

# Acadian Leaders and Louisiana, 1902-1955

CAROLYNN MCNALLY

*Cet article explore les premiers contacts entre l'élite émergente de la Renaissance acadienne des Provinces maritimes et les descendants d'Acadiens en Louisiane dans la première moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les deux groupes, séparés depuis le Grand Dérangement, avaient évolué différemment au Canada et aux États-Unis. Le petit groupe d'hommes derrière le premier mouvement nationaliste acadien négligea les changements qui en avaient résulté, car il prônait l'idée d'une grande famille acadienne unie partageant une histoire commune, des liens de parenté et des symboles culturels tels qu'Évangéline, de Longfellow. L'inclusion des Acadiens du Sud dans la définition de cette collectivité n'a toutefois pas encouragé des partenariats politiques ou économiques durables.*

*This article explores the initial contacts between the emerging elite of the Acadian Renaissance in the Maritime Provinces and Acadian descendants in Louisiana in the first half of the 20th century. Separated since the Grand Dérangement, the two groups evolved differently in Canada and the United States, but the small group of men behind the first Acadian nationalist movement neglected these changes as they celebrated the idea of a united "grande famille acadienne" sharing a common history, kinship ties, and cultural symbols such as Longfellow's Evangeline. Including Southern Acadians in defining this collectivity did not, however, encourage lasting political or economic partnerships.*

"LA RACE, MESSIEURS, LA NATON, C'EST LA FAMILLE AGRANDIE," announced Pascal Poirier at the first Convention nationale acadienne, held in Memramcook in 1881.<sup>1</sup> In the second half of the 19th century, Poirier was a leading figure of an emerging socio-economic elite attempting to define Acadian identity by adopting specific cultural symbols such as a flag, an anthem, and a national day, as well as by leading the first nationalist project establishing new French-language institutions in the Maritime provinces. Contemporaries saw these initiatives as proof of an Acadian Renaissance – a rebirth pulling Acadians out of what Léon Thériault has termed the "période de l'enracinement dans le silence,"<sup>2</sup> or what Antonine Maillet famously referred to as "cent ans dans les bois."<sup>3</sup>

1 *Conventions nationales acadiennes*, vol. 1: *Memramcook (1881), Miscouche (1884), Pointe de l'Église (1890)*, ed. Denis Bourque and Chantal Richard, in collaboration with Amélie Giroux (Moncton: Institut d'études acadiennes, 2013), 145. On Pascal Poirier, see Gérard Beaulieu, "Pascal Poirier: premier sénateur acadien 1852-1933" (MA thesis in history, University of Ottawa, 1971).

2 Léon Thériault, "L'Acadie de 1763 à 1990, synthèse historique," in *L'Acadie des Maritimes: études thématiques des débuts à nos jours*, ed. Jean Daigle (Moncton: Chaire d'études acadiennes, 1993), 47.

3 Antonine Maillet, *Cent ans dans les bois* (Montreal: Leméac, 1981).

The complex nature of identity construction at this time, however, is often muted in historiographies regarding the Acadian Renaissance. Poirier's first sentence to the anticipating crowd reveals the different layers of the boundaries of the group as a "race," a "nation," and a "family." In the leaders' vocabulary, these words were interchangeable in referring to the collectivity; and yet their meaning varied according to the context of their use. For instance, according to historian Martin S. Spigelman, "the Acadian concept of 'race' is extremely imprecise. They have redefined the word on cultural rather than biological grounds in order to achieve certain goals."<sup>4</sup> In particular, although such vaguely defined terminologies gave the impression of a "vision diasporique" that accommodated widely distributed Acadian descendants, notably those in Louisiana, the reality of the nationalist project was much more limited.<sup>5</sup> The grand rhetoric of the Acadian family disguised the extent to which the Maritime Provinces remained the focus of the leaders' ambitions. Much as the Maritime Acadian leaders professed to include their "frères du sang" from the southern state in what they considered the "Acadian race," they distanced themselves politically and socially as their goals remained Maritime-centric. Even as Acadian descendants in the Maritimes and Louisiana tried to consolidate their common past in cultural and ceremonial events, and to conceptualize both groups as one family fighting for its survival in North America, this article demonstrates that – when the speeches were over and the audience was on its way home – the persistent pattern of limited interaction quickly resumed.

This argument builds on the work of recent historians such as Christopher Hodson, Jean-François Mouhot, and Leanna I. Thomas who, for an earlier era, have effectively questioned the traditional narrative of survivance to reveal the complexity of Acadian experiences following the Grand Dérangement.<sup>6</sup> While the era of the Acadian Renaissance undoubtedly saw in a general sense a reawakening of Acadian consciousness, identity construction was always complex and complicates our understanding of the nature of the era of the Conventions nationales – including the notion of a founding mythology based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline*. As a result, the first half of the 20th century was characterized by disconnections between northern and southern Acadians that the rhetoric of diasporic solidarity might disguise but could not remove.

Contemporaries, and subsequent historians, have frequently credited Longfellow's *Evangeline* (1847) with revealing the Acadians to themselves and sparking what became the Acadian Renaissance. The tale of *Evangeline*, a young girl separated from

4 Martin S. Spigelman, "The Acadian Renaissance and the Development of Acadien-Canadien Relations, 1864-1912: 'des frères trop longtemps séparés'" (PhD diss. in history, Dalhousie University, 1975).

5 Julien Massicotte, "Le territoire acadien. Contextes et perceptions," in *Balises et références: Acadies, francophonies*, ed. Martin Pâquet et Stéphane Savard (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007), 85.

6 Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jean-François Mouhot, *Les réfugiés acadiens en France, 1758-1785: L'impossible réintégration?* (Québec: Septentrion, 2009); Leanna I. Thomas, "A Fractured Foundation: Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement in Louisiana, 1755-1803," *Louisiana History* 55, no. 3 (Spring 2014): 198-227.

her fiancé on her wedding day due to the Expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755, became what some have termed a founding myth of national identity, capable of building a bridge between northern and southern Acadians.<sup>7</sup> Certainly, visitors and writers taken by Longfellow's description of the people and the scenery travelled to see for themselves "the land of Evangeline" in the Maritimes as well as in Louisiana. Some, such as the Québec historian Henri-Raymond Casgrain, borrowed from Longfellow's imagery, and incorporated it into his mythical view of Acadie.<sup>8</sup> In his travel notes published in 1887, Casgrain described both his time spent in the Maritimes and in Louisiana. In the latter, he described his encounter with former United States Senator and ex-Governor of Louisiana Alexandre Mouton and his children. For Casgrain, Mouton's daughter was the spitting image of Evangeline, pious and loyal, while his son resembled another of Longfellow's characters – Basil, a herdsman – who rode a "Texan" horse atop a "Mexican" saddle and wore a sombrero.<sup>9</sup> Yet, despite the young Mouton's attire, Casgrain described the other Acadians he encountered as similar to the ones he met in the Maritime provinces: "Je les ai trouvées les mêmes aux Attakapas qu'aux bords du Mississipi. L'habitant actuel de Peticoudiac et de la baie Sainte-Marie reconnaîtrait son accent et ses coutumes."<sup>10</sup> Casgrain's notes were designed for a French-Canadian audience, and he wrote Acadian history within a broader narrative of French perseverance in North America;<sup>11</sup> but images of Evangeline were also used to address quite different readerships. A journalist at Chicago's 1893 World Columbian Exposition, for example, depicted a young woman weaving her "ancient loom of Grand Pré pattern"; she looked, he believed, "more like the Evangeline of Longfellow than any picture of her I have ever seen."<sup>12</sup> Other early depictions of the Acadian people in Louisiana were offered by visiting journalists from northern states following up on Longfellow's tale. They portrayed Cajuns as backward, ignorant, isolated from other communities, and maintaining a flawed French dialect. Or, as A.R. Waud described them in a *Harper's Weekly* article in 1866, they were "good representatives of the white trash, behind the age in everything."<sup>13</sup> Some of these accounts even found a place alongside others praising Acadians for their "primitive simplicity" and as a group for whom "time seems to have stood still," as reprints in the Maritime Acadian

7 See Joseph Yvon Thériault, *Évangéline: Contes d'Amérique* (Montreal: Québec Amérique, 2013) for a thorough discussion regarding the poem's importance in the first Acadian nationalist movement.

8 Pierre Rajotte, "Les pèlerinages de Raymond-Henri Casgrain: de la référentialité à l'intertextualité," *Voix et Images* 22, no. 2 (hiver 1997): 289-306.

9 H.-R. Casgrain, *Un Pèlerinage au pays d'Évangéline* (Quebec: L. Demers, 1887), 148.

10 Casgrain, *Un Pèlerinage au pays d'Évangéline*, 158.

11 Thériault, *Évangéline*, 140-1; Yvan Lamonde, *The Social History of Ideas in Quebec, 1760-1896* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 337-8; Fernand Harvey, "Les historiens canadiens-français et l'Acadie, 1859-1960," in *Les relations entre le Québec et l'Acadie: de la tradition à la modernité*, ed. Fernand Harvey and Gérard Beaulieu (Quebec: Éditions de l'IQRC/Éditions d'Acadie, 2000), 27-8.

12 S.K.G., "After the fair," unidentified newspaper clipping cited in Vaughn L. Glasgow, "Impossible to Recount All That One Sees: Acadians in Chicago, Yankees on the Bayou in 1893," 1994, p. 4, Acadians vertical file, Louisiana Historical Center (LHC), Louisiana State Museum (LSM), New Orleans.

