

The relocation of Alma

Scholarly sources:

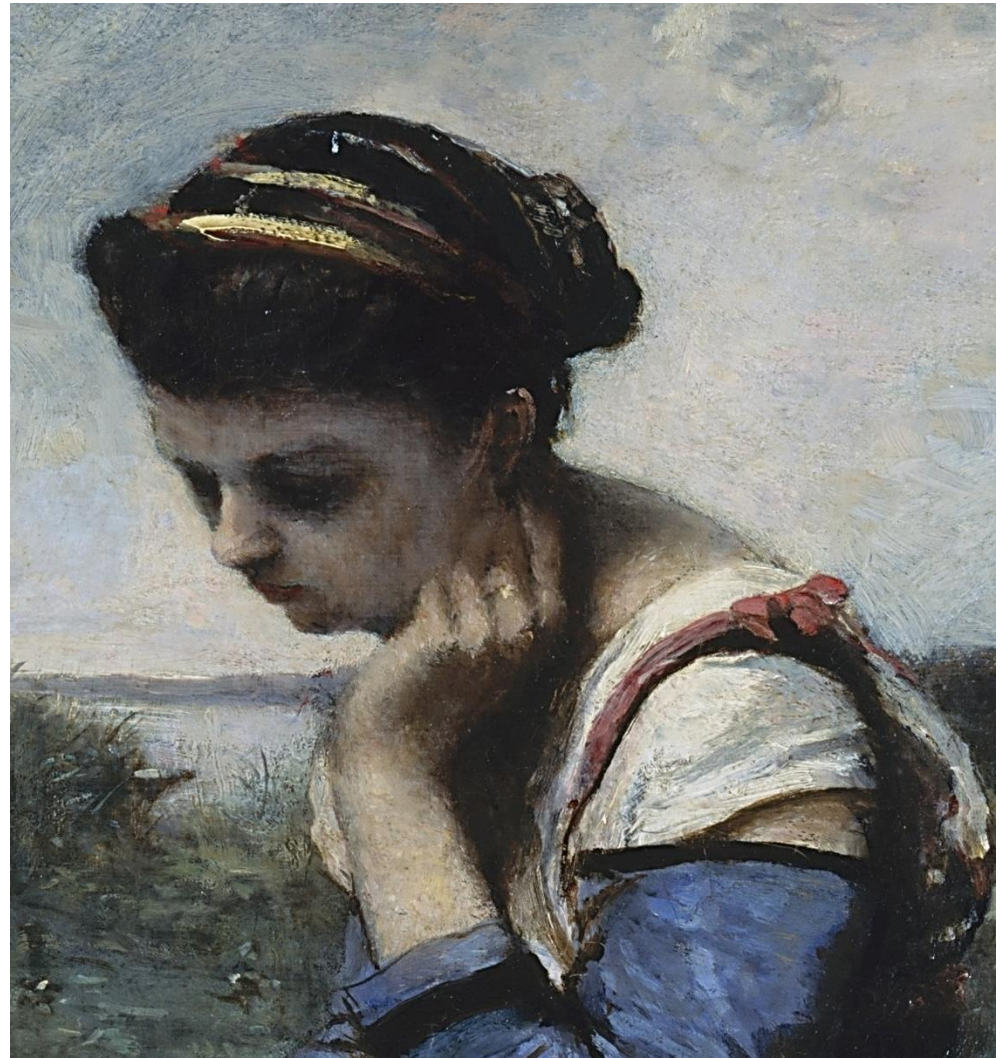
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Meet Alma

