

# “Memorial Constructions”: Representations of Identity in the Design of the Grand-Pré National Historic Site, 1907-Present

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*La récente désignation de Grand-Pré à titre de site du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO a donné lieu à une nouvelle définition de la région axée sur sa valeur « universelle ». Toutefois, en raison de l'histoire complexe de cet endroit, le concept d'universalité apparaît problématique. Au fil des ans, Grand-Pré a revêtu plusieurs identités qui ont été imposées sur le paysage et sur les monuments et caractéristiques du Lieu historique national de Grand-Pré. Bien que maints historiens aient mis l'accent sur le rôle de Grand-Pré dans la formation de l'identité acadienne, cet article examine comment les identités contradictoires des lieux ont été à la fois représentées et remises en question dans la conception du parc.*

*The recent designation of Grand-Pré as a UNESCO world heritage site has led to a new definition of the area based on its “universal” value. The complex history of the site, however, makes the concept of universality problematic. Grand-Pré has been characterized, over the years, by several identities that have been imposed on the landscape and on the monuments and features of the Grand-Pré National Historic Site. Although many historians have emphasized the role of Grand-Pré in Acadian identity formation, this article looks at how the site's competing identities were both represented and challenged through the design of the park.*

IN JUNE 2012 THE “LANDSCAPE OF GRAND-PRÉ” was declared a UNESCO world heritage site. It was the end result of a long nomination process that brought renewed attention to the park, the region, and its history. More importantly, it was also a re-evaluation of the site's historical significance as researchers in the social, physical, and life sciences were recruited to study and analyse the area's social, cultural, and environmental history.<sup>1</sup> The purpose was to answer one central overarching question – what is Grand-Pré's historical purpose? Within this deceptively simple question,

1 These experts included Acadian, Planter, and Mi'kmaw historians and cultural specialists as well as archaeologists, biologists, botanists, geographers, and marine scientists. See Nomination Grand-Pré, *Report on the Proposed Outstanding Universal Value for Grand-Pré*, prepared by A.J.B. Johnston, January 2009, <http://www.nominationgrandpre.ca>. There are many who have helped to bring this work to fruition. First and foremost I owe much to John C. Walsh and Del Muise, who reviewed many draft versions of this article and who were always more than willing to bestow their valuable experience and expertise. I am also always grateful for the mentoring of Andrew Parnaby and Scott Moir. This work would not have been possible without their academic

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however, were found some more ambiguous and debatable ones – *whose* history does or *should* Grand-Pré commemorate and *what* historical narrative, or narratives, does the site convey? The answers have proven to be consistently elusive. Over the past two centuries Grand-Pré has had many different and sometimes opposing identities assigned to it – some grounded in history and some in myth. Any attempt to distinguish between these historical and mythical components, however, has only led to further confusion over the site’s “definitive” identity.

Within the context of the UNESCO designation, the answer is presented in absolute terms. The park’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), or its significance on the world stage, lies in its cultural landscape and the sentiments that the site evokes. According to the UNESCO decision document, Grand-Pré is a testimony to the dynamic Acadian farming settlements of the 17th century as well as a “symbolic” landscape for Acadians. Grand-Pré, the statement continues, is the

iconic place of remembrance of the Acadian diaspora, dispersed by the Grand Dérangement, . . . . Its polder landscape and archaeological remains are testimony to the values of a culture of pioneers able to create their own territory, whilst living in harmony with the native Mi’kmaq people. Its memorial constructions form the centre of the symbolic re-appropriation of the land of their origins by the Acadians, in the 20th century, in a spirit of peace and cultural sharing with the English-speaking community.<sup>2</sup>

As with many UNESCO designations,<sup>3</sup> this statement speaks in broad terms about what is perceived to be the site’s overarching theme or dominant narrative: the Acadian people, who settled in Grand-Pré in the early 1680s, were expelled from their homeland by the British because of their questionable neutrality in 1755. In

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- 2 UNESCO, Decisions Adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 36th Session, Saint-Petersburg, 24 June-6 July 2012, p. 193. This and other documents regarding the UNESCO decision are available online at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/4798>. For documents on the nomination process, consult the Nomination Grand-Pré website at <http://www.nominationgrandpre.ca>.
- 3 For a more comprehensive look at UNESCO’s history, see Richard Hoggart and John R. Bolton, *An Idea and its Servants: UNESCO from Within* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011); Poul Duedahl, “Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945-1976,” *Journal of World History* 22, no. 1 (March 2011): 101-33; Glenda Sluga, “UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley,” *Journal of World History* 21, no. 3 (September 2010): 393-418; and Laura Elizabeth Wong, “Relocating East and West: UNESCO’s Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Values,” *Journal of World History* 19, no. 3 (September 2008). For more detailed insight into the criteria for UNESCO designations and the challenges faced by world heritage sites, see Claire Campbell, “Global Expectations, Local Pressures: Some Dilemmas of a World Heritage Site,” *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 11, no.1 (2008): 69-88; Ann Leask and Alan Fyall, eds., *Managing World Heritage Sites* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006); and Michael A. Giovine, *The Heritage-scape: UNESCO, World Heritage and Tourism* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009).

other words, the site's "universal value" is defined by its function as a symbol of the emplacement and "re-appropriation" of Grand-Pré by the Acadian people.<sup>4</sup> This narrative, the UNESCO decision document states, has been firmly entrenched in the landscape because of the site's "memorial constructions." These "constructions" include the Memorial Church and garden as well as a number of smaller monuments that make up the Grand-Pré National Historic Site. According to the OUV statement, it is these structures that help make the site Acadian. They are part of a "symbolic re-appropriation" that has led to a re-affirmation of a collective Acadian identity.

The history of the Grand-Pré National Historic Site, however, is more complex and multifaceted than this statement would suggest: the park was originally called the Grand-Pré Memorial Park, and, interchangeably, the Evangeline Memorial Park before this current designation. Over time, the site has acquired a number of diverse associations due to its appropriation by competing interest groups. The park was constructed by the Dominion Atlantic Railway (DAR), which acquired the land in 1917 from John Frederic Herbin (a local poet and jeweller). Herbin transferred the land to the DAR with the intent that it would be turned into a park commemorating Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem *Evangeline* (1847), and only so long as a parcel of land was given to the Acadian community on which to build an "appropriate memorial" honouring the Acadians and the 1755 deportation.<sup>5</sup> However, by the time the park was completed in the early 1930s it had been transformed into a pioneer museum portraying the region's British colonial past. Over the past 30 years, attempts have been made to bring the focus back to the Acadian story and the "cultural landscape" as defined in the OUV statement. Nonetheless, the influence that these associations have had on the Grand-Pré park is pronounced. The "cultural landscape" that emerges reveals a complex historical legacy that makes the concept of "universal" value problematic.

The diverse associations of the Grand-Pré National Historic Site stem, for the most part, from Grand-Pré's complex past. When the Acadians first settled in Grand-Pré during the 17th-century it was already well known to the area's indigenous people, the Mi'kmaq. In 1760 Grand-Pré was resettled by Planters from New England in an attempt to bring in inhabitants who would be "unquestionably loyal."<sup>6</sup> Many of the area's current residents are descended from this group of settlers. The Planters were later followed by Loyalists who fled from the Thirteen Colonies

4 This article does not attempt to summarize the history of Grand-Pré or the Acadian deportation. For some context of these, see Naomi Griffiths, *The Acadian Deportation: Deliberate Perfidy or Cruel Necessity?* (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969); Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History, 1686-1784* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Bona Arsenault, *Histoire des Acadiens*, Saint Laurent, Fides, 2004; John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005); Nicolas Landry and Nicole Lang, *Histoire de l'Acadie*, Sillery Septentrion, 2001; Émile Lauvière, *La tragédie d'un peuple : histoire du peuple Acadien de ses origines à nos jours, Volume 1*, Paris, Ames et Choses, 1924; and Michel Roy, *L'Acadie : des origines à nos jours*, Montréal, Québec/Amérique, 1981.

5 J.F. Herbin to Placide Gaudet, 20 September 1920, 1.76-77, Fonds Placide Gaudet, Centre d'études acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson (CEA).

6 Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 407.

during the American Revolution (1775-1783) – though very few Loyalists actually settled in Grand-Pré. Understandably, this diverse history has resulted in a landscape whose historical associations are multi-faceted. At one time Grand-Pré was Acadian or “French” – a distinction that was often blurred by the Acadian elite, who would often describe themselves as members of the “French race” – but with the resettlement of the area it became a predominantly English-speaking community.<sup>7</sup> These associations were also opposing ones since their historical roots lay in the battle between the French and the British in colonial Nova Scotia. All of these associations were accommodated and included in the construction of the park. Built during the 1920s and 1930s, it has represented a much broader narrative than that of the deported Acadians. Within this context, the “memorial constructions” of the Grand-Pré National Historic Site were never inherently “Acadian.”

By looking at the construction of the park, starting with its conception in 1907, this article examines the origins of those “memorial constructions.” It traces the many associations that have been attributed to the park over the past century, including more recent attempts at redefining its historical purpose. In particular, it explores the conflict between the site’s competing interest groups and the impact that this has had on the park’s interpretive framework over time. First and foremost among these groups was the Acadian elite, who consisted mainly of Acadian professionals from New Brunswick but who claimed to represent the interests of the larger Acadian diaspora. By erecting a large monument to the Acadians at Grand-Pré, this group was also symbolically reclaiming Grand-Pré as an Acadian landscape. This was viewed by some members of the local English-speaking community of Grand-Pré as an affront to their own Planter heritage.<sup>8</sup> The anglophone elite, on the other hand, wanted to appropriate both histories – Acadian and Planter – as part of a larger national grand narrative that would celebrate Grand-Pré’s French and British colonial past. This group consisted primarily of politicians and local representatives of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). The DAR, however, also contributed to the development of this grand narrative in an attempt to increase the park’s appeal to a range of communities and potential visitors and therefore its profitability. Each of these groups sought to preserve and promote a particular aspect of Grand-Pré’s history in order to convey a particular identity. The Grand-Pré National Historic Site became the focus of the ensuing conflict since it was used to both establish and challenge these various identities. This was achieved in one of two ways. Most often it was through the use of language to describe the park’s buildings and other features as embodying particular types of identities. At other times it was accomplished by directly or indirectly influencing the design of the park, which included the selection of artefacts to be displayed at the site. Not surprisingly, this latter approach was the most consequential for the site’s interpretive framework. This article, then, also delves into the relatively unexplored subject of Grand-Pré’s architectural development.

7 C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada’s National Historic Parks and Sites* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 17.

8 See Advisory Board Meeting, Agenda, 5 November 2009, p. 3, *Nomination Grand-Pré*, <http://www.nominationgrandpre.ca/board.html>.

### Identity and architecture at Grand-Pré

Although the theme of identity formation has been addressed extensively in recent literature, most notably in Barbara LeBlanc's *Postcards from Acadie*, very few studies have been undertaken on Grand-Pré's architectural history. This article does not seek to fill the gap entirely, but it will build upon some of the previous works that have briefly explored this subject. LeBlanc's book is important as a starting point in this endeavour. Her analysis of the park focuses on the symbolic role that the site's monuments – the Memorial Church especially – have had in fostering Acadian identity. In this way it does address the broader significance of the park's built environment.<sup>9</sup> But her analysis falls short of looking in detail at the structural development of the church or at the design of the Grand-Pré garden. Nor does she address how the design changes that the park underwent over time were affected by changes in the park's administration or how the design changes might have been influenced by the broader socio-political climate of the Maritimes. This context is also missing in Shannon Ricketts's and Carol Savoie's independent studies of Grand-Pré's architecture. Ricketts's federal report on the park's construction provides a good descriptive account of the various architectural influences on the church's design, but as a federal heritage study it lacks a broader analysis of how these influences were used to create and sustain the identity, or identities, attributed to the church.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Savoie's Master of Architecture thesis provides an informative analysis of the historical roots of Acadian architecture; her thesis, however, is a proposal for how modern architects can create their own "narrative architecture" using knowledge of past events, design, and materials.<sup>11</sup> All of these studies address, in some way, the architectural components of the park, but none offer both an analysis of the design of the church and park as well as an analysis of the cultural and political context of their construction. They also do not address how the discourses surrounding the design elements of the Memorial Church and the Grand-Pré National Historic Site generally were central to framing the broader discussion of identity formation.

