

A New Acadia: The Acadian Migrations to South Louisiana, 1764-1803

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RESEARCH NOTE

A New Acadia: The Acadian Migrations to South Louisiana, 1764-1803

THE ACADIAN EXPULSION FROM NOVA SCOTIA has been the subject of intense scrutiny by both popular and scholarly writers, particularly since the publication of Longfellow's *Evangeline* in 1847. The subsequent wanderings of the exiled Acadians and the eventual settlement of many of them in Louisiana remained until recently a relatively neglected chapter in North American history.¹ Indeed, with the exception of superficial and often inaccurate accounts of the Acadian migration in general histories of the Acadians, no comprehensive view of the Acadian migration to Louisiana has existed until quite recently.²

Through the use of major archival collections built by the Center for Louisiana Studies and other Gulf Coast repositories, Acadian scholars in Louisiana and elsewhere have patiently pieced together the story of Acadian immigration and settlement in the 18th-century Mississippi Valley.³ What has emerged is the picture of a migration orchestrated in no small part by the Acadians themselves. This image constitutes a radical departure from the traditional views of the Acadian influx, which tended to regard this migration either as a fortuitous happenstance or as the spontaneous migration of independent groups of exiles to what they considered to be France's last outpost on the North American continent.⁴ This view of the Acadian influx, however, merely belied the one-dimen-

1 See, however, Robert LeBlanc, "The Acadian Migrations", *Proceedings of the Minnesota Academy of Science*, XXX (1962), pp. 55-9; Naomi Griffiths, "Acadians in Exile: The Experiences of the Acadians in the British Seaports", *Acadiensis*, IV, 1 (Autumn 1974), pp. 67-84; Naomi Griffiths, "Petitions of Acadian Exiles, 1755-1785: A Neglected Source", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XI (no. 21) (May 1978); Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution*, 15 vols. (New York, 1946-1970), VI, pp. 306-15, Oscar W. Winzerling, *Acadian Odyssey* (Baton Rouge, 1955).

2 Carl A. Brasseaux, "The Founding of New Acadia: Reconstruction and Transformation of Acadian Society in Louisiana, 1765-1865", thèse de doctorat, 3e cycle, Université de Paris, 1982. For more narrowly focused studies of Acadian immigration and settlement, see James H. Dormon, *The People Called Cajuns: An Introduction to an Ethnohistory* (Lafayette, La., 1983), and Jacqueline K. Voorhies, "The Acadians: The Search for the Promised Land", in Glenn R. Conrad, ed., *The Cajuns: Essays on their History and Culture* (Lafayette, 1978), pp. 97-114.

3 See Carl A. Brasseaux, "The Colonial Records Collection of the Center for Louisiana Studies", *Louisiana History*, XXV (Spring 1984), pp. 181-8. Other major collections exist at Loyola University (New Orleans), the University of Texas (Austin), and the University of Florida (Gainesville).

4 For an excellent example of this, see Marc de Villiers du Terrage, *Les Dernières Années de la Louisiane française* [translated by Hosea Phillips, edited by Carl A. Brasseaux and Glenn R.

sional vision of historians limited to one archival resource — the general correspondence of Louisiana's colonial administrators in France's Archives Nationales. The limited materials formerly available to Louisiana historians also contained numerous gaps in factual documentation, forcing the students of Acadian history to engage in speculation, particularly regarding the dates of arrival and the settlement patterns of the exiles who sought refuge in Louisiana.⁵ Some scholars, for example, had speculated that Acadians began to establish homes in Louisiana as early as 1756, one year after the dispersal.⁶

The evidence now clearly indicates that the influx of Acadians into Louisiana did not begin until after the promulgation of the Treaty of Paris (1763), which provided an 18-month grace period during which Acadians detained in British territory could relocate on French soil. The first Acadians to reach Louisiana following their release were 20 individuals from New York.⁷ This group included Acadians deported to New York in 1755 and relatives recently released from detention camps at Fort Edward, Nova Scotia. Arriving at New Orleans in early April 1764, they were settled by Louisiana's caretaker French administration along the Mississippi River above New Orleans, near the boundary between present-day St. John and St. James parishes.⁸