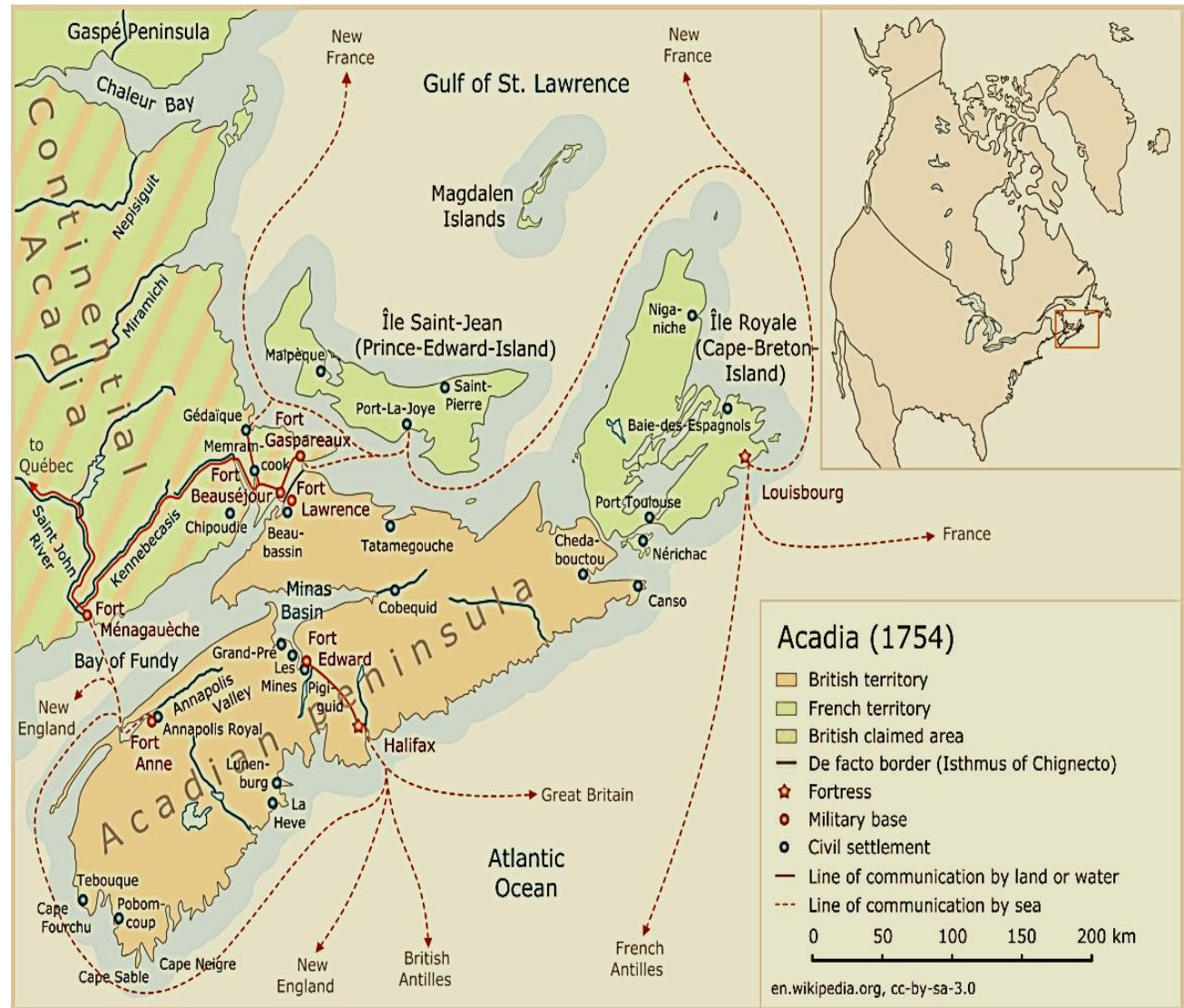
Alma Boucher was a fourteen-year-old girl living in Acadia in 1755. Her life was about to change drastically.

But we'll get to that in a moment. First let's talk for a minute about the world she knew.



Alma's world

Alma's land, Acadia, was an area in today's eastern Canada that got its name from a group of French settlers called the Acadians.



The Acadians settled the area in 1604 and were the first European colonists that came to the North American continent with the intention of settling permanently.

Most Acadians settled on the coastal area called the Annapolis Valley.



But the Acadians were never totally secure in the Valley. The French and the British were continually at war. By the early 1700s, the British (right) had control over all of Acadia, including the Annapolis Valley.



The Acadians were Alma's people—or at least partly. See, Alma's father was Acadian, but her mother was a Mi'kmaq.

And who were these Mi'kmaqs?

The Mi'kmaq Indians were the first settlers in the area—long before it was called Acadia. The Mi'kmaq lived by fishing and hunting. They also gathered clams, mussels and bird eggs. The group settled mostly on streams and coastal areas.

While the Mi'kmaq kept small gardens a ways off the coastal areas, they did not do any large-scale farming.