The context of the site's construction is also key to understanding design decisions and the intent behind them. Architecture both expresses and aids in the construction of meaning, and the narratives that we convey through architecture can be used to shape our relationships to one another – either by reinforcing a shared identity or by reaffirming existing beliefs about political, social, economic, and/or cultural differences.<sup>12</sup> All agents and actors, whether they are the original builders or

9 Barbara LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie: Grand-Pré, Evangeline and the Acadian Identity* (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2003).

10 Shannon Ricketts, "Grand-Pré Memorial Chapel," *Federal Heritage Building Review Office Report 91-168* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1991). See also Shannon Ricketts, "Cultural Selection and National Identity: Establishing Historic Sites in a National Framework," *The Public Historian* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 23-41.

11 Carol Savoie, "Architecture as the Narrator: The Odyssey of a People" (MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 2002), 36.

12 John Urry, "How Societies Remember the Past," in *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, ed. Sharon MacDonald and Gordon Fyfe (Cambridge, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 50. See also Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

subsequent stewards, take on a curatorial role as they select and arrange objects according to pre-determined goals. For Acadians, the memory of the expulsion is conveyed through the site's monuments – a bronze statue of Evangeline, Evangeline's "Well," a stone cross, and Memorial Church – turning Grand-Pré into a lieu de mémoire; it is a site where, according to Pierre Nora, memory "takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects."<sup>13</sup> Grand-Pré gained a prominent place in the Acadian historical consciousness only after the publication of *Evangeline* in 1847, an association that was later solidified with the construction of the park. For many anglophones, however, the site's Acadian story was a natural fit with Canada's larger national narrative. The first Acadian settlers, after all, were Canadian "pioneers," and the expulsion of 1755 was but one stepping stone on the path to the British conquest of Quebec in 1759. The ideologies held by both Acadians and anglophones influenced how they saw the park and the narrative that it conveyed, and the elites of both groups attempted to use Grand-Pré and the Grand-Pré National Historic Site to promote their own version of the area's history.

### **Defining community**

The history of how competing interests shaped the Grand-Pré site has been given attention elsewhere; most recently this was by Roger Marsters, who studied the HSMBC's attempt to impose a bicultural nationalism on Grand-Pré (which itself had depended upon the promotion of the area's bicultural past). During the 1930s the HSMBC, recognizing the need to promote such a past, set out to commemorate a separate site in Grand-Pré that would pay homage to both the French and English. The board proposed erecting a monument that would honour Colonel Arthur Noble, who died during the 1747 "Battle of Grand-Pré" when he and his detachment of British troops from Massachusetts were attacked and defeated by a combined force of French, Acadian, and Aboriginal combatants. The board hoped that a monument commemorating an aspect of the area's English history might help to make commemoration at Grand-Pré more balanced. In this way, the board would be able to appease the anglophone critics of the park and help ease tensions between French- and English-speaking groups in the area. Thus, writes Marsters, it was believed that the site would contribute to the creation of a greater "unified Canadian citizenry" by helping to reconcile the country's cultural and social divisions, which were inherently historical ones.<sup>14</sup> However, these divisions were also regional. As E.R. Forbes notes, diverse settlement patterns in the Maritimes "contributed to prevent the development of a common historical tradition" and led to the emergence of a variety of cultural, economic, and political traditions and interests that "would have to be reconciled before a genuine regional consciousness could emerge."<sup>15</sup> The board members saw the Noble monument as a small but important step towards the reconciliation of the area's regional divisions and the forging of a broader, bicultural national identity.

13 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26, 1 (Spring 1989): 7.

14 Roger Marsters, "'The Battle for Grand-Pré': The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and the Commemoration of Acadian History," *Acadiensis* XXXVI, no. 1 (Autumn 2006): 29-50.

15 E.R. Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 2. As Forbes notes, the



The historical and cultural divide between the region's English- and French-speaking groups led to the emergence of two competing narratives at Grand-Pré. These narratives focused on the distinction between two different kinds of communities, one with borders and one without. The Grand-Pré Memorial Park was built as a small local museum, but it has never functioned as a *community* museum in the traditional sense.<sup>16</sup> The community whose history the site was intended to commemorate was that of the dispersed groups of Acadians who inhabited separate and in some cases distant regions throughout the world. The park, on the other hand, is situated in the middle of the largely rural, English-speaking community of Grand-Pré and is surrounded by farmland that is privately owned and farmed by local residents. Since the 1755 expulsion there have been very few Acadians who have called Grand-Pré home. Community in the Acadian context has been and continues to be a fluid social process defined by the social interactions of its members (through national organizations and groups) and not by geographic boundaries.<sup>17</sup> In such communal structures, write John C. Walsh and Steven High, social relationships and experience “occur through space, giving that space meaning and value” while also being the means through which spaces and places are “produced and reproduced through time.”<sup>18</sup> This fluidity allows both communities to share an association with Grand-Pré, but it can be problematic when trying to articulate exactly who are the stakeholders. As Victor Tetrault, executive director of the Société Promotion Grand-Pré (SPGP), noted in 2009, one of the problems with preparing the UNESCO bid for Grand-Pré is that the major stakeholders, the Acadians, are a “community that’s absent.”<sup>19</sup>

For the Acadian elite, however, Grand-Pré’s ultimate significance lay in its ability to transcend sovereign boundaries. This was paramount in the creation of a collective Acadian national identity. During the mid-1800s, a new Acadian national

development of a regional consciousness was especially important with the emergence of the Maritime Rights Movement in the 1920s. This movement sought to address Canadian economic policies that negatively impacted the economies of the Maritime Provinces. In order to appear cohesive, the movement had to convey a broader regional identity; therefore, what followed was a period of “containment and accommodation” as differences were reconciled in whatever way necessary. See also David A. Frank, “The 1920s: Class and Region, Resistance and Accommodation,” in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, ed. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise (Toronto and Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1993), 235.

16 In their report on Canadian museums, Sir Henry Miers and S.F. Markham defined community museums as institutions meant to draw local audiences, “supply their needs,” and “provide material for their instruction.” See Sir Henry Miers and S.F. Markham, *A Report on the Museums of Canada* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable Ltd., 1932), 36.

17 This is the principle behind Benedict Anderson’s pivotal theory of imagined communities. Anderson argues that nationalism is the product of a shared but imagined affinity, conveyed largely through print culture rather than the occupation of a shared physical space that can be definitively called the nation. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 6.

18 John C. Walsh and Steven High, “Rethinking the Concept of Community,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 32, no. 64 (November 1999): 258.

19 Jon Tattrie, “Government Funds Grand Pré Bid to Become UNESCO Site,” *Metro (Halifax)*, 17 February 2009.

movement was begun that would work towards this goal. Central to this movement were the Acadian national conventions, the first of which was held in Memramcook, New Brunswick, in 1881. The first convention saw the selection of a national holiday and the formation of a new national organization, the Société nationale de l'Assomption (SNA) – later renamed the Société nationale de l'Acadie – which would eventually come to represent the political and social interests of Acadians abroad. This was followed by the 1884 convention in Miscouche, Prince Edward Island, where an Acadian flag and a national anthem were added to the roster of national symbols. Grand-Pré also had a prominent place in this agenda since the widespread popularity of *Evangeline* allowed Acadians, and therefore Acadian social and political issues, to enter “mainstream Canadian society.”<sup>20</sup> It was believed that by drawing on their common heritage or “past glory” all Acadians would unite into a single political force. As Sheila Andrew notes, the expulsion provided Acadians with a “very strong and unifying and levelling historical experience” that could be harnessed precisely for this purpose.<sup>21</sup> It was also necessary; despite the advances made since the first convention, political inequalities continued to exist. Acadian representation within government remained unbalanced, and tensions between francophones and anglophones in the region began to escalate during the 1920s. Of particular concern was the supposed possibility of “French Domination” of the Maritime region. This concern was especially prevalent in New Brunswick, where the Acadian population was so large.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the role of the Acadian elite has been viewed by some as one of self-interest. Historian Régis Brun, for instance, argues that the Acadian national movement was little more than a means for the elite to acquire power and fortune – that it was not a bottom-up movement to address the needs and interests of the masses.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the “self-interest” addressed by Brun is not unique to the

20 LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie*, 69. Longfellow’s poem brought sympathy to the Acadian cause and for this reason was disliked by many anglophones. Historian M. Brook Taylor has characterized the period following the publication of *Evangeline* as one of partisan strife that divided British nationalists who supported England’s actions in 1755 and Acadian nationalists who used the poem to elicit sympathy for the Acadian peoples. In an attempt to discredit the validity of Longfellow’s poem, writes Taylor, Nova Scotia historians conducted extensive research to support Britain’s actions. Taylor argues that this made Nova Scotians more enthusiastic and better historians. For more, see M. Brook Taylor, *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

21 Sheila M. Andrew, *The Development of Elites in Acadian New Brunswick, 1861-1881* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 9, 10.

22 The “domination” feared by the region’s English-speaking community took on many forms, but it mostly had to do with the intrusion of the French language on what was perceived as Anglophone society. For instance, a campaign launched by Acadians to increase the use of French in commercial establishments in Moncton, New Brunswick, was met with an “Anglophone backlash.” This backlash led to a drop in revenues for Acadian businesses and the campaign was eventually abandoned. See Léon Thériault, “Acadia from 1763 to 1990: An Historical Synthesis,” in *Acadia of the Maritimes: Thematic Studies from the Beginning to the Present*, ed. Jean Daigle (Chaire d’études acadiennes: Université de Moncton, 1995), 45-88.

23 Régis Brun, *De Grand-Pré à Kouchibouguac: l’histoire d’un peuple exploité*, Moncton, Éditions d’Acadie, 1973, p. 143.



Acadians or Grand-Pré. Public memory is inherently about social power structures.<sup>24</sup> Historical interpretation is by nature selective, and the narratives we convey about the past often depend on who is telling the story and what is to be gained from the telling. This holds true for the masses as well as the elites. John Bodnar addresses this selectivity in his analysis of public memory in America in which he identifies two distinct classes that intersect in the process of commemoration: the dominant elites or enactors representing “official culture,” who use commemoration as a means of ensuring social and national unity, and members of the “vernacular culture,” or “ordinary people,” whose interests can both parallel and oppose those of the enactors.<sup>25</sup> Although enactors have significant power, writes Bodnar, so do ordinary citizens, who can either accept the official version of history or choose to believe a version of the past that is in opposition to the national agenda (such as the belief that some war deaths are unnecessary rather than patriotic).<sup>26</sup> Ordinary citizens, writes Bodnar, can “put official agendas to unintended uses” by using “patriotic symbols” to further their own political agendas.<sup>27</sup>

Those Acadians involved with the Grand-Pré project were most certainly defined as members of the influential class described by Brun in that they were professional individuals who were socially and politically connected (in some cases directly so). Pascal Poirier, a lawyer and the first Acadian appointed to the Canadian Senate, was named president of the Comité de l'Église Souvenir (the Comité), which also included other prominent members such as Father André Cormier, a well-respected Acadian priest; Antoine-J. Léger, a lawyer who managed the committee's legal affairs; Alexandre J. Doucet, an MP for the largely Acadian county of Kent, NB; Charles D. Hébert, a school inspector in New Brunswick and a secretary for both the Comité and the SNA; and François Comeau, an Acadian employee of the DAR who acted as a liaison between the company and the Comité. Comeau was also elected president of the SNA in 1937. The Comité was sponsored by two larger Acadian national organizations: the Société Mutuelle L'Assomption (SMA), which owned the land on which the Memorial Church was built, and the SNA, which was

24 David Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory,” *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 7-23.

