

RETELLING EXODUS

Cultural Negotiation among Pennsylvania Acadians

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Honors History Thesis

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Submitted 18 March 2014

The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.
Deuteronomy 28:25

Long ago, along the sleepy agricultural peninsulas of French Acadia, rustic communities dotted fertile meadows spliced by glassy rivers that watered the forests. On a dewy morning in 1755, this peace and calm was torn asunder by British troops sworn to amass the innocent farmers of the region and cast them out into the breadth of the British Empire. One young woman, Evangeline Bellefontaine could only watch as British officers abused her father and boarded her fiancé Gabriel Lajeunesse on a swarming, congested ship headed for the British colonies. After she too was cast off, Evangeline spent the remainder of her life wandering across North America, from the eastern seaboard to the western plains searching for her lost fiancé, until much later, as a Sister of Mercy, she discovered him dying in a Philadelphia hospital. Before he died in her arms, they confirmed their eternal love for each other, sharing a final sweet moment that somehow encapsulated decades of tribulation, determination, and longing.

This is actually a story, not history but rather a fiction told by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his epic poem *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*. Since the poem's publication in 1847, the histories of Acadian exiles reflect these same patterns: nostalgic tales of small agriculturalists tragically torn from their homes, wandering through exile, and finally reuniting to restore culture and community. While Longfellow's poem truly sparked renewed interest in the history of Acadia, in modern-day Nova Scotia, a historiographical attachment to this style of narrative limits the scope to which the 'Grand Dérangement' or 'Great Upheaval' of Acadians can be understood. Rather than studying only tribulations or paths toward reunion, the study of Acadians would be well-served by an examination of these people's behavior in often hostile environments. Historians such as John Mack Faragher have written excellent histories on

Acadian cultural negotiation and adaptation during the years of British occupation.¹ The same must be attempted within the history of the Acadian diaspora.

The French settled Acadia in the early seventeenth century, quickly establishing close relationships and trading partnerships with the native Mi'kmaq people (often through intermarriage) while simultaneously trading south with the British colonies in New England (fig. 1). Although this was initially a mutually beneficial association, New Englanders grew to fear the Acadians' relationship with the French and Native Americans. They envied Acadians' superior geographic location for shipping as well as trade with Caribbean colonies. For several decades, troops from Massachusetts attempted to ransack and claim the Acadian peninsula, but infighting and confused leadership prevented a permanent British presence in the area. In 1710 however, Samuel Vetch, a Scot, convinced the British government to fund a comprehensive assault on the Acadian town of Port Royal which finally succeeded; the British crown claimed the province following the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, and Acadia became Nova Scotia.²

Yet the problem remained: what to do with the French residents of Acadia? The capitulation agreement allowed Acadians to remain in their homes, protected from harassment by the British troops, and the Tory British government refused to spare the expense of exporting these locals. Furthermore, British garrisons relied upon Acadian industry, trade, and agriculture to survive. So while Vetch had hoped to resettle the region, create a colony of Scotsmen, and officially introduce Scotland into the British Empire, he and other English officials were forced to incorporate Acadians into the British system.³ Thus began several decades during which British colonial officials relied upon the Acadian people, and in return, demanded oaths of

¹ John Mack Faragher. *Great and Noble Scheme*. (New York: WW Norton & Co, 2005).

² Christopher Hodson, "Exile on Spruce Street: An Acadian History," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (2010): 260.

³ Geoffrey Gilbert Plank. *An Unsettled Conquest*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 57-59.

allegiance to the English crown under the threat of dispossessing the Acadians of their land and forcing them to relocate.

Despite being an agricultural and largely illiterate population, the Acadians proved to be masterful negotiators during an era of French and British imperial competition in North America. The Acadians refused to accept an unconditional oath to the British king, insisting on both the freedom to practice Catholicism and complete military neutrality, giving them the moniker ‘French Neutrals.’⁴ Two generations of accommodation between Acadians and British officials followed, until the leadership of Nova Scotia fell into the hands of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Lawrence in 1753. A man of neither subtlety nor empathy, Lawrence continually suspected conspiracy amongst the Acadian residents and urged the British Parliament to finally authorize an ultimate resolution to the Acadian problem; the British Board of Trade in London vacillated on the issue until ultimately allowing Lawrence to expel as he saw fit the residents of Nova Scotia.⁵

What followed is one of the earliest instances of systematic and deliberate ethnic cleansing in North America. Between August and December 1755, Charles Lawrence carried out his methodical plan for amassing the Acadians and dispersing them “among His Majesty’s colonies upon the Continent of America.” Starting with the town of Chignecto, colonial officials issued a summons to all male inhabitants over the age of sixteen to appear at the fort to discuss oaths of allegiance and the ownership of their land. There, the men were taken hostage and detained until their wives and children surrendered as well. Together, British troops rounded up the inhabitants of Chignecto (those who were unable to escape into the frontier) and boarded

⁴ For comprehensive histories of Acadian oaths during British occupation, see Geoffrey Plank’s *An Unsettled Conquest* (2001) and John Mack Faragher’s *A Great and Noble Scheme* (2005).

⁵ Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 280-311.

them on ships to await transportation south.⁶ This pattern was repeated in the towns of Pisiquid, Minas Basin, and Grand Pré until approximately 7,000 Acadians were removed from their homes and boarded onto sloops as overcrowded as slaving vessels, festering with smallpox and other disease.⁷

Of these ships, several were bound for the port city of Philadelphia in the colony of Pennsylvania. During a violent storm in the North Atlantic, two of these ships, the *Boscawen* and the *Union*, sank with their 582 Acadian refugees still trapped within the cargo holds.⁸ On 18 and 20 November 1755, three sloops, *Hannah*, *Three Friends*, and *Swan*, arrived in Philadelphia carrying approximately 454 French Neutrals.⁹ Blindsided and panicked about how to accommodate these refugees, Pennsylvania Governor Robert Hunter Morris placed guards on the ships to ensure that no passenger would disembark. Four days later, on 24 November 1755, the refugees were allowed to land on Province Island, also known as Sick Island, after having been on board the ships for two months, eating a diet of pork and flour, and lacking blankets, shirts, stockings, and other provisions.¹⁰ From there, the government of Pennsylvania deliberated how best to settle the Acadian exiles with the least risk and expense to the colony.

The French Neutrals lived and worked in Pennsylvania, and other American colonies, for nearly a decade until the Treaty of Paris in 1763 officially ended the French and Indian War, allowing the Acadian exiles to settle more freely. Afterwards, the majority of the refugees resettled and congregated in New Brunswick or along the banks of the Mississippi River in Spanish-controlled Louisiana, where they would become what are known today as the Cajuns.

⁶ *Ibid.* Page 338.

⁷ *Ibid.* Page 364.

⁸ *Ibid.* Page 370.

⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 20 November 1755.

Wilton Paul Ledet, "Acadian Exiles in Pennsylvania." *Pennsylvania History* 9 (1942): 119.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

Due to the cultural influence and size of the Louisiana Cajun population, histories of the Acadian diaspora typically drive towards this ultimate reunion in the south. Of the Acadians' time in the American colonies (or several other remote locations to which the population was dispersed), many historians emphasize only the misery and tribulations that Acadians endured.¹¹ Some argue further that Acadians merely attempted "to give a peaceful image of itself: that of a quiet people desiring to live on good terms with the English-speaking majority" until they were able to congregate and find sanctuary in Louisiana or New Brunswick.¹²

Like their Native American neighbors, Acadians have long been relegated to the role of perpetual victims in histories of eighteenth century imperial conflict. Historians who applaud the Acadians' actions tend to homogenize their cultural experience and to focus on a quality of character (usually stubbornness or tenacity as exhibited by Evangeline) as an explanation of how they maintained their culture until they ultimately regrouped on the Mississippi River in Louisiana. Yet neither of these approaches actually examines the conditions in which Acadians found themselves in specific American colonies after their exile from Nova Scotia in 1755, nor the ways in which they dealt with those conditions. The evidence indicates that their actions, primarily between 1755 and 1763, constituted a deliberate construction of culture and identity in particular social, political, and religious conditions. Pennsylvania provides an excellent, if perhaps atypical, framework for studying Acadian agency following exile for the colony's diversity, relative wealth, and a collection records that document a remarkable people constructing new cultural identities in a strange land.

