**Pothier**

Post-Deportation settlement in Southwest Nova Scotia took place along the Tusket River, and it is here that we find those Acadianswho attended the parish of Saint-Michel in what is now known as Wedgeport. Abbé Henri-Raymond Casgrain met with Abbé Parker of the parish of Saint-Michel, who wrote, in *Un Pèlerinage au Pays d’Évangéline,* that:

*Vous allez être, me dit-il, agréablement surprise en visitant nos cantons; vous allez vous trouver absolument dans l'ancienne Acadie. Nulle part le vieux type national ne s'est mieux conservé qu'à cette extrémité de la Nouvelle-Ecosse; cela est dû à l'isolement dans lequel les Acadiens y ont toujours vécu et y vivent encore. Ce sont les mêmes coutumes, la même simplicité de moeurs, la môme naïveté dans les esprits, le même attachement à la religion, qu'aux jours de la Grand-Prée* (p. 433).

Translated, this reads,

You are going to be, he tells me, pleasantly surprised visiting our cantons; you are going to find yourself absolutely in ancient Acadia. Nowhere has the old national type kept itself better at this end of Nova Scotia; this is due to isolation in which the Acadians have always lived there and still live there. These are the same customs, the same simplicity of morals, the same naivety of spirit, the same attachment to the religion, as in the days of the Grand-Pré.

In this part of Nova Scotia, it is only in the Tusket region that the Acadians have lived since the Frenchfirst made contact in Acadia for over four hundred years, with the exception of the decade or so that many of the returning families spent in exile.

Casgrain continues, “*Les plus nombres familles de Tousquet sont les* ***Pothier,*** *les LeBlanc, les Boudreau, les Surette; viennent ensuite celles des Corporon, des Cotreau, des Mius, des Richard, des Doucet. Toutes ces familles conservent plus ou moins le souvenir des migrations de leurs ancêtres*” (The largest families of Tusket are the Pothiers, the LeBlancs, the Boudreaus, the Surettes; next comes those of the Corporons, the Cotreaus, the Mius, the Richards, the Doucets. All of these families more or less retain the recollection of the migrations of their ancestors) (p. 444).

The historian Frère Antoine Bernard provides details concerning the first Acadians, both *Sang-Mêlés* and “*Purs*”,to resettle the Cape Sable region, post-Deportation;[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Un premier recensement, en date du 18 mai 1775, releva à la baie Sainte-Marie la quinzaine de noms patronymiques que nous connaissons déjà, et 122 habitants. Plus bas, au Tousquet, les pionniers s’appelaient Jacques Amirault, Joseph Melanson, Charles Doucet et Pierre Mius; au Coin (Wedge) s’étaient établis Jean Doucet, Pierre Inard, Pierre Robichaud et Eustache Corperon; à Sainte-Anne du Ruisseau on trouvait Jean Bourque, Joseph Babin, Pierre Surette, Pierre Leblanc et trois Mius. Les d’Entremont cultivaient de nouveau leur domaine ancestral de Pubnico; ils y avaient comme voisins les d’Eon, Amirault, Comeau, Leblanc et* ***Pothier.*** *Ces reconstructeurs, dont la plupart avaient connu la vie facile de l’ancienne Acadie où “tout poussait tout seul”, trouvaient sans doute pénible la tâche d’ouvrir les terres rocailleuses de leur patrie nouvelle. Mais à quoi bon gémir sans fin?* “It is useless crying over spilt milk,” *leur disaient peut-être leurs voisins anglais des régions d’Argyle et de Yarmouth. On défrichait donc de main ferme, sans oublier de demander à la mer son indispensable appoint de morue, hareng, homard, huîtres et autres substituts de la viande que ne pouvaient encore fournir en quantité suffisante des troupeaux en voie de reconstitution. Et, comme aux jours anciens, on broyait à force de bras le blé ou le seigle dont on tirait le pain brun, le pain du pays qui gardait intactes les dents des octogénaires acadiens.*