25 John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 13.

26 There is an extensive literature on the subject of war monuments and commemoration dealing specifically with shifting attitudes towards the idea of war. Robert Shipley, for example, looks at how monuments have largely been ignored by the public. Exploring several reasons for this, he highlights the most problematic cause as being the rejection of war memorials as representations of war and death. See Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: A History of Canadian War Memorials* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1987), 19. See also Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

27 Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 32. This process can be seen throughout Canadian historical commemoration. Alan Gordon's work, for instance, looks at how the conflict between French and English nationalism impacted the erection of statues honouring Sir John A. Macdonald and Paul Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, in 1895 Montreal. Alan Gordon argues that whereas MacDonalld stood as a symbol of Canadian nationalism, it was the statue of Maisonneuve, the city's founder, that was given more frequent attention by Montrealers. See Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal's Public Memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001), xii.

responsible for the construction and maintenance of the church. The SMA had been founded in 1903 by Acadians living in Waltham, Massachusetts, but it also had branches throughout eastern Canada and the United States. Its stated goal was to provide mutual charity and aid to Acadian peoples in need.<sup>28</sup> As Acadian “national” organizations, both the SMA and the SNA invested in projects that would have significance to the Acadian community at large. This was how they acquired their “power.” The opportunity to build a large Acadian monument at Grand-Pré was also an opportunity for the SMA and SNA to increase their political capital.<sup>29</sup> They could once again make the association with Grand-Pré a physical one. The remains of the Acadian dykelands served as a physical reminder of the ingenuity of the Acadian peoples, but an official monument would serve as a symbolic reclaiming and is something that would have appealed to many Acadians.

### **The Acadian Memorial Church**

The Acadian monument chosen for Grand-Pré represented the sense of community that was valued by a disparate group such as the Acadians. The land transfer between the DAR and the SMA took place in 1919, and the agreement signed by both parties stipulated that the memory of the Acadians would be conveyed through the erection of a Memorial Church.<sup>30</sup> The monument was meant to represent the church of Saint-Charles, which it was believed stood on the exact same site prior to 1755. It was inside the church that the deportation order was read aloud to the Acadian people and where over 400 Acadian men were detained by British troops while they awaited the ships that would take them to various colonies throughout the British Empire.<sup>31</sup> The church was also a place of communal gathering, and so a memorial in the guise of the church would represent a time and place in which all Acadians shared one communal identity. However, the design of the Memorial Church was not specifically Acadian nor an exact replica of the church of Saint-Charles. It was designed in the Norman architectural tradition by the Moncton architect René A. Fréchet, who had a specialization in religious architecture and was also a member of the SNA.<sup>32</sup> In designing the Memorial Church, Fréchet set out to replicate the mundane architecture of the original church, which was described as being “plain and old fashioned”; but the church he proposed could only be “as near as possible a facsimile” since there were no sketches or plans of the original church from 1755

28 For most of the early years of the park’s construction, the two groups are indistinguishable and worked very closely on the development of the church and in expanding the influence of the Acadian national movement. For more on the history of the SMA, see Antoine J. Léger, *Les grandes lignes de l’histoire de la Société l’Assomption*, Québec, Impr. franciscaine missionnaire, 1933, and Euclide Daigle, *Petite histoire d’une grande idée: Assomption, compagnie mutuelle d’assurance-vie, 1903-1978*, Moncton, Impr. Acadienne, 1978. For a history of the SNA, see Maurice Basque, *La Société nationale de l’Acadie: au coeur de la réussite d’un peuple*, Moncton, Éditions de la Francophonie, 2006.

29 John Frederic Herbin to Placide Gaudet, 28 September 1920, Fonds Placide Gaudet, 1.76-77, CEA.

30 Indenture between the Dominion Atlantic Railway and the Société Mutuelle l’Assomption, 28 May 1919, p. 2, Fonds l’Eglise souvenir, 881-1, CEA.

31 Shannon Ricketts, “Grand-Pré Memorial Chapel,” 5.

32 Régis Brun, *Les Acadiens à Moncton : un siècle et demi de présence française au Coude*, Moncton, Régis Brun, 1999, p. 83-88.

and very few accounts that described its design.<sup>33</sup> Fréchet's church, instead, would be more reminiscent of the style of Renaissance construction common in France during the reign of Henri IV (1553-1610), who was also the reigning monarch of France when Acadia was first settled by Pierre Dugua, Sieur de Mons, in 1604.<sup>34</sup> It was a style that was also associated with church design in Quebec during that same time period.

The intentional use of a design based on Norman and Quebec architectural traditions served some very important goals. The most direct association was with the ancestry attributed to the Acadian peoples in *Évangéline*, which describes the Acadian forefathers as being Norman in origin and of singing in their "Norman orchards."<sup>35</sup> The association was not just poetic. According to Ian McKay and Robin Bates, such an association also helped to give the Acadians a "standing" within the "British narratives." It was commonly believed at the time that the Norman invasion of 1066 had made England a "stronger nation," and this gave the Norman identity a certain level of respect.<sup>36</sup> In other words, being "Norman" was closer to being "English" and therefore considered more respectable than being "French" or "Acadian."

Another significant association was the one made with Quebec architecture. This link provided Acadians with a connection to a place and a people who were linguistically similar but, unlike themselves, were not scattered across vast distances. The church's architecture, writes Barbara LeBlanc, helped the Acadians to connect themselves to the land of their "French-Speaking cousins."<sup>37</sup> Shannon Ricketts, on the other hand, sees the association with Quebec church design as more likely unintentionally "ironic" than intentionally "symbolic," considering that the differences between early Quebec and Acadian construction techniques were "little understood at the time."<sup>38</sup> Acadian construction, at least for dwellings, consisted mostly of simple cob houses or squared log homes, where "each architectural component was functional and decoration was minimal or absent."<sup>39</sup> According to Bernard and Ronnie-Gilles LeBlanc, this type of architecture was unique but not

33 François Comeau to R.L. Borden, 7 October 1921, 4.8-3, CEA. There is, however, said to be a description of the church in the oral tradition of the Planters that has been passed down. See Nomination Grand-Pré, *Report on the Proposed Outstanding Universal Value for Grand-Pré*, January 2009, *Nomination Grand-Pré*, 19, <http://www.nominationgrandpre.ca/documents.html>.

34 R.A. Fréchet, "La chapelle memorial à Grand Pré, N.É.," *l'Évangéline* (Moncton), 22 December 1921. Norman Style architecture is also referred to as English Romanesque architecture. See Ricketts, "Grand-Pré Memorial Chapel," 7. Ricketts places the church within the broader tradition of revival-style architecture, which consisted of the patterning of new construction on older forms. This included the architectural practice of using vernacular buildings of the country as a source of inspiration in contemporary designs. See Shannon Ricketts, "Cultural Selection and National Identity," 7.

35 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Évangéline: A Tale of Acadie* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1875), 18.

36 Ian McKay and Robin Bates, *In the Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 95.

37 LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie*, 101.

38 Ricketts, "Grand-Pré Memorial Chapel," 7.

39 Savoie, "Architecture as the Narrator," 15.

independent of other influences. The style was essentially European, but with adaptations for the local environment. It also incorporated a number of features borrowed from “neighbouring cultures,” which included the use of “Anglo-American” sash windows.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, Fréchet did set out to create a church that resembled 18th-century Quebec churches. He even made a point of critiquing a sketch of the church drawn by the park’s general architect, the Montreal-based Percy Nobbs, stating that the side porch of Nobbs’s church should be relocated from the east to the west side and that the main entry should be placed on the south side facing the railway station, which would help to bring the design “into closer line with Québec church design rather than the English parish church model with its side entry.”<sup>41</sup>

In any case, the Comité did not hesitate to promote the church’s design as “French.” The building of the church was often described by the SNA as a “French” project that would usher in a new era for the Catholic Church and “the French Race in America.”<sup>42</sup> Fréchet also described the design as having a grace that would be “en tout français” from its shape to its external décor. Even the church spire, which consisted of an iron cross and rooster, was described by Fréchet as embodying the style of “les vieilles églises françaises.” In the interior of the church the distinctive “French” style was embodied in the floral motives and white and blue tones, which, according to Fréchet, demonstrated the aesthetic quality of French Renaissance-style architecture.<sup>43</sup>

The symbol of the church was more than just a historical reference. An association with French architectural traditions in the guise of a church also meant an association with Roman Catholicism, the religion of most Acadians. Their religion was one of the many traditions that Acadians took with them in 1755 and a part of their modern cultural identity, as the SNA made a point of emphasizing.<sup>44</sup> It was a kind of identity that could appeal to a number of individuals and groups, including Catholic associations and other potential donors who identified themselves as French, Catholic, or both. More importantly, it would have appealed to the patriotic and national sentiments of the Acadian community at large – who would have also been more likely to donate to what they perceived as a Catholic and therefore truly Acadian endeavour. In this context, the church was described in religious or spiritual terms as being “sacré par son objet.”<sup>45</sup> The funding campaigns

40 Bernard LeBlanc and Ronnie-Gilles LeBlanc acknowledge that the exact appearance of Acadian buildings prior to the deportation is somewhat of an “enigma” since there are few available sources describing their design. For more on the construction of Acadian dwellings, see Bernard V. LeBlanc and Ronnie-Gilles LeBlanc, “Traditional Material Culture in Acadia,” in Daigle, *Acadia of the Maritimes*, 577-624 (quotation on 603).

41 Fréchet, “La chapelle memorial à Grand Pré.” Despite this criticism, it appears that Fréchet drew inspiration from Nobbs’s design since the church that Fréchet designed was very similar to the one drawn by Nobbs. This has led Shannon Ricketts to suggest that Fréchet adopted Nobbs’s basic concept while “making some alterations along the way.” This is very likely since Nobbs and Fréchet did correspond regarding the park’s construction. See Ricketts, “Grand-Pré Memorial Chapel,” 8.

42 F.J. Robidoux to Knights of Columbus, 23 December 1921, Fonds Antoine-J. Léger, 21.7-6, CEA.

43 Fréchet, “La chapelle memorial à Grand Pré.”

44 Ronald Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian’s Journey through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 47.

45 Extract from *Le Devoir* (Montréal) published in *l’Évangéline*. unknown author, “L’ÉGLISE-SOUVENIR DE GRAND-PRÉ,” *l’Évangéline*, 20 October 1921.





