carl Brasseaux, director of the Center of Louisiana Studies at the University of Louisiana, said today's anniversary marks an important point in the history of Acadians, known today as Cajuns and estimated to number 500,000.

"The die is cast," Brasseaux said. "If there had been any doubt about the population's fate, it was laid to rest at that point."

John Mack Faragher, chair of Yale University's Program in American Studies, said Anglo British forces expected to get the work of Acadian expulsions done in the fall of 1755.

"During that time, they were able to round up and ship off about 7,000 Acadians — that represents about one-third of the Acadians that were present in Nova Scotia at that time," Faragher said. "Many families had already fled to what they considered safer territory that was nominally French."

Faragher said that what took place from 1755 until the end of the French and Indian War in 1763 was a prolonged guerrilla struggle in Nova Scotia.

"There was a lot of fighting and atrocities on both sides," Faragher said. "In 1758, the British succeeded in deporting about 4,000 more Acadians. All in all, that expulsion, which gets a lot less attention, was even worse than the first."

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Faragher said that of the common misunderstandings about the deportation is that the British sent the Acadians to Nova Scotia in September of that year by Col. John Winslow.

The order read by Col. John Winslow to the Acadians in Grand Pré church in September 1755 said in part, "That your lands and tenements, cattle of all kinds and livestock of all sorts are forfeited to the Crown with all other your effects saving your money and household goods and you yourselves to be removed from this his province."

Faragher said when Americans read Longfellow’s poem, “Evangeline,” they “were outraged at what the British did.” However, when Americans realized that it really wasn’t the British, but American colonial forces from New England who were responsible for the atrocities against the Acadian people, they lost interest in the cause.

"If we’re going to tell the story, it’s extremely important to tell the truth," Faragher said. "It gives us some perspective and understanding of what ethnic cleansing is and how it occurs. Democracy or emerging democracies, like the United States, are not immune to resorting to such violent tactics. This is the earliest example of what would become a horrible pattern of American expansion in the 19th century.”

Brasseaux said that learning history is important because he believes “Americans have unfortunately tended to be rather myopic, at least in recent years. The modern world doesn’t exist in a vacuum. The reason that we find ourselves in our present surroundings is a result of a long series of events dating back centuries, if not millennia. The past, in many ways, is a determinant of what is to come. History is important on many counts.”

### Timeline of major events in the history of Acadians:

**EXPLORATION**
- 1604 — First Acadian settlement on Saint-Croix Island.
- 1605 — First Acadian settlement in Port-Royal.
- 1607 — Jamestown is established.
- 1620 — Pilgrim Fathers land at Plymouth Rock.
- 1632 — Treaty of St. Germain-on-Laye. Isaac de Razilly departs from La Rochelle with Charles de Menou and 300 settlers. They settle at La Heve.

**BEFORE DEPORTATION**
- 1638 — The St. Jean arrives in Port-Royal with French settlers that include both men and women.
- 1655 — Port-Royal is captured by the British.
- 1670 — Treaty of Breda.
- 1671 — The population of Acadia numbering 340 is enumerated for its first census.
- 1672 — Beaubassin in the Chignecto Isthmus region is established.
- 1682 — Grand Pré located in Minas is founded. It will become the bread basket of Acadia.
- 1687 — St. Charles des Mines Church is built at Grand-Pré.
- 1690 — Port-Royal is captured by the British. It will be renamed Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.
- 1697 — Treaty of Ryswick.
- 1701 — Petitcodiac is founded.
- 1704 — With a population of 1,450, the Acadians are enumerated again.
- 1708 — Queen Anne's war breaks out and there is unrest with the British.
- 1710 — Port-Royal falls to the British one last time and is now called Annapolis Royal after Queen Anne.
- 1713 — Treaty of Utrecht. Acadia now belongs to England and never again returns to France.
- 1720 — The fortress at Louisbourg begins construction.
- 1749 — The English found Halifax and bring 2,576 English settlers to populate and settle the land.
- 1755 — The Acadian Diaspora/Deportation begins and will go on for years.

**POST DEPORTATION**
- 1758 — Acadians who had gone to Ile Ste. Jean/Prince Edward Island earlier in agreement with the British Government or who had fled there later are deported to France. A group escapes to Malpeque and is not discovered. Later, they will be part of the founding families of Tignish. Three ships go down at sea while deporting the Acadians. Whole families are never heard from again.
- 1759 — Acadians on Ile Royale/Cape Breton are deported to France.
- 1765 — First Acadians settle in Louisiana.
- 1773 — The 2,370 Acadians in France are enumerated.
- 1776 — 22 Acadians under the command of Capt. Isaias Boudeau fight under Col. Jonathan Eddy (the Eddy Rebellion) in an effort to retake Port Cumberland.
- 1785 — Acadians numbering 1,600 sail from France to settle in Louisiana. Some of their relatives had gone there earlier. They will become known as Cajuns.
- 1847 — The poem “Evangeline” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is published. A spirit of pride and hope is rekindled among the Acadians.
- 1881 — First Acadian Convention at Memramcook. The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother is voted as the Acadian National holiday and is celebrated each year on Aug. 15.
- 1884 — Second Acadian Convention at Miscouche on Prince Edward Island. The tri-color with gold star is approved as the Acadian flag and the hymn is Ave Maria. Stella becomes the national anthem of the Acadians.
- 2003 — Proclamation from Queen Elizabeth II acknowledging the wrong in deporting the Acadians from Nova Scotia for refusing to pledge allegiance to Britain.

**SOURCE:** lWIW, acadiarhome.org