¹¹ For a complete summary of Acadians' misfortunes based on location, see Carl A Brasseaux's *Scattered to the Wind* (1991).

¹² Jean-Claude Vernex et al. *French America: Mobility, Identity, and Minority Experience across the Continent*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 192.

These records include a substantial cache of family documents found in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania: the notes on the Ribaud family of Acadia and later Pennsylvania, which were collected by Fern DuComb Kahlert, and the legal records regarding the estate of Charles White. In 1816, prominent Pennsylvania businessman Charles White died in Philadelphia without a will or apparent next of kin; this left his lawyer, Stephen du Ponceau, to investigate White's history in order to determine the heirs to his fortune. In the process, du Ponceau unearthed White's true name, Charles LeBlanc, and his large extended family of Acadian refugees. The results of du Ponceau's search for White's heirs-at-law are numerous pages of depositions and family trees that document the experience of Acadian refugees living in Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century. As the Acadians were a largely illiterate people who left behind few records, these documents provide a rare glimpse at the lives of refugees; I use them to understand the practice of cultural negotiation within the Acadian diaspora before many of the Neutral French regrouped in Louisiana and Canada.

In Pennsylvania, Acadians entered a paradoxical environment: characteristically suspicious of Popery, yet with a burgeoning population of Catholics, historically embedded with Quaker pacifism now suddenly calling up arms. The diverse population of ethnicities and religions, along with Pennsylvania's tradition of religious toleration, accommodated Acadians' individual choices as they carved out new lives in a new space. In Pennsylvania, the Neutral French maintained and adapted elements of their culture. Some elements such as community patterns, religious expression, and forms of labor were subject to cultural negotiation that maintained Acadian tradition while also adapting to the Pennsylvania system. Other issues however, such as military service and a commitment to neutrality, included much less room for negotiation and changed little during this decade of North American imperial war.

No Man is an Island: Acadian Community-Life

And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other.
Deuteronomy 28:64

As one of the first European settlements in North America, the French first colonized Acadia in 1605, two years before England's first permanent colony in North America at Jamestown, Virginia.¹³ There, Acadians built agricultural communities, growing wheat and raising sheep and cattle along the banks of the St. John River and the coast of the Atlantic peninsula. After generations of population growth thanks to a relatively even sex-ratio, Acadians expanded their settlements out from river basins to the tidal plains of the Bay of Fundy. In that region they developed sophisticated diking technologies to protect their farms from the world's largest tides: the Bay of Fundy experiences tidal changes of nearly 56 feet. With an extremely low rate of immigration from France, Acadians developed close community ties between themselves and their Native American neighbors, the Mi'kmaq, forming close communal bonds based upon trading relationships and intermarriage.¹⁴

After the British assumed control of Nova Scotia, these intimate communities and relationships with Native Americans contributed to suspicion and fear amongst British officials preceding the Grand Dérangement. As Acadians steadfastly refused to swear an unconditional oath to the British crown, British officials feared that Acadian communities secretly schemed against them. After several Mi'kmaq raids on British stores in the early eighteenth century, Englishman Charles Morris surveyed the Bay of Fundy region and concluded that it was certain

¹³ Philip L Barbour. *The Jamestown Voyages under the First Charter, 1606-1609: documents relating to the foundation of Jamestown and the history of the Jamestown colony up to the departure of Captain John Smith, last president of the council in Virginia under the first charter, early in October 1609.* (London: published for the Hakluyt Society by Cambridge UP, 1969).

¹⁴ Plank, *Unsettled Conquest*, 19.

that Acadians abetted the Mi'kmaq in continued attacks against the British.¹⁵ Ultimately, Nova Scotia's colonial governor, Charles Lawrence, determined that Acadian communities posed an imminent danger to British interests; he concluded that a dispersed expulsion would be necessary to make certain that Acadians could not "easily collect themselves together again," ensuring it would be "out of their power to do any mischief" and claiming "they may become profitable and, it is possible in time, faithful subjects."¹⁶

As such, after the Acadians were distributed throughout the British Empire, the Pennsylvania Provincial Council debated how best to settle the 454 refugees the colony received; meanwhile the refugees remained sequestered on Province Island. On 5 March 1756, the Council passed "An Act for dispersing the Inhabitants of Nova Scotia, imported into this Province, into the several Counties of Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, and Lancaster, and the Townships thereof, and making Provisions for the same" before sending it along to the king for approval. The act scattered Acadians throughout Bucks, Chester, Lancaster, and Philadelphia counties on the stipulation "that not any more than one family be allotted...to any one township," allegedly so that each township's overseer of the poor could establish settlements for these families in the "best manner they are able" (fig. 2).¹⁷ Yet given Governor Lawrence's recommendation, this suggests the councilmen also had ulterior motives borne from fears of the Acadian community. Among others, the Provincial Council appointed several respected Pennsylvanians including four Huguenots such as Samuel Le Fevre, and Abraham de Normandie to apportion the Acadian refugees.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 142.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 145.

¹⁷ *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682-1801*, Vol 5, 217.

¹⁸ *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682-1801*, Vol 5, 216.

Even in regions of Pennsylvania where this dispersal was implemented effectively, records reveal a highly mobile population of Acadians in Pennsylvania and the neighboring colony of Maryland. When successful Pennsylvania businessman Charles White died in Philadelphia without a will or apparent next of kin in 1816, his lawyer, Stephen du Ponceau interviewed several of White's numerous cousins and acquaintances, asking them to recount their experiences in America.¹⁹ These depositions and testimonies reveal an actively traveling population between the mid-Atlantic colonies. According to many acquaintances, Charles White traveled between Philadelphia and Annapolis, Maryland to visit his Acadian relatives as a young man.²⁰ Likewise, his cousins, Mary Joseph Trepagnié and a Mrs. Fisher, traveled between New York, Baltimore, and Pennsylvania, later claiming to visit often with White in Philadelphia.²¹ These travels of White's extended family reveal the mobility of some Acadians in Pennsylvania in order to maintain Acadian relationships despite their intentionally dispersed resettlement.

Yet for some Pennsylvania Acadians, seeing their fellow refugees required significantly less exertion. Despite the Provincial Council's ambitious plan for Acadian resettlement, many Pennsylvania townships refused to accept the French Neutrals, leaving a group of Acadian exiles stranded in Philadelphia without a home. Initially the refugees boarded in an abandoned building previously used as barracks for colonial soldiers, but this solution quickly proved insufficient.²² As such, the Provincial Council paid Philadelphia businessman Anthony Benezet £29.18 to build cabins for the exiles in the city.²³ With the additional support of private enterprises, Benezet erected several one-story wooden houses along the north side of Pine Street, between Fifth and

¹⁹ Hodson, "Exile on Spruce Street," 151.

²⁰ "Testimony of Catherine Bijeo" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

²¹ "Testimony of John Wilson" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

²² Ledet, "Acadian Exiles in Pennsylvania," 125.

²³ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 7, 5662: 21 October 1760.

Sixth Street (fig. 3).²⁴ One of Charles White's cousins, Catherine Boudreau actually lived in one of these cabins that would be dubbed the "French houses" at 6th and Pine.²⁵ As such, along one street in Philadelphia the project of maintaining relationships with fellow Acadians was made simpler by the prejudices of Pennsylvania townships and the generosity of sympathetic Philadelphians.

