FORWARD

Mass Migration of French Families to New France

When Acadia was returned to France in 1632 by the Saint Germain-en-Laye Treaty, Cardinal Richelieu, minister of Louis XIII, organized a trading company for Quebec and one for Acadia. In the church registers of LaChaussee near the village of d'Aulnay, in France, more than half of the acts entered in the records from 1626 to 1650 concerns family names that are found in the 1671 census in Acadia. Dugast was one of these names. The family was one of the many that mass migrated to Acadia from France to being a new life and seek a lifetime dream of becoming successful in "New France". Many such families had acquired land there and developed estates which were regarded as the finest in the land. In the war between France and England in Canada, the English made many attempt's to get the Acadian's to bear arms against France. It was their intent to remain loyal to England in exchange for protection of their lives and property. They did choose however, to remain neutral. Because of the English determination to get complete control over the Acadian's, constant pressures were placed on them. When the English weren't harassing them, the English had the Indians doing so. As a result of this, the Acadian's lived in constant fear of losing their properties and their lives. In early 1749, they began emigrating in increasing numbers to the nearest french territories. Thousands of them went to Ile Saint-Jean (Prince Edward Island). Eventually, the English issued the ultimatum of either taking up arms against France or be exiled out of the country. As a result of choosing to remain neutral, the Acadian's were eventually forced out of Nova Scotia. The Exile Trip Back to France From Nova Scotia

Some of the Acadians migrated into the United States. Others were shipped back to France in 1758 from Prince Edwards Island on five ship's provided by the English. The ships' were badly in need of repair, and far from being the finest one's afloat. Many of the Acadian's were ill as a result of the harassment done to them by the English, and not eating properly. Many died enroute back to France including Charles Dugast and two of his children, Marguerite and Joseph.

The Difficulty Experienced On Returning To France

The migration back to France was difficult for the Acadian's. They were finding it difficult to adjust in their new environment. The French authorities were aware of this so in 1773 they devised a plan to settle 1500 Acadian's on land acquired the year before by a retired colonel, the Marquis de Perusse des Cars of the Normandy regiment. This land comprised sixteen parishes in the Montairon region of Poctou, France. Subsidized by the French government, the Marquis formed the Acadian Colony by assigning them to the territory comprising the parishes of Archigny, Cenan, Lapuye and Saint-Pierre de Maille. The colony was on a plateau located between La Gartanpe River to the east and La Vienne River to the west. This colony, for reasons too numerous to mention, was an utter failure. In 1775, the 1500 Acadian's who had settled in Poctou returned to the ports of France.
In 1783, when everything seemed hopeless, a man by the name of Peyroux de la Coudreniere decided to help the desperate Acadian refugees. Originally from Nantes where he had been a pharmacist, Peyroux went to Louisiana where he spent seven years. While there, he made a fortune. During his stay there he met prosperous and influential Acadians. They expressed to him how grateful they would be if he would take steps to locate their Acadian friends and relatives in France. Through him a plan was put into effect to bring the Acadians to Louisiana at the expense of the King of Spain. His first step was to meet Ignacio Heredia, personal secretary to the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, the Count of Arando, who, hearing of the plan, recommended it to his government in Madrid.

Among other Acadians that Peyroux met in Nantes was Olivier Theriot, a shoemaker, who became his close friend.

Peyroux's plan to transport the Acadian's from France to Louisiana began by having them sign a petition. This was sent to the Spanish Ambassador in Paris and then forwarded to Madrid with favorable recommendation. On October 22, 1783, Charles III of Spain accepted Peyroux's plan and agreed to absorb the costs it would involve.

Olivier Theriot was given the rewarding task of spreading the good news among the Acadian refugees in Nantes, Saint-Malo and Morlaix. From that moment, Heredia became a key figure in the project and kept Peyroux and Olivier informed as to activities preparing the Acadian's departure for Louisiana.

On March 31, 1784, Louis XVI gave his permission for the Acadian's departure. The French government agreed to pay all Acadian debt's incurred while in France. This enabled them to be able to sign up for the emigration to Louisiana.

The Journey To America

Through the effort's of Manuel d'Aspres, Spanish Consul in Saint-Malo, seven vessels were made ready to carry the Acadian's to Louisiana.

La Ville d'Archangel was the sixth ship to leave France with 53 families aboard which made up 309 passengers. It left Saint-Malo on August 12, 1785 and reached it's New Orleans desitation on December 3. The ship's passenger list listed Family #45 as Victoria Dugat, widow of Thomas Aillet, Thomas Aillet, son age ten (10), and Louis Aillet, son age six (6). The Acadians on this ship were sent to Bayou des Ecores and along Bayou Lafourche.

This began the Aillet Acadian Heritage in America. Sometime during the period of time from the Acadian's being expelled from Nova Scotia until the time they departed from France, Victoria met and married Thomas Aillet. Sometime before she departed for America, Thomas died. From the time when Victoria and her two boys arrived in New Orleans, that was the beginning of the Aillet Acadian Heritage in Louisiana.