A translation reads,

A first census, dated the 18th of May, 1775, noted at the Baie Sainte-Marie the fifteen surnames that we already know, and 122 inhabitants. Lower, at Tousquet, the pioneers were named Jacques Amirault, Joseph Melanson, Charles Doucet et Pierre Mius; at the Coin (Wedge) were established Jean Doucet, Pierre Inard, Pierre Robichaud et Eustache Corperon; at Sainte-Anne du Ruisseau we found Jean Bourque, Joseph Babin, Pierre Surette, Pierre Leblanc and three Mius. The d’Entremonts once again cultivated their ancestral domain of Pubnico; they had as neighbours the d’Eons, Amiraults, Comeaus, Leblancs and ***Pothiers*.** These reconstructors, most of whom had experienced the easy life of ancient Acadia where “everything grew by itself,” undoubtedly found the task of opening up the rocky land of their new homeland painful. But what is the good of endless moaning? “It is useless crying over spilt milk,” was possibly told to them by their English neighbours of the regions of Argyle and of Yarmouth. So we were clearing with a firm hand, not forgetting to ask the sea for its indispensable addition of cod, herring, lobster, oysters and other substitutes for the meat that the herds could not yet provide sufficient quantities of in the process of reconstruction. And, as in the olden days, we manually ground the wheat or rye from which brown bread was pulled, the bread of the country that kept the teeth of the Acadian octogenarians intact.

Père Jean-Mandé Sigogne appointed three *sage femmes*(midwives) to his parish of Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau during his Fall 1799 visit to the area. Information concerning these *Sage Femmes* can be found on page 54 of *Histoire de Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau, Belleville, Rivière-Abram (Nouvelle-Écosse)* and reads as follows:

*Le 27 novembre de cette même année (1799), le Père Sigogne nommait à Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau trois sages femmes,*

*Anne Suret, femme de* ***Dominique Pothier****, Isabelle Mius, femme d’Amand LeBlanc, & Marie Modeste Doucet, femme de Jean-Baptiste Mius (qui) on prêté en qualité de sages femmes le serment prescript dans le rituel de ce diocèse.*

Translated, this reads,

The 27th of November of this same year [1799], Père Sigogne named, at Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau, three midwives,

Anne Suret, wife of ***Dominique Pothier***, Isabelle Mius, wife of Amand LeBlanc, and Marie Modeste Doucet, wife of Jean-Baptiste Mius (who) lent in quality of the midwives, the prescript oath in the ritual of this diocese.

Two of the three appointed midwives, Isabelle Mius and Marie-Modeste Doucet, were of *Sang-Mêlé*(mixed-blood) origin. The third, Anne Surette, was married to a *Sang-Mêlé*man named ***Dominique Pothier***. Jean-Baptiste Mius II, husband of Marie-Modeste Doucet, was also of *Sang-Mêlé*origin.

Pierre Doucet’s wife, Geneviève Boudreau, had First Nations roots, as she descended from Anne-Marie (no surname given)Pinet through her father, ***Dominique Pothier.*** Michel Boudreau and ***Marguerite Ange Pothier*** are found in the direct paternal lineage of one of the authors of this report.

Amable Boudreau *dit* l’Évêque was a *Sang-Mêlé*descendant of Anne-Marie (no surname given)Pinet through his mother, ***Marguerite Ange Pothier*** and we are aware that Anne-Marie was of First Nations descent, from mtDNA testing.

According to his baptismal record, “amable boudro” (Amable Boudreau), son of “Michel boudro” (Michel Boudreau) and of “marguerite Pottier” (***Marguerite Ange Pothier***) was baptized by missionary Joseph Mathurin Bourg at Cape Sable on August 18, 1781, which is where Amable was born on November 01, 1773. His godfather was “joseph corporon” (Joseph Corporon) and his godmother was Anne Corporon, both of whom were also *Sang-Mêlés*. The record also states that Amable was “*ondoyé*” (emergency baptized) by Joseph Corporon at birth.[[2]](#footnote-2)

If we turn to the registers of the parish of Saint-Anne in Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau, Nova Scotia we find that Père Jean-Mandé Sigogne revalidated the marriage of “Amable Boudreau” (son of Michel Boudreau and of Marguerite Pottier (***Marguerite Ange Pothier***) and Monique Duon (daughter of Abel Duon and Anne d’Entremont) on October 08, 1799. According to the record of this marriage, Amable and Monique were originally married by Pierre Mius, in the absence of a priest, on November 21, 1797.

We know that Pierre Mius was himself a *Sang-Mêlé*, as he was the son of the mixed-blood Joseph Mius d’Azy II and Marie-Josephe Préjean. The fact that Amable Boudreau *dit* l’Évêque was also a *Sang-Mêlé*and fulfilled the same duties in the absence of a priest that Pierre did before him is significant as it demonstrates that some *Sang-Mêlés* were people of authority in post-Deportation Southwest Nova Scotia despite the prejudice against them as a group.