Figure 1: The Grand-Pré Memorial Church, 2008. Photograph taken by author.



launched by the SNA also linked the church to the broader nationalist agenda by describing the project as “la grande cause acadienne” and representative of the historic and patriotic spirit of the Acadian people.<sup>46</sup> The religious association was not only notional. In 1923 a statue of Notre-Dame-de-l’Assomption, the patron saint of the Acadians, was placed inside the church and, although services were never held inside the church, masses were and continue to be held every year on the grounds next to the building. After its construction the church also served as a pilgrimage site for Acadians worldwide.<sup>47</sup>

The Catholic character of the church is also revealed by the reactions of non-Catholics to its design. Some members of the Grand-Pré community believed that the church’s French Roman Catholic design was part of the growing Acadian nationalist movement and therefore might lead to a “disturbance of the peace in the Maritimes.”<sup>48</sup> One resident in the Grand-Pré area expressed his concern: he was “heart and soul” in support of the project of building a memorial, but was opposed to the idea of constructing a Catholic church. Edward McCarthy complained to the Bishop of Saint John in 1919 that “when we build a Catholic church we always have a definite end in view, generally to give our people an opportunity to hear mass, but there are no Catholics at Grand-Pré.” It did not seem to make sense, he concluded, to give it the character of a church.<sup>49</sup> To McCarthy the presence of a French Roman Catholic church, whether consecrated or not, conveyed a very distinct and conflicting identity. His feelings echoed those of other residents in Grand-Pré, who feared an Acadian “take over.” Many believed, for instance, that a proposal to use an old road adjacent to the park as a main entrance signified an attempt to bring the French back into the area and dispossess the English.<sup>50</sup> It did not help that the road was commonly known as the “Old French Road.” The idea of erecting a church, however, was first proposed by John Herbin, a Protestant. Furthermore, it was the church’s ability to unite that was emphasized by the SNA. When requesting funds from the Knights of Columbus, for instance, F.J. Robidoux emphasized the role of the “ENGLISH RAILWAY COMPANY,” whose contributions to the construction of a Catholic church were providential by virtue of the fact that they, the DAR officials, were mostly “ENGLISH SPEAKING PROTESTANTS.”<sup>51</sup> Both the DAR and the SNA promoted the idea that the church would represent an “alliance” of sorts between Canada’s “two great races” rather than a continuation of a far-reaching conflict.<sup>52</sup>

46 Committee of Grand-Pré Memorial Church, “Dear Sir” letter to potential donors, October 1929, Fonds l’Église-souvenir, 881-1, CEA.

47 The unveiling and blessing of the statue took place on 23 August 1923, which coincided with the SMA convention in Moncton. On that same day an Acadian flag was also blessed and placed inside the church behind the statue. See LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie*, 122, 124-6.

48 Marsters, “The Battle for Grand-Pré,” 31.

49 Edward McCarthy to Lord Bishop of St. John, N.B., 3 October 1919, Fonds Antoine-J. Léger, 21.7-6, CEA.

50 One resident was supposedly able to rally the community to sign a petition against the use of the road. See Marguerite Woodworth, *History of the Dominion Atlantic Railway* (Kentville, NS: Kentville Publication Company Ltd, 1936), 51-61.

51 F.J. Robidoux to Knights of Columbus, 23 December 1921, Fonds Antoine-J. Léger, 21.7-6, CEA (emphases in original).

52 François Comeau to R.L. Borden, 7 October 1921, Fonds Ferdinand Robidoux, 4.8-3, CEA.

### The Grand-Pré garden

The other side of this new alliance, at least in terms of design, was represented by the cultivated grounds of the Grand-Pré park. The garden layout was personally designed by Nobbs.<sup>53</sup> In 1919 he prepared a plan of the park that reveals a clearly demarcated landscape enclosed by low hedges and fences. The plan was very similar to the concept that was originally proposed by Herbin before he deeded the land to the DAR. Nobbs worked on the design with the assistance of E.R. Clarke, the DAR's landscape architect.<sup>54</sup> Clarke determined that to appropriately focus attention on the church it would be best to establish an "artificial background" by creating a boundary using the already present willows and carefully planted poplars. This would help to accentuate the beauty of the church by making it the distinctive feature of the park as well as help to "restrict the landscape" to the site.<sup>55</sup> Within this boundary is the garden, which consists of carefully planted hedges and a "water garden" encircled by an intricate system of pathways. Along one pathway is the statue of Evangeline; on the other the memorial stone cross and Evangeline's "Well." As with the park's boundaries, plants are used to emphasize shape and direction. The pathways are bordered on both sides with cylindrical poplar trees, which serve to narrow the traveller's gaze so that the centrality of the church is emphasized. Although the park consists of seemingly distinct and separate monuments, the park's features are guided by the very narrative that inspired them.<sup>56</sup> The statue of Evangeline is the first monument one sees when entering the park, setting the context for the rest of the site.

The garden, however, tells a different story. It is a story told in the English Arts and Crafts tradition, which placed heavy emphasis on the romantic and idyllic rural countryside.<sup>57</sup> Percy Nobbs was a devoted practitioner of the style, one that focused on vernacular architectural forms and the practice of making buildings appear to "grow naturally from their surroundings" by using local materials, traditions, and craftsmanship in their design.<sup>58</sup> It also drew from the "time-tested methods of old builders" to create a landscape that was rustic and nostalgic in character. Part and

53 Percy Nobbs's influence on the landscape of McGill University is particularly pronounced. He designed many of the buildings on the campus.

54 This was in accordance with the practices of Arts and Crafts landscaping, where the architect determined the structural layout of the ground but the landscape gardener alone had dominion over the ornamentation of the garden. Hitchmough also notes that the architect would be aware of all the elements that the landscape-gardener required: fountains, basin, fish-pond, sun-dial, etc. The relationship, for the most part, was collaborative but always interdependent. The landscape architect was required to come up with the layout as well as determine if it should be formal or picturesque in design; only then could the gardener "work out the details" of how it could be achieved. See Wendy Hitchmough, *Arts and Crafts Gardens* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998), 72.

55 E.R. Clarke to George Graham, "Grand-Pré estimate," 2 December 1922, p. 2, Fonds Ferdinand Robidoux, 4.3-2, CEA.

56 Savoie, "Architecture as the Narrator," 7. Savoie describes this arrangement as narrative through "spatial succession," but unfortunately does not qualify exactly in what way she thinks the park's structure accomplishes this.

57 Hitchmough, *Arts and Crafts Gardens*, 7.

58 Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), 2. For this reason, the characterization of Arts and Crafts gardens as Victorian, though common, is inaccurate. Furthermore, the relative simplicity of the Grand-Pré garden is significantly different from the high style of ornamental Victorian gardens

parcel of this was the belief that the Arts and Crafts landscape represented a humane protest against the often-devastating effects of 19th-century industrialism.<sup>59</sup> The Arts and Crafts garden in particular, writes Wendy Hitchmough, was centred on the ideal of the English country house and garden, which was often indicative of a “striving for purity and innocence” in “a century of radical changes.” It was also part of the movement away from the “ostentation and vulgarity” of the Victorian era as it came to represent a deliberate rejection of the social values and oppressiveness of the Victorian period and of the British Empire’s long history of political domination over foreign subjects.<sup>60</sup> In this way, the tradition held on to an English aesthetic while emphasizing a different British identity – one that was free from the constraints and imperialism of the Victorian period. Nobbs drew upon the ideals of the Arts and Crafts tradition, most notably the theme of the country house and garden, to design a landscape that was simple yet elegant but also recognizably “English.” Even the principle of making buildings appear to grow naturally from the landscape was incorporated into the church’s design. Early photographs of the park reveal climbing vines and other plants on the church itself, which have since been removed. This element of the garden’s design was modelled in the Arts and Crafts tradition.<sup>61</sup> It also reflected the principle of “harmonious decoration” laid out in the agreement between the SMA and the DAR, which called for the church to appear “right and proper” with the rest of the park and vice versa.<sup>62</sup> This was certainly achieved in Nobbs’s design. Like the English country home and garden, the church and its beautifully landscaped grounds represents a symbiotic rural ideal, one where the church’s simple charm is “underscored by its garden setting.”<sup>63</sup>

The relationship between the church and the garden was not only aesthetic. The Grand-Pré Memorial Park, after all, consisted of a French Catholic church at the centre of an English garden situated within an “Acadian” landscape. It was intended to represent the “harmonious” merging of identities. This aspect of its design was not accidental but intentional, and also extended to the garden’s floral arrangements. The garden arranged by Clarke was carefully adorned with flowers imported from other countries such as France, England, and Scotland. This, Clarke emphasized,

like those that grace the palaces or large estates of England (the English countryside in particular). The “opulent” formality of the Victorian garden was a “small reflection of the Victorian world at large.” See Hitchmough, *Arts and Crafts Gardens*, 7. Tom Carter, however, does note that the Victorian garden could also represent an environment in which the rules of the “rigid” Victorian society could be “relaxed.” He states that it was a place “where men and women, labourers and intellectuals, poor and rich could mix with comparative freedom.” See Tom Carter, *The Victorian Garden* (London: Bill & Hyman Limited, 1984), 8. For more on the Victorian and Arts and Crafts traditions, see the following: Jane Brown, *The English Garden in Our Time* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Antique Collector’s Club, 1986); Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 2nd ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1995); Brent Elliot, *Victorian Gardens* (London: Batsford Ltd, 1986); and Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).

59 Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, 2.

60 Hitchmough, *Arts and Crafts Gardens*, 7, 14, 16.

61 It is ironic, however, that most visitors to the Grand-Pré park, even today, describe the garden as being Victorian.

62 Indenture between the Dominion Atlantic Railway and the Société Mutuelle l’Assomption, 28 May 1919, p. 2, Fonds l’Église-souvenir, 881-1, CEA.

63 Ricketts, “Grand-Pré Memorial Chapel,” 8.

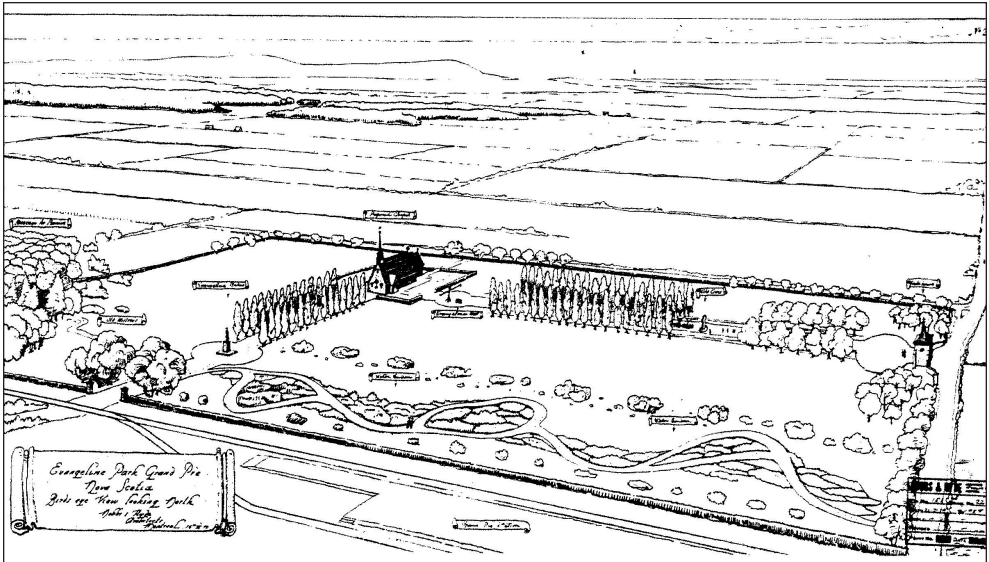


Figure 2: Plan of the Grand-Pré Memorial Park drawn by Percy Nobbs, 1919 (John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University Library).

served as a “well ordered scheme of decoration” since it would help the DAR to promote the garden as being “international,” something to be admired by tourists from all corners of the globe.<sup>64</sup>

The flowers from France were considered particularly appropriate for the park.<sup>65</sup> These included some Fleur de Lys and a gift of an apple tree that was planted next to Evangeline’s “Well.” The tree was meant to serve as a reminder to visitors that the beautiful orchards of the Annapolis Valley, which brought wealth to the region, were “d’origine française.”<sup>66</sup> Many of the French flowers came from regions of France like Chatellerrault, Orleans, and Brouage – the last considered highly appropriate given it was the birthplace of Samuel de Champlain, the founder of Acadia. A label for the flowers stated that they were donated for this very reason.<sup>67</sup> The fact that Pierre Dugua, Sieur de Mons, was the leader of the first expedition to Acadia in 1604, and not Champlain, seems to have been lost on the donors.<sup>68</sup> This distinction, of course,

64 François Comeau to Madame Lusseau, 4 July 1932, Fonds François Comeau, 12.2-8, CEA.

65 Clarke, “Grand Pré estimate,” 2.

66 “Pommier de France pour le Parc-Souvenir de Grand-Pré,” *l’Évangéline*, 11 May 1933.

