

**GEOG 220**

**Cajun Music**

- Canada's link to the Cajuns lies with the deportation of the Acadian population of the Maritime provinces in 1755
- On this, see Voluntary references:
  - Michela Rosana, "Mapping the Acadian deportation" *Canadian Geographic* 28 July 2016
  - Also article in the latest issue of the Smithsonian magazine (Feb or March 2022)

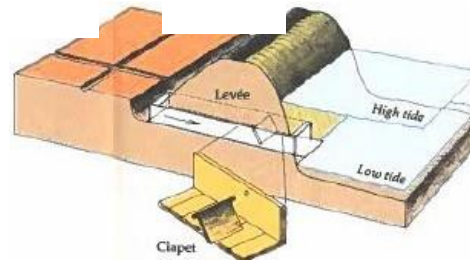
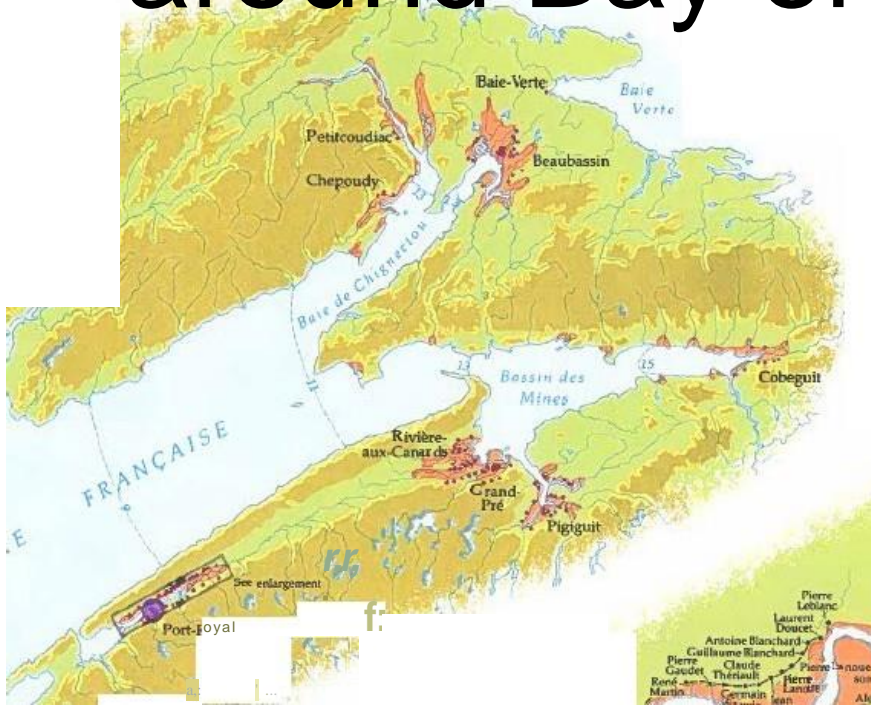
# Cajuns

Derived from **Arcadia** – ancient Greek word for a mythical countryside realm

**Acadia** – name given to areas of Maritime provinces (and Maine) settled by French

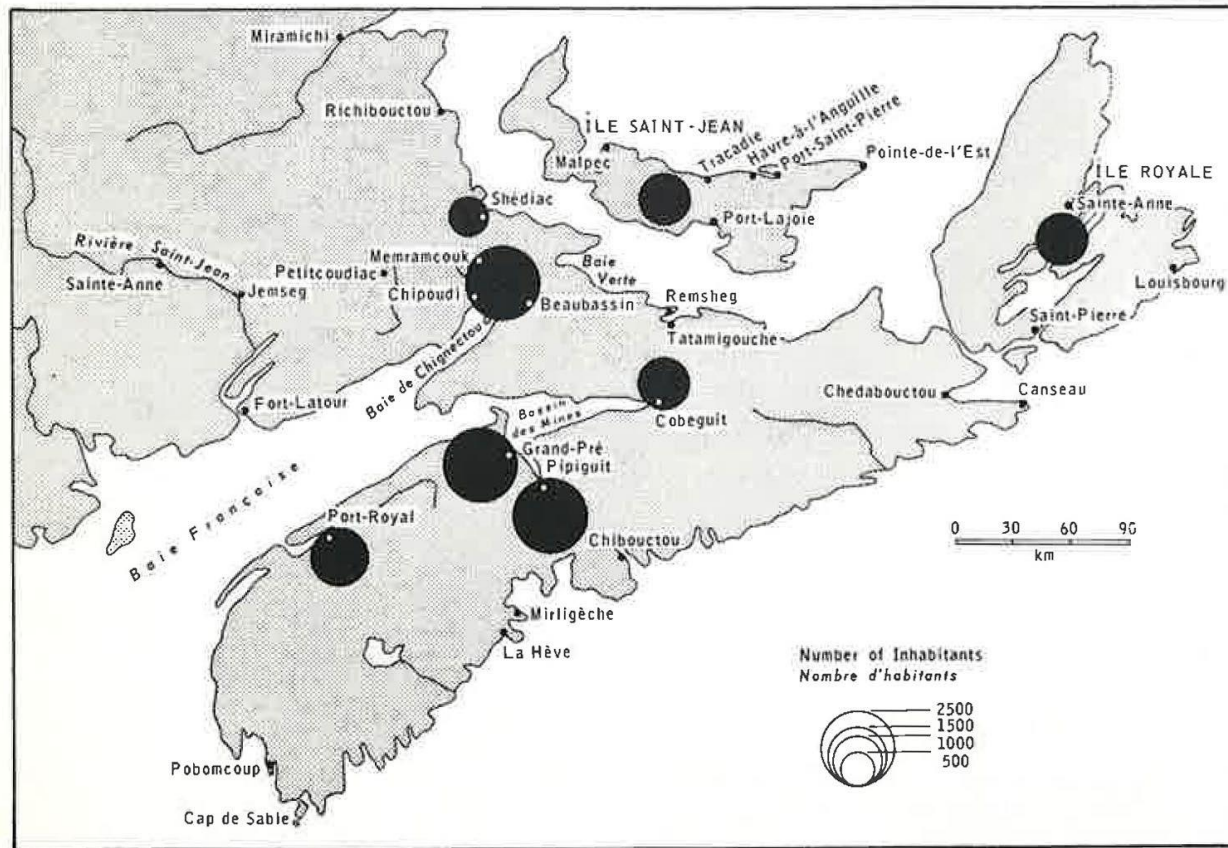
**Cajun** – name for the French speaking population of Louisiana (a corruption of the word Acadian)

# Acadians drain marshes around Bay of Fundy to farm



# Deportation of the Acadians 1755 by British

MAP 2. ACADIAN SETTLEMENTS 1755



The poem “Evangeline” (1847)  
commemorates the deportation of  
1755



# *Evangeline* (1847)

## Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

THIS is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,  
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,  
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,  
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.  
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean  
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.

This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it  
Leaped like the roe, when he hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman?  
Where is the thatch-roofed village, the home of Acadian farmers,—  
Men whose lives glided on like rivers that water the woodlands,  
Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven?  
Waste are those pleasant farms, and the farmers forever departed!  
Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts of October  
Seize them, and whirl them aloft, and sprinkle them far o'er the ocean.  
Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand-Pré.

Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient,  
Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman's devotion,  
List to the mournful tradition still sung by the pines of the forest;  
List to a Tale of Love in Acadie, home of the happy.<sup>[16][17]</sup>[\[2\]](#)



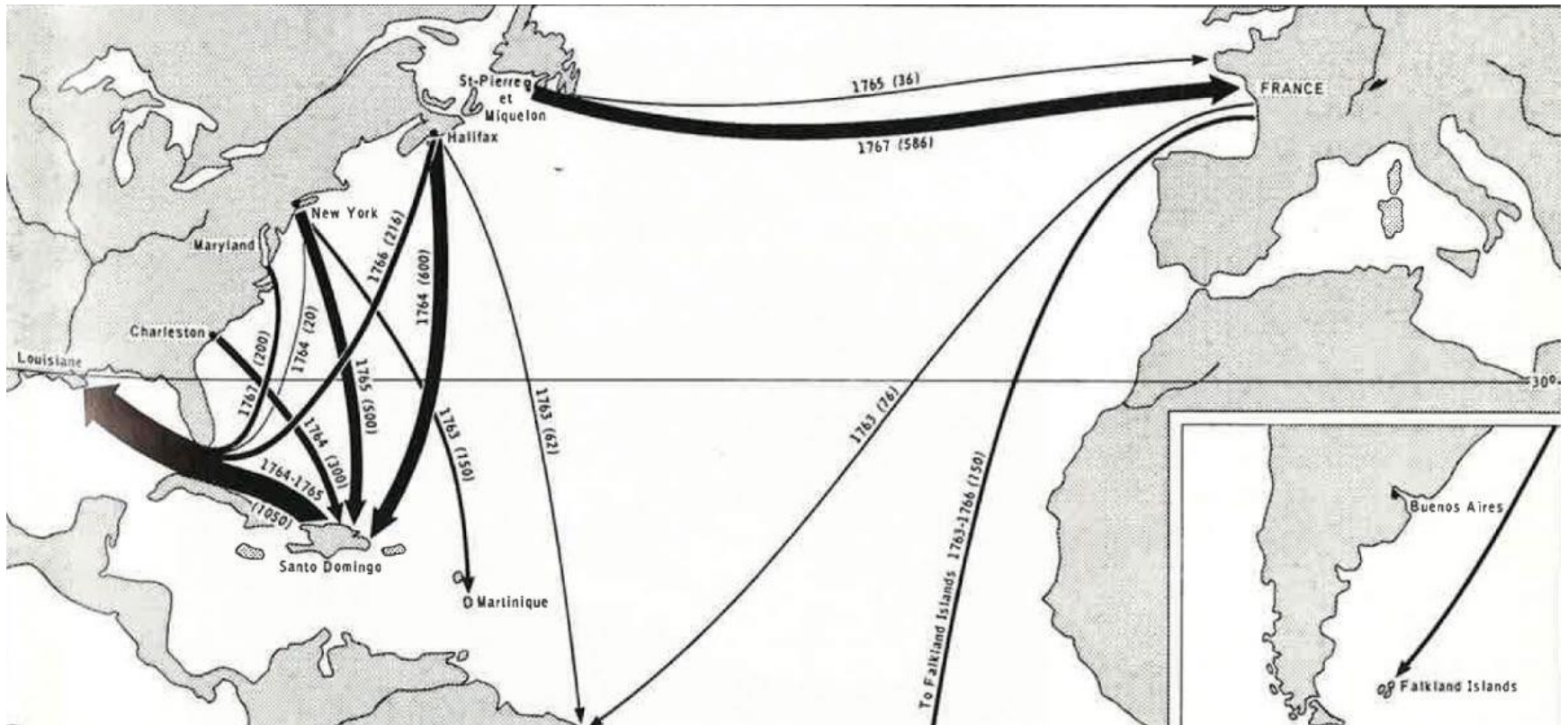


Monument to Evangeline  
St Martinville, Louisiana

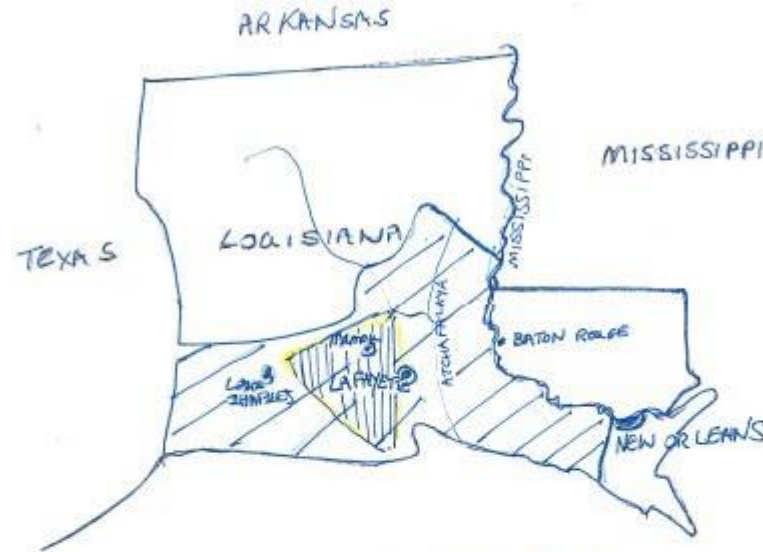
Source: Wikipedia



Some of those deported in 1755 move to the  
Cajun area of Louisiana



# The “Cajun” area of Louisiana



A sketch map of Cajun Country

/// The 22 parishes of Louisiana recognized by the state in 1971 for their "strong French Acadian cultural aspects" and declared "The Heart of Acadiana"

△ Area of focus in video "Cajun Country"

A stereotypical image of Cajun area – but  
note: a lot is ranch land





Note this folk house design – in  
the Cajun area of Louisiana



# Let us now turn to Cajun Music

Some basic Cajun instruments

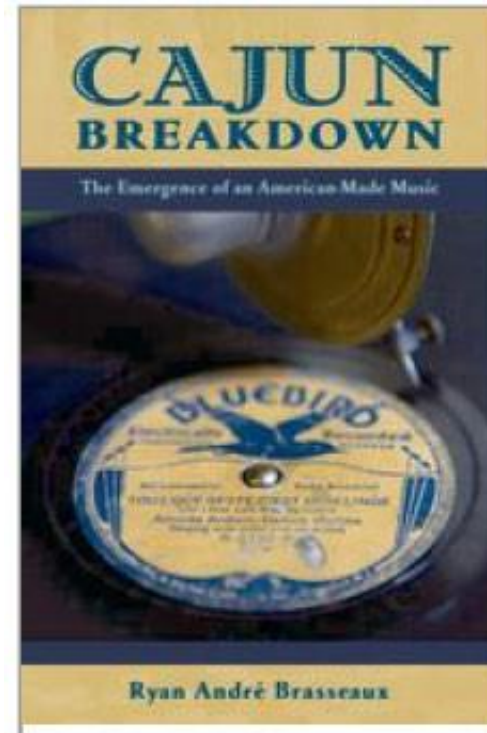


Source: Wikipedia

- A good introduction is the Wikipedia entry “Cajun Music”

# A useful reference

- Ryan André Brasseaux, *Cajun Breakdown: The Emergence of an American Made Music* (Oxford University Press, 2009)
  - Available through the Concordia University Library as an ebook





# Sample music --this might work!

Go to “Cajun Music MP3 “Hadacol it something” available at

- <http://npmusic.org>
- Click on “Lets play some music” at the bottom of the page. Then try some clips:  
i.e.
  - 1920s-30s Amade Ardoine and Dennis McGee
  - 1979 Mamou Hour Cajun Hour

# Some related issues

- Cultural appropriation?
  - Example: Paul Simon *Graceland*

# The video

- ***Cajun Country*** (a film made by Alan Lomax)— part of a PBS series called “American Patchwork” (60 mins. originally screened 1990; copyright renewed 2006)
- The YOUTUBE LINK TO ALAN LOMAX CAJUN MUSIC --
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnTOhXCsnbo>

# Alan Lomax

- One useful starting place is Anna L.C. Wood, “Like a Cry from the Heart: An Insider’s View of the Genesis of Alan Lomax’s Ideas and the Legacy of His Research: Part 1, *Ethnomusicology* 62(2) 2018: 230-264.

GEOG 220  
"Place, Space and Identity"  
Alan Nash

CAJUN MUSIC

*Some notes to accompany your viewing of the video*

- General Objective: we will see from this video that it is the unique blending of diffusion and innovation of cultural traits together in one particular area that create and then sustain a cultural region.
- Specific Objective: Using Cajun music as an example, to consider how the pattern and spread of musical traditions contribute to the creation of cultural regions.

Of the many things that go towards defining unique cultural regions, folk music is an important element, but one relatively neglected by cultural geographers until quite recently. Anthropologists and folklorists have spent much more time studying this topic, developing the field of *ethnomusicology* to study patterns of world folk music.

In this video, we travel with Alan Lomax to examine one particularly interesting example of a regional folk music, the *Cajun music* of Louisiana – we will hear and see how this music contributes to the creation and maintenance of a distinctive Cajun culture region, and we will consider the music's patterns of diffusion into Louisiana.

The state of Louisiana was once part of France's colonial empire in the Americas, and it was therefore to Louisiana that many of the French Acadians fled when they were deported from Nova Scotia by the British between 1755-1763. The Acadians settled mainly in the south west of Louisiana, and over time became known as "Cajuns".

It is interesting to note that Cajun music has also spread to influence other musical traditions in its turn. The video gives us two examples of this:

- Alan Lomax suggests that Cajun songs influenced Texas cowboy songs (he says the “yippee-yi-yay” of the latter may have a French origin). If so, their influence spread up routes, such as the Chisholm Trail, along which cattle were driven to the railheads.
- The revival of Cajun music is discussed towards the end of the video. What is not mentioned, however, is its subsequent path to “world music” status. Note, for example, its use by Paul Simon in his 1986 *Graceland* album, where Cajun music is combined with the singing of South Africa’s Ladysmith Black Mambazo. [World music, of course, illustrates the postmodernist view that all musical traditions are equally worthy of respect.]

Alan Lomax, the host and narrator of this program from the PBS *American Patchwork* series (originally broadcast in the early 1990s), was among the foremost scholars of American folk music. Continuing his father's pioneering work in the American South, Alan Lomax began recording folk music in the 1940s on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution. He "discovered" Lead Belly, and played a part in the revival of Cajun music. Sadly, he died in the summer of 2002. Interest in traditional American folk music continues, recently encouraged by the film *Oh Brother Where Are Thou?*, and by the fine selection of recordings available on CD through Rounder Records. Another recent film worth seeing is *The Songcatcher* (a drama set in the nineteenth-century Appalachians of the USA involving a heroine who figures out the local folk songs are based on old British songs).

#### Some References:

Malcolm L. Comeaux, "The Cajun Accordion", in *Baseball, Barns & Bluegrass: A Geography of American Folklife* ed. George O. Carney (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998) pages 131-138.

George O. Carney (ed.) *The Sounds of People and Places: A Geography of American Folk and Popular Music* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994).



## A footnote: Brasseaux's comment on the German roots of Cajun accordians

### Introduction: Framing Cajun Music

Imported accordions would have followed Louisiana's normal trade routes beginning at the lighthouse and pilot town at the mouth of the Mississippi River, and then upstream to the port in New Orleans. The German lighthouse keeper, then, literally and figuratively represents south Louisiana's cultural gatekeeper marking the entrance to commercial and cultural exchange.

The diatonic cries of the button accordion were not completely foreign to Cajun musicians. By the Civil War, the harmonica became an important part of the Southern musical landscape and eventually swept through south Louisiana as a popular form of personal entertainment. Like other poor white Southerners, many of south Louisiana's vernacular musicians were accomplished harmonica players. The mouth organ was conveniently small, inexpensive, widely available at general merchandise stores, and, more



*Figure I.3 . Lithograph artist A. R. Waud sketched one of the earliest depictions of the accordion in Louisiana in June 1871—a German lighthouse keeper at the mouth of the Mississippi River. Reproduction courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.*