There was a good reason why the Mi'kmaq Indians did not do any large-scale farming. The reason was right in the center of the Annapolis Valley and was called the Bay of Fundy.



The area bordering the Bay of Fundy had great top soil for farming. But the Bay also had the highest tides in the world—rising to as high as 64 feet. The tides brought in rich mud deposits, but the Mi'kmaq Indians could not take advantage of the soil to plant crops because the high tides would just come in and wipe them away.



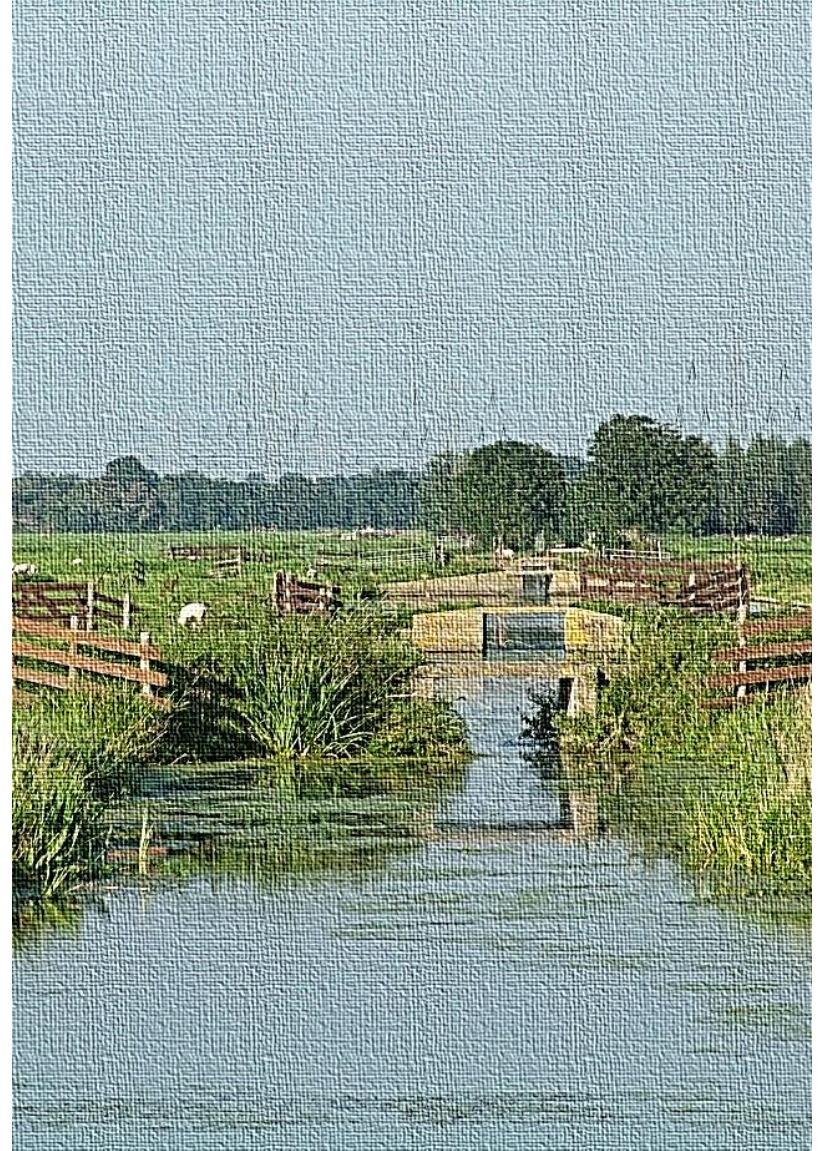
But all this changed when the Acadians arrived. For one thing, the Acadians were not like other European colonists who came to America with the idea that they would *displace* the Indians. The Acadians from the start worked to *share* and *cooperate* with the Mi'kmaq Indians.



And there was something else. Back in Europe, the French Acadians had learned how to build levee systems to control large tides. They'd learned this from their Dutch neighbors.

So the Acadians worked with the Mi'kmaq to build dikes and levees that allowed them to farm. The soil was so good that the Acadians even had orchards. They cultivated a wide variety of crops, kept cattle, and had their own dairy farms.