These immigrants were followed, in late February 1765, by 193 Acadian refugees from detention camps at Halifax.⁹ These Acadians initially sought to relocate at Saint-Domingue, the French sugar island to which approximately 2,000 of their *confrères* had fled in late 1763 and early 1764. The refugees from the mainland, however, quickly discovered that life in the Antilles was far more difficult than it had been under English dominion: Acadians were impressed into work details and sent to build the Môle St-Nicolas naval base in the midst of a jungle. The workers were unpaid, receiving as compensation for their labours discarded clothing and inadequate supplies. Their children quickly succumbed to the twin scourges of malnutrition and disease (usually scurvy), while they and their wives fell victim to the climate and endemic fevers. Those Acadians who survived were generally unable to find an economic niche in the island's planta-

Conrad, annotated by Carl A. Brasseaux] (Lafayette, La., 1982), pp. 211, 274. The original edition was published in Paris in 1903.

- 5 Joe Gray Taylor, *Louisiana: A Bicentennial History* (New York, 1976), pp. 24-5; Garnie W. McGinty, *A History of Louisiana* (New York, 1949), pp. 60-64; Francois-Xavier Martin, *The History of Louisiana from the Earliest Period*, (New Orleans, 1963 [1882]), pp. 187-8.
- 6 See, for example, Lillian C. Bourgeois, *Cabanoey: The History, Customs, and Folklore of St. James Parish* (New Orleans, 1957), p. 11.
- 7 Brasseaux, "New Acadia", pp. 158, 205-6.
- 8 Jacqueline K. Voorhies, comp., *Some Late Eighteenth Century Louisianians* (Lafayette, La., 1973), pp. 114-119; Janet Jehn, comp., *Acadian Exiles in the Colonies* (Covington, Ky., 1977).
- 9 There were initially 193 Acadian immigrants, but by April 1765, their number had grown to 231. Denis-Nicolas Foucault to Minister of Marine Choiseul, 28 February 1765, Archives des Colonies [AC], subseries C 13a (Louisiane: correspondance générale), volume 45, folio 12, Archives Nationales, Paris.

tion economy, which offered few opportunities to independent farmers.¹⁰

As Halifax Acadians prepared to migrate to the French Antilles, letters from Saint-Domingue reached them carrying reports of maltreatment by French colonial authorities.¹¹ Repelled by substandard food and clothing, tropical diseases, and social and economic incompatibility with the island's plantation economy, the Saint-Domingue Acadians resolved to migrate *en masse* to French-speaking Quebec via the Mississippi Valley, and they invited their cousins in Halifax to join them.¹² Incredible as it may seem, extant sources in Halifax indicate that local Acadians, driven to desperation by the recent reports from Saint-Domingue and by the British government's rejection of their efforts to be settled in Canada, embraced this ambitious scheme. Indeed, the Halifax Acadians reportedly anticipated the creation of a major Acadian settlement in Illinois.¹³

Their dreams were never realized. Although the Halifax Acadians chartered a boat for Saint-Domingue, they subsequently discovered that the vast majority of their *confrères* were either dead or destitute and unable to afford passage to Louisiana.¹⁴ The Halifax Acadians, led by the legendary Joseph Broussard *dit* Beausoleil, were thus forced to change ships and continue on alone to the Mississippi Valley.¹⁵ Arriving at New Orleans in late February 1765 with little more than the clothes they carried on their backs, 193 Halifax Acadians were greeted by a colonial government nearly as destitute as they. Louisiana had been partitioned by the Treaty of Paris into English and Spanish sectors. Anticipating expeditious occupation of the trans-Appalachian and trans-Mississippi regions respectively by British and Spanish authorities, the French government failed to send material assistance and provisions to Louisiana after 1763.¹⁶ Moved by pity, Louisiana's French caretaker administrators nevertheless mobilized what limited resources were available, providing each family with land grants, seed grain for six months, a gun, and crude land-clearing implements. The Louisiana government also provided a former military engineer, Louis Andry, to conduct them to the Attakapas District, a frontier post selected for their settlement, and to supervise their establishment.¹⁷

10 Gabriel Debien, "Les Acadiens à Saint-Domingue", in Glenn R. Conrad, ed., *The Cajuns: Essays on their History and Culture* (Lafayette, La., 1978), p. 262.