13 A.R. Waud, "Acadians of Louisiana," *Harper's Weekly*, 20 October 1866, 670.

nationalist newspaper *L'Évangéline*.<sup>14</sup> For more than a hundred years the word was used as a derogatory term and, according to Jacques Henry, in the second half of the 19th century “the negative ascription of Cajun spread in English through mostly English-language media.”<sup>15</sup>

The depictions by these late-19th-century writers, who were focused on Longfellow's tale of Acadian groups that for better or worse had been untouched by time, ignored the reality that the populations of Acadian descent had evolved differently in Canada and the United States. Louisiana Acadians were isolated from the first decades of the Acadian Renaissance in the Maritime Provinces. The nationalist project theoretically included them as it addressed an Acadian diaspora, but the elite's intellectual outreach was limited. In the Maritimes, the French language and Roman Catholicism linked the Acadian struggle to Quebec aspirations within the new Canadian Confederation of 1867. While family and history would ultimately distinguish Acadians from French Canadians in Quebec, which they confirmed by choosing the feast of the Assumption of Mary over Saint-Jean-Baptiste as their national day, nevertheless the Canadian context was unmistakable. In Louisiana, Acadian identity evolved differently. According to historian Carl Brasseaux, Acadian culture “began to take on a decidedly Louisiana character” after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.<sup>16</sup> The 19th century then saw the breakup of a culturally homogenous group into distinct socio-economic divisions. Cultural interchanges and intermarriages between Acadians and others in Louisiana transformed the group and prevented it from organizing itself as a collectivity. By 1860, Acadian descendants made up two major groups: one of “upwardly mobile” Acadian planters and large farmers, who had embraced materialism and the plantation system, and the other consisting of “petits habitants” or subsistence farmers and small planters. By the end of the Civil War, according to James Dormon, or by the end of Reconstruction, according to Brasseaux, blurred divisions of people in Louisiana gave rise to a Cajun identity.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Acadian descendants in Louisiana did not define themselves by a collective memory in the same way as the Acadian leaders in the Maritimes understood themselves to be part of an extended Acadian family. According to Joseph Yvon Thériault, Cajuns were “une classe social, ou un état social, plus qu'un groupe mémoriel.”<sup>18</sup>

The definition of Acadian identity, as well as the political, social, and economic future of the group, was discussed extensively at ten Conventions nationales acadiennes organized between 1881 and 1937 in different communities throughout the Maritimes. According to Thériault, these assemblies were the “moments phares du nationalisme acadien,”<sup>19</sup> while Chantal Richard considers the events as the

14 “Southern Acadia,” *L'Évangéline*, 13 February 1889. On the history of *L'Évangéline*, see Gérard Beaulieu, ed., *L'Évangéline, 1887-1982: entre l'élite et le peuple* (Moncton, Éditions d'Acadie et Chaire d'études acadiennes, Université de Moncton, 1997).

15 Jacques Henry, “‘Acadien’ to ‘Cajun’ to ‘Cadien’: Ethnic Labelization and Construction of Identity,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 56.

16 Carl A. Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun, Transformation of a People, 1803-1877* (Jackson & London: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), xi.

17 James Dormon, *The People Called Cajuns: An Introduction to an Ethnohistory* (Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1983).

18 Thériault, *Évangéline*, 285.

19 Thériault, *Évangéline*, 172-3.

“première occasion officielle de prise de parole du peuple acadien en tant que collectivité.”<sup>20</sup> As of 1890 the Conventions nationales acadiennes were overseen by the Société Nationale de l’Assomption (SNA), which eventually evolved into today’s Société Nationale de l’Acadie.<sup>21</sup> As a meeting ground for the Acadian elite, these assemblies were supposedly open from the beginning to all Acadians; yet the delegates at the first convention were exclusively drawn from the Maritimes. Eventually they would be opened up to Acadians from what would become known as the Acadian diaspora, such as those living in Quebec, the Magdalen Islands, or New England. Joseph A. Breaux, the first representative from Louisiana, would only attend in 1905. Late to the party, Breaux was confronted with ideas regarding identity that had been discussed for almost a quarter of a century within the context of finding their place as a minority within Canada. In particular, many Acadians, led by their political representatives such as Pierre-Amand Landry, insisted on proving Acadians to be loyal British subjects. This desire manifested itself in promoting a bon-ententisme among the different peoples in Canada, pairing the newly created Acadian symbols with British cultural symbols and adapting the Expulsion narrative to a new national project centred in the Maritime Provinces of Canada. Accordingly, the 1900 Convention nationale welcomed Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier as its guest of honour. Laurier, as well as the Acadian leaders surrounding him on stage, emphasized the importance of defining an Acadian identity within the Canadian mosaic. At the opening ceremonies, Laurier stated in front of an estimated crowd of 4,000 to 5,000 people that the country’s future relied on recognizing and accepting the difference between ethnic groups living within its borders: “Je veux que l’opiniâtre écossais demeure écossais; que l’anglais intelligent demeure anglais; que l’irlandais affectueux demeure irlandais. Je veux prendre tous ces éléments et faire une nation qui sera la première parmi les puissances de l’univers; et vous, Acadiens, je veux que vous soyez représentés dans cette nation.”<sup>22</sup> On the following day, Landry, the first secretary of the Société nationale de l’Assomption, emphasized the same themes of mutual respect and urged Acadian people to admire the strengths of their neighbours but to remain French and Catholic as “nous voulons marcher dans la vie nationale en harmonie avec les Irlandais, les Écossais, avec tout le monde.”<sup>23</sup>

Although this sentiment of bon-ententisme was more dominant in the presence of the Canadian prime minister, it was not new to the Acadian leaders’ ears as it had been a recurring theme at the previous conventions. Landry’s initial speech at the first Convention nationale had conveyed a similar message. When asked to address the several English-speaking members of the audience after the 1881 deliberations,<sup>24</sup> he stated:

20 Chantal Richard, “Le récit de la Déportation comme mythe de création dans l’idéologie des Conventions nationales acadiennes (1881-1937),” *Acadiensis* XXXVI, no. 1 (Autumn 2006): 69.

21 The name change occurs in 1957; see Maurice Basque, in collaboration with Eric Snow, *La Société nationale de l’Acadie: au coeur de la réussite d’un peuple* (Lévis, QC: Éditions de la Francophonie, 2006).

22 “La Convention Acadienne à Arichat,” *L’Évangéline*, 23 August 1900.

23 “La Convention d’Arichat,” *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 23 August 1900.

24 According to Ferdinand Robidoux, “Les nationalités qui nous entourent étaient largement représentées dans l’auditoire. On y voyait des Irlandais et des Anglais haut placés dans le commerce, l’industrie, les professions, la politique.” These audience members requested Landry



We have met and we have labored with a sincere desire to promote the success of the French Acadian people, but not to detract from that of our neighbours; we have encouraged union of sentiment, union of action and mutual aid and assistance among ourselves, not to use such agencies in hostility to our neighbours of different origin but rather to enable us to work hand in hand with our same neighbours with better success and more credit to ourselves.

He omitted the more heated topics of debate, and so withheld mentioning their choice of national day, colonization projects, or even Catholicism. He also chose not to repeat the more incendiary remarks made by Jacques-Philippe Rhéaume, president of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, concerning who should be held accountable for the Expulsion.<sup>25</sup> This speech is one example of Landry's "political pragmatism" as an ambitious politician, but also, as Jean-Roch Cyr has termed it, the "politique de modération" that he favoured throughout his career.<sup>26</sup> The bon-ententisme also manifested itself visually and aurally. Acadian national events often included British cultural symbols. At the Arichat Convention, for example, "God Save the Queen" was sung by the assembly at the closing ceremonies,<sup>27</sup> and, according to Landry's report of the event, the streets were lined with "des drapeaux et insignes, aux couleurs acadiennes-françaises, [flottant] gaiment au vent, entremêlées, ça et là, du vieil et héroïque Union-Jack."<sup>28</sup> While Sheila Andrew notes that "professed loyalty to the Crown was a possible accommodation with the powerful anglophone elite that allowed Acadians to maintain their religious and linguistic individualism" in the Maritimes, her detailed analysis of the *Moniteur acadien's* coverage of Queen Victoria's 1887 Golden Jubilee suggests too that Acadians' use of cultural symbols not only reflected their ties to the Crown as loyal British subjects but also a broader understanding of entangled loyalties to France and Quebec.<sup>29</sup>

More importantly still, Acadians were exposed to a narrative of the Expulsion that blamed a single governor, Charles Lawrence, who was held to have acted without direct orders from the British Crown. At Arichat, both Laurier and Landry stated that the British Crown was innocent and should not be held responsible for the Grand Dérangement.<sup>30</sup> The following week, *L'Évangéline* ran an editorial along similar lines:

to address them in English. See Ferdinand Robidoux, *Conventions nationales des Acadiens. Recueil des travaux et délibérations des six premières conventions, vol. 1, Memramcook, Miscouche, Pointe de l'Église, 1881, 1884, 1890* (Shediac, NB: Imprimerie du Moniteur acadien, 1907), 91.