Although some Acadian communities remained intact, some features of community behavior did not. One of the most unique aspects of community in Nova Scotia, that of endogamous marriage, traces back to Acadia's origins; this practice transformed following Acadians' transplantation in Pennsylvania. By 1654, French immigration to Acadia had almost entirely ceased. Without immigration, this left only a handful of founding families that intermarried for four successive generations. At that time satellite communities on the Acadian frontier would be founded by only five to ten families, all related by blood. These close family ties and personal relationships provided added initiative for community work necessary to sustain settlements on the frontier, especially maintenance of the intricate system of dikes that made land in the Minas Basin tidal region suitable for farming. In Acadia, young people typically married within the same family, but also within the same village.²⁶ Charles White's family, although extensive, could all trace their roots back to the village of Grand Pré before their expulsion. The parents of White's cousin, Catherine Boudreau, lived only half a mile from each other in Grand Pré before marrying.²⁷ Throughout several generations in Acadia, endogamy served as both a vital process for community development as well as a cherished cultural pattern.

²⁴ Ledet, "Acadian Exiles in Pennsylvania," 125.

²⁵ "Testimony of John Wilson" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

²⁶ Carl A Brasseaux. "Acadian to Cajun: History of a Society Built on the Extended Family." (Speech presented at the Community Health Event Genetics of the Acadian People at McNeese State University, Lake Charles, Louisiana, 9 August 1999).

²⁷ "Testimony of Samuel Mangee" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

In order to settle Charles White's estate, Stephen du Ponceau mapped out a family tree including all of White's living relatives; the product is several pages of family records that map out the decline of endogamy within an Acadian family in Pennsylvania. The older generations, such as White's aunt and uncles, married into the same handful of long-established Acadian families: with names such as Landry, LeBlanc, Babin, and Melançon. Yet younger generations, including several of White's cousins, married into French or German families such as the de Valcourts and the Huieslers. Many more married into a wide range of families with Anglican names such as White, Wells, Fisher, Jenkins, Bernard, Gray, and Gold.²⁸ The personal history of Joseph Ribaud, an unrelated Acadian immigrant, reflects this same trend away from endogamous marriages. Pennsylvania records indicate he first married Margaret Benoit, a fellow Acadian refugee, but following her death Ribaud married a native Pennsylvanian, Margaret Sennar. Later their son would marry another Pennsylvanian, Ann Cockran.²⁹

This marriage pattern might suggest an unconscious assimilation into the dominant culture of colonial Pennsylvania; however Acadians likely married based on shared traits of language or religion, reflecting an old pattern of Acadian community development. The marriage records at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Philadelphia document several mixed marriages between 1758 and 1786 (the era with the highest number of recorded marriages and baptisms): five marriages between Acadians and Canadians, seven marriages to French, and only one to an English Protestant (although still performed in a Catholic Church).³⁰ According to Acadian historian Carl Brasseaux, during periods of French immigration to Acadia, a similar process of intermarriage was vital to the establishment and growth of Acadian communities. New immigrants and well-established families intermarried, forging bonds based on "common

²⁸ "Charles White's Heirs-at-Law" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

²⁹ Kahlert, "Notes on the Ribaud Family" 3, 4, 6.

³⁰ Ledet, "Acadian Exiles in Pennsylvania," 127.

regional language and socio-economic background.”³¹ Hence, a process that some might classify as routine assimilation had long been a practice of cultural incorporation and growth for centuries in Acadia.

The choices that Acadians made both to maintain old community bonds and to establish new cultural ties within a new community were made possible by the diversity of colonial Pennsylvania. As early as the 1680’s William Penn boasted that Pennsylvania contained “French, Dutch, Germans, Swedes, Danes, Finns, Scotch, Irish, and English” living as “one kind, and in once [sic] Place under One Allegiance.”³² Amongst these diverse ethnicities was a budding community of Catholics in Philadelphia, available to support the Neutral French in spite of prevailing anti-Catholic sentiment virulent in British North America.³³ Pennsylvania’s diversity also provided Acadians with sympathetic individuals such as Anthony Benezet who accommodated the Philadelphia Acadians on Pine Street. Benezet himself descended from a family banished from France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.³⁴ Acadian sympathizers in Pennsylvania such as Benezet aided Acadians as they adapted to life in a new community structure. The diverse demography of Pennsylvania also resulted in the cultural adaptation of religion, one of the most integral elements of Acadian community life.

Animals and Devils: Expression and Transformation of Acadian Religion

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.
Acts 17:24

³¹ Brasseaux, “Acadian to Cajun.”

³² William Penn *A Further Account of the Province of Pennsylvania and Its Improvements, for the Satisfaction of Those That Are Adventurers, and Enclined to Be So* (London 1685), quoted in John Smolenski. *Friends and Strangers: the Making of a Creole Culture in Colonial Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 83.

³³ Sally Schwartz. *“A Mixed Multitude:” the Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania*. (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 241.

³⁴ Ledet, “Acadian Exiles in Pennsylvania,” 120.

Like most features of Acadian culture, religion was a highly communal tradition, establishing close relationships within village life. Often, Acadian villages shared close community ties, sometimes even family connections, with their Native American neighbors, the Mi'kmaq. These ties produced a unique form of Catholicism fused with native tradition. Acadians incorporated native traditional festivals of spring into the traditional Catholic celebration of Easter to produce the festival of *le retour des oies* (return of the geese), a celebration of both Christ's resurrection and the return of spring.³⁵ Andrew Brown, a Presbyterian minister who studied the remaining Acadians in Nova Scotia in the 1790s, found this celebration unique in its integration of both Catholic conventions and Algonquian tradition, wherein the day "was the festival of dreams and riddles, all fool's day."³⁶ This amalgamation of observances reflects a Catholic religion no longer synchronized with traditional doctrine and more attuned to naturalistic expressions of religion.

Acadians' strong bonds with Native Americans and the land produced a religion that was simultaneously devout and earthy: less focused on the glories of heaven and more grounded in the realities of their environment. Popular Christmas songs in Acadia focused less on the infant Jesus, and more on the exultation among animals present at the birth of Christ:

Around Bethlehem
The animals of Laquedem³⁷
Sing: Noel, Noel
We are on the earth
As Jesus descends from heaven

In this song, the animals celebrate the arrival of Jesus; the rooster haughtily announces the coming of Christ; the duck anticipates the model Jesus will serve for all young children; and the

³⁵ Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 191.

³⁶ Andrew Brown, "Removal of the French Inhabitants of Nova Scotia by Lieutenant Governor Lawrence and His Majesty's Council in October 1755" (1815), 59-60. Quoted in Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 191.

³⁷ Isaac Laquedem is the Wandering Jew in Alexandre Dumas' unfinished, sprawling historical tale *Isaac Laquedem* (1853)

timid sheep is inspired to henceforth always be brave.³⁸ Songs such as this reflect a concern with the natural in a Catholicism influenced by Native American culture.

Canadian folklorist Antonine Maillet transcribes an Acadian folktale that embodies the sensuous aspect of Catholicism present in a religion more in tune with nature. The story tells of an Acadian farmer and a young devil arguing one day about the ownership of a particular field. They decide to settle the dispute with a clawing contest: whoever produces the deepest scratches in the earth shall rightfully own it. As he leaves the field, the man sees the devil's claws and is instantly discouraged, but his wife formulates a plan to save the field. When the devil returns to the couple's house, the wife sits at the table crying. When the devil asks what troubles her, she responds that her husband had injured her the night before with his terrible claws. She says "just look" as she lifts up her skirts for the devil to see. Peering underneath, the shocked young devil had never seen anything like it and immediately surrenders the field.³⁹ Stories such as this one, although common in Acadian tradition, infuriated French Catholic missionaries in the area. Ironically, these missionaries attempted to separate Acadians from their Mi'kmaq neighbors in order to preserve the more traditional doctrine of their Native converts.⁴⁰

While French missionaries barely recognized Acadian religious practice, to the British occupiers of Nova Scotia, the Catholic religion in any expression posed a dangerous threat. By the 1730's nearly every Acadian male had taken an oath to the British king. However, rather than the unconditional oath that British authorities demanded, men delivered an oath conditional upon an exemption from military service and the right to practice Catholicism. These conditional oaths grew increasingly problematic for British officials since the rights of Catholics were severely

³⁸ Antonine Maillet. *Rabelais et les Traditions Populaires en Acadie*. (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Universite Laval, 1980), 44.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

⁴⁰ Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 191.

restricted in nearly every corner of the British Empire.⁴¹ As such, when the Acadians came to understand they would be expelled, they appealed to England to be sent to another French Canadian territory, in the hopes that “we will be able to preserve our religion which we have very much at heart, and for which we are content to sacrifice our estates.”⁴² Yet with prevailing British fears of Catholics reinforcing French territory, this request was made in vain.

