Greed
played role
in exile of
Acadians

When the British decided to expel the Acadians from their native lands 250 years ago this year, they also decided that the Acadians should bear the cost of their own exile.

In July 1755, Col. John Winslow, the British officer in charge of the Grand Pré area of old Acadie, wrote this in his journal: "We are now hatching the noble and great project of banishing (the Acadians) from this province; they have ever been our secret enemies and have encouraged the Indians to cut our throats. If we can accomplish this expulsion, it will have been one of the greatest deeds the English in America have achieved; for, among other considerations, the part of the country which they occupy is one of the best soils in the world, and, in the event, we might place some good farmers on their homesteads."

In fact, Gov. Charles Lawrence, who then had charge of the whole of the Acadian peninsula, had been planning the Acadian deportation for some time. Early in 1755, he had asked Charles Morris, the provincial surveyor, to prepare a report on how to go about it.

Gov. William Shirley of Massachusetts promised enough ships to carry away the 7,000 Acadians still in Nova Scotia.

On July 31, 1755, Lawrence sent instructions to Col. Robert Moncton, commanding officer in the Beauséjour region: "The ... Acadians of the District of Annapolis Royal, Mines and Pisiquid ... shall be removed out of the country as soon as possible. ... For this purpose, orders are given for a sufficient number of transports to be sent ... for taking them on board, by whom you will receive particular instructions as to the
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manner of their being disposed of, the place of their deportation, and every other thing necessary of that purpose.

“In the meantime,” Lawrence instructed, “it will be necessary to keep this measure as secret as possible to prevent their attempting to escape and carry off their cattle. In order to effect this, you will endeavor to fall upon some strategy to get the men, both young and old — especially heads of families — into your power, and detain them until the transports should arrive, so as they may be ready to be shipped off; for, when this is done, it is not much to be feared that the women and children will attempt to go away and carry off the cattle.

“As their whole stock of cattle and corn ... must be secured and applied toward a reimbursement of the expense the Government will have incurred in transporting them out of the country, care must be taken that nobody make any bargain for purchasing them under any color or pretext whatsoever.”

Greed had as much to do with the expulsion as anything else.

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