25 Bourque and Richard, *Conventions nationales acadiennes*, 183-4, 20.

26 According to Sheila Andrew, this pragmatism prevented him from "exhibiting displays of confrontational nationalism"; see Andrew, *The Development of Elites in Acadian New Brunswick, 1861-1881* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 169; Bourque and Richard, *Conventions nationales acadiennes*, 26; Della M.M. Stanley, *A Man for Two Peoples: Pierre-Amand Landry* (Fredericton: Law Society of New Brunswick, 1988); and Jean-Roch Cyr, "Sir Pierre-Amand Landry," *DCB Online XIV*, <http://www.biographi.ca/>.

27 "La Convention d'Arichat," *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 23 August 1900.

28 P. A. Landry, "La Convention Acadienne à Arichat," *L'Évangéline*, 23 August 1900.

29 Sheila Andrew, "More than a Flag of Convenience: Acadian Attitudes to Britain and the British Around the Time of Queen Victoria's 1887 Jubilee," *History of Intellectual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2005), [www.ucalgary.ca/hic/issues/vol5/2](http://www.ucalgary.ca/hic/issues/vol5/2).

30 "La Convention Acadienne," *L'Évangéline*, 30 August 1900.

Enfin, comme pour donner un dernier démenti au subterfuge infâme qui avait exilé leurs ancêtres, les descendants de ces pauvres martyrs du sort, embrassent d'un même coup d'oeil, l'antique lieu du sacrifice et le sceptre innocent que d'infâme bourreaux avaient voulu incriminer les descendants des victimes du cruel Lawrence, dis-je, réunis au congrès, protestent, la main sur la conscience, de leur loyauté et jure un fidèle attachement au successeur de George!<sup>31</sup>

Laurier drew upon the work of his former law partner Édouard Richard to substantiate his view of the Expulsion. Employed by the Public Archives of Canada as Canadian archivist in France, Richard wrote a voluminous Acadian history ultimately exonerating the British Crown.<sup>32</sup> The Acadian elite enthusiastically supported his findings after its publication in 1895.<sup>33</sup>

Acadian enthusiasm of this kind for loyalty to the Crown was not universally endorsed. According to Martin S. Spigelman, French Canadians were often frustrated with Acadians' attitude towards the British Crown and the Canadian government. Moreover, Acadians, Landry being only one example, often adopted cautious approaches to national questions regarding French Canadian issues and this created tensions among French-speaking groups in Canada advocating the "survivance" of French language and culture.<sup>34</sup> In 1922 Placide Gaudet published *Le grand dérangement, sur qui retombe la responsabilité de l'expulsion des Acadiens*, which supported Richard's conclusion but allowed some questions to remain open-ended as he did not want to "dare specify" some of his own hypotheses as an employee of the Canadian government.<sup>35</sup> Gaudet was a renowned historian and genealogist,<sup>36</sup> although his envisioned dictionary of Acadian families ultimately excluded descendants living in the United States.<sup>37</sup> The project was aimed less at building a broader definition of the collectivity than at supporting the governing

31 "Notre fête nationale," *L'Évangéline*, 23 August 1900.

32 Edouard Richard, *Acadia: Missing Links of a Lost Chapter in American History* (New York: Home Bk. Co., 1895).

33 Harvey, "Les historiens canadiens-français et l'Acadie," 35.

34 Martin S. Spigelman, "Acadian Renaissance and the Development of Acadien-Canadian Relations," 317.

35 John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 466; Placide Gaudet, *Le grand dérangement : sur qui retombe la responsabilité de l'expulsion des Acadiens* (Ottawa: Ottawa Print, 1922).

36 See Sheila Andrew, "Placide Gaudet," *DCB Online XV*, <http://www.biographi.ca/>; Anselme Chiasson, "Placide Gaudet," *Revue de l'Université de Moncton* 3, no. 3 (September 1970): 120-8; and Caroline-Isabelle Caron, *Se créer des ancêtres: un parcours généalogique nord-américain XIXe-XXe siècles* (Quebec: Septentrion, 2006), 140.

37 Although his intended dictionary of Acadian families was never completed, he did publish a genealogy of three families with the help of archivist Arthur George Doughty as "Acadian genealogy and notes" in Public Archives of Canada, *The Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906). A wide collection of his personal research notes are available at the *Centre d'études acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson* of the Université de Moncton (CEA-AC).

Liberal party in its effort to court the Acadians as a group gaining demographic weight in the Maritime Provinces.<sup>38</sup> Pleading to Minister of Agriculture and head of the National Archives Sydney Arthur Fisher for a job as a genealogist, Gaudet wrote in 1899<sup>39</sup>:

Quelle belle page d'histoire à écrire! En l'an de grâce 1899, 144 ans après le drame de 1755, un ministre d'agriculture fédéral, Anglais d'origine, mut par un sentiment d'équité, de justice envers les 130 000 descendants, dans les provinces maritimes, des infortunés exilés et proscrits de l'Acadie, a fait voter au parlement un crédit pour permettre à un d'entre eux de tracer la filiation des familles dont les membres furent cruellement disloqués et transportés aux quatre vents du ciel par les ordres d'un lieutenant-gouverneur qui n'avait reçu aucune autorisation du gouvernement d'Angleterre de commettre cet acte inqualifiable.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, while certain individuals continued to portray Acadians as the victims of the British Crown, most Acadian leaders were all too conscious of their precarious position within Canada. Their choice of words and symbols often revealed their attempts to appeal to English Canada by proving their loyalty to the British Crown, as well as maintaining their complex relationship with French Canadians.

One group that was put in an awkward position by this approach to defining Acadian identity within the developing Canadian context was New England Acadians, who made up their own "commission," or subcommittee, for the first time at the 1900 Convention nationale in Arichat.<sup>41</sup> Since the first convention, emigration to the United States had been discouraged by the clerical elite to the point that colonization projects had been launched to dissuade young Acadians from abandoning their farms and heading south of the border to find work in industrial centres.<sup>42</sup> Aligning with François Edmé Rameau de Saint-Père's belief that a strong colonization and repatriation project was an essential step to Acadians' rebirth, the organizers of the Conventions nationales devoted many discussions to the topic.<sup>43</sup> At the Arichat convention, issues specific to Acadians living in the United States were omitted from official speeches during opening and closing ceremonies, and reporters generally overlooked their presence. No American representative was among the

38 For an overview of the Acadian population growth of the 19th century, see Muriel Roy, "Settlement and Population Growth," in *The Acadians of the Maritimes*, ed. Jean Daigle (Moncton: Centre d'études acadiennes, 1982), 166-72.

39 Anne Drummond, "Sydney Arthur Fisher," *DCB Online XV*, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stanley\\_frederick\\_arthur\\_13E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stanley_frederick_arthur_13E.html).

40 Letter from Placide Gaudet to M.S. Fisher, 1 July 1899, 1.67-5, CEA-AC.

41 On Acadians in New England, see Claire Quintal, ed., *L'émigrant acadien vers les États-Unis: 1842-1950* (Québec: Le Conseil de la vie française en Amérique, 1984).

42 Régis Brun, "Le réveil du patriotisme acadien-américain, 1895-1905: la fondation de la Société l'Assomption," *Les Cahiers de la Société historique acadienne* 32, no. 1 (mars 2001): 42.

43 See, for instance, François Edmé Rameau de Saint-Père, *La France aux colonies. Études sur le développement de la race française hors de l'Europe. Les Français en Amérique, Acadiens et Canadiens* (Paris: A. Jouby libraire-éditeur, 1859), 111.



speakers on the stage for the opening ceremonies, and one of two resolutions by the American Acadian commission was in support of the “Acadianization” of the Roman Catholic Church in the Maritime Provinces – a project that would dominate national leaders’ focus for several years but concerned only indirectly those across the border.<sup>44</sup>

On the heels of the 1900 convention, Acadians in New England began to organize among themselves in order to offer their own nationalist assembly to Acadians in industrial towns south of the border. This led to the 1902 Acadian Congress in Waltham, Massachusetts. The president of the congress, Dominique S. Léger, declared that Acadians in the United States were called to pursue “la continuation de l’oeuvre admirable commencé en 1881,” hinting that the future of the Acadian people was beyond the borders of the Maritimes – even of Canada. To Léger and other community leaders in Massachusetts, the next logical step followed in 1903 with the creation of the Société Mutuelle l’Assomption (SMA) – a mutual benefit association willing to help those in financial need but also mandated to protect the French language and Acadian culture.<sup>45</sup> In a letter to the first president of the SMA, Jean H. LeBlanc, an organizer from Gardner, Massachusetts, Ferdinand Richard, suggested that the initiative offered an opportunity for Acadians of New England states to build something independently from the Maritime Acadians: “Voyez pour un instant, ne serais ce pas une gloire pour nous d’avoir ici l’étendart de notre nationalité par nous, tand que chez nous avec toute leurs Juge, Docteur, Sénateur, Avocat, Prêtres (et le reste).”<sup>46</sup> When the organizers contacted Pascal Poirier, president of the SNA, in February 1903, he proved to be less than supportive to their cause, and even encouraged them to seek support from French Canadian labour groups rather than the Maritime Acadians in order to strengthen bonds between French-speaking communities in New England.<sup>47</sup> Despite these initial doubts, leaders crossed the border to join the American Acadians in their celebration. Seeing the assembly before him, Pierre-Amand Landry stated: “Non, je ne regrette plus maintenant votre départ en vous voyant si prospères. Il est vrai que vous nous

44 “La Convention d’Arichat,” *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 23 August, 1900. As for their second resolution, Acadians from the United States thanked Acadian leaders for recognizing their presence in New England and hoped that the bond between both groups would grow stronger over the years.