The Mi'kmaq and the Acadians also intermarried often, and such was the case in Alma's family.



Alma's dad was an Acadian from a long line of cattle ranchers, and her mother was a Mi'kmaq from a long line of fisher folk.

She eventually agreed to marry him.

They put their skills together and opened a small butcher shop in the village of Grand Pre in the Annapolis Valley.



Like many Acadians, Alma's family lived in a very large house that was built to last for many, many generations.



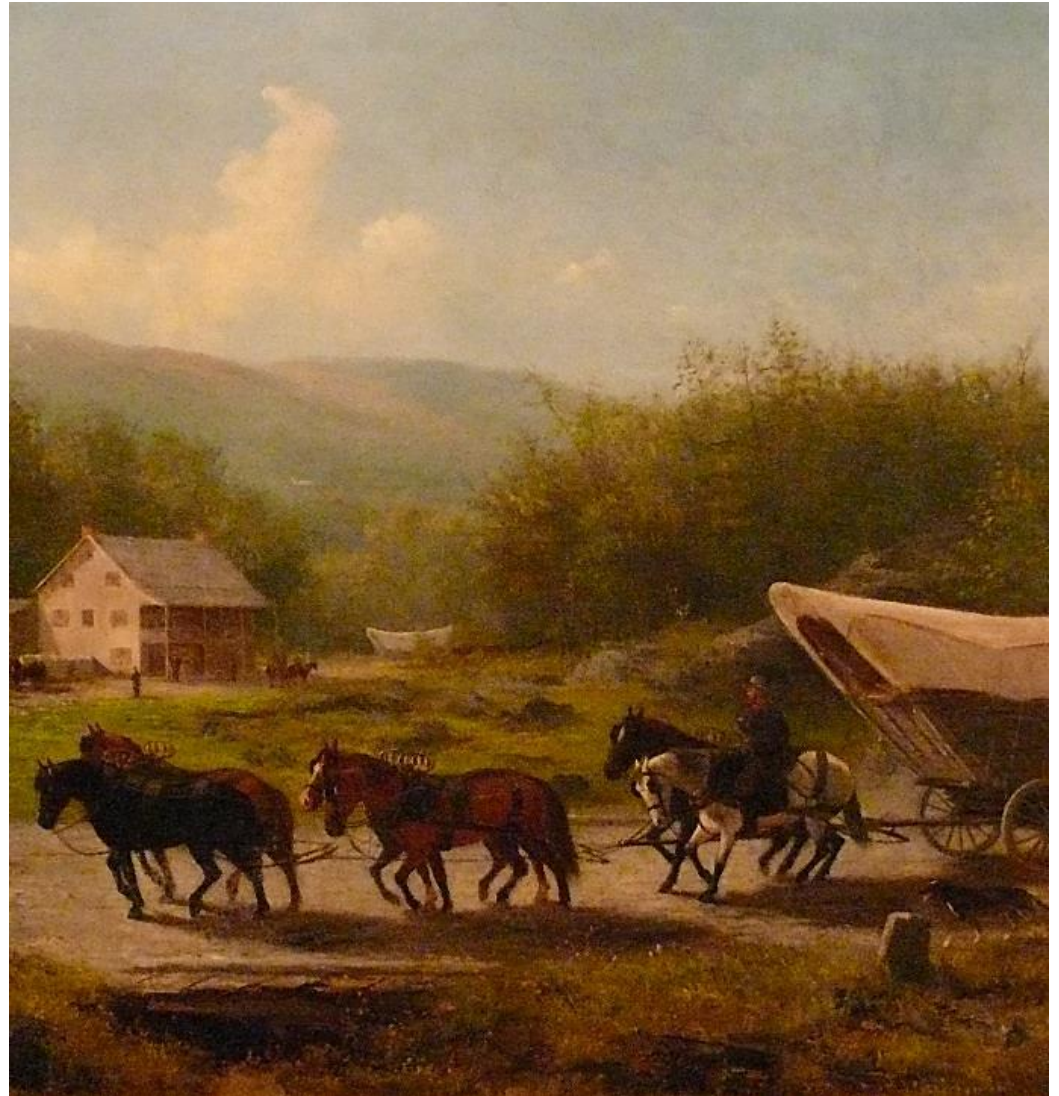
Alma loved her neighbors, who were almost all farmers.