67 François Comeau to M.K. McQuarrie, 14 May 1932, Fonds François Comeau, 12.2-8, CEA. The flowers were sent directly to François Comeau, who received them on behalf of the Comité. A letter sent to George Graham, the general manager of the DAR, by Comeau suggests that the DAR had little to do with the flowers from France, stating that the “railway itself is not known at all in France.” See François Comeau to George E. Graham, 11 April 1932, Fonds François Comeau, 12.2-8, CEA.

68 Several of the flowers, especially those received from France, were acquired with the help of Professor Ernest Martin of Dalhousie University. Martin promoted the Acadian cause in France

would have also been blurred by the Comité, since it was a distinction that reflected the broader political, cultural, and religious divisions that influenced commemoration at both Grand-Pré and Nova Scotia more generally. Pierre Dugua may have been French and the founder of Acadia, but he was also a Protestant. Champlain, on the other hand, was the ideal Catholic hero – he may not have led the expedition, but he was there. Acadians preferred to associate themselves with the latter. Dugua received more sympathy from English-speaking Protestants who, according to Rudin, saw in him a man “whose religion spoke to a world in which people such as themselves might feel some sense of control, free from the influence of outsiders.”<sup>69</sup>

The decision to incorporate a diversity of flowers and shrubs represented an attempt to communicate identities that were embedded in nature. Their place of origin became an important signifier of the type of identity that they should represent. The attribution of cultural identity to flowers and plants in this way is noted elsewhere. Benedict Robinson, for instance, argues that the introduction of Turkish tulips to England during the 17th century signalled the intrusion of the “foreign” into the “native” and that this was indicative of an expanding global market. The description of the tulips as “Turkish” gave the flowers a particular identity that labelled them as foreign. This, he argues further, created a link between cultural identity and cultivation that reveals how the “compressed space” of the garden can open onto the “wider and less determinate spaces of nation, race, or culture.”<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the flowers planted at Grand-Pré expanded beyond the confines of the localized garden space as they were transposed from one landscape to another. It served to label the indeterminate space in which they settled as a foreign one, but one in which they could be planted together – aesthetically and in the spirit of harmony. Comeau acknowledged this interconnectedness. He wrote that the church without the garden “would stand as an incomplete memorial” – just as the church would be of “little historic importance” without the garden, which gives it an “elaborate and interesting setting.”<sup>71</sup>

### **Grand-Pré’s pioneer museum**

By the mid-1920s, however, opposition to the park was on the rise. Despite attempts to emphasize the park’s “common heritage,” the local community of Grand-Pré

through a series of visiting lectures and several acts of good will. In 1932 Martin planted Old Willow branches in a public garden in the town of Chatellerault, France, so that when the trees grew to maturity the citizens of the town as well as visitors would have a visual marker to help recall “le souvenir du peuple acadien.” See Communiqué, “Le Prof. Martin Honore Grand Pré,” *L’Évangéline*, 18 July 1932.

69 Rudin further notes that the emphasis on Pierre Dugua during the 1904 tercentenary of the founding of Acadia reflected the ability of English-speaking organizers to exert a much greater influence on the events than their Acadian counterparts. Members of the English-speaking elites like J.W. Longley, attorney general of Nova Scotia, writes Rudin, avoided references to Champlain during the ceremonies or “for that matter to the presence of any Catholics on the 1604 expedition, a presence that might have anticipated Canada’s emergence as a country with two founding (European) peoples, one Catholic and the other Protestant and, by extension, one French and the other English-speaking.” See Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, 32.

70 Benedict S. Robinson, “Green Seraglios: Tulips, Turbans and the Global Market,” *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2009): 6.

71 F.G.J. Comeau to S.F. Markham, 16 September 1931, p. 1, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA.



continued to perceive it as a threat to their own identity. There was a growing concern within the community that local English historical traditions were being dominated by Acadian and French narratives. The restricted design of the park did not help. The fences separated the park from the surrounding community and also isolated the cultivated space of the park from its vast open setting. It had the effect of creating both physical as well as symbolic boundaries of exclusion. By focusing exclusively on the church the DAR elevated the building beyond the environment surrounding it, and enclosing the property marked it as a distinct space within the broader community. This served to reinforce earlier concerns that Acadians were symbolically “reclaiming” the land they had previously lost. The landscape was officially marked, enclosed, and given a prominent status as an Acadian historic site. These concerns translated into spatial rivalries. The HSMBC’s plan to erect a monument to Colonel Noble was viewed by the board as one way to resolve the imbalance of commemoration at Grand-Pré. By some residents, however, it was seen as problematic.<sup>72</sup> The Grand-Pré Women’s Institute objected to the proposed inscription for the monument, which described the battle as a “French Victory”; they argued it was clearly a “massacre by treachery.”<sup>73</sup> Such a monument, they argued, was “inadequate and a dishonour to the memory of brave men, who died for King and Country,” and that it also failed to reflect the area’s “loyalty” and “patriotism” to the British Crown.<sup>74</sup> If the English erect a monument, they argued, “it should surely be English.”<sup>75</sup> The board was also criticized for not consulting the local residents, who for many years had called for greater emphasis on their own history and traditions.<sup>76</sup>

The DAR also challenged the Noble commemoration, but for different reasons. Of particular concern was the board’s additional plan of establishing a museum dedicated to the Planters on the old Grand-Pré homestead of former Prime Minister

72 Marsters, “‘The Battle for Grand-Pré,’” 33.

73 Annie Stewart to Hon. William Duff, 10 March 1926, RG84-A-2-a, vol. 1195, HS6-7, file pt. 2, Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Women’s Institutes throughout the country often took part in activities that promoted local community history. Following the First World War, many institutes began engaging in historical research on their communities and began compiling historical scrapbooks of their respective localities (the precursors to the Tweedsmuir history books, which were launched in the 1940s). See Linda Ambrose, *For Home and Country: The Centennial History of the Women’s Institutes in Ontario* (Guelph, ON: Federated Women’s Institutes of Ontario, 1996).

74 The earliest inscription for the monument’s tablet conveyed how Noble and his troops were “surprised and attacked by a large party of French and Indians” and how the “defenders” were “defeated with heavy loss.” See G.W. Bryan to W.W. Cory, 15 November 1923, RG84-A-2-a, vol. 1195, HS6-7, file pt. 2, LAC, and Mrs Alden Harris to Deputy Minister of the Interior, 10 March 1926, RG84-A-2-a, vol. 1195, HS6-7, file pt. 2, LAC.

75 Annie Stewart to Hon. William Duff, 10 March 1926, vol. 1195, HS6-7, file pt. 2, LAC.

76 This criticism was also voiced by William C. Milner, a former Maritime representative on the HSMBC who often clashed with the board over its lack of attention to Maritime historic sites. Milner criticized the board for ignoring the needs of local residents who “stressed the ancient records and traditions of their own locality.” Milner’s criticism was a valid one, since most of the commemorations recommended by the board were Loyalist sites, mostly in Ontario. See unknown author, “Stone Heap Not Wanted,” *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 20 May 1926. According to C.J. Taylor, Milner was removed from the board in 1920 because of his “difficult personality.” His removal undoubtedly had an influence on his decision to get involved in the Noble controversy. See Taylor, *Negotiating the Past*, 43.

Robert Borden.<sup>77</sup> Comeau characterized both plans as a “scheme” that took attention away from the park and the Memorial Church.<sup>78</sup> “It is unfortunate,” Comeau wrote, “that all efforts to establish a Museum in Grand-Pré are not combined and centred in Grand-Pré Park.”<sup>79</sup> The DAR responded by speeding up the construction on the interior of the church before, as Comeau warned, “these other people get ahead of us.”<sup>80</sup> The DAR’s concerns were also likely fuelled by the realization that its Acadian museum lacked a “community” perspective. It was clear that if the park was to survive it would not only need to finish the museum but also make it more appealing to the local community of Grand-Pré. The DAR, of course, did not have control over the museum and its content. The SNA still had the control; however, this was about to change. The Comité was struggling to raise the necessary funds to complete the museum as community donations, the project’s largest source of funding, began to significantly decline. In 1928 the SNA decided to approach the DAR for a loan to complete the museum.<sup>81</sup> The company agreed to provide the loan as long as a few “concessions” were made.

The “concessions” put forth by the DAR included the right to use a portion of the floor space in the church for “advertising matter” and exhibits that the company deemed in its “interest” to display.<sup>82</sup> The DAR believed that such a concession made sense given this new financial contribution. “I have no doubt,” wrote Comeau to Antoine Léger, that “you will agree that we have grounds for asking for some authority to occupy the Memorial Chapel and have general supervision over the museum. It is not an easy matter to raise the required money by us, and I doubt very much if we can secure this loan without certain property rights.”<sup>83</sup> Comité members were reluctant to accept the new terms for fear that it might mean the inclusion of artefacts “that would not represent their best traditions” and felt that the Acadians “should have, to a certain extent, the control.”<sup>84</sup> They proposed an amendment to the original agreement that specified that no artefacts were to be placed in the church that did not represent “the best traditions or ideals of the Acadian people.”<sup>85</sup> The selection of these items would be done by a two-person committee made up of the president of the SNA and George E. Graham, the vice-president and the general manager of the DAR.<sup>86</sup>

It is not clear, however, if the Comité’s amendment was accepted. The DAR pressured Léger and the other members of the Comité to accept the deal before the HSMBC “gets in and corrals a lot of Acadian and Indian relics” for the new museum.<sup>87</sup> What is clear is that the focus of the museum became much broader after

77 F.G.J. Comeau to George Graham, 10 September 1930, Fonds François Comeau, 12.1-11, CEA.

78 George Graham to F.G.J. Comeau, 8 September 1930, Fonds François Comeau, 12.1-11, CEA.

79 Comeau to Graham, 10 September 1930, Fonds François Comeau, 12.1-11, CEA.

80 François Comeau to Ferdinand Robidoux, 19 April 1929, Fonds Ferdinand Robidoux, 4.8-7, CEA.

81 F.G.J. Comeau to Charles D. Hébert, 19 January 1928, Fonds Antoine-J. Léger, 21.7-6, CEA.

82 Indenture between SMA and the DAR, Draft, April 1928, p. 2, Fonds Antoine-J. Léger, 21.7-6, CEA.

83 François Comeau to Antoine Léger, 9 May 1928, Fonds Antoine-J. Léger, 21.7-7, CEA.

84 Antoine Léger to François Comeau, 19 May 1928, Fonds Antoine-J. Léger, 21.7-6, CEA.

85 Minutes of the Comité du Terrain de Grand-Pré et de l’Eglise souvenir, 13 May 1929, Fonds Société nationale de l’Assomption, 41.1-4, CEA. A copy of the amended agreement can be found in the minutes ledger of the Société nationale des Acadiens Fonds, p. 44, Fonds Société nationale de l’Assomption, 41.1-4, CEA.