45 According to the association’s constitution, the Société Mutuelle l’Assomption’s role would be as follows: “Premièrement, rallier sous le même drapeau tous les Acadiens; deuxièmement, secourir ses membres malades; troisièmement, assurer une aide pécuniaire aux héritiers légaux des membres défunts; quatrièmement, conserver notre langue, nos moeurs et notre religion”; see Antoine-J. Léger, *Les grandes lignes de l’histoire de la Société l’Assomption* (Québec: Imprimerie franciscaine missionnaire, 1933), 44. See also Euclide Daigle, *Petite histoire d’une grande idée: Assomption Campagne mutuelle d’assurance-vie, 1903-1978* (Moncton: Imprimerie acadienne, 1978).

46 Ferdinand Richard to Jean H. LeBlanc, 24 December 1902, 77-428, CEA-AC. Richard’s meaning is not clear in all its inferences. He may have believed that creating a mutual benefit association would be a feat for the New England Acadians as a new generation of leadership and in opposition to the established leadership in the Maritimes that was not responding to their needs. Or, he may have considered it a feat as New England Acadians, unlike Maritime Acadians, did not have men in prestigious positions leading the charge.

47 Jean H. LeBlanc and Clarence F. Cormier to Pascal Poirier, 3 February 1903, and response from Pascal Poirier, 10 February 1903, 77-430, CEA-AC.

manquez mais vous n'avez pas amoindri l'Acadie, vous l'avez au contraire agrandie en écartant ses limites jusqu'aux États-Unis."<sup>48</sup>

Ultimately, in 1905, the Société Nationale de l'Assomption welcomed the Société Mutuelle l'Assomption not only to the Convention nationale, but within the "famille acadienne" where from that point on both groups worked together "dans l'union la plus intime et la plus touchante au progrès et à l'avancement de l'Acadie." At this time, Pascal Poirier and Pierre-Amand Landry equally stated that they fully supported the efforts of the sister association.<sup>49</sup> The SNA also opened up the Caraquet Convention nationale of 1905, and its commissions, to all priests, business leaders, and politicians from the United States. At the same time, however, the nationalist goals remained resolutely Canadian. As Pierre-Amand Landry stated in his report on the first commission regarding national interests:

Le bel exemple que nous donnent nos frères des États-Unis par les efforts intelligents et perseverents qu'ils font pour maintenir l'usage de leur langue, pour tenir vivace l'amour de la patrie et pour continuer a conserver intactes les liens qui les rattachent a nous m'edifie et me donne l'espoir qu'ils ne sont pas perdus à la patrie. Cependant s'il pouvaient maintenir toutes ces belles traditions et se nourir du pain du vrai patriotisme dans le Canada, notre pays, notre avenir n'en serait que le mieux assuré.<sup>50</sup>

Understandably, Acadians in New England felt neglected by the SNA and by the orientation of the Conventions nationales. An important response had been the creation of the SMA. But by then another crucial form of outreach by New England Acadians had already begun, in the form of the invitation of a Louisiana representative to the 1902 Waltham Congress. In a letter to Clarence Cormier, one of the organizers of the 1902 Congress, Aimé Belliveau, an Acadian civil servant in Ottawa, urged that Louisiana delegates be invited to the festivities. He had made a similar suggestion to the organizers of the Arichat Convention, whom he also accused not only of ignoring it but also of exploiting the New England Acadians who had attended. According to Belliveau, "ce serait grandiose si votre convention devenait le trait d'union des deux grandes branches de nos ancêtres séparés depuis près d'un siècle et demi."<sup>51</sup> "Trait d'union" it would become, by welcoming judge Joseph A. Breaux from New Iberia, Louisiana, who, as *L'Évangéline* described it, had "franchi l'immense espace quoiqu'enneigé par les années" to address the assembly "dans une langue correcte et avec cet accent d'espérance, qui est le propre de notre race."<sup>52</sup> Yet Judge Breaux's interpretation of the Acadian past and his vision of their future in Louisiana differed crucially from northern Acadians' discourse regarding the "Acadian race." At the 1902 Congress, he spoke of the baleful intentions of the

48 "La Convention Acadienne," *L'Évangéline*, 28 August 1902.

49 Léger, *Les grandes lignes de l'histoire de la Société l'Assomption*, 56-7.

50 Pierre-Amand Landry, "'Intérêts nationaux' rapport sur la première commission au sujet des intérêts nationaux (brouillon)," 1905, 5.2-6, CEA-AC.

51 Aimé Belliveau to Clarence Cormier, 3 July 1902, 304.1, CEA-A.

52 J. LeBlanc, "La Convention Acadienne à Waltham, 16 août 1902," *L'Évangéline*, 28 August 1902.

British Crown, and assured the gathered delegates that “votre présence ce soir prouve de la manière la plus convaincante que les attentats de la Grande Bretagne dans cette direction n’ont pas réussi.”<sup>53</sup> Journalists praised the quality of his spoken French, and reported that he had met individuals with the same family names as his friends in Louisiana, but did not criticize his comment regarding Great Britain. Had it been made on Canadian soil, it would undoubtedly not have passed off so lightly.

Joseph A. Breaux was born on his family’s plantation in Iberville Parish in 1838. Admitted to the bar in 1859, his career as a lawyer had been interrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War, during which he enlisted in the Confederate Army. He was appointed associate justice in 1890, and then chief justice of the Supreme Court of Louisiana in 1904.<sup>54</sup> In a letter to Placide Gaudet, he briefly described his personal journey as the son of a farmer living close to poverty before his admittance to the bar.<sup>55</sup> After Waltham, Breaux travelled to the Maritime Provinces, meeting many Acadian leaders along the way. He assured them that on his return to Louisiana, he would establish “des rapports plus suivi entre les deux rameaux de la race proscrits de 1755.”<sup>56</sup> Breaux also joined Acadians for the 1905 and 1908 Conventions nationales, in Caraquet and St-Basile respectively, but on those occasions emphasized cultural and family ties rather than initiating any lasting social, political, or economic partnerships with northern Acadians.<sup>57</sup>

Upon his return to New Orleans in late 1902, Breaux presented a paper to the Louisiana Historical Society, noting that many of the descendants of the Acadians in Louisiana, especially the younger generation, preferred simply to be identified as Americans. Breaux, for his part, believed that discussions of nationality or race should not supplant, and indeed should enhance, efforts at becoming good American citizens: “On doit plutôt s’appliquer à être bon citoyen s’efforcer de s’adapter aux environnements du progrès social et industriel du pays.”<sup>58</sup> Breaux had also mentioned this concern in a letter to organizer Clarence Cormier before the Waltham Congress, saying “le mot Acadien est une reproche qui effraye les timides” since many associated the term to an indigenous heritage rather than European roots.<sup>59</sup> Pierre-Amand Landry was outraged at the idea of Acadian reluctance to be identified as such, and suggested in *L’Évangéline* that Judge Breaux must have been misquoted by the reporter of the piece. He added:

53 “Discours de l’honorable M. le Juge Joseph A. Breaux de la Louisiane,” *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 2 September 1902, 2.

54 Nell DeLaune Romero, “The Contributions of Joseph A. Breaux to Education in Louisiana” (M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1957), TT 1957, vol. 9, p. 51, Jones Hall University Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.

55 Joseph A. Breaux to Placide Gaudet, 1 August 1906, 1.70-14, CEA-AC.

56 “L’Hon. Juge Breaux,” *L’Évangéline*, 11 September 1902.

57 Historians often emphasize Breaux’s presence at the St-Basile CNA in 1908 as a source of establishing closer ties with southern Acadians, but his purpose and message remains the same as that of his previous visits.

58 “Les Acadiens de la Louisiane,” *L’Évangéline*, 4 December 1902.

59 Juge Breaux to Clarence F. Cormier, 1 July 1902, 304.1, CEA-AC. See also “Données sur les Acadiens de la Louisiane en 1906, envoyés par le juge Breaux à Placide Gaudet,” 1.41.4, CEA-AC. In a later letter to Cormier, Breaux would state that the number of self-identified Acadians in Louisiana was even smaller than he had first predicted; see Jos. A. Breaux to Clarence F. Cormier, 9 August 1902, 304.1, CEA-AC.