She lived a most pleasant life. On weekdays she helped her parents after school in the butcher shop. On Saturdays she went clam gathering with her Mi'kmaq cousins, which was just plain fun.

And on Sundays the family would attend their Catholic church and then go on long rides through the beautiful Acadian countryside. How Alma loved her home!

But all that was about to change.



The relocation

For many years the ruling British had left the Acadians and the Mi'kmaq to their own ways. But when the British were battling the French in the French and Indian War, the British government back in England began to believe that the Acadian settlers could be their enemies because they were still mainly French in ethnicity.



So the British made a huge decision and told the French.

The Acadians of Annapolis Valley would have to go.



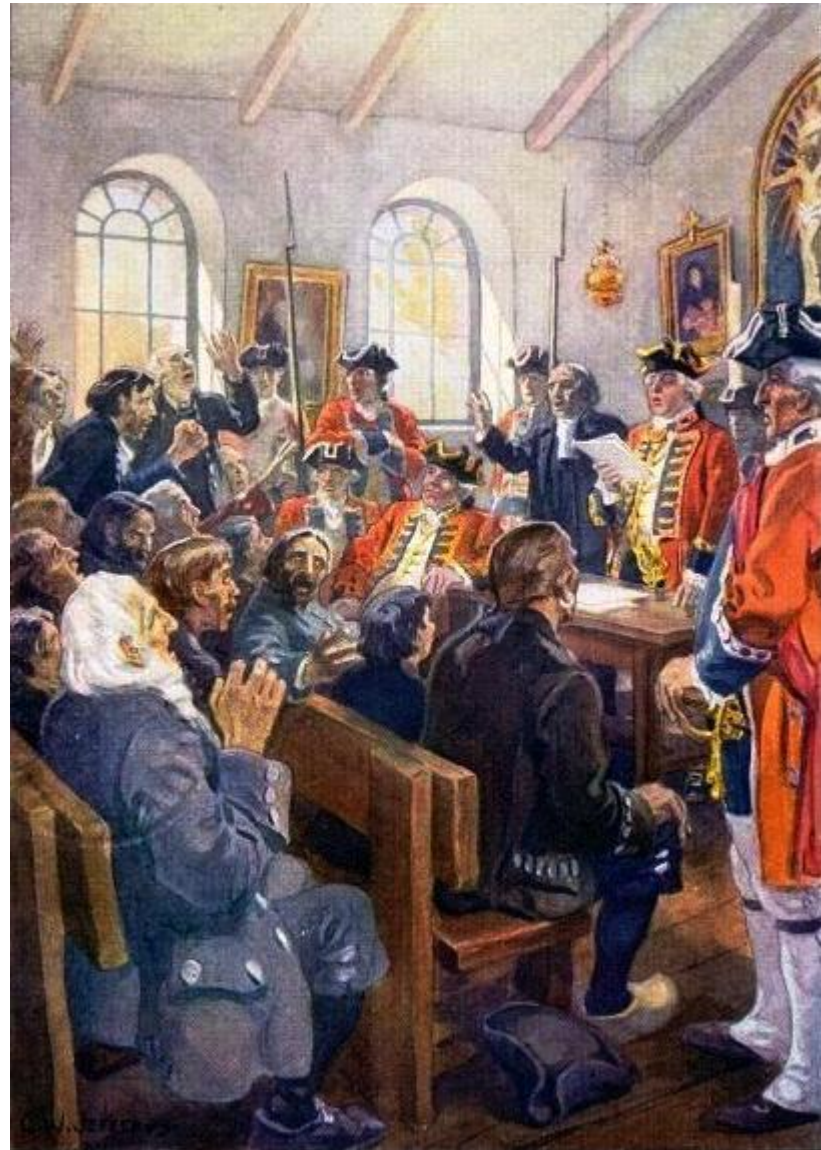
So that year, in 1755, the British came into the town of Grand Pre and ordered the Acadian men and boys into a church where they read the deportation order.



The Acadians begged and pleaded with the British.

"We've been here for a century and one half!" screamed one man.

