When Charles Lawrence became governor of Nova Scotia in 1754, he not only politically ambitious, he was greedy — and the lands held by the Acadians were high on the list of the things he wanted.

The population of New England was beginning to grow and it was getting crowded. The New Englanders were looking around for a place to grow into. Unfortunately for the Acadians, they were not English and their lands were the highest around.

That and the Acadians' reluctance to take an oath of allegiance to the British crown were all that was needed to ensure their fate.

250 years ago this year, when they were exiled from their homeland.

England and France fought each other regularly during these times as they tried to establish dominance in Europe and in North America. There was a pause in the battle in the early 1750s, but Lawrence knew that it was only a matter of time before war broke out again.

The governor and his advisors thought the Acadians' refusal to take an unconditional oath of allegiance meant that they would fight with the French and Canadians against the English when war broke out again.

The Acadians had their own fears. They thought that their promise of neutrality in any war would be their only protection when the fighting started. They had lived in Acadia for more than a century by 1755 and considered themselves Acadians and North Americans. They didn't care who ruled Europe. It made little difference in their day-to-day lives. The French government all but ignored the Acadians and the Acadians all but ignored the French government.

They had no intention of fighting for or against the British. They just wanted to be left alone to tend their farms, whoever was in power.

That's what they told Lawrence in a letter, and that's what stirred things up.

He called the letter "treason," and said that he would thereafter consider the Acadians as citizens and agents of France.

That gave him the excuse he needed to go on with the plan he'd been hatching.

"What if," he asked his advisors, "we take their lands and move them away, but we scatter them in our British colonies up and down the Atlantic seaboard?" That would open the lands to New Englanders, remove the threat of Acadians fighting with the French, and keep them from reuniting with other Frenchmen because they would be scattered to the winds.

His advisors thought that it was a grand idea.

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