Je ne pense pas que le reporter ait saisi la pensée du savant juge quand il lui a fait dire que les Acadiens de la Louisiane n'aimeraient pas à être appelés "Acadiens." Je puis comprendre qu'ils soient fiers d'être citoyens et bons citoyens américains; mais je ne puis croire qu'ils rougissent d'être reconnus comme descendants de ces braves Acadiens dont l'histoire est si touchante, si héroïque et si intéressante.<sup>60</sup>

Many responded in the ensuing editions of the newspaper in support of Landry. For these northern Acadians, their Louisiana counterparts were fighting a battle that was an extension of their own. Unlike the New England Acadians who had abandoned their land to move to the city and find employment within factories, Louisiana Acadians had, like the idealized Acadian assiduously promoted by so many of the elite at this time, espoused a rural and Roman Catholic way of life. They had also, like their northern counterparts prior to their Renaissance, long lived in isolation, preserving what would be considered their old Acadian traditions.<sup>61</sup> Overall, they saw their southern "cousins" as an underdeveloped version of themselves – but without acknowledging the century and a half of history separating them as well as the different socio-economic contexts of the regions they inhabited. In this line of thought, northern Acadians believed they would need to help the southern Acadians discover their history and protect the French language.<sup>62</sup>

The history that mattered was the tale of *Évangéline*. As other scholars have already made clear, both groups, in the south and the north, adapted the poem to suit their needs. According to Joseph Yvon Thériault, Breaux tried to validate Acadian identity by linking it to the prestige of this popular literary character. Felix Voorhies, judge and playwright, also wanted to free Acadian identity from its lower socio-economic connotation.<sup>63</sup> He took on the portrayal of Cajuns in Creole literature as ignorant and simple-minded bon-vivants, specifically targeting Sidonie de la Houssaye's 1888 *Pouponne et Balthazar*.<sup>64</sup> In 1907 Voorhies published *Acadian Reminiscences*, outlining what he believed to be the true story of *Évangéline* and Gabriel as told to him by his maternal grandmother. According to Voorhies, the two

60 "Les Acadiens de la Louisiane," *L'Évangéline*, 4 December 1902. Regarding the myth of the "changeless Cajuns," see Lawrence E. Estaville, Jr., "Changeless Cajuns: Nineteenth-Century Reality of Myth?" *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 117-40.

61 Placide Gaudet, "Les acadiens de la Louisiane," *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 11 December 1902.

62 For responses and reactions to the summary of Breaux's presentation, see P.A. Landry, "Les Acadiens de la Louisiane," *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 27 November 1902; P.A. Landry, "Les Acadiens de la Louisiane," *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 2 December 1902; P.A. Landry, "Les Acadiens de la Louisiane," *L'Évangéline*, 25 December 1902; "Les Acadiens de la Louisiane," *L'Évangéline*, 25 December 1902; E.P. Chouinard, "Les Acadiens de la Louisiane," *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 4 December 1902; Placide Gaudet, "Les Acadiens de la Louisiane," *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 11 December 1902; Acadien, "Correspondance: Nos frères louisianais," *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 15 January 1903.

63 Barbara LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie: Grand-Pré, Évangéline and the Acadian Identity* (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2003); Thériault, *Évangéline*, 288.

64 Hebert-Leiter, *Becoming Cajun, Becoming American*, 30; Sidonie De la Houssaye, *Pouponne et Balthazar* (New Orleans: Librairie de l'Opinion, 1888).

betrothed were really named Emmeline Labiche and Louis Arceneaux. Unlike in Longfellow's tale, they were reunited in Louisiana, but Louis had married another. Discovering this under an oak tree near Bayou Teche, Emmeline became "hopelessly insane"<sup>65</sup> and eventually died alone. The historian Carl Brasseaux argues that this re-imagining of Longfellow's poem influenced the northern Acadians' acceptance of their southern cousins, whose ancestors they believed beforehand, had "mortgaged their heritage for a new life in an exotic, semi-tropical land."<sup>66</sup> Although Voorhies's version had first appeared in *L'Évangéline* in 1894 and 1896,<sup>67</sup> its echoes were much stronger after the book's publication. In southwestern Louisiana, the elite embraced this version to boost the appeal of local towns, especially St. Martinville, where a tourist industry was built around the oak tree marking the location of the lovers' reunion and Emmeline's resting place.<sup>68</sup> Many northern Acadians were willing at least to consider the probity of this version of the tale and to accept sharing the heroine with Louisiana Acadians.<sup>69</sup> There is, however, a difference between "acceptance" and understanding. It would take many more years for northern Acadians to grasp the specific challenges French speakers faced in Louisiana.

Judge Breaux found an ally in a Creole scholar, Alcée Fortier, who was an important figure in promoting the French language in the state as well as building networks between Louisiana and French Canadians. Breaux was elected state superintendent of public instruction in 1888, and both he and Fortier sat on the first State Board of Education.<sup>70</sup> They were also active in the Louisiana Historical Society; in 1903, Fortier served as its president while Breaux was vice-president.<sup>71</sup> A professor at Tulane University, Fortier had gained an international reputation as a scholar of French language and literature, including Creole and Acadian folklore in Louisiana.<sup>72</sup> He and Breaux travelled to Québec City for the 1908 tercentennial celebration of the founding of Quebec, a commemoration that, as H.V. Nelles has

65 Felix Voorhies, *Acadian Reminiscences: With the True Story of Evangeline* (Boston: Palmer Company, 1907), 88.

66 Carl Brasseaux, *In Search of Evangeline: Birth and Evolution of the Evangeline Myth* (Thibodaux, LA: Blue Heron Press, 1988), 44.

67 "The Grave of Evangeline," *L'Évangéline*, 13 September 1894; "Evangeline's People," *L'Évangéline*, 7 May 1896.

68 W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Memory and Acadian Identity, 1920-1960: Susan Evangeline Walker Anding, Dudley LeBlanc, and Louise Olivier, or the Pursuit of Authenticity," in *Acadians and Cajuns: The Politics and Culture of French Minorities in North America*, ed. Ursula Mathis-Moser and Günter Bischof (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2009), 58.

69 In a letter sent to Joseph A. Breaux on 30 September 1919, Placide Gaudet shared his hypothesis regarding Emmeline's identity; see 1.75-17, CEA-AC. Aubin-Edmond Arsenault inserted Voorhies's account in his memoirs after meeting the author's granddaughter in New Orleans; see Aubin-Edmond Arsenault, *Memoirs* (Charlottetown: Island Guardian, 1951), 134.

70 Romero, "Contributions of Joseph A. Breaux to Education in Louisiana," 31.

71 "Minutes of Louisiana Historical Society," Louisiana Historical Society records, 1877-1997, Manuscript collection 854, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Tulane University, New Orleans.

72 Publications by Alcée Fortier include the four-volume *A History of Louisiana* (Paris and New York: Manzi, Joyant, and Company, 1904); a collection of Creole folklore entitled *Louisiana Folk-Tales* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, published for the American Folk-Lore Society, 1895); and *Histoire de la Littérature Française* (New York and Boston: H. Holt and Co.; C. Schoenhof, 1893).



demonstrated, attempted to favour a united vision of Canada despite conflicting notions of French Canadian and English Canadian nationalisms.<sup>73</sup> Interviewed by a journalist from the Montreal-based newspaper *La Patrie*, Fortier was quoted as saying with pride that Canadians and Louisianans had much in common:

Il souhaite qu'un rapprochement plus étroit s'effectue entre les deux peuples; déjà dans le domaine de la pensée, des liens intimes tiennent sans cesse en relation des esprits éminents de notre province et de la Louisiane, mais il veut que ces bonnes et belles relations s'étendent de plus en plus dans tous les domaines de l'activité nationale, pour qu'un jour, on voit vivre d'une vie quasi commune, ceux qui eurent des ancêtres communs.<sup>74</sup>

Fortier added that Louisiana Francophones were faced with a greater challenge concerning a lack of support for French-language education. As the most pre-eminent Louisiana delegate at the 1912 Congrès de la langue française, however, he presented a report to the assembled representatives of French North American communities regarding the state of French education in Louisiana that did not enumerate the specific challenges faced by Louisiana francophones. Instead, he limited his focus to detailing existing learning institutions that offered French classes and emphasized that “des milliers de jeunes Louisianais étudient le français avec plaisir.”<sup>75</sup>

This first Congrès de la langue française played an important role in bringing together French Canadian and Acadian leaders.<sup>76</sup> Contrary to the opinion Fortier had expressed in 1908, Pascal Poirier lamented the dire state of French-language education in Canada, criticizing what he believed to be insufficient improvements in schools.<sup>77</sup> Following the event, a new generation of Acadian leaders strengthened ties with Quebec nationalists by participating in a nation-wide institutional network. In her study of Acadian nationalism in the pages of *L'Évangéline* between 1910 and 1920, Anne Bernou notes that the contacts between Acadian and Quebec's French Canadians encouraged “la prise de conscience d'une solidarité francophone à l'échelle du Canada.”<sup>78</sup> Representatives from Louisiana, however, took a limited role in the nascent networks among French-speaking communities in North America, the distance between them and other communities plaguing attempts at establishing

73 H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

74 “Un illustre visiteur,” *La Patrie* (Montreal), 1 August 1908, Alcée Fortier vertical file, LHC, LSM.

75 *Congrès de la langue française au Canada (Québec, 1912), Mémoires* (Québec: Imprimerie de l'action sociale, 1914), 268.

76 Léon Thériault, “L'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick et le Québec (1880-1960): Froideur ou méfiance?” in *Les relations entre le Québec et l'Acadie de la tradition à la modernité*, ed. Fernand Harvey and Gérard Beaulieu (Sainte-Foy, QC, and Moncton, NB: Éditions de l'IQRC, Éditions d'Acadie, 2000), 60.

77 “Discours du Sénateur Pascal Poirier, Congrès Langue Fr. Québec, juin 1912,” 6.3-7, CEA-AC.