Such was the suspicion of Catholics in British America during the French and Indian conflict that in 1757, Samuel Finley delivered the sermon “The Curse of Meroz, or the Danger of Neutrality in the Cause of God and our Country,” in Nottingham, Pennsylvania. In the sermon, Finley warned that “Tyranny is the Genius of [Catholics’] Government, and bloody Cruelty of their Religion... [which is] more fit for the Rule of Beasts than of Men.”⁴³ He continued on to caution that the prevalence of Catholicism would threaten pure worship and ordinances with the Papists’ thinly disguised pagan rituals. Protestants’ righteous ministry would be corrupted and Pennsylvania would be inundated with “hypocritical Monks, Friars, Priests, and Jesuits.”⁴⁴ For all its hyperbolic threats, this sermon was not just the rhetoric of an impassioned Protestant minister, but also an indication of the fears and suspicions rampant throughout Pennsylvania for many years.

In July of 1755, four months before the French Neutrals arrived, five justices of Berks County, Pennsylvania wrote Governor Morris to complain about the population of Catholics in the area. In the increasingly panicked atmosphere of the French and Indian War, Berks County “thought it our Duty to inform Your Honour of our dangerous Situation, and to beg Your Honour to enable Us by some legal Authority to disarm or otherwise to disable the Papists from doing

⁴¹ Plank, *Unsettled Conquest*, 88.

⁴² Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 355.

⁴³ Samuel Finley. *The curse of Meroz; or, the danger of neutrality, in the cause of God, and our country. A sermon, preached the 2d of October.* (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by James Chattin, 1757), 24.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

any Injury to other People who are not of their vile Principles.” Catholics, they explained, “are bound by their Principles to be the worst Subjects and the worst of Neighbors.” As such, they appealed to the governor for extra protection, fully expecting the Catholics would massacre the town’s citizens or flee into the frontier to consult with French troops at Fort Du Quesne.⁴⁵

Despite the outbreak of this sort of suspicion against Catholicism in the Pennsylvania colony, the number of Catholics in the population gradually increased during the eighteenth century.

In 1757, Governor Denney, also concerned about the prevalence of Catholicism in Pennsylvania, ordered a study be conducted to determine the number of Catholics in the colony. The finding showed that there were approximately 1,365 practicing Catholics in the Pennsylvania, over the age of 12, consisting of roughly equal numbers of Germans, English, and Irish. In the rapidly growing colony of Pennsylvania, this represented a relatively small proportion of the population.⁴⁶ Yet when Pennsylvania had first learned it would receive hundreds of Catholic Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755, it was enough for a panicked Governor Morris to write Massachusetts governor William Shirley for advice about what to do with the Neutrals, fearing they might “foment some intestine commotion in conjunction with the Irish and German catholics, in this and the neighbouring Province (Maryland).”⁴⁷ It was into this environment of Catholicism’s growth and subsequent apprehension that the Acadians had arrived in Pennsylvania.

With a growing population of Catholics in Pennsylvania, the practice of Catholicism amongst Acadians was no longer an exclusive habit, especially in Philadelphia. Acadians such as Charles White frequented Old St. Joseph’s Church which was founded by Jesuit Reverend Joseph Greateon in 1734, 20 years before the arrival of the Acadians. The first urban Catholic

⁴⁵ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, Vol 6, 503: 23 July 1755.

⁴⁶ Schwartz, *Mixed Multitude*, 241.

⁴⁷ *Pennsylvania archives*. Series I. Vol 2, 506: 20 November 1755.

Church in the thirteen colonies, St. Joseph's became the house of worship for hundreds of English, Irish, and German Catholics, and eventually the Acadians.⁴⁸ In fact, the "French houses" built along 4th and Pine Street were situated just two blocks from this church on 4th and Walnut (fig. 3).⁴⁹ However, even among those Acadians living in Philadelphia, worshippers split between several different churches, including St. Joseph's as well as St. Mary's and St. Augustine's, which were both founded in the late eighteenth century.⁵⁰ Amongst a larger population of Catholics and with more options for places of worship, Acadians no longer worshipped as a community. Their outward expression of religion conformed to more traditional Catholic doctrine while worshipping with English, Irish, and German Catholics.

Yet, according to friends and family of Charles White, public worship was not the only form of religious expression practiced amongst Acadian refugees. Like their English, Irish, and German counterparts, Catholic Acadian children met to study catechism, a summary of church doctrine used in order to learn the sacraments. However, unlike other ethnic groups who attended church to learn catechism, Acadians taught their children together in a Neutral home.⁵¹ Reminiscing on her childhood, Catherine Boudreau recalled that "all the neutral children [in Philadelphia] went to catechism" in the house of another Neutral.⁵² This insular practice allowed Acadians to maintain certain elements of their earthy religion. For example, they conformed to worship as practiced by German, Irish, and English Catholics, and there is no record or memories amongst Pennsylvania Acadians of having celebrated Acadian religious festivals such as the

⁴⁸ James Hennessey. *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 49.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 50.

⁵⁰ John Tracy Ellis. *Catholics in Colonial America*. (St. Paul, Minnesota: North Central Publishing Company, 1965), 378.

⁵¹ "Testimony of Mary Joseph Tampagnié" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

⁵² "Testimony of John Wilson" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

retour des oies. However, the religious folklore which Catholic missionaries in Nova Scotia found so odious could survive to the present day because of an Acadian exclusive catechism.

The Acadian Pennsylvanians' conciliatory manner of religious expression was made possible by Pennsylvania's history of religious toleration. In establishing his colony, William Penn ensured religious freedom even for Catholics, the most despised religion in the British Empire, writing in 1671 "I am by my Principle to write as well for Toleration for the Romanists."⁵³ As such, Catholics arrived in Pennsylvania beginning in 1682 with Irish Catholic servants who traveled with English and Welsh Quakers in William Penn's party. Afterwards, waves of Catholic immigrants from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany immigrated to Pennsylvania and settled along the Delaware River.⁵⁴ Penn's policies provided Acadians with plentiful Catholic neighbors by the time they entered the colony in 1755.

This contrasts with other North American colonies, such as Massachusetts, where anti-Catholic sentiment was much more violent. In the village of Westborough, Massachusetts, the minister Ebenezer Parkman was perhaps the most welcoming of the Acadians' neighbors, yet even he determined to convert the Catholics, declaring, "If I had any love for [them] I must!" Such an atmosphere elicited a tenacity to maintain Catholicism that often only served to increase locals' distrust and hatred of the Acadian refugees.⁵⁵ Yet in Pennsylvania, Acadians seemed to practice their newly modified Catholicism peacefully, without any record of religious hatred or violence borne against them. Paradoxically, Acadians' large number of Catholic neighbors in Pennsylvania both protected their faith and altered their religious expression. Just as Acadians

⁵³ Schwartz, *Mixed Multitude*, 19.

⁵⁴ Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 49.

⁵⁵ Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: an Eighteenth Century History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 76.

adapted religious expression in Pennsylvania, the Neutral French modified labor patterns to conform to both Pennsylvania's economy as well as their cultural identity.

