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Cajuns in Louisiana - I

Lead: Cajuns who fled Canada and emigrated to Louisiana beginning in the 1700s added a rich variety to the culture and politics of that already exotic region.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Cajun was originally a derogatory name, similar to Injun, the name given to Native Americans by Europeans. It referred to French Canadian immigrants who made their way south into Louisiana after being forcibly removed by the British in the Expulsion of 1755. Originating in the

maritime provinces of northwestern France, Normandy, Picardy, Brittany, they settled in La Cadie, an area surrounding Canada's Bay of Fundy, territories that became New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Isle, and parts of Maine. Their wilderness isolation from French colonial areas in the St. Lawrence Valley and from France itself created a unique culture unlike that of New France, almost an eastern frontier sensibility, independent, egalitarian with distinct speech, and dependence upon family and clan rather than nationality.

With the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) much of the territory settled by the Acadians was ceded to Great Britain

and if they were estranged from their rulers before, the French-speaking, Catholic Acadians were even more alienated from the Protestant British. While they were able to live in relative peace for a time, eventually they were deemed a positive threat. In 1755, Governor Charles Lawrence, without consulting London, determined that the Acadians “manifested no interest in linking their interests with those of the British Empire,” and expelled them. The poignant story of this cruel ethnic cleansing was memorialized by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his narrative poem, *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* which described the wrenching separation of Evangeline and her long-lost husband Gabriel

after their forced removal.

Some moved to Maine, others returned to Europe, still others, about 4000 by 1800, emigrated down the Mississippi valley to French Louisiana and there became the heart of the culture known as Cajun. Next time: rough welcome.

Research by Ashleigh Green and Laura Musser, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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