86 Minutes of the Comité du Terrain de Grand-Pré et de l’Eglise souvenir, 13 May 1929, 41.1-4, CEA.

87 F.G.J. Comeau to F.J. Robidoux, 2 May 1929, Fonds Ferdinand Robidoux, 4.8-7, CEA.

the deal with the DAR was signed. When the museum opened in 1930 it displayed a wide variety of historical artefacts largely representing the area's British and, to a lesser extent, French colonial past. The collection included Native stone tools; rifles, guns, and swords; farming implements of "both French and English makes"; old utensils of the New England Planters dating to 1760; and Acadian spinning wheels. Artefacts of an imperial nature included old parchment grants dating to 1772 that were executed by the Governor of Halifax under the seal of King George III of England as well as a reproduction of the Nova Scotia flag given to Sir William Alexander by proclamation of King James VI and I in 1621.<sup>88</sup> There were also pictures, paintings, and lithographs of officials who played an important part "in the transfer of Old Acadia to the British authorities," artwork that included depictions of Governor Charles Lawrence, who authorized the expulsion, and Colonel Winslow, who "carried the decree to completion."<sup>89</sup> Depictions of other notable persons were also incorporated, including Daniel d'Auger de Subercase, the last French governor of the fort at Port Royal; Francis Nicholson, who captured the fort in 1710; Paul Mascarene, the last British governor of Annapolis Royal; and Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts, who supplied the ships that "carried the Acadians into exile." Together, Comeau wrote, these objects were thought to present a "complete" picture of the province's history in "pioneer times."<sup>90</sup> Of course, the vision of the past conveyed by the museum's collection pitted objects representative of British imperial conquest alongside more mundane displays of Acadian farming implements and household items. The former also seems to have outnumbered the latter.<sup>91</sup>

This imperialist narrative was not what the SNA had originally planned for the museum. In the initial planning stages the Acadian committee had envisioned a museum space that, according to Fréchet, was more focused on the history of the Acadians "depuis la dispersion, à nos jours" and which would explain to visitors "le progrès de la nation [Acadien]."<sup>92</sup> In any case, the Comité may have wanted more emphasis on Acadian history but it also wanted to appease the DAR which had made the project possible. As Marsters notes, the SNA demonstrated on a number of occasions a clear desire not to alienate their English benefactors nor to antagonize "the dominant anglophone society."<sup>93</sup> This way, Rudin observes, the Acadian elites could "hold on to the crumbs they were able to take from the table."<sup>94</sup>

The apparently "harmonious" design of the museum and the park, nonetheless, lent itself to appropriation by political officials, who sought to sell it as a unifying project. Concerns that the church represented a sinister nationalistic movement were dismissed at the dedication ceremony of the Memorial Church in August of 1922, its construction heralded as the great symbolic "coming together of two races to create

88 F.G.J. Comeau to S.F. Markham, 16 September 1931, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA. A copy of this list can also be found in Sir Henry Miers and S.F. Markham, *Directory of Museums and Art Galleries in Canada, Newfoundland, Bermuda, the British West Indies, British Guiana and the Falkland Islands* (London: The Museums Association, 1932).

89 Miers and Markham, *A Report on the Museums of Canada*.

90 F.G.J. Comeau to J.C. Webster, 16 April 1931, Fonds François Comeau, 12.2-4, CEA.

91 Comeau to Markham, 16 October 1931, p. 3, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA.

92 Comeau to Markham, 16 October 1931, p. 5, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA.

93 Marsters, "'The Battle for Grand-Pré,'" 46.

94 Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, 49.

one country.”<sup>95</sup> The tone changed very little at the official inauguration of the museum in 1930. The dedication coincided with the celebrations of the 175th anniversary of the expulsion. Present at the celebrations were local and provincial politicians and a delegation of representatives from France. The French delegates were just as eager to emphasize the co-operative nature of the project, which one representative described as a testament “de l’Energie de la race française.” Its representation of Canada’s two cultures, he continued, gave it a “personnalité internationale” and made it “l’un de lieux sacrés de la race française.”<sup>96</sup> The lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia, the Hon. James C. Tory, also emphasized the project as the culmination of good will and reconciliation. The museum, in his words, brought to the “support of national ideals the best qualities of both races,” who were “united, heart and soul” in the enjoyment of a “common heritage.”<sup>97</sup>

The museum’s focus on the region’s British colonial/imperial history also increased its marketability to outside groups and potential donors. The Great Depression had led to a steep decline in both financial support and visitor attendance to the park. In order to build up the remainder of the museum’s collection, the DAR had to look to philanthropic organizations for funding.<sup>98</sup> One such source was the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which had been active in Canada for several years by providing funding for the development of galleries, museums, concert halls, public parks, libraries, and other cultural institutions that would serve to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge through adult education.<sup>99</sup> In 1928 this foundation decided to provide a grant from its British Dominions and Colonies Funds to the British Museums Association (BMA) to compile a report on the state of cultural institutions in the British colonies. The study included a survey that was conducted by BMA Associate President Sir Henry Miers and the British museologist S.F. Markham. In 1931, their survey led them to the Grand-Pré museum. Miers and Markham admired the

95 Unknown author, “Memorial Chapel is Dedicated at Grand Pre, N.S.,” *Montreal Gazette*, 17 August 1922.

96 Discours a l’Inauguration d’un musée Acadien dans l’Église-souvenir de Grand-Pré, Hon. Mr. Coursier, 20 August 1930, pp. 1-2, Fonds François Comeau, 12.9-1, CEA. See also “Program of the Celebration of the 175th Anniversary of the Deportation of The Acadians and of the Inauguration of Historical Museum Evangeline Memorial Park, Grand-Pré, N.S.,” 20 August 1930, p. 3, Fonds l’Église-souvenir, 881-1, CEA.

97 Address by Hon. James C. Tory, Grand Pré, 20 August 1930, pp. 3-4, Fonds François Comeau, 12.9-1, CEA. This discourse was speaking to a much broader divide. For instance, during the planning of pageants to celebrate Quebec’s tercentenary in 1908, organizers engaged in a debate over exactly how to end the performances. Since the conquest of Quebec in 1759 represented English colonial domination, certain interest groups suggested that the pageants should end in 1775, when Quebecers repelled the invading Americans. Ultimately, the pageants ended with the conquest, but showed neither defeat nor victory. Instead, the conquest ended in “mutual triumph.” See H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec’s Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 147.

98 François Comeau to S.F. Markham, 16 October 1931, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA.

99 Jeffrey D. Brison, *Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 121. See also Robyn Gillam, *Hall of Mirrors: Museums and the Canadian Public* (Banff, AB: Banff Centre Press, 2001), 70, and John G. Reid, “Health, Education, Economy: Philanthropic Foundations in the Atlantic Region in the 1920s and 1930s,” *Acadiensis* XIV, no. 1 (Autumn 1984): 64.

park as a whole, but were particularly enamoured with the museum for its “historic tribute” to the French and English pioneer settlers. They even provided some advice on how the park could acquire additional funding.<sup>100</sup> They told Comeau about a large sum that had been “earmarked” by the corporation for “British Museums of national and historic interest in British possessions outside of the British Isles.”<sup>101</sup> Intrigued, Comeau sent a written appeal to Frederick Keppel, president of the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>102</sup>

In the letter to Keppel, Comeau described the “Acadian” museum as a “well-merited” tribute to the “pioneer nation-builders.” These pioneers included the Acadians, New England Planters, Loyalists, and, to a lesser extent, the Mi’kmaq. All these groups, Comeau wrote, had “laid the foundation” of Nova Scotia, which stands as the “outstanding vanguard of civilization in America.” Comeau continued: “The part played by Grand-Pré in the history of this province was of such strategic importance, from the viewpoint of British Empire interests, that it may well be said to have held a unique position, without parallel in any age.”<sup>103</sup> This description of the park promoted the Memorial Church as a “British” museum that conveyed a narrative of British conquest and colonial settlement. Comeau hoped that such a characterization would not only help to impress the corporation but also convince it to practice “more than ordinary generosity in the matter.”<sup>104</sup> However, it was not to be. Despite a forceful appeal, the DAR’s request for funding was declined on the grounds that the corporation was no longer issuing funds for new projects.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, the DAR was able to amass sufficient funding to keep the park in operation well into the 1950s. The documents of the SNA, however, are largely silent on exactly how this was achieved. Some relief likely came with the celebrations of the 175th anniversary in 1930, an event that brought renewed attention to the park. Moreover, during this time a new group called the “Société des amis de Grand-Pré/Association of the Friends of Grand-Pré” was formed to encourage financial aid from both French and English-speaking donors.<sup>106</sup>

### **The nationalization of the park**

Whatever the source of funding, the survival of the park continued to hang by a very thin thread. In 1955 Acadians as a whole celebrated the bicentennial of the expulsion, an event that “awoke the nationalistic sentiments” of many Acadians. However, the festive atmosphere of the celebrations masked some darker financial

100 Miers and Markham, *A Report on the Museums of Canada*, 12.

101 Arthur Smith to M.K. McQuarrie, 13 December 1932, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA.

102 François Comeau to F. Keppel, 27 January 1933, p. 2, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA.

103 Comeau to Keppel, 27 January 1933, p. 3, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA.

104 François Comeau to J. Clarence Webster, 13 December 1933, Fonds François Comeau, 12.4-6, CEA.

105 This was most likely in reference to the proposal for the construction of a priest’s house to eventually replace the church as a museum space. The project was eventually abandoned.

106 Additional funding may have also come from the Rockefeller Foundation since a suggestion was put forth that the park should seek support from the foundation. See Clément Cormier, unaddressed and undated correspondence, Fonds Clément Cormier, 177.2863, CEA. It is not certain, however, if this was pursued or not since there are no documents in the CEA archives relating to an application to the Rockefeller Foundation.



realities. The DAR could no longer afford to operate the park, and many within the organization felt that it was no longer worth the investment.<sup>107</sup> As one newspaper reported, the DAR could not keep up with “changes in the mode of travelling” brought on by the popularity of the automobile and of motor car tourism.<sup>108</sup> The decline in revenue from railroad operations meant the DAR had even less money to invest in projects like the park. Even the bicentennial celebrations had depended on partial funding from the provincial and federal governments. A bust and plaque of Longfellow were erected on the site during the celebrations, but only by virtue of government financial assistance – and this was a sign of things to come. The bicentennial would be the last celebration held at the Grand-Pré Memorial Park while it was under private ownership. Plans to turn the park into a federally owned and operated historic site were already underway.

In 1954 J.C. McCuaig, the manager of the DAR, approached Jean Lesage, federal minister of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources and suggested that the National Parks Branch (NPB), then a branch of the department, should take over the site.<sup>109</sup> The DAR’s offer came at a crucial moment. In 1949 a royal commission had been formed to look into the state of the arts in Canada. The Massey Commission on the National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences had the mandate “to give encouragement to institutions which express national feeling, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of Canadian life.” In 1951 the commission released its report, a document that made seemingly contradictory recommendations. On the one hand the commission favoured the creation of a centralized agency to help impose a common cultural tradition on an otherwise “disparate society.” On the other, it suggested that a greater emphasis should be placed on regional representation. This concern was voiced by localized groups throughout the country, who wanted greater emphasis on regional expression and the preservation of local architecture. The recommendations of the Massey Commission were not immediately implemented, but they nonetheless influenced policy surrounding designation, acquisition, and preservation of Canadian historic sites. By the mid-1950s government policy had determined that at least one large historical park project should be established in each province or region, and that the government should also establish a network of regional museums. The overall goal was to establish provincial heritage programs that would help to insert a “layer of official history into the national fabric.”<sup>110</sup> The Grand-Pré Memorial Park fit into the government’s new initiative.