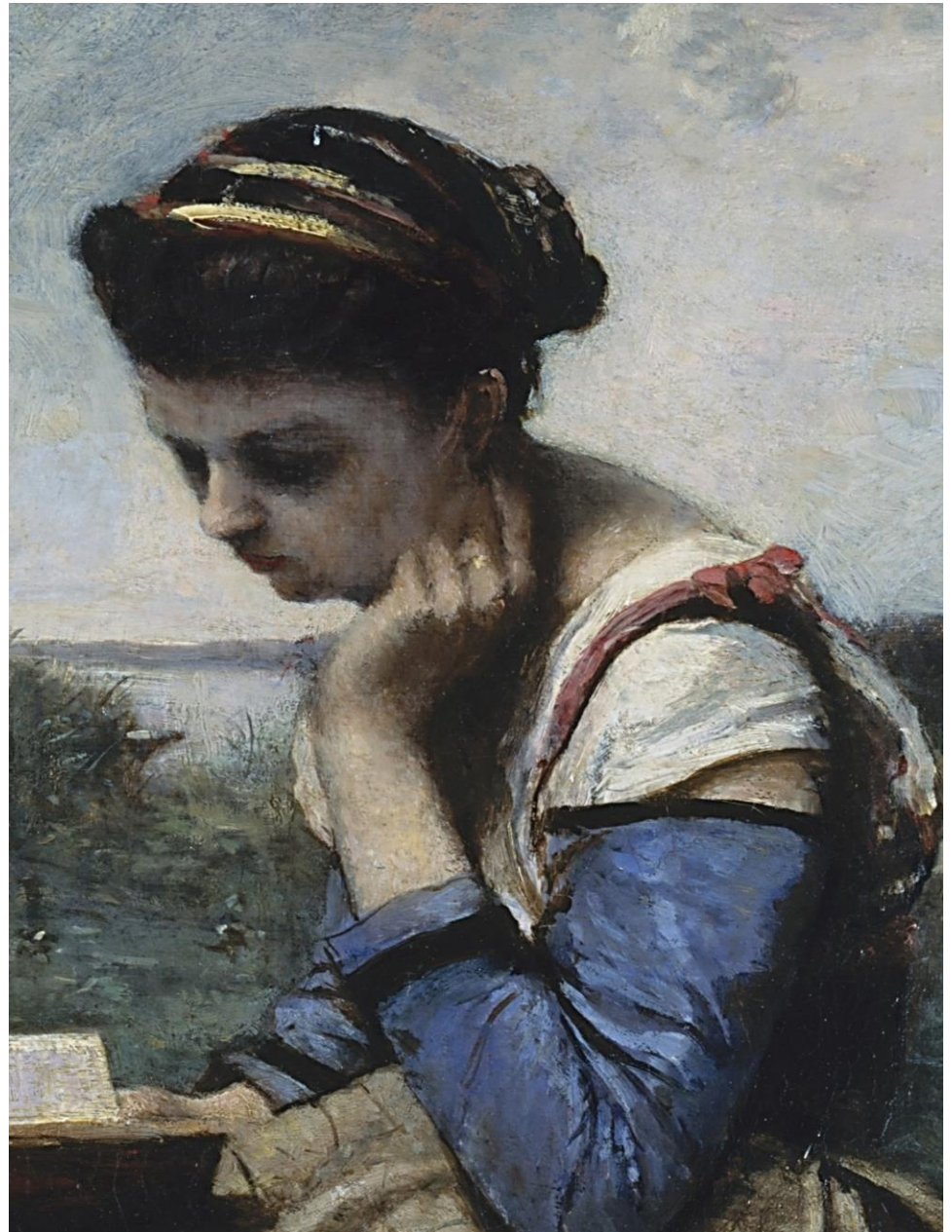
"We built up these levees, this land, these towns. Not you!" screamed another.



But it was all to no avail.

The people cried—long mournful
cries.

Outside, Alma heard. She opened
her prayer book and prayed.



While the Mi'kmaq were successful in hiding out some families that had not been in Grand Pre that Sunday, most of the Acadians were taken to their homes at gunpoint and forced to pack.

Boats were waiting for them all along the coast. Some families even got separated as they were taken in row boats to ships that would deport them.



Some ships were headed for New England. Some Acadians became prisoners of the British. Some ships were sent to France, And some went to Louisiana.

Wherever the Acadians went, they were expected to fend for themselves without any people or jobs or funds to help them.