11 Brasseaux, "New Acadia", pp. 71-4.

12 Thomas B. Akins, ed., *Acadia and Nova Scotia: Documents Relating to the Acadian French and the First British Colonization of the Province, 1714-1758* (Cottonport, La., 1972 [1889]), pp. 349-50.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Brasseaux, "New Acadia", p. 159.

15 Foucault to Choiseul, 25 February 1765, C 13a, vol. 45, folio 42, AC.

16 Carl A. Brasseaux, "L'Officier de Plume: Denis-Nicolas Foucault, commissaire-ordonnateur of French Louisiana, 1762-1769", M.A. thesis, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1975, pp. 27, 37, 61, 62, 64.

17 List of provisions and supplies delivered to the Acadian families who have taken refuge in Louisiana, 30 April 1765, C 13a, vol. 45, folio 30, AC; Charles Phillipe Aubry and Foucault to

Though thus thwarted in their efforts to reach the Upper Mississippi Valley, subsequently harassed by the Attakapas commandant, and decimated by either malaria or yellow fever in the summer and fall of 1765, the Halifax Acadians survived these calamities and, by dint of their unstinting industry, soon prospered.¹⁸ Antonio de Ulloa, Louisiana's first Spanish governor, who arrived at New Orleans on 5 March 1766, stood in awe of his newly established Acadian subjects, who, he observed, literally worked themselves to death to provide for their destitute families as well as their orphaned and widowed relatives. Their persistent labours quickly transformed the region's semi-tropical jungles into productive farms, and within a decade the exiles enjoyed a standard of living at least equal to that of their predispersal homeland. The Attakapas Acadians were clearly sustained in their herculean tasks by a desire to create a new homeland not only for themselves but also for their displaced friends and relatives. Thus, when Ulloa toured the Acadian settlements along Bayou Teche in late spring 1766, the Attakapas settlers sought permission to invite their relatives remaining in exile to join in their good fortune.¹⁹ By this means, the Attakapas Acadians sought to reunite their scattered families in their adopted home, which they now proudly called "New Acadia".

When Ulloa equivocated, citing the necessity of securing royal authorization, the immigrants characteristically ignored the governor's pleas to desist and in 1766 and 1767 numerous letters of invitation from Attakapas Acadians were circulating widely among the Acadians remaining in exile in Maryland and, later, in Pennsylvania.²⁰ Pooling their meagre resources to charter local merchant vessels for Louisiana, hundreds of Acadians — at least 689 of the 1,050 known survivors in Maryland and Pennsylvania — boarded vessels in Chesapeake Bay ports for Louisiana.²¹ Arriving at New Orleans, these refugees were greeted as cordially as their predecessors and were offered land and material assistance to facilitate their establishment.²²

Amicable relations between the immigrants and their Spanish hosts soured,

Choiseul, 30 April 1765, C 13a, vol. 45, folios 21-24, AC; Jacqueline K. Voorhies, trans., "The Attakapas Post: The First Acadian Settlement", *Louisiana History*, XVII (Winter 1976), pp. 91-6.

18 "Copie d'un vieux registre de St. Martin de Tours", pp. 1-3, [typescript of the oldest church registers, St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church, St. Martinville, Louisiana]; Attakapas General Census, 30 October 1774, legajo 218, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba [PPC], Archivo Nacional de Indias, Seville, Spain.

19 Antonio de Ulloa to Jeronimo de Grimaldi, 19 May 1766, legajo 2585, Audiencia de Santo Domingo [ASD], Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

20 Henry Jerningham to Ulloa, November 1766, in Lawrence Kinnard, ed., *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794*, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1946), II, pp. 36-7.

21 Ulloa to Grimaldi, 29 September 1766, legajo 2585, ASD; Aubry to Ulloa, 16 December 1766, legajo 187A, PPC; Richard E. Chandler, trans. and ed., "End of an Odyssey: Acadians Arrive in St. Gabriel, Louisiana", *Louisiana History*, XIV (Winter 1973), pp. 81-7; Ulloa to Grimaldi, 23 July 1767, legajo 2585, ASD; Pedro Piernas to Ulloa, 5 June 1767, legajo 187A, PPC.