Lesage accepted the DAR’s offer in the summer of 1955, just prior to the bicentennial celebrations. Of course the deal could only be finalized if the SNA was willing to give the federal government all rights to the Memorial Church.<sup>111</sup> At first, the

107 LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie*, 133.

108 Unknown author, “Future Doubtful for Famous Site at Old Grand Pré,” *The Val d’Or Star*, 18 April 1956.

109 LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie*, 133.

110 Taylor, *Negotiating Identities*, 131, 133, 145, 139. See also Paul Litt, *The Muses, the Masses and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

111 Unknown author, “Une foule de plus de 10,000 personnes au couronnement des fêtes acadiennes à Grand-Pré,” *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 16 August 1955. See also unknown author, “Les fêtes acadiennes atteignent aujourd’hui leur point culminant,” *Le Devoir*, 15 August 1955.



Figure 3: Pontifical Mass held at Grand-Pré during the 1955 bicentennial celebrations. (Centre d'études acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson, PB4-43; PB4-47)

executive members of the SNA were concerned that the deal might have “grave” consequences for the Acadian peoples and were reluctant to sign over ownership of the church.<sup>112</sup> They would only do so if there were specific conditions to which all parties agreed. According to the final agreement signed with the SNA, the government was responsible for recognizing and emphasizing the importance of the site for the Acadian peoples and for giving the church, the museum, and all other monuments within the park a “strictly bilingual character and appearance” as manifested through the employment of bilingual guides, the use of bilingual inscriptions on objects in the museum and outside signs, bilingual information literature available to visitors, and “through all means of physical expression normally found in a national park.” The government was also responsible for properly maintaining and interpreting the objects representing the history of the Acadians.<sup>113</sup>

112 “La Société nationale l’Assomption, Rapport de la réunion du conseil général, 29 novembre 1956,” p. 3, Fonds Société nationale de l’Assomption, 41.3-4, CEA.

113 Agreement between Her Majesty the Queen and the Société Nationale l’Assomption, 14 December 1956, p. 3, Fonds l’Église-souvenir, 881-3, CEA. The NPB signed two separate agreements: one with the SNA regarding the museum and the other with the DAR regarding the park grounds.

The stipulations set out in the agreement would be part of the NPB's broader re-conceptualisation of the park, which included a slightly altered interpretive framework and a rearrangement of the museum's displays. The association with *Evangeline* was also minimized because it was believed that the poem strayed from historical fact and that in promoting it the park might "be encouraging the life and growth of a myth."<sup>114</sup> The park would no longer be promoted as Evangeline Memorial Park, as the DAR had done.<sup>115</sup> Instead it would be referred to as the Grand-Pré National Historic Site. The name *Evangeline* would also be removed from any associated publications, which in some cases had included images of the park's monuments along with the heading "Land of *Evangeline*." Greater emphasis was placed on Grand-Pré's Acadian history, but the museum would still showcase a number of displays on the area's French and British colonial past. An accession book of the museum's collection at the time lists displays on the military history of the region since the expulsion, the settlement of the New England Planters, the social and economic development of the region after the expulsion,<sup>116</sup> English-speaking natives of the region, national and provincial significance of the area, and Longfellow and *Evangeline*.<sup>117</sup>

### **Redefining the Grand-Pré National Historic Site**

The changes implemented by NPB attempted to make the park more inclusive of the region's broader history while also promoting a national grand narrative. The move to marginalize the *Evangeline* story was also about eliminating a powerful myth that had the "tendency to promote disunity among Canadians" and which may "easily engender unnecessary ill-feeling."<sup>118</sup> The adherence to a bicultural narrative would help to encourage national unity, and thus the creation of a national identity, while also addressing the need for a new "national regionalism" identified by the Massey Commission. This, however, proved more complicated than expected. The NPB faced continuous pressure from individuals and groups who felt their stories were not adequately represented at Grand-Pré. In a letter to the editor of the *Chronicle Herald*, for example, one Maritimer lamented the dominance of the Acadian narrative in Nova Scotia: "I hold our Nova Scotia Acadians in the highest regard and I respect their pride in their French inheritance; but other Nova Scotians should not let their history be lost by default – through indifference and ignorance."<sup>119</sup> This

114 J.A. Hutchison to E.A. Cote, 11 June 1957, RG84-A-2-a, vol. 145, GP 113-200, file pt. 1, LAC.

115 For instance, a program drafted for the inauguration of the Grand-Pré museum referred to the park as "Evangeline Memorial Park," even though its official title was Grand-Pré Memorial Park. See "Program of the Celebration of the 175th Anniversary of the Deportation of the Acadians and of the Inauguration of Historical Museum, Evangeline Memorial Park, Grand Pré, N.S.," August 20th, 1930, Fonds l'Église-souvenir, 881-1, CEA.

116 This included displays on the growth of towns, development of transportation (including DAR), early architecture, and ship-building. See "Accession Book sent by A.J. H Richardson, Chief National Historic Sites Division, to Max Sutherland, post graduate student at Acadia University," 4 January 1957, RG84-A-2-a, vol. 1159, GP 318, file pt. 1, LAC.

117 "Accession Book sent by A.J. H Richardson," 4 January 1957, RG84-A-2-a, vol. 1159, GP 318, file pt. 1, LAC.

118 J.A. Hutchison to E.A. Côté, 11 June 1957, RG84-A-2-a, vol. 145, GP 113-200, file pt. 1, LAC.

119 Evelyn M. Richardson, "What Version . . .," *Chronicle Herald* (Halifax), 6 October 1967.

sentiment was also common among the residents of the community of Grand-Pré, who placed added pressure on NPB officials to get more New England Planter artefacts for the museum in addition to British colonial artefacts – not that extra pressure was necessary. The NPB made sure to include as many Planter artefacts as it could, even if such items were neither “easily found nor easily acquired.”<sup>120</sup> The Planters, after all, were a large part of the area’s bicultural heritage and of the NPB’s re-visioning of the park. But the NPB was concerned less with local traditions than with framing a larger national narrative. As McKay and Bates put it, under the new framework the park’s bicultural identity remained in place but as part of the “official culture of the federal, bilingual, and bicultural Canadian state.”<sup>121</sup>

By the 1960s and 1970s, some members of the Acadian community began to rally against the park and its bicultural narrative. The park, they argued, failed in its original stated purpose to properly showcase Acadian history and culture. This culminated in an official re-evaluation of the park’s mandate carried out during the 1980s. In 1985 a new management plan was released by the parks branch, now Parks Canada (PC). The plan proposed a new “comprehensive framework for the long-term protection, interpretation and use” of the park. The study noted that there was growing “public dissatisfaction” in that many in the Acadian community felt that Acadian and Planter culture “should not be mixed in a ‘sanctuary’ designed to create a reflective and commemorative atmosphere to recall the story of the deported Acadians.” The plan suggested that the main floor of the church should be used exclusively to represent the history of the expulsion and that all current exhibits, except for the statue of Notre Dame de l’Assomption and the Acadian flag, should be removed to help “recreate the commemorative atmosphere originally envisaged for the church.”<sup>122</sup> Thus, the church should return to its intended purpose as a memorial to the Grand Dérangement.

Grand-Pré was just one site out of many undergoing a re-evaluation at this time. Many Canadian historic sites established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were built on “imperialist assumptions” that glorified British conquest and expansion. The Grand-Pré plan was part of a larger federal initiative, which aimed to eliminate these narratives of British supremacy.<sup>123</sup> Accordingly, a number of changes were instituted to “Acadianize” the church and the park. A competition was held to design a stained glass window for the Memorial Church, and the winning design depicted the exile of the first group of Acadians from Pointe Noire on the shores of the Minas Basin. The window was installed above the entryway to the church, to “enhance the contemplative nature of the exhibit within” and remind visitors of the museum’s “serious atmosphere.” Within the church, what had been a historical museum slowly became an art gallery of pastoral scenes depicting Acadian life in Grand-Pré before and at the time of the expulsion (which was in keeping with the original vision of the SNA). In 1986 Claude Picard was commissioned to create six paintings representing the history of the expulsion, and these were to be the “main medium through which the Acadians’ story is related to visitors.” In addition, a number of prints from an 1883

120 A.D. Perry to G.L. Scott, 1 December 1960, RG84-A-2-a, vol. 1159, GP 318, LAC.

121 McKay and Bates, *In the Province of History*, 124.

122 Parks Canada, *Management Plan Grand-Pré National Historic Park* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1985), 11, 2, 20.

123 Ricketts, “Cultural Selection and National Identity,” 24.





Figure 4: The Grand-Pré Interpretation Centre, 2008. Photograph taken by author.

publication of *Evangeline* by Felix Octavius Carr Darley were placed on the walls inside the church, creating a visual narrative of the expulsion.<sup>124</sup>

The federal government's relationship to the Acadian community was also reassessed, and in 1997 the agency gave co-management of the site to an Acadian organization – the Société Promotion Grand-Pré (SPGP) – a non-profit organization composed of several members of the Acadian community that had been formed in the same year by the SNA and the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle Écosse (FANE).<sup>125</sup> The organization's goal was to “promote Acadian culture and history related to Grand-Pré” through co-management of the park.<sup>126</sup>

In 2003 the SPGP collaborated with PC to create a new interpretation centre at the entrance to the park, with a view to contextualizing the material history of the Acadian people. The design was inspired by the 1605 habitation at Port Royal, which gave the building a French quality like that of the Memorial Church. Other aspects of its design were meant to emulate more directly the “*pièce-sur-pièce*” log construction of early Acadian settlements.<sup>127</sup>

124 Société Promotion Grand-Pré (SPGP), “Grand-Pré and the Arts,” *Grand-Pré National Historic Site*, <http://www.grand-pre.com/en/history-of-grand-pre-and-the-arts.html>.

125 The Société Nationale l'Assomption changed names several times over the years. In 1957 it became the Société Nationale des Acadiens, and in 1992 the Société Nationale de l'Acadie. See LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie*, 112.

126 SPGP, “Objectives and Mandate,” <http://www.grand-pre.com/en/objectives-and-mandate.html>. See also Parks Canada, *Special Events in the Southwest Nova Scotia National Historic Sites of Canada: Replacement Class Screening Report Extension, February 2005* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 2005), p. 4, <http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/documents/8408/8408E.pdf>.