From Wheat to Wages: Transformation of Labor Patterns in Pennsylvania

There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.
This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.
Ecclesiastes 2:24

In their native home, Acadians' work tied in closely with community-life. Yet after coming to the British colonies, Acadian labor patterns were less a reflection of historical tradition, than a deliberate reconstruction of work patterns. Before the Grand Dérangement, the Acadian economy was characterized by small farming and collective labor. Archaeological findings suggest that Acadians constructed their communities as collections of small farms organized around communal barns and community windmills for grinding flour. Individual families maintained their own gardens and small fields of wheat, but the nature of agriculture in Nova Scotia necessitated a certain degree of collective labor. The plains and farmlands surrounding the Bay of Fundy faced the imminent danger of being swept away by the world's largest tides: a danger which Acadians circumvented through the construction of an intricate system of dikes.⁵⁶ These dikes, built from bricks of sod that hinged shut to block out brackish tidewater, and opened to allow freshwater to drain from the marshes, required constant upkeep from every farmer in town (fig. 4).⁵⁷ The degree to which Acadians intertwined individual and community labor was exemplified in their actions when a young couple married; as the couple entered into married life, the community gathered to build them a house, cleared land for tilling,

⁵⁶ Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 189.

⁵⁷ Hodson, "Exile on Spruce Street," 258.

and provided the couple with livestock.⁵⁸ Unsurprisingly, this balance of individual and communal farming did not survive the journey to colonial Pennsylvania.

When the Pennsylvania Provincial Council passed “An Act for dispersing the Inhabitants of Nova Scotia,” in 1756, the council also established a procedure to allow the Acadians to resume their farming lifestyle. The act declared that “as [Acadians] have been bred up to the management of farms,” they should be supplied with rented plantations, provided that “they may be had on reasonable terms.” In addition, the government promised to supply Acadian farmers with tools for farming and husbandry, not to exceed ten pounds in value.⁵⁹ Although the Provincial Council considered it an adequately generous offer, fifteen Acadian men “speaking on behalf of the whole” wrote to the Council stating that they had decided to refuse the offer: not from a lack of appreciation for their efforts, but as a matter of principle. Simply stated, these Acadian argued that as prisoners of war (a hotly debated status in colonial politics) “we were not obliged to make Settlements Against our Inclination.”⁶⁰

Unfortunately, without farms to provide income and sustenance, some Acadians resorted to desperate measures just to survive. William Griffiths, an Acadian sympathizer, wrote to the Provincial Council, alerting them to the sad situation. Although many Acadians chose wage labor over an agricultural lifestyle, Griffiths remarked that there was “a general Dislike in the Inhabitants of this Province against employing the Neutrals in their Service ...many of them who are willing [to work] are unemployed, and the Load of Expence becomes heavier on the Province.”⁶¹ Without other means of employment, some Acadians attempted to sell wooden shoes akin to those they had worn in Nova Scotia. Others scavenged the streets of Philadelphia

⁵⁸ Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 189.

⁵⁹ *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682-1801*, Vol 5, 217-18.

⁶⁰ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 5, 4294: 27 August 1756.

⁶¹ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 6, 4408: 28 October 1756.

for bits of cloth and rags which they washed and made into linsey cloth for market.⁶² Some Acadians flatly refused to work during their exile, but Griffiths warned that many of the Neutrals who sought employment “have had neither Meat or Bread to eat for many Weeks together, and were necessitated...to pilfer and steal for Support of Life.”⁶³ For some Acadians, whether by choice or circumstance, life without farming provided few other opportunities for gainful employment.

In the eighteenth century, as North America prepared for increased hostilities between England and France, an old and lucrative industry emerged in Pennsylvania that favored seafaring, another Acadian tradition. In response to increased hostilities with the French, English King George II issued a royal decree in 1744 “encouraging our Faithfull Subjects Serving on Board Our Ships of War or Privateers” and promised them the “Sole Interest and Property of and in all and every [French] ship.”⁶⁴ The conditions along the Atlantic coast justified this encouragement. Indeed by May 1748, George Porteus, captain of the *Three Brothers*, was sailing on course to Philadelphia when a band of French privateers suddenly accosted his ship. Taken hostage, Porteus encountered at least thirty other English prisoners on board the French ship headed for the Cape of Delaware. Thanks to inclement weather he managed to escape, but not before learning from his captors that this sloop had many other French and Spanish companions also trolling the eastern seaboard.⁶⁵ This was hardly an isolated incident during the eighteenth century; other reports estimated at least fourteen French and Spanish privateering vessels patrolling the coast as far south as the Carolinas.⁶⁶

⁶² Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 183.

⁶³ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 6, 4408: 28 October 1756.

⁶⁴ *Minutes of the Pennsylvania Provincial Council*, Vol 4, 693: 29 March 1744.

⁶⁵ *Minutes of the Pennsylvania Provincial Council*. Vol 5, 246: 25 May 1748.

⁶⁶ *Minutes of the Pennsylvania Provincial Council*, Vol 5, 264: 30 May 1748.

As a result, Acadians, who had long engaged in the shipping and fishing industries in Nova Scotia, found a niche in the growing privateering industry in Pennsylvania. Samuel Mangee, who was deported alongside Charles White's family, testified in his deposition that upon coming to America he purchased a vessel and became a "waterman."⁶⁷ Likewise, Joseph Ribaud, who first practiced "image-making" after arriving in Pennsylvania, eventually changed careers in the 1770's to become the master of the *Brig Lion*. At the time, the *Brig Lion* was owned by Francis Daymon, a rich Pennsylvania privateer who spoke fluent Latin and French, a skill which likely explains Ribaud's choice of employer. Ribaud and the *Brig Lion* continued to patrol the waters surrounding Pennsylvania during the American Revolution, preying upon British shipping vessels to great financial success.⁶⁸

While Pennsylvania's government allowed adult Neutrals to seek out their own employment after having refused small farms, the Provincial Council developed a more direct strategy to incorporate younger generations of refugees into the economic sector. On 18 January 1757, the Pennsylvania Provincial Council passed "An Act for binding out, and settling, such of the Inhabitants of Nova Scotia imported in this Province as are under Age; and for maintaining the Aged, Sick, and Maimed, at the charge of the Province." The act declared that "any of the said inhabitants of Nova Scotia that are underage should be bound out to any trades or occupations."⁶⁹ This wrested Acadian children from their homes into service, including Charles White himself. White arrived in Pennsylvania as a young boy, and following the act of the Provincial Council, he served as an apprentice to a "Quaker gentleman," working in his shop.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ "Further Examination of Samuel Mangee" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

⁶⁸ Kahlert, "Notes on the Ribaud Family" 4.

⁶⁹ *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682-1801*, Vol 5, 315.

⁷⁰ "Testimony of Thomas Bradford" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

Unlike their parents, Acadian children entered the workforce on the terms of Pennsylvania's government.

Even so, French Neutral parents reacted to this mandate swiftly, voicing their complaints to the Pennsylvania Provincial Council in February 1757. Seventeen Acadian leaders in Pennsylvania addressed the council to lament the loss of their children, stating "you have brought us in a Condition worse than Death, in depriving us of a Part of ourselves."⁷¹ They appealed to the Bible to impress upon the council the gravity of their actions: "God has reduced his People under the hardest Captivity, as in *Egypt*, under *Pharaoh*, and in *Babylon*, under *Nebuchadnezzar*; yet we do not read that these Princes that thus oppressed them ever separated the Children from their Parents."⁷² This protest reflects an attachment to family, but likely also the culture shock for a community long accustomed to working as a family. The Acadians appealed to the council, saying they would rather work of their own accord in order to support their children, just as Hagar provided for her son Ishmael as they starved in the desert.⁷³

To what extent the Neutrals were successful in extricating their children from forced apprenticeship is unclear, yet some Acadian children, such as Charles White, worked the Pennsylvania system to great success. After serving as a shop boy in a Quaker's store, White grew to be a successful businessman in Philadelphia. White and his business partner, John Montgomery first opened a liquor store and a grocery before White began buying and managing properties.⁷⁴ He was by all accounts an inattentive and miserly landlord, but at the time of his death in 1816, White had acquired ten houses and two plots of land in the city of Philadelphia,

⁷¹ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 6, 4509: 8 February 1757.