22 Ulloa to Grimaldi, 19 May 1766, legajo 2585, ASD.

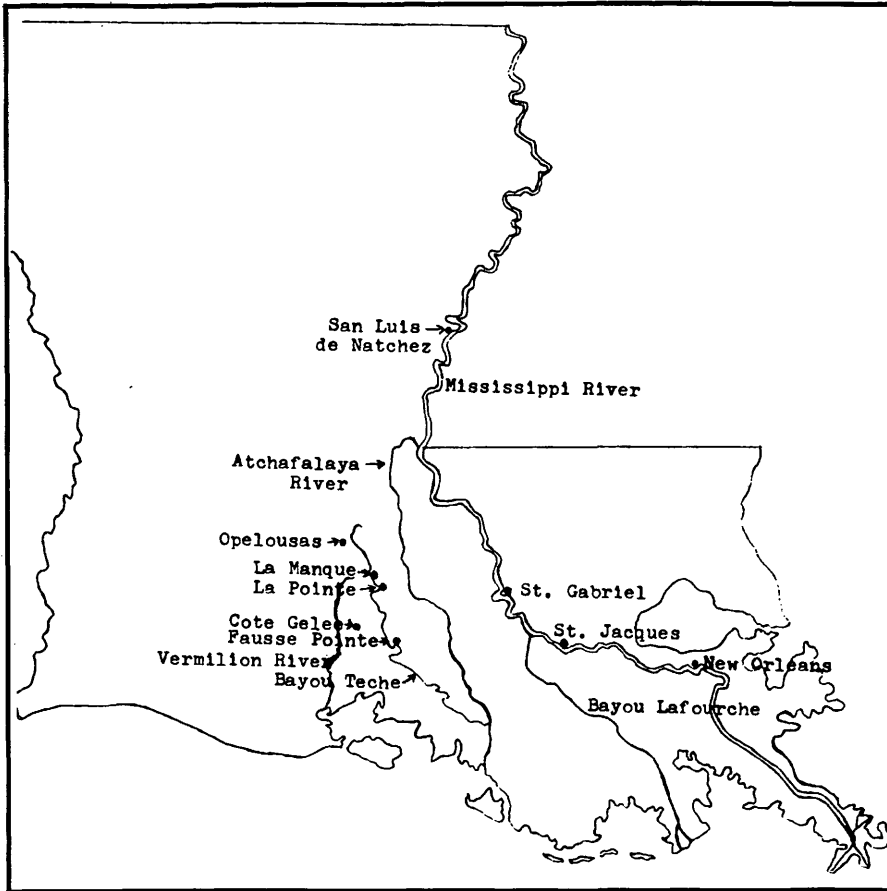


Figure One: Acadian Settlements in Louisiana, c. 1768

however, as a bitter dispute arose in 1767 and 1768 over the new Acadian settlement sites. No objections had been voiced when at least 200 Maryland Acadians had been sent to Cabannocé (present-day St. James Parish) and later to Ascension Parish in the fall of 1766.²³ The caretaker French government had been compelled by circumstances to settle approximately 80 late-arriving Halifax Acadians at Cabannocé in May 1765, and the proximity of the new settlement sites to those of 1765 seemed to portend at least partial realization of the Acadian dream of familial reunification.²⁴ However, the subsequent waves of Maryland and Pennsylvania Acadians were forcibly dispersed, in conformity with Spanish defensive strategy. Extremely concerned about the vulnerability of

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Louisiana's eastern frontier to Indian and British encroachment and lacking the troops necessary to protect its extensive borders, Ulloa decided, in May 1766, to employ the immigrants in the colonial defences. After May 1766, each wave of immigrants was assigned to a strategic site along the Mississippi River, which constituted the international boundary between British and Spanish territory. Although the Acadian settlement sites were sometimes isolated and vulnerable to attack, Ulloa hoped that the marksmanship and virulent anglophobia of the immigrants would make the new river posts an adequate first line of defence in the event of Anglo-Hispanic hostilities. Thus, in July 1767, 210 Acadians were assigned to Fort St. Gabriel, while in February 1768, 149 immigrants were ordered to San Luis de Natchez, near present-day Vidalia, Louisiana.²⁵

The dispersal of the immigrants earned the Spanish government the enmity of the Acadian community which, by 1768,²⁶ had emerged as the predominant cultural group in Lower Louisiana, outside New Orleans and its immediate environs. As a result, the Acadians became active participants in the ouster of Ulloa during the New Orleans rebellion of 1768.²⁷ Marching into New Orleans on the morning of 29 October 1768, scores of exiles (perhaps as many as 200-300) took up arms to force the Spanish governor's unceremonious departure from Louisiana.