78 Anne Bernou, “Le nationalisme acadien des années 1910 à 1920 à travers *L'Évangéline*” (MA thesis in history, Université de Paris, 1971), 53.

continent-wide networks.<sup>79</sup> For French speakers in Louisiana, it continued to prove difficult to have a footing in transcontinental associations well into the 1950s. Canadian institutional networking also marginalized Louisianans to the degree that its main focus was to protect a francophone identity or identities within Canada, and so was often limited by the Dominion's borders.<sup>80</sup>

Although their French heritage and customs distinguished Acadians and Cajuns from other Americans, the French they spoke also set them apart from other French groups in North America. Fortier recognized that Acadians helped preserve the French language in Louisiana, but “un grand nombre d’entre eux parlent un dialecte qui se rapproche de la langue du XVIIe et du XVIIIe siècle.”<sup>81</sup> According to François Weil, Fortier was the “first specialist of Cajun culture” and “rehabilitated the Cajun language and culture and included it in a larger study of Francophone Louisiana.”<sup>82</sup> Yet, in his 1894 paper, *The Acadians of Louisiana and Their Dialect*, he disapproved of this dialect and wrote that “French is essentially the language of the inhabitants and it is well spoken by the educated class. The latter speak English also, but the lower class speak the Acadian French mixed with the Creole patois and a little English.” Fortier portrayed Acadians as still ignorant, even though well on the way to improving their lot. He believed this improvement would be accelerated once education became a priority: “The greatest defect of the Acadians is the little interest they take in education; a great many are completely illiterate.” Education would, he admitted, “destroy their dialect.”<sup>83</sup> Louisiana Acadians felt the pressure to learn English to free themselves from their economic inferiority, and all the more so when in 1921, building on years of discouraging the use of French in the classroom, the new state constitution barred the language from public education institutions. This change contributed to French speakers’ negative views of their maternal language and pushed many to abandon transmitting the language to the next generation.<sup>84</sup> This

79 Marcel Martel, *Le deuil d’un pays imaginé: rêves, luttes et dérouté du Canada français*, Collection Amérique française, no. 5 (Ottawa: Les presses de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1997), 43, 61.

80 See, for instance, the Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne-française, established in 1904, and L’Ordre de Jacques Cartier, established in Ontario in 1927, in Marcel Martel, *French Canada: An Account of its Creation and Break-Up, 1850-1967*, Canada’s Ethnic Group Series, no. 24 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1998). See also Denise Robillard, *L’Ordre de Jacques Cartier : une société secrète pour les Canadiens français catholiques, 1926-1965* (Montréal: Les Éditions Fides, 2009). For more on the Ordre de Jacques Cartier in an Acadian context, see François LeBlanc, “Membership, leadership et activisme au sein de l’ordre de Jacques Cartier en Acadie: le conseil régional 20 (Moncton)” (MA thesis in history, Université de Moncton, 2013) and Philippe Volpé, “L’Ordre de Jacques Cartier en Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick durant la Grande Dépression, 1933-1939: Noyautage, extériorisation et nationalisme économique” (MA thesis in history, Université Laval, 2013).

81 “Histoire Externe de la langue française en Louisiane et domaine actuel du français,” Alcée Fortier Collection – Mémoire – Résumé of 2 reports: Teaching of French in Louisiana. ca. 1900, RG65, 1983.65.41, LHC, LSM.

82 François Weil, “The Purchase and Making of French Louisiana,” in *Empire of the Imagination: Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase*, ed. Peter J. Kastor and François Weil (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 318.

83 Alcée Fortier “The Acadians of Louisiana and Their Dialect,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 6, no. 1 (1891): 77, 80.

84 Regarding the punishment of students caught speaking French, see Shane K. Bernard, *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 18.

widespread attitude towards the French language and the Acadian identity associated with it would rarely surface in the reports written by visiting northern Acadians and French Canadians, who preferred to remark on the very existence of a French presence rather than going into the threats that faced it in the state.

Thus, for leaders such as Breaux and Fortier, education was seen as a necessity for Acadians to participate in the US economy and therefore improve their economic standing. Northern Acadians had a different understanding of what represented progress for the Acadian descendants in Louisiana, with the role of education being to preserve the French language and make known Acadian history throughout the state – an interpretation reflecting their specific battle in New Brunswick and Canada.<sup>85</sup> Although the interaction between the two groups increased in the following years, the emphasis was again less on understanding the numerous challenges related to being a linguistic or socio-economic minority in two countries that have different approaches to nation-building and more on the safer ground of kinship ties and the survival of Evangeline's descendants.

Especially during the 1920s, northern Acadian leaders began visiting Louisiana in order to meet members of the diaspora and to see how their nationalist efforts could extend to the south. While discovering Louisiana, they commented on the French dialect, the similar family names, and the familiar toponyms surrounding them. These were reminders of home and a confirmation of a common past. These experiences, however, did not translate into a tangible expansion of the social project outside of the Maritimes. For example, the former Prince Edward Island premier Aubin-Edmond Arsenault – the first Acadian to hold such an office<sup>86</sup> – recounted in his memoirs his 1924 visit to Louisiana as the first official envoy of the *Société Nationale de l'Assomption* or, as he referred to it, the “National Acadian Society of the Maritimes and the New England States.”<sup>87</sup> By limiting the scope of the association, Arsenault also limited his role as its president. His understanding of the group's mandate did not correspond with the association's constitution, which as of 1921 included “all” Acadians under its umbrella.<sup>88</sup> Arsenault was hosted in New Orleans by Judge Breaux, and travelled to small towns in southwest Louisiana where he was welcomed to the homes of lawyers and in one place participated in an impromptu banquet with local priests.<sup>89</sup> In his memoirs, Arsenault, like many other previous visitors, including Casgrain, remarked on the professional success of his hosts and their Acadian predecessors such as Governor Mouton. This was part of a trend to report back to members of the Acadian elite that descendants in Louisiana were capable of rising up to reach prestigious positions in government – just as Acadians in the Maritime Provinces were similarly praising the careers of the likes

85 See, for instance, letters sent to Acadian newspapers in reaction to Breaux's comments at the Louisiana Historical Society in 1902 (cited above) and, as we will see in the following pages, Clarence Cormier's 1924 impressions of Louisiana and his strategy to improve southern Acadians' understanding of the French language and their knowledge of their history and survival.

86 See Jean-Paul Arsenault, “Aubin Edmond Arsenault: Canada's First Acadian Premier,” *PEI Genealogical Society Newsletter* 29, no. 2 (April 2004): 9-10.

87 Arsenault, *Memoirs*, 125.

88 Basque, *Société Nationale de l'Acadie*, 86.

89 Arsenault, *Memoirs*, 130.

of Pierre-Amand Landry and Pascal Poirier. For instance, while visiting Mobile, Alabama, the Miramichi-born priest William C. Gaynor wrote to Placide Gaudet:

I find a marked difference in the present status of families which came originally from Acadie. Here in Alabama, especially at Mount Vernon, North of Mobile, the descendants of Acadian families – now called Cajins – are canaille of the worst sort – thieves and murderers. Their ancestors intermarried with Indians and Negroes, and this blood mixture injured the race. Whereas, across the State line in Louisiana the Acadian districts are held in great respect, many individual Acadians having risen to positions of trust and honor.<sup>90</sup>

Although Arsenault was exposed to privileged experiences and interacted with a limited group of mostly well-to-do Acadian representatives, he was one of the few northern Acadians to comment on race demographics in Louisiana as he tried to understand the history of plantations and slavery. He exclaimed that the sound of local African Americans speaking French together transported him back home to Prince Edward Island, where a similar dialect had been spoken. He neglected, however, to mention Cajuns or possible divisions within the “Acadians of Louisiana, the largest group in North America.” When musing on the differences between the “North” and the “South,” he observed only that Louisianians seemed to “enjoy life more” and that their “hospitality and their friendliness is unbounded.”<sup>91</sup> Another traveler to Louisiana in 1924 was Clarence Cormier, an Acadian from New England, who was keen to explore the possibility of establishing a branch of the Société Mutuelle l’Assomption in the state in order to help preserve Acadian culture and history. Although Cormier’s plan did not get the necessary support from SMA’s head office and so did not come to fruition, what marked him the most from his visit was the number of the “frères par le sang” in Louisiana.<sup>92</sup> In a note of thanks to his host, the Abbé Fidèle Chiasson, he stated: “Ça été une révélation de les trouver si nombreux, si bien conservés, parlant un bon français, polis, hospitaliers et prospères. Je suis heureux d’avoir été vers eux. Enfin après 168 ans nous nous retrouvons acadiens de l’Acadie et de la Louisiane. Au plus tôt vous viendrez visiter la patrie de vos ancêtres et désormais notre amitié sera plus chaude parce que nos relations seront plus étroites.”<sup>93</sup> Cormier conveyed similar impressions to the French historian Émile Lauvrière, stating that Acadians numbered close to 300,000 “bien conservés” – almost ten times the initial estimate that Judge Breaux had sent him fewer than 20 years before Cormier’s visit.<sup>94</sup>

90 William C. Gaynor to Placide Gaudet, 18 January 1910, 1.72-6, CEA-AC.

91 Arsenault, *Memoirs*, 143.

92 In a letter to Dudley LeBlanc, Cormier explained that the branch of the SMA in Louisiana was not seen as financially sound by the head office. See Clarence Cormier to Dudley LeBlanc, 25 April 1925, 304.24, CEA-AC. See also Dudley LeBlanc to Clarence Cormier, 7 May 1925, 304.24, CEA-AC, where LeBlanc informed Cormier that their local efforts of establishing a similar insurance organization were relatively successful: “We have enrolled many members since your visit and we are continually growing larger and larger.”