127 SPGP, “Grand-Pré and the Arts.” The colour theme was also meant to recall the Acadian tri-colour flag.



The centre also included an exhibit space meant to provide a more “authentic perspective” of a functioning Acadian colonial landscape using an approach that emphasized the archaeology, history, and geography of the area.<sup>128</sup> The most prominent part of the exhibit was an authentic wooden sluice salvaged from a nearby marsh where it had been part of a 17th-century Acadian dyke system. The dyke system was presented in a full-scale diorama accompanied by panels and visual media. In addition, the visitor encountered display panels regarding the natural history of the area and the religious faith of the Acadians as well as exhibits on everyday objects used before the expulsion (e.g., plates, bowls, and cauldrons). Some panels offered audio recordings giving perspectives on significant events in the history of Acadia, all derived, it was stated, from documented sources. One panel on the expulsion, for instance, included the viewpoints of the Acadians and the Mi’kmaq, officials at Quebec and Paris, and Governor Charles Lawrence. The visitor could also view a 20-minute video on the expulsion in a multi-media theatre across from the exhibit space, featuring costumed actors playing the role of Acadian peasants and British soldiers during the expulsion and illustrating the theme “All too often in times of conflict, civilians are the victims.”<sup>129</sup>

The interpretation centre was intended to elide archetypal themes and past ideologies attributed to the site, but its view of the past still reflected the complex narratives that had been at the centre of Grand-Pré’s identity crisis. The story of the Planters and the region’s broader colonial past was still represented in the displays. This complexity, for Rudin, worked in such a way as to broaden the park’s historical purpose so that the story of pre-deportation Acadie became “much more than the story of Acadians.”<sup>130</sup> Yet this did not seem to be a problem for many in the Acadian community, who continued to accept Grand-Pré as being primarily an Acadian historic site. According to the SPGP website, the park continued to have symbolic meaning for many Acadians, who considered it the “most important Historic Site” of the Acadian people.<sup>131</sup>

This general acceptance of the significance of Grand-Pré for Acadians had been facilitated by the Acadian professional class, which had worked to re-establish a strong identifiable relationship. Acadian nationalistic groups like the SNA had selected and promoted Grand-Pré as the focal point of a pre- and post-deportation Acadian identity. And the strength of this association was reaffirmed in 2004, when Acadian elites and historians tried to draw attention away from Grand-Pré by focusing on a new founding myth. The new narrative would centre on the first Acadian settlement at Île St. Croix, which was established in 1604. The reason for this new project, writes Rudin, was to present an Acadian past that was relevant to the Acadians of Atlantic Canada but “divorced from that of the deportation” and the larger diaspora. This version of the past would emphasize the modernity of the Acadian “nation” and would marginalize the Acadia depicted in the narratives of the deportation, thus freeing Acadians from their “legacy of trauma and victimization.” Several events were organized throughout the summer of 2004 to perpetuate this

128 Denise Hansen and Jonathan Fowler, “Protect and Present – Parks Canada and Public Archaeology in Atlantic Canada,” in *Past Meets Present: Archaeologists Partnering with Museum Curators, Teachers, and Community Groups*, ed. John H. Jameson Jr. and Sherene Baugher (New York: Springer, 2007), 331.

129 Hansen and Fowler, “Protect and Present,” 330.

130 Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, 251.

131 SPGP, “Objectives and Mandate,” <http://www.grand-pre.com/en/objectives-and-mandate.html>.

new founding myth, but the new narrative did not appeal to most Acadians. “The Dugua story,” writes Rudin, “could not compete with the story of the deportation,” which provided a “far more powerful” memory.<sup>132</sup> The Grand-Pré National Historic Site had only reinforced this memory. The park’s most prominent feature, after all, was the Memorial Church built by Acadians to commemorate Acadians.

### **Grand-Pré and UNESCO: a unity that divides**

For many, the UNESCO designation has only confirmed Grand-Pré’s “Acadian” status. The designation labelled the park the most important Acadian historic site in the world. Gerald Boudreau, chair of the nomination committee, described the designation as the “crowning glory” of the “extraordinary work done by the Acadian people.”<sup>133</sup> That “work,” according to UNESCO, also included the establishment of a high-level of co-operation with the local English-speaking community. In a manner reminiscent of the unity espoused in the 1920s and 1930s, UNESCO minimized any divisive aspects of the site. As with many UNESCO historic sites, the OUV statement for Grand-Pré was curiously silent about relevant conflicts.<sup>134</sup> The expulsion was not mentioned, even though the “re-appropriation” was, and the central message was of “peace and cultural sharing” between Acadians and the English-speaking community, thus fitting into a larger meta-narrative of global unity. As Claire Campbell has noted in her review of the designation of the town of Lunenburg, however, UNESCO designations often have the ability to divide rather than unite communities. “There is the potential,” writes Campbell, “for a hierarchy or rivalry between local history and international significance, between community memory and external expectations, between a specific place and local artifacts and a generally accessible heritage.”<sup>135</sup> A “jurisdictional complexity” was created in Lunenburg whereby Parks Canada rather than the town became the dominant representative authority in dealings with UNESCO, leaving an impression that the town had limited influence on its own management as a world heritage site.

Similarly, in Grand-Pré the long nomination process revealed that many in the local community were concerned about the implications of the designation. As a 2009 article from the *Cape Breton Post* states, some residents of Grand-Pré were “not happy” with the “attempt to have the area declared a UNESCO world heritage site.” Many of the concerns had to do with fears of higher taxes, increased traffic, and restricted access to some of the farmland surrounding the dykes, but they were also fuelled by the lack of community consultation.<sup>136</sup> The Nomination Grand-Pré

132 Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, 78, 71, 10.

133 Glen Parker and the Canadian Press, “Grand-Pré named World Heritage Site,” *Chronicle Herald* (online), 30 June 2012.

134 Michael Giovine has analysed the tendency to “eliminate” “contentious narrative claims” in favour of overarching meta-narratives where diversity and unity are considered one and the same. See Giovine, *The Heritage-scape*, 133. For more on this topic, see Duedahl, “Selling Mankind,” and Sluga, “UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley.”

135 See Claire Campbell, “Global Expectations, Local Pressures.” Campbell also writes that the concern over agency stemmed largely from the fact that UNESCO, for the most part, would only recognize and deal with a federal authority in the form of Parks Canada.

136 “Some residents of N.S. community worried about UNESCO designation,” *Cape Breton Post* (Sydney) (online), 6 April 2009, <http://www.capebretonpost.com/Living/People/2009-04-06/article-773987/>.

Advisory Board acknowledged this dissatisfaction, noting that many of the local residents did not view the nomination proposal as a “community project” and did not feel that they have had “adequate opportunity to participate in and to provide leadership” to the nomination process.<sup>137</sup> Yet these sentiments were downplayed by government officials. Quoted in a *Metro* article published in February 2009, two months before the above article from the *Post*, then-Nova Scotia Premier Rodney MacDonald described the nomination process as a “community-driven project.”<sup>138</sup> Despite this, the nomination board called for greater engagement of the surrounding community by bringing more attention to Mi’kmaw and Planter history and by recruiting “Local ‘Storytellers’” to act as interpreters.<sup>139</sup>

The official designation of the park led to further criticisms of its narrow focus. Members of the local community quickly began to express doubts about what the UNESCO status will mean for the area’s diverse history. One resident expressed concern that the focus of the designation centred on Acadian history at the expense of the rest of the area’s rich past. Cally Jordan was particularly concerned that the achievements of individuals – like her ancestor Robert Laird – would be marginalized by comparison. Laird had consolidated much of Grand-Pré in the late 1700s and was the one-time owner of the land where the Grand-Pré park is now situated. “We were very happy to have the interest in this community,” Jordan commented, “but I am somewhat disappointed in the unbalanced view of what Grand Pre is. It wouldn’t exist without what Robert Laird did.”<sup>140</sup> For the nomination committee, however, the purpose of the site was clearly defined. The park’s features, regardless of their ambiguous identities, had become “iconic” features recognized across North America and the world as “symbols of Acadian identity and history.”<sup>141</sup> In a speech thanking the community of Grand-Pré for their role in the nomination process, nomination project manager Christophe Rivet stated that the designation was reflective of the local community’s understanding that the site’s preservation was “important to humanity as a whole.”<sup>142</sup> Nonetheless, the community remained divided.

## Conclusion

Any attempt to define the Grand-Pré National Historic Site in “universal” terms must first acknowledge its complex past as well as the turbulent history of the region. The history of the park reveals a persisting division between the local community of Grand-Pré and the more diasporic Acadian community. This division among stakeholders – which has deep historical roots – has also been reinforced in the construction of the park. The site’s architectural heritage offers us a glimpse into the ideals of its builders. Although attempts were made to redirect the purpose of the

137 Nomination Grand-Pré, “Advisory Board Meeting Agenda,” 8 July 2010, *Nomination Grand-Pré* <http://www.nominationgrandpre.ca/>.

138 Tattrie, “Government Funds Grand Pré Bid to Become UNESCO Site,” *Metro*, 17 February 2009.

139 Hockin Cronin Associates, *Tourism Strategy and Interpretation Framework, Final Report*, 24 February 2010, *Nomination Grand-Pré*, <http://www.nominationgrandpre.ca/>.

140 Glen Parker, “Grand Pre Family Mulls History,” *Chronicle Herald* (online), 8 July 2012, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/114893>.

141 Nomination Grand-Pré, *Report on the Proposed Outstanding Universal Value for Grand-Pré*, 29.

142 Glen Parker, “Grand Pre honoured for UN status,” *Chronicle Herald* (online) 22 July 2012, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/119633>.

site over time, these ideals have been sustained by “carefully manicured grounds” and an arrangement of monuments and built space that has created a lasting representation of the site’s early appropriations.<sup>143</sup> The park was created to fulfill specific commercial and ideological goals. The continuous attempt to redefine the museum’s mandate over the past century was intended to make the museum more relevant to the community in which it was situated, to the agenda of local politicians, and to the dispersed Acadian community (who are considered the primary stakeholders in the site). The DAR and the SMA/SNA were both faced with obstacles that necessitated a re-evaluation of the park’s mandate, and both were willing to accommodate the desires of the local anglophone politicians. The HSMBC’s proposal for the Noble monument and the Planter museum demonstrated the need to be more inclusive of the local community’s history. DAR officials were also well aware that a museum dedicated solely to the Acadians would not have garnered as much support as one that also highlighted the accomplishments of British colonial expansion.<sup>144</sup> The parts of these narratives that did focus on the Acadians did little to present an accurate account of the Acadian past. Rather, they emphasized the romantic ideals of purity and rebirth “in the process marginalizing feelings of pain and loss.”<sup>145</sup>

Grand-Pré’s many associations have made it difficult to perceive any clear purpose for the site. The question of what the site should or should not commemorate has been largely tied to both stakeholder perspective and political ideology. For the community of Grand-Pré, the park was too Acadian and potentially divisive. For the Acadians, it was not Acadian enough. For the federal government, its bicultural character needed to be more greatly emphasized in order to tell a national grand narrative. The Grand-Pré envisioned by UNESCO was one that fit an even broader meta-narrative of global unity through diversity. “By the early 20th century,” writes Marsters, “the Acadian Expulsion, and in particular its ‘chief scene’ at Grand-Pré, was laden with diverse cultural associations that were independent of and, to some extent impervious to, historical argument.”<sup>146</sup> These associations can be harder to dismiss when they are not only bound to a particular place, but a place that has been built upon with the intent to commemorate. However, as James Opp and John C. Walsh acknowledge, the creation of place is a continuous process. “The ‘local’,” they write, “is a fluid and uncertain category, reminding us that, despite the claims of planners, architects, and other spatial engineers, the production of place is always unfinished and uneven.”<sup>147</sup> The story of the Grand-Pré National Historic Site is still being written in the landscape even if its historical purpose remains elusive. The closest we may get to a “definitive” purpose may very well be one that is agreed upon. Definition, after all, often relies on our ability to build consensus, but achieving consensus is not always about discovering a “universal” truth.

143 Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, 272.

144 Carl E. Guthrie and Grace M. Guthrie, *The Canadian Museum Movement* (Ottawa: Canadian Museums Association, 1958), 34.

145 Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, 272.

146 Marsters, “‘The Battle for Grand-Pré,’” 39.

147 James Opp and John C. Walsh, “Introduction: Local Acts of Placing and Remembering,” in *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada*, ed. James Opp and John C. Walsh (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 7.