⁷² *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 6, 4510: 8 February 1757.

⁷³ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 6, 4512: 8 February 1757.

⁷⁴ "Testimony of Thomas Bradford" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

valued at nearly \$21,000.⁷⁵ His success, like several other Acadians' in Pennsylvania, reflects a larger trend of post-expulsion labor that was deliberately alienated from the land.

Historian Jean-Claude Vernex contends that small agricultural communities such as the Acadians integrated an attachment to a specific land and place into their cultural identity. Centuries of work in Acadia, building dikes that made the peninsula suitable for farming, and cultivating the land for centuries produced “an attachment to land...that cements groups and gives them a sense of belonging.” In this sense, to accept work as small agriculturalists in Pennsylvania would be to accept a new land as a facet of their cultural identity.⁷⁶ When refusing their farms, the French Neutrals insisted “we shall never fully consent to settle in this Province.” In the original French they used the term *de notre plein*, which suggests completing something to the highest or fullest degree: in this case the highest degree of settlement appears to be the tilling and cultivation of land.⁷⁷ By refusing land, Acadians refused a cultural identification with the land of Pennsylvania. Ironically, by sacrificing their traditional occupation as farmers and incorporating themselves into the Pennsylvania economy, Acadians maintained another aspect of their traditional culture (identification with the land of Nova Scotia).

If anyone suffered in this transition from agricultural to wage labor, it would be Acadian women exiled in Pennsylvania. In Nova Scotia, women's labor assumed an important role in society. Acadian women maintained the province's apple orchards, known throughout the eastern seaboard for their exceptional fruit. When a young Acadian woman married, she received cuttings from her mother's orchard with which to start her own orchard and gardens. The apple orchard became not only a site of women's labor, but also sociability: as women pruned and

⁷⁵ “Estate of Charles White” in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

⁷⁶ Jean-Claude Vernex, *French America*, 191.

⁷⁷ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 5, 4294:27 August 1756.

picked the fruit of the trees together, children played together close by.⁷⁸ Coming to Pennsylvania, after men refused farms from the Provincial Council, women negotiated with a new form of work and place in society. Oftentimes women, such as Charles White's cousins Catherine Boudreau and Catherine Bijeo, took jobs as housekeepers at local churches or for wealthy businessmen.⁷⁹ In this way women continued to work, despite being deprived in Pennsylvania of something that had been a status symbol and important cultural space in Nova Scotia. Labor patterns, like community life and religious practice, witnessed different forms of Acadian cultural adaptation; yet some issues, such as military service and dedication to neutrality, had significantly less room for negotiation.

Farewell to Arms: Acadian Commitment to Neutrality

They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.

Isaiah 2:11

In 1753, as the French and Indian war loomed, Lawrence's predecessor as colonial governor, Peregrine Hopson ordered the provincial secretary William Cotterell to review the provincial records to determine whether the Acadians had ever committed to an unconditional oath without the stipulation of military neutrality. Cotterell found that only the residents of Annapolis Royal had committed to an unconditional oath in 1726, but just a year later they insisted upon military neutrality in their oaths to the crown.⁸⁰ Fearing the threat of Acadian hostilities, British officials had offered Acadians one last opportunity in 1755 to swear an unconditional oath to the British King or face being expelled from their homes. Yet the Neutral French persisted in refusing to swear allegiance without an exemption from military service,

⁷⁸ Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 183.

⁷⁹ "Testimony of Reverend Michael Hurley" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

"Further Examination of Catherine Bijeo" in DuPonceau Papers, box 4, folder 4.

⁸⁰ Plank, *Unsettled Conquest*, 142.

likely assuming that such threats were hollow, which Acadians had come to expect in past decades.⁸¹

For the Acadians, military neutrality was often a matter of practical necessity rather than ideological opposition. Most Acadian villages were located within close proximity to border regions still claimed by the French, as well as Mi'kmaq villages where the Native Americans maintained close relationships with the French. In this atmosphere, swearing an unconditional allegiance to Great Britain would put their lives and their centuries-long relationship with the Mi'kmaq in danger.⁸² Often, especially during sieges by the French, Acadians supplied British forts with food and supplies.⁸³ With repeated refusals of military service over several decades, attachment to neutrality grew to become a facet of Acadian cultural identity, even serving as their moniker: the "Neutrals." The practice of neutrality permitted the Acadians to develop relationships with both the British and the French, allowing the locals in Acadia to thrive between the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 and the Acadian expulsion in 1755.⁸⁴

During an era of imperial conflict in North America, this position of neutrality posed problems of citizenship and civic identity, especially for the British. Historically, the British had a long tradition of demonstrating the centrality of military service to civic identity. The British Assize of Arms of 1181 and 1252 required every freeman to swear to an oath of service "according to the commandment of his own will, and to the faith of the Lord, of the King, and his reign."⁸⁵ Under Queen Elizabeth I, William Lambarde compiled these laws in 1581 to produce the *Eirenarcha: or of the Office of the Justices of the Peace* which mandated that British subjects keep arms in the house to prepare for attack, including bows and arrows for every male

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 145.

⁸² *Ibid*, 144.

⁸³ Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 218.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 180.

⁸⁵ Assize of Arms (1181), Assize of Arms (1252)

between the ages of sixteen and sixty. The *Eirenarcha* further required British towns to maintain a collective arsenal of weapons.⁸⁶ The French as well, demanded the military allegiance of Acadians; in 1744, Captain Duvivier, a French military commander at Minas angrily demanded that Acadians take an unconditional oath to the French crown which Acadians characteristically refused.⁸⁷ In this environment of imperial competition, neutrality was viewed with mistrust.

However, in the scope of eighteenth century imperialism, colonial Pennsylvania represents a strange and rare breed, one with a history of ideological neutrality. William Penn founded his colony with the goal of peace and pacifism. Penn had served in the military alongside his father, Admiral William Penn, who conquered Jamaica. William Penn Jr. also served in Ireland as a junior officer during the region's violent uprisings.⁸⁸ However, after he converted to the Society of Friends and founded the colony of Pennsylvania, William Penn pursued a pacifist policy consistent with Quaker doctrine.⁸⁹ Yet as Pennsylvania diversified in the eighteenth century, both religiously and ethnically, provincial leaders could no longer agree on the degree to which Pennsylvania should maintain its pacifist roots.⁹⁰ Questions of whether Pennsylvania required a defense society and of what purpose military preparedness served to civic identity grew in prominence in years leading up to the French and Indian War.

Skirmishes between Native Americans and colonial settlements that preceded the Acadians' removal also affected Pennsylvania during the early eighteenth century.⁹¹ The Pennsylvania Gazette frequently published stories of Indian attacks in the nearby Ohio Territory. On 27 October 1752, the Gazette reported that French and Indian forces attacked a Miami village

⁸⁶ William Lambarde. *Eirenarcha, or of the Offices of the Justices of the Peace*. (London: Co of Stationers, 1581).

⁸⁷ Plank, *Unsettled Conquest*, 131.

⁸⁸ Joseph Seymour. *The Pennsylvania Associators, 1747-1777*. (Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2012), 7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

⁹⁰ Smolenski, *Friends and Strangers*, 119.