93 Letter from Clarence F. Cormier to l’Abbé Chiasson, 31 March 1924, 304.21, CEA-AC.

94 Judge Breaux would send a more detailed breakdown of his estimates to Placide Gaudet, stating that no census existed tracking the number of Acadians in the state; see the list of communities he sent to Gaudet in 1.41-4, CEA-AC.

Cormier called upon northern Acadians to help the several thousands in Louisiana improve their circumstances. “Oui, là comme ici,” he commented, “la langue est menacée et notre histoire est encore moins connue. Cependant, le coeur est bon et avec du travail il y a moyen de conserver et de relever le niveau intellectuel au point de vue français de ces braves acadiens que j’ai beaucoup aimés.”<sup>95</sup> In his efforts to encourage support from his compatriots, Cormier did not allude to any type of division among the Acadian descendants in Louisiana. Lauvrière confirmed the growth of the Acadian population by writing that when Cormier – “l’apôtre acadien” – informed him of the number, “nous crûmes à un mirage du soleil ou de l’enthousiasme. Mais non, ces chiffres sont bel et bien confirmés par les recensements les plus récents.”<sup>96</sup> Lauvrière also addressed the lack of Acadian organization in Louisiana, and further encouraged northern Acadians to intervene as “ils ont besoin de votre stimulant pour être réveillés de leur mortelle somnolence, sinon ils sombreront avant peu dans le grand anonymat américain.”<sup>97</sup> According to historian Julien Massicotte, Lauvrière believed Acadians were defined by their Catholicism and that Acadian identity originated from the Expulsion. The group and the territory it occupied were both defined as a diaspora, existing wherever Acadian descendants resided. Above all, Acadian history to Lauvrière was a tragedy, and his vision inspired a series of historical works pertaining to Acadians from 1920 to 1950.<sup>98</sup> In *La tragédie d’un peuple*, Lauvrière maintained that two necessary steps could keep Louisiana Acadians attached to their French heritage. The first was the training of an Acadian clergy, and the second was to establish closer ties to France and to other Acadian groups.<sup>99</sup>

French Canadian leaders such as Lionel Groulx also saw an advantage in mobilizing the French-speaking population of the South and making known the “miracle” of their survival and the perseverance of the French “race” in North America: “Le miracle est grand et touchant si l’on songe que la langue maternelle s’est conservée ainsi à peu près sans écoles, sans journaux, par la seule tradition orale de la famille, aidée quelquefois de la prédication dominicale.”<sup>100</sup> Although including the southern Acadians within the group was not a priority when the Acadian elite’s immediate demands were addressed to local, provincial, and federal governments, it helped the group’s reputation within French-speaking communities in Canada and elsewhere as a persistent and growing population. Some from outside

95 Clarence F. Cormier to Émile Lauvrière, 15 August 1924, Waltham, MA, 304.23, CEA-AC.

96 Émile Lauvrière “Grandeurs et Misères coloniales – Les français de la Louisiane,” *Figaro*, 1931, n.p., 3.8.5, CEA-AC.

97 Émile Lauvrière to “Révérend Père,” 20 July 1924, 3.1-2, CEA-AC.

98 Massicotte, “Le territoire acadien. Contextes et perceptions,” 85.

99 Émile Lauvrière, *La tragédie d’un peuple: histoire du peuple acadien de ses origines à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1922), 2:505. In the Maritime Provinces, Lauvrière encouraged stronger ties with France by establishing the Comité France-Acadie. He subsequently led the creation of a similar Comité France-Louisiane. See Marie-Claire Pitre, “Émile Lauvrière et l’Acadie (1866-1954),” *Les Cahiers de la Société historique acadienne* 13, no. 2, (June 1982): 61-86.

100 Lionel Groulx, “Quelques impressions de voyages (Extrait du *Devoir*, numéro du 25 avril 1931),” 3.11-16, CEA-AC. For a full analysis of Lionel Groulx’s understanding of French-Canadian minorities, see Michel Bock, *A Nation Beyond Borders: Lionel Groulx on French-Canadian Minorities* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014).



both groups, such as Lauvrière and Groulx, also had a vested interest in developing stronger ties with Acadians in a complex network of French-speaking communities in North America and France.

Aside from visiting scholars, politicians, and leading Acadian figures, patriotic tourism – often described as pilgrimages – also allowed many of these different communities to meet and learn about the other at a more popular level. The bond over a common history could, however, give rise to tensions, as individuals from both northern Acadie and southern “Nouvelle Acadie” travelled more frequently to discover each other in the 1920s. As the French-language networks in Canada were fostering a sense of solidarity among Francophone communities within the Dominion, the southern Acadians were contending with a strong sense of nativism in the US. Maria Herbert-Leiter has defined the “Cajun double bind,” as “people had to choose between their Acadian past, or what was left of it, and an American future, making conflict and tension basic components of being Cajun during the twentieth century.”<sup>101</sup> In response to local economic and social change, some individuals from southwestern Louisiana’s Acadian elite attempted to revitalize Acadian culture and promote their own communities while being careful not to offend white southern Protestants.<sup>102</sup> The heritage, and history, they celebrated was an Acadian one, removing them from a recent Southern past and American narrative. According to Fitzhugh Brundage,

Cajuns, the revivalists told themselves and others, were not really of the South; the peasant-like Acadians had no place in the familiar narrative of southern history as told by other white southerners. The historical twists and turns of the region’s past – slavery, sectionalism, and the traumas of the New South – happened to other people elsewhere.<sup>103</sup>

Dudley LeBlanc was part of this cohort of revivalists and paid particular attention to developing transcontinental alliances. A celebrated businessman and politician in Southwest Louisiana, he repeatedly led pilgrimages to Nova Scotia to see where his own ancestors had lived prior to the Expulsion.<sup>104</sup> According to Brundage, LeBlanc “forged the link between the Acadian identity, the distant past, and the international Acadian diaspora” while also promoting closer ties among French-speaking populations in North America.<sup>105</sup> Joseph Yvon Thériault, however, refers to him as the ideal ethnic entrepreneur, using his ethnicity to peddle products he sold

101 Hebert-Leiter, *Becoming Cajun, Becoming American*, 79.

102 Brundage, “Memory and Acadian Identity,” 57. See also W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Le Réveil de la Louisiane: Memory and Acadian Identity, 1920-1960,” in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

103 Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow*, 242.

104 For more biographical information on Dudley LeBlanc, see Trent Angers, *Dudley LeBlanc: A Biography* (Louisiana: Acadian House Publishing, 1993) and Floyd Martin Clay, *Coozan Dudley LeBlanc: From Huey Long to Hadacol* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1973).

105 Brundage, “Memory and Acadian identity, 1920-1960,” 61.

nationwide, such as the popular vitamin supplement Hadacol – through which LeBlanc became a millionaire – and at the same time promoting Acadian identity as a marketable commodity.<sup>106</sup> A key promotional role was played by the “Evangeline girls” who travelled with LeBlanc: 25 young women representing different communities in Louisiana and wearing the heroine’s famous milkmaid costume.<sup>107</sup> LeBlanc also addressed more serious subjects, notably during the commemoration of the 175th anniversary of the Expulsion in 1930. Ignoring the advice of the president of the Société Nationale de l’Assomption, Judge Arthur LeBlanc, to “bury the hatchet in the shadows of the cross,” Dudley LeBlanc gave a provocative speech targeting the British Crown for its role in the Expulsion.<sup>108</sup> This accusation was also expressed in LeBlanc’s book, *The True Story of the Acadians*, published in 1927.<sup>109</sup> For northern Acadians, however, such plain speaking ran the risk of jeopardizing their strategy of gaining political ground as a linguistic minority in the Maritime Provinces.

In 1931, it was French Canada’s turn to visit Acadians in Louisiana, and Dudley LeBlanc’s turn to welcome them as the president of the Association of Louisiana Acadians. The Montreal-based newspaper *Le Devoir* organized this pilgrimage, as it had organized a similar expedition to the Maritime Provinces in 1915.<sup>110</sup> Founded in 1910 by Henri Bourassa, whose father Napoléon Bourassa had authored in 1866 a fictional work on the Expulsion,<sup>111</sup> the newspaper saw itself as the liaison between French-speaking communities throughout North America, reflecting Bourassa’s brand of national and transcontinental French Canadian nationalism.<sup>112</sup> The travellers to Louisiana included Acadians, French Canadians, and editors from *L’Évangéline* and *Le Devoir*, as well as Monsignor Camille Roy (rector of the Université Laval) and Lionel Groulx. At their arrival, Acadians were simultaneously celebrated as a distinct group in the state and as a family spanning North America separated by history. The historian Harry Lewis Griffin informed the visitors that “though two hundred years separates our people from Acadia, the spirit of that beautiful country still is deeply imbedded in their very souls. Though they are surrounded by an entirely different civilization, the consciousness that they were once part of a French civilization still exists.”<sup>113</sup> The unveiling of an Evangeline statue in St. Martinville was considered the most important event of the visit, but the

106 Thériault, *Évangéline*, 298.

107 Brundage, “Memory and Acadian identity, 1920-1960,” 62.

108 Ronald Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian’s Journey Through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 193.