Spanish control over the colony was restored in August 1769. As a conciliatory gesture, Alejandro O'Reilly, Ulloa's successor as governor, permitted the disgruntled San Luis de Natchez settlers to migrate to the Acadian settlements along the Mississippi River in late December 1769. This judicious move did much to placate the colony's Acadian population. But Hispano-Acadian friction and the instability during and following the October 1768 insurrection seem to have discouraged further Acadian immigration into Louisiana. Indeed, while it is possible that a handful of individuals may have found their way to the colony in ensuing years, only one small group of Acadians is known to have arrived in Louisiana between 1768 and 1785. In 1770, a haggard band of 30 Acadians arrived at Natchitoches, Louisiana after a 15-month ordeal of ship-board starvation, mutiny, shipwreck, imprisonment and forced labor in Spanish Texas, and finally a 420-mile overland trek to Louisiana. After successfully resisting government efforts to settle them permanently in the Natchitoches post, these refugees established homes first in the Iberville district and later at Opelousas.²⁸

The arrival of these immigrants marked the end of the Acadian influx from the Atlantic seaboard colonies. The next wave of Acadian immigration eman-

25 Richard E. Chandler, trans. and ed., "Odyssey Continued: Acadians Arrive in Natchez", *Louisiana History*, XIX (Fall 1978), p. 447; Chandler, "End of an Odyssey", pp. 81-7.

26 Ulloa, "Observations", 1769, C 13a, vol. 47, folios 121-121v, AC.

27 David Ker Texada, *Alejandro O'Reilly and the New Orleans Rebels* (Lafayette, La., 1970), pp. 88-9.

28 Carl A. Brasseaux and Richard E. Chandler, "The Britain Incident, 1769-1770: Anglo-Hispanic Tensions in the Western Gulf", *Southwestern Quarterly*, 87 (April 1984), pp. 357-70.

Table One
Acadian Migrations to Louisiana, 1764-1788

<i>Place of Origin</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Number of Exiles</i>
New York	1764	20
Halifax	1764-1765	311
Maryland and Pennsylvania	1766-1770	689
France	1785	1,596
St. Pierre/Miquelon	1788	19
	<i>Total</i>	2,635

ated from France, but once again Louisiana influences served as the catalyst for the migration. In 1766, letters from Attakapas Acadians to relatives in France had much the same impact as they had had earlier on their counterparts in Maryland.²⁹ Indeed, the approximately 2,500 Acadian refugees in France endured conditions at least as bad, and in some cases, worse than those suffered by the exiles in English captivity.³⁰ But Acadians in France lacked the resources to take advantage of the opportunity to seek a better life in Lower Louisiana, and the financially embarrassed French government refused to subsidize their relocation as it would benefit only the Spanish crown.³¹

Thus forced to remain in France and to endure several disastrous resettlement programs in succeeding years, the Acadians maintained their interest in Louisiana through a steady flow of correspondence that crossed the Atlantic in the 1760s, 1770s, and early 1780s.³² Though none of these letters has survived, numerous references to them in Louisiana, French, and Spanish colonial archives indicate that many, perhaps most, Louisiana Acadians managed somehow to contact their displaced relatives overseas and, by extolling the virtues of the Mississippi Valley's salubrious climate, fertile soil, and abundant unclaimed lands, enticed them to rejoin their kinsmen in the new Acadian homeland. Indeed, the volume of Acadian correspondence reached such proportions that in 1767 exiles at Belle-Isle-en-Mer, France could describe accurately the location and status of

29 Minister of Marine Praslin to Mistral, 13 September 1766, Archives des Colonies, subseries B (ordres du roi), volume 125, folio 450vo, Archives Nationales, Paris.

30 Memoir on Acadian History to 1778, June 1778, Archives des Affaires étrangères, Angleterre subseries, volume 47, folio 23, Archives Nationales, Paris.

31 Praslin to Mistral, 13 September 1766, B, vol. 125, folio 450vo, AC.

32 Mathe Allain, trans., "The Records of Belle-Isle-en-Mer", *Attakapas Gazette*, XVI (1981), pp. 103-10, XVII (1982), pp. 36-45, 76-83, 123-131, 183-192, XVIII (1983), pp. 73-80, 108-13.

literally hundreds of relatives in St. Pierre and Miquelon, the Province of Quebec, the Maritimes, the 13 English seaboard colonies, and Louisiana.

These letters helped to keep alive the spark of interest in Louisiana colonization among the Acadians in France, and this continuing interest was successfully exploited in 1784 by Henri Peyroux de la Coudrenière, a French soldier of fortune recently returned from Louisiana. The Spanish government had recently sponsored unsuccessful efforts to enlist Iberian Spaniards and Canary Islanders to populate and hispanicize the lower Mississippi Valley and was actively seeking alternate sources of recruits. By providing colonists for Louisiana, Peyroux anticipated a handsome reward from a grateful Spanish monarch. Working through the Acadian shoemaker Oliver Terrio, Peyroux gradually overcame the initial Acadian incredulity and the subsequent resistance of the French government in organizing the largest single migration of Europeans into the Mississippi Valley in the late 18th-century. Between mid-May and mid-October 1785, 1,596 Acadians boarded at various French ports seven New Orleans-bound merchant vessels chartered by the Spanish government for their transportation.³³

Upon arrival at New Orleans, the 1785 immigrants were housed in converted warehouses on the western riverbank. While recuperating from the deleterious effects of their trans-Atlantic voyage, they selected delegates to inspect potential home sites in Lower Louisiana. On the basis of their representatives' reports, the exiles selected on an individual basis the most appealing settlement. Individual interests, however, were usually subordinated to those of the group, as 84 per cent of the immigrants endorsed the sites recommended by their delegates. Four of the seven groups of passengers elected to establish communities along Bayou Lafourche, settling between present-day Labadieville and Raceland.³⁴ Two other contingents of French Acadians selected lands along the Mississippi River near Baton Rouge.³⁵ The final group of immigrants accepted lands along lower Bayou des Ecores (present-day Thompson's Creek); this group was later forced to relocate along Bayou Lafourche when a 1794 hurricane unleashed torrential rains that washed away their farms.³⁶

The settlement sites of the Acadians along Bayou Lafourche, the Mississippi River, and earlier along Bayou Teche provided the exiles a niche in which to reconstruct their shattered culture. Cultural rehabilitation was facilitated by the resilience of the Acadian society itself, the numerical superiority of the immigrants in their respective districts, and by the residential propinquity of the immigrants in their waterfront communities. Upon arrival in Louisiana, Acadian families were typically granted concessions with 4 to 6 arpents (768 to 1,152 feet) frontage on the nearest waterway with a standard depth of 40 arpents

33 On the 1785 Acadian migration to Louisiana, see Winzerling, *Acadian Odyssey*.

34 Brasseaux, "New Acadia", p. 215.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Anselme Blanchard to Carondelet, 28 October 1794, vol. 209, fol. 356, PPC.

(7,680 feet).³⁷ Forced heirship laws in colonial Louisiana, which required equitable distribution of property among heirs — and Acadian families were consistently large — upon the demise of landholding parents, quickly reduced the original family land grants to narrow ribbons of property. By 1800, many, if not most, individual tracts measured less than 1 arpent frontage by 40 arpents depth.³⁸ Force heirship initially worked to preserve Acadian culture by increasing the population density in the original settlement sites at a time when the trickle of non-Acadian immigration into the area threatened to grow into a torrent. Indeed, by the dawn of the 19th-century, the Acadian community east of the Atchafalaya River consisted of an almost uninterrupted chain of small farmsteads extending along two axes from the lower Lafourche to upper West Baton Rouge Parish, and from upper West Baton Rouge Parish to the St. James-St. John Parish boundary.³⁹

The residential congestion which helped to preserve Acadian cultural integrity also paradoxically worked to transform their imported culture. Though the Acadians constituted at least a plurality in their original settlement sites, the New Acadia districts were by no means their exclusive domains.⁴⁰ In the Attakapas and neighbouring Opelousas posts, small bands of Indians and scores of Creoles and recently discharged French soldiers were well established at the time of the Acadian influx. Moreover, in 1779 the Spanish colonial government established a Malaguenian colony at New Iberia, near the Acadian Fausse Pointe settlement. East of the Atchafalaya River, the Houma and Chitimacha Indians maintained villages in proximity to their Acadian neighbors at Cabannocé and St. Gabriel, while, in the 1770s and early 1780s, many Creoles from the densely populated German Coast area above New Orleans joined the Acadians in their quest for lands along Bayou Lafourche.⁴¹ Isleño colonists recruited in the Canary Islands by the colonial government found homes in the predominantly Acadian Lafourche and Iberville districts in 1779. A final cultural element was introduced in the Acadian settlements in the late 1770s and 1780s as surprisingly large numbers of exiles began to acquire Black slaves, first as wet-nurses and later as field hands.⁴²

The various components of New Acadia's polyglot population did not coexist harmoniously: Acadians resented the social pretensions of their Creole neighbors. Ulloa to Grimaldi, 19 May 1766, legajo 2585, ASD.

38 U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1810 Census of Louisiana, St. James, Ascension, Assumption and Lafourche parishes, Microfilm, National Archives (Washington, D.C.); Brasseaux, "New Acadia", p. 381.

39 1810 Census of Louisiana, St. James, Ascension, Assumption and Lafourche parishes.

40 Voorhies, *Louisianians*, pp. 271-345, 441-8.

41 Brasseaux, "New Acadia", pp. 190-237; Gilbert C. Din, "Proposals and Plans for Colonization in Spanish Louisiana", *Louisiana History*, XI (Summer 1970), pp. 197-213, and "Spain's Immigration Policy and Efforts in Louisiana During the American Revolution", *Louisiana Studies*, XIV (Summer 1975), pp. 241-58.

42 By 1810, a majority of Acadian farmers along the Mississippi River and Bayou Teche were slaveholders: 1810 Census, Attakapas, St. James, Ascension, and Iberville parishes.

bours, who, in turn, were appalled by the exiles' lack of deference to the social position of the longer-established residents.⁴³ The Houma Indians, on the other hand, were deeply offended by the government's decision to settle the Acadians on their tribal lands, and they vented their frustration by almost daily raids on the immigrants' barnyards and grain stores throughout the 1770s and early 1780s.⁴⁴ Finally, African bondsmen chafed under the new slave regime and reportedly gave their enthusiastic support to an abortive servile insurrection at the Lafourche district in 1785.⁴⁵

These mutual animosities notwithstanding, the rival groups in the Acadian settlements were compelled by local demography, economics and topography to interact on a daily basis. This was particularly true of the Acadian settlements east of the Atchafalaya River. Whereas the western Acadians (those in Attakapas and Opelousas) could — and many did — escape the intercultural feuding by seeking the isolation of the uninhabited prairies adjoining their bayou homes, the eastern Acadians were confined by swampy backlands to narrow natural levees along the waterfront. Forced to reside ever closer to their non-Acadian neighbours by the increasing congestion in the area, the eastern Acadians and those exiles remaining along Bayou Teche gradually found themselves adopting innovations in cuisine and material culture introduced by their neighbours. The so-called "Creole" house (a raised structure on piers) replaced the Acadian *maison de poteaux-en-terre* by the 1780s; horseracing, introduced into south Louisiana by a handful of Anglo-American immigrants in the 1780s, was almost immediately preempted by the Attakapas Acadians. The Spanish guitar was adapted to Acadian music. Iberian spices entered the formerly bland Acadian cuisine apparently in the late 18th century; by 1803, Indian corn and African okra found their way into the Acadian diet, though in dishes (*pain de mais*, *soupe de mais*, gumbo, etc.) only remotely resembling their African and Indian counterparts. And, by 1810, a majority of Acadians owned slaves, in emulation of their Creole neighbours.⁴⁶ Indeed, cross-cultural borrowing existed to such an extent that, by the time of the Louisiana Purchase (1803), the basis for a new, synthetic South Louisiana culture had been established.

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43 Carl A. Brasseaux, "Acadians, Creoles, and the 1787 Lafourche Smallpox Outbreak", *Louisiana Review*, VII (Summer 1979), pp. 55-8.

44 Judice to Miro, 26 May 1785, legajo 198A, folios 411-12, PPC.

45 Judice to Miro, 15 November 1785, legajo 198A, folio.462, PPC; Judice to Miro, 13 November 1785, legajo 198A, folios 455-58, PPC.

46 Brasseaux, "New Acadia", pp. 238-95; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Third Decennial Census, 1810, Louisiana Schedules.