

The Deportation Period, 1755 - 1762

The period between 1755 and 1762 was a very tragic time for Acadians, for it was in those years that the British authorities decided to enforce a deportation order. Acadians were stripped of all their rights and placed in the holds of over-crowded ships bound for destinations unknown. The traumatic events deeply scared the Acadians people. Memories of the terrors of the deportation and exile lasted for generations.

After the fall of Beauséjour in the spring of 1755, events progressed rapidly toward deportation. The British authorities in Halifax continued to ban Acadians from using their guns and canoes and in the late summer the plan was put into motion. On Friday, September 5, 1755 Colonel John Winslow ordered that all males aged 10 years and up in the area were to gather in the Grand-Pré Church for an important message from His Excellency, Charles Lawrence, the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia. The decree that was read to the assembled and stated in part:

"Gentlemen, I have received from His Excellency Governor Lawrence the King's commission which I have in my hand and by who's orders you are conveyed together to manifest to you His Majesty's final resolution to the French inhabitants of this his province of Nova Scotia who for almost half a century have had more indulgence granted them than any of his subjects in any part of his Dominions. What you have made of them you yourself best know."

(quoted by John Winslow in : *Acadie; Esquisse d'un parcours; Sketches of a Journey. p.52*)

The promise made to the Acadians that families were not to be divided during the process were not kept. Lawrence's motives were not at all sympathetic to the Acadian's plight as evidenced in a letter he sent to Colonel Robert Monckton: " I would have you not wait for the wives and the children coming in but ship off the men without them." (quoted in Naomi Griffiths, "*The Acadian Deportation; Causes and Development*," Ph.D thesis, p. 176)

After Acadians had boarded the ships orders were given to destroy homes and to round up livestock. In this way Acadians who had escaped, or were planning to, would not have their former homes to run to nor would they have their cattle and sheep to rely on. Today, the very site of the first deportation, at Grand-Pré is marked by a cross.

In total over ten thousand Acadians were either deported, imprisoned or escaped, or hid in the wooded hillsides close by. For those who did run, ingenious ways were contrived by the authorities to force them out of hiding. Winslow had warned Acadians that "if within 2 days the absent ones are not delivered up, military execution would be immediately visited upon the next of kin." (quoted in Dudley LeBlanc, *The Acadian Miracle*, p.174)