109 Dudley J. LeBlanc, *The True Story of the Acadians* (Lafayette: n.p., 1927; rev. 1932)

110 See *Souvenir du Voyage du Devoir en Acadie*, 304-23, CEA-AC.

111 Napoléon Bourassa, *Jacques et Marie. Souvenir d’un peuple dispersé* (Montreal: Sénécal, 1866).

112 Pierre Anctil, “Journal *Le Devoir* et les minorités francophones,” in *Encyclopédie du patrimoine culturel de l’Amérique française*, <http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/>. See also Pierre Anctil, with Pierrick Labbé, *Fais ce que dois. 60 éditoriaux pour comprendre Le Devoir sous Henri Bourassa, 1910-1932* (Quebec: Septentrion, 2010), 391.

113 “Welcome to the Acadians, 1931,” Harry Lewis Griffin Papers, 30.2-26, Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Harry Lewis Griffin was a professor of Louisiana history and was eventually named dean of the College of Liberal Arts of Southwestern Louisiana Institute, which is today the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

thoughts of the travellers turned more to remarking on the reunion of two branches of the same people. Omer Heroux reported in *Le Devoir*:

En Louisiane, nous regardions, nous écoutions parler les jeunes Acadiennes du Nord et celles du Sud, filles de familles qui n'avaient pas eu de contact depuis le "Grand Dérangement," depuis plus de cent soixante-quinze ans. On eût dit des cousines en promenade dans la paroisse voisine.<sup>114</sup>

The distinguished guests would also state, as northern Acadian visitors had done before them, that more effort was required on their part to help mobilize the Acadian population in the South. Monsignor Roy commented that "tous les éléments de race sont là-bas, mais éparés, sans cohésion, sans lien solide. . . . Un profond désir anime les foules, mais sans orientation; il y a une masse d'énergies vigoureuses, mais sans organisation." Added Lionel Groulx, "Il suffirait de quelques animateurs pour ressaisir ce petit peuple, et, sans rien lui enlever de ce patriotisme américain, l'attacher indéfectiblement à son particularisme ethnique."<sup>115</sup>

Subsequent nationalist gatherings continued the theme of the Acadian family. The Convention nationale held in Memramcook in 1937 was the tenth and last of its kind. Held in the same summer as the Convention nationale was the second Congrès de la langue française, its organizing committee presided over by Roy. At the latter event, both of the main Acadian speakers – L.-J.-Arthur Melanson, Archbishop of Moncton, and Albert Sormany, president of the Société Mutuelle l'Assomption – compared the event to a continent-wide family reunion.<sup>116</sup> While listing the participants, *L'Évangéline* acknowledged the presence of prestigious Acadian representatives and a large delegation of Louisiana Acadians. During Melanson's speech regarding the survivance of Acadians, he estimated that the total number of Acadians now exceeded a million, provided that "nous ajoutons maintenant le fort contingent des descendants acadiens de la Louisiane."<sup>117</sup> For the 1937 Convention nationale, meanwhile, Henri-P. Robichaud, an Acadian residing in Rhode Island, announced early in the summer a 400-person road trip from New England to the Memramcook celebration in order to "tighten the bond" within the Acadian family.<sup>118</sup> Yet, despite this overwhelming number of anticipated "pilgrims" to the region, the working sections of the program were dominated by New Brunswick Acadians. *L'Évangéline* boasted that every Acadian parish in New Brunswick would be represented among the commissions, each of which was presided over by a New Brunswick Acadian. As for the rest of the diaspora, they were planned to be the topic

114 Omer Heroux, "L'Acadie est vraiment ressuscitée," *Le Devoir*, 15 August 1934, 3.14-12, CEA-AC.

115 Quoted in Heroux, "L'Acadie est vraiment ressuscitée."

116 "Discours du président général de la Société l'Assomption au Congrès de la Langue française," *L'Évangéline*, 8 July 1937, and "Magistral discours de Son Excellence Mgr Arthur Melanson sur la survivance française en Acadie," *L'Évangéline*, 8 July 1937.

117 "Magistral discours de Son Excellence Mgr Arthur Melanson sur la survivance française en Acadie," *L'Évangéline*, 8 July 1937.

118 "Plusieurs centaines d'Acadiens des États-Unis rendront visite à leur pays natal au cours du moins d'août," *L'Évangéline*, 29 July 1937.

of a commission entitled “nos relations avec les groupes acadiens des autres provinces et des États-Unis,” but the discussion was cancelled due to poor attendance. No Louisiana representative was included in the list of the members of the commission.<sup>119</sup> The “nos” in the title, furthermore, narrowed the scope of the Acadians in question to those residing in New Brunswick.<sup>120</sup>

The same tension persisted during the 1955 bicentennial. Pageants, parades, and ceremonies were organized throughout North America to commemorate a dark chapter, but most of all to celebrate the survival of the Acadian people. For the Maritime Provinces and Louisiana, the celebrations reflected conflicting definitions of Acadian identity: one evolving in a Canadian context, the other in a US context. Each region embraced its membership in the Acadian diaspora, but interpreted its linkages according to different regional realities and national narratives. In Moncton, the celebrations emphasized a peaceful coexistence of the two founding linguistic groups of Canada.<sup>121</sup> Writing to Thomas J. Arceneaux, the chairman of the Louisiana *Acadian Bicentennial Commemoration* (ABC), H.A. Joyce, the mayor of Moncton – ironically, in view of the tensions that would emerge only a decade or two later – proclaimed that his city was “the dwelling-place of people of two great cultures, living together in peace and harmony and making equal contribution to the common good.”<sup>122</sup> The Maritime Acadians invited Arceneaux and other Acadian representatives from Louisiana to their celebration, and a delegation of Maritime Acadians journeyed to Louisiana to take part in its celebrations. The tone of the year-long, state-funded Louisiana celebration differed markedly from the one organized in Canada despite featuring many of the same cultural symbols. According to historian Shane K. Bernard, the ABC was “less about celebrating Cajun culture than about seeking the validation of mainstream America.”<sup>123</sup> When it was time to welcome the northern Acadian delegation at the 1955 Bicentennial Celebration in Louisiana, the emphasis was once again on a symbolic family reunion. *Time* magazine captured the tone:

All over the Cajun country of Louisiana last week, the “gentle bond” of old Acadia again made strangers friends . . . . On the farms and along the bayous of Louisiana the bicentennial visitors danced the old Acadian “Fais Do-Do” sang *Évangéline* and chatted in their special brand of French . . . . Said a Cajun doctor: “We felt as though we are one family. We felt that the Acadians belong here . . . . The

119 “Les principaux problèmes qui préoccupent les Acadiens seront étudiés au congrès de Memramcook,” *La voix d’Évangéline*, 9 August 1937.

120 “1937 – ‘Le Congrès de la reconnaissance’ – Le juge LeBlanc,” *La voix d’Évangéline*, 12 August 1937.

121 Sacha Richard, “Commémoration et idéologie nationale en Acadie. Les fêtes du bicentenaire de la déportation acadienne,” *Mens: revue d’histoire intellectuelle de l’Amérique française* 3, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 36.

122 H.A. Joyce, mayor of Moncton, to Thomas J. Arceneaux, 6 January 1955, Manuscript 60, Acadian Bicentennial Celebration, box 1, file 16, Correspondence, 1955, 3-7 January, Manuscript and Special Collections, University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

123 Shane K. Bernard, *Cajuns*, 52. See also Shane K. Bernard, “Anglo-Conformism: The Acadian Bicentennial Celebration of 1955,” *Louisiana History* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 161-74.

visiting Acadians, whose ancestors drifted back to Canada years after the exile, discovered that both groups have preserved intact the old Acadian tradition of large, devout, close-knit families, the old Acadian songs and dances, word for word and step for step.<sup>124</sup>

In reality, however, the 1955 bicentennial events faithfully reflected and confirmed the disconnect between the familial imagery and the entirely different social and political imperatives that respectively faced the northern and southern Acadians. While continuing to welcome each other as cousins, they also had no option but to temper this common sense of identity with the negotiation of social position in their respective homelands. Like their French Canadian “grand frères,” these distant cousins had identified each other as allies in legitimizing Acadian identity at the turn of the 20th century, but mutual understanding of their own separate battles back home was beyond the grasp of either Acadian elite. In the case of the Maritime Acadian leadership, their limited relationship to the group further skewed their view of the southern Acadians – meeting only fortunate, successful, and white men who identified as Acadians and who generally looked down on the Cajun way of life. Sporadic meetings, moreover, did not lead to any active or tangible partnerships between the groups, at the beginning of the 20th century or subsequently. Like the romanticized history of the Expulsion through the different versions of Evangeline’s journey, Acadians promoted a romanticized version of their relationship. The meeting of “long lost cousins” was a “happy ending” to a long tragedy, or a celebrated family reunion symbolic of a peaceful future. What Acadians said in front of the crowds, and what they wrote in their newspapers and books, however, did not translate into action. The vision of a “grande famille acadienne” persisted in the first half of the century, but the social project outlined by the northern Acadian leadership was always designed for the French-speaking communities of the Maritime Provinces and not for a broader diaspora.

124 “Canadians Abroad,” *Time*, 31 January 1955, Thomas J. Arceneaux Papers, “From the Files of Uncle Tom, vol. 3, Lafayette, Louisiana, 1975: an additional random sampling of clippings, pictures, etc.,” 214, box 1, file 4, Manuscript and Special Collections, University of Louisiana at Lafayette.