⁹¹ Seymour, *Pennsylvania Associators*, 61.

at Pickawillany. The Miami quickly surrendered their fort, and their chief, who was known to be a friend of the British, was reportedly boiled and eaten by his conquerors. The Gazette declared that in this bloody region, “nothing but revenge and Blood is to be heard among the Indians.”⁹² Reports such as this frenzied the public, convincing them that the oncoming war with the French and their Indian allies would threaten Pennsylvania’s mercantile interests and allegiance with the Delaware and Six Nations.⁹³

It was in this atmosphere, that proponents of a defense society, such as Benjamin Franklin, stressed the importance of military service as an essential facet of cultural identity. In 1744, the English king had already issued a proclamation urging all his subjects in North America to supply themselves with arms. Later, in November 1747 Ben Franklin delivered the speech “Plain Truth: or Serious Considerations on the Present State of the City of Philadelphia, and the Province of Pennsylvania.”⁹⁴ In it, Franklin emphasized the practical necessity for a military organization: French incentive to plunder the burgeoning wealth of Pennsylvania, the threat of French privateers and spies, the proximity of the French in the Ohio Territory, and their alliance with Native Americans. Yet the most effective and resonant turns in his speech appealed to the imperative of military service to the cultural identities of diverse Pennsylvanians. Franklin urged to arms the military prowess of “Brave and steady Germans” as well as the British race who retained “that Zeal for the Publick Good, that military Prowess, and that undaunted Spirit, which has in every Age distinguished their Nation.”⁹⁵

This warmongering rhetoric also developed a religious imperative for military service. Franklin, a secular man himself, appealed to his audience’s religious sensibilities by evoking the

⁹² *Pennsylvania Gazette*. 27 October 1752.

⁹³ Seymour, *Pennsylvania Associators*, 62.

⁹⁴ *Minutes of the Pennsylvania Provincial Council*, Vol 4, 696: 29 March 1744.

⁹⁵ Franklin 1747 “Plain Truth: or Serious Considerations on the Present State of the City of Philadelphia, and the Province of Pennsylvania.”

story of Meroz from the Book of Judges whom God struck down for not joining with Deborah as she vanquished the enemies of Israel.⁹⁶ Ministers in Pennsylvania used this passage to its greatest effect. Samuel Finley delivered the sermon “The Curse of Meroz, or the danger of neutrality” on 2 October 1757. He emphasized that God “puts a Sword into [our] Hands, with strict Orders *not to bear it in vain*...It is therefore a Crime to let it rust in the Scabbard, when Justice commands it be unsheathed.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, he assured Pennsylvanians that they had the additional religious duty of protecting fellow Protestants from the “foolish Legends” and “unproved Traditions” of the French Catholics, not to mention their “Deceit, Pride, Lust, Cruelty, and Avarice.”⁹⁸ In this environment of religious conflict, “[God’s] cause admits of no Neutrality in any of his subjects.”⁹⁹

Enter the Acadians, or French Neutrals, whose very name embodied two deeply mistrusted elements in colonial Pennsylvania at this time. Almost immediately, it seemed that they threatened the safety of the colony. In the spring of 1757, approximately a year after the Acadians’ arrival, the Earl of Loudoun, commander-in-chief of British forces in North America visited Pennsylvania to inspect his troops. During his visit, Loudoun wrote to William Pitt, concerned about the seditious attitude he encountered amongst the Acadians living there: “I found that the French Neutrals there had been very mutinous, and had threatened to leave the women and children and go over to join the French in the backcountry.”¹⁰⁰ If this account is to be believed, it requires a serious examination of why a people who called themselves “Neutrals” would threaten armed hostility.

⁹⁶ Judges 5:23.

⁹⁷ Finley. *The curse of Meroz*, 10.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 25.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 13.

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence Henry Gipson. *The British Empire before the American Revolution*. Vol 6. (New York: Knopf, 1956), 315.

In the past, many historians have implicitly accepted the veracity of this account. Historian of the British Empire, Lawrence Henry Gipson, claims it is “doubtless not surprising...that some of the exiles should have been led into violence of speech and action” at this time. Indeed, Loudoun’s visit to the Acadians in Pennsylvania coincided with both the act of the Provincial Council mandating Acadian children be bound out as apprentices, as well as the emotional petition from Acadian leaders to the council begging the return of their children. According to Loudoun’s letter, the Acadians presented him at this time with a petition of their grievances which he refused to read as it was written in French. He was also “informed” (by an unknown source) that Acadians had threatened to take up arms because they viewed themselves “entirely as French subjects.”¹⁰¹ Altogether, this account of Acadians’ eagerness to serve for a military bespeaks a colonial official who, like colonial governor Charles Lawrence, was inclined to view the Acadians with fear and suspicion.

Indeed, the region surrounding the Delaware River witnessed several instances of colonial officials’ exaggeration of the military risk of Catholics. In March 1744, Governor Lewis Morris of New Jersey wrote to New York Governor George Clinton warning that if the French were to arrive in Pennsylvania, “they would in that Province soon get ten or twelve thousand [Catholics] together, which would in that case, be not a little dangerous to these and neighboring colonies.”¹⁰² This is an unlikely danger considering the population of Catholics in Pennsylvania at the time was less than 1,500. Later, in 1755, Colonel George Washington wrote to John Robinson to inform him of some “very unnatural and pernicious correspondence held with the French [military], by some priests.”¹⁰³ Such reports rarely predicted any actual dangers, but

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 316.

¹⁰² Ellis, *Catholics in Colonial North America*. 377.

¹⁰³ George Washington, John Clement Fitzpatrick, and David Maydole Matteson. *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources, 1745-1799*. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1931), 506.

amongst this larger body of official letters, Loudon's panicked report reflects a long-standing trend of the inflated fear of potential Catholic military threats.

However if we suspend disbelief and assume that Loudoun delivered an accurate report of the Acadians' sentiments, it remains unlikely that a people that had, for several generations, steadfastly refused military service to both the French and British kings would suddenly defect to the French cause. It is far more likely that Acadians were attempting to manipulate the anxiety of the British in order to protect their interests. For decades in Nova Scotia, Acadians used military service as a point of negotiation in their oaths of allegiance to the French and British crowns for the purpose of protecting their interests. Loudoun's visit to the Acadians in Pennsylvania coincided not only with the act of the Provincial Council mandating Acadian children be bound out as apprentices, but also a period when British fears of French attacks were especially exigent.¹⁰⁴ Since the Neutral French understood the significance of military service better than most, it is entirely possible that they may have utilized the threat of military service as a protest against the removal of their children.

Ultimately, there are no reports of the Neutral French bearing arms for either army during the French and Indian War, suggesting that either by Acadian choice, or colonial anxiety about allowing Catholics to bear arms, the exiles maintained their cultural identity of neutrality. Pennsylvania's unique composition of Quakers and pacifists likely facilitated this process. William Griffiths, who was appointed by the Provincial Council to oversee the distribution of French Neutrals, wrote to the council as early as the autumn of 1756 to urge them to be compassionate and understanding of the suffering of the Acadians, and not to act rashly to their threats.¹⁰⁵ The colony of Pennsylvania itself is a unique setting in which to study the evolution of

¹⁰⁴ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Eighth Series, Vol 5, 4294: 27 August 1756.

¹⁰⁵ Ledet, *Acadian Exiles in Pennsylvania*, 123.

Acadians' neutral identities, as the two have much in common. In the eighteenth century, both Acadians and Pennsylvania were two traditionally neutral entities suddenly coping with the tangible threat of an imperial war, and negotiating with the effects of neutrality.

The War Concludes

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
Ephesians 5:25

The decade of mandated Acadian settlement in Pennsylvania and other American colonies came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 10 February 1763; the war between Great Britain and France was over, and the Acadians speculated what this would mean for their future.¹⁰⁶ The French ambassador in London, Louis-Jules Barbon Mancini Mazarani, duc de Nivernois, wrote to the Acadian exiles living in England and promised to remove them to a French territory. This letter circulated around the British Empire and soon Nivernois heard from Acadian leaders in nearly every American colony where refugees could be found. Leaders of the Acadians in Pennsylvania provided Nivernois with a roll including the names of 383 individuals, every Acadian living in the Province. The leaders voiced their appreciation for Nivernois' "wishes to relieve us from our slavery which we have been held in since the beginning of the war with England."¹⁰⁷

However the refugees remained where they were until 1766, when groups of Acadian refugees in France and the Caribbean sought permission from the Spanish governor of the Louisiana territory, Antonio de Ulloa, to settle in the province. Ulloa hesitated on the issue, but Acadians began arriving in droves, writing to fellow exiles in Maryland and Pennsylvania to join

¹⁰⁶ Faragher, *Great and Noble Scheme*, 422.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 423.

them. Early in 1767, the first boatload of Maryland Acadians left Annapolis bound for Louisiana to be followed by several more ships carrying refugees from both Maryland and Pennsylvania. Between Maryland and Pennsylvania, it is estimated that approximately two thirds of Acadian immigrants left to settle in the Acadian colonies in Louisiana.¹⁰⁸ This left at least a third of Acadian refugees to remain in the mid-Atlantic colonies where, as far as many historians are concerned, Acadians “were swallowed up by their host cultures” to be forgotten by history and their ancestors.¹⁰⁹

One hundred years later, New England woman Eliza B Chase and eight travel companions traveled up to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to tour the pristine and romantic meadows of Evangeline’s homeland. She published her travel narrative, *Over the Border: Acadia, the home of “Evangeline”* in 1884 to share her experience of the “bewitching” Acadian peasantry whose “sweet simplicity, frankness, honesty, thrift, and other pleasing characteristics” far outshone American peasants who would soon become “commonplace and uninteresting.” In Nova Scotia, Chase commented on nearly every aspect of Acadian culture, from the songs they sang after dinner, to the handkerchiefs women wore, along with the strange furniture found in children’s rooms. Chase remarked it was an “odd piece of furniture [with] one end railed in front to serve for cradle;” it was an item that she had only ever seen amongst the Dutch communities in Pennsylvania.¹¹⁰ What Chase observed here in children’s bedrooms was just one example of culture that Acadians had adapted during their time in British America: their stay in Pennsylvania meant that certain Acadians carried pieces of Pennsylvania culture, even after leaving.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 431.

¹⁰⁹ Carl Brasseaux. *“Scattered to the Wind” Dispersal and Wanderings of the Acadians, 1755-1809*. (Lafayette, Louisiana: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1991), 70.

¹¹⁰ Chase 1884, 162.

In essence, every culture is in dialogue with its environment. This was the case in Nova Scotia as Acadians lived alongside two competing empires and the Mi'kmaq people, and it continued to be the case after Acadians were dispersed. The French Neutrals individually and collectively modified their cultural expression in exile, in a constant push and pull between tradition and adaptation. In Pennsylvania, many Acadians adapted expressions of community life, religion, and labor to negotiate between customs and Pennsylvania's socio-political environment. Commitment to military service, however, remained more staunchly unchanged. These different aspects of culture changed, sometimes in tandem with, other times independently of each other in exile. By examining records that document the lives of these refugees, although they are admittedly few, historians can understand this dynamic and how it affected the evolution of Acadian culture.

As historians, we cannot rely upon the romance or the story of cultural perseverance embodied by *Evangeline* as history. Acadians were not merely struggling through adversity nor biding time until their ultimate reunion. Exile leaves an indelible impact upon a culture and Acadians actively shaped and amended their culture during the time they spent in the American colonies. A productive use of history then needs to consider how refugees reacted to exile: the individual choices they made even before congregating in Louisiana or New Brunswick. Historians must look to the means in which Acadian culture and identity changed in the socio-political situations of American colonies before reuniting if we are to understand the effect of exile upon cultural identity.



Figure 1 “The World of Charles White”, Drawn by Rebecca Wrenn (Hodson 2010, fig. 1)

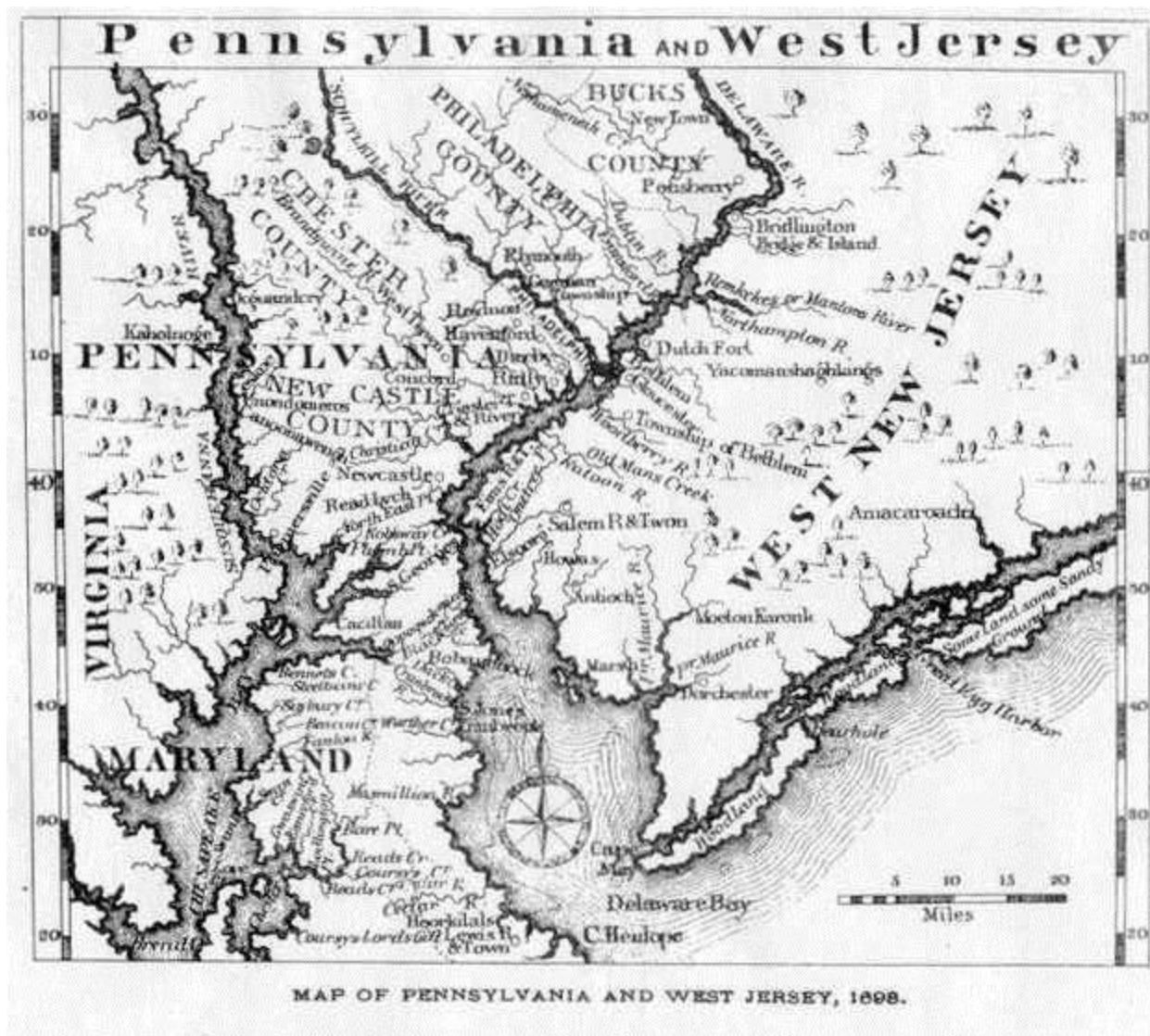


Figure 2 "1698 Map of Pennsylvania and West Jersey." <http://www.usgwarchives.net/pa/montgomery/beantoc.htm>



Figure 4 “Depiction of Acadian dyke construction at Grand Pré.” Lewis Parker, Courtesy of Parks Canada, Atlantic Service Center, Halifax.

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