Yarmouth historian, George Stayley Brown, provides a brief insight into the land that would become occupied by some of the Acadians who returned to the region of Cape Sable post-Deportation.[[3]](#footnote-3) He notes that,

In 1763, or earlier, had been granted to Gov. MONTAGUE WILMOT the tract, about 5,000 acres, lying between what is now Tusket Village and the sea, and including Surette's and Wilson's Islands. The title to these lands appears to have reverted to the government; for in June, 1801, they were again granted to JOSEPH MOULAISON and twenty-seven other Acadians, and a plan of division was executed the same year by Joshua Frost, surveyor.

Adjoining the Wilmot grant on the east, came a grant passed in October, 1763, to the Rev. JOHN BREYNTON, Rector of St. Paul's Church, Halifax, and Chaplain to the House of Assembly, of the lands, 3,838 acres, extending easterly to the Eel Brook; and next came one of Ranald MacKinnon's grants, extending from the Eel Brook to the Abuptic River, and stated at 1,000 acres.

To the northward of the Breynton land, and extending westerly from Eel Lake, was a lot granted to the Rev. WILLIAM DOYLE of Halifax, and which he advertised in *The Nova-Scotia Gazette* of Jan. 19, 1773, in form following: -

To be let in Parcels or altogether: -

About 500 acres of entirely cleared land (having been an old Indian Settlement) the Estate of the Rev. William Doyle of Halifax, situate in the Township of Argyle, between Barrington and Yarmouth, at the West end of the Peninsula of Nova Scotia, and just opposite to Boston, within a quarter of a mile of the tide from which it is separated by Dr. Breynton’s land on the South and by the late Mr. Pierpont's on the West. It is bounded on the East by Eel Lake, nine miles long and one broad, on the banks of which is a great plenty of hard and other wood. On the North lie ungranted lands. The rent to be nothing the first year, and but a penny an acre the second year, and to rise gradually to two shillings which it is never to exceed ; and for laboring people the rent will be taken out in work.

This land seems also to have reverted to the government, for in 1791 it was again granted to Jean Bourque and others.

In 1773 Dr. Breynton leased for 999 years to PIERRE SURETTE, PIERRE LEBLANC, PIERRE MEUSE, and LOUIS MEUSE, 1,193 acres, which included the lands from the Eel Brook and Eel Lake westerly to the marsh, the peninsula from where the church now stands to Roco Point, and other lands.

On Aug. 16, 1775, Ranald MacKinnon leased for eight Spanish dollars yearly, and by deed executed April 7, 1795, for the sum of one hundred pounds he sold, to ***DOMINIQUE POTHIER,*** JEAN BOURQUE, PAUL SURETTE, PIERRE SURETTE, and JOSEPH BABIN, 236 acres of land, “beginning at Goose Bay at the ‘carrying-place,’ so called, thence running easterly to the Lake, thence Northerly by Eel Lake to the Eel Brook, thence Westerly by the Eel Brook to Goose Bay, thence Southerly by Goose Bay to the first-mentioned bounds.” The ‘carrying-place’ was at the foot of Eel Lake: and in the district described in this deed from Ranald MacKinnon, there are now 30 houses occupied by Acadian families; namely, 17 Surette, 5 ***Pothier***, 5 Babin, and 3 d’Entremont.

Based on the description given in this excerpt of the land that was granted to the Reverend William Doyle of Halifax, Nova Scotia, it is plausible that the “old Indian Settlement” could very well have been the pre-Deportation Mi’kmaq settlement of Ouikmakagan, which was a place of great importance for both the mixed-blooded Acadians of pre-Deportation Cape Sable and their Mi’kmaq friends and kin.

1. See pages 239 and 240 of his 1935 work, *Histoire de la Survivance Acadienne 1755-1935 Avec Cartes et Illustrations.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Amable’s baptismal record can be found in l’Université de Moncton’s *Centre d’Études Acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson*’s collection, *Fonds Placide-Gaudet* (1.88-11(Original CEA CN-2-158)). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Refer to pages 397 and 398 of his 1888 *Yarmouth, Nova Scotia: A Sequel to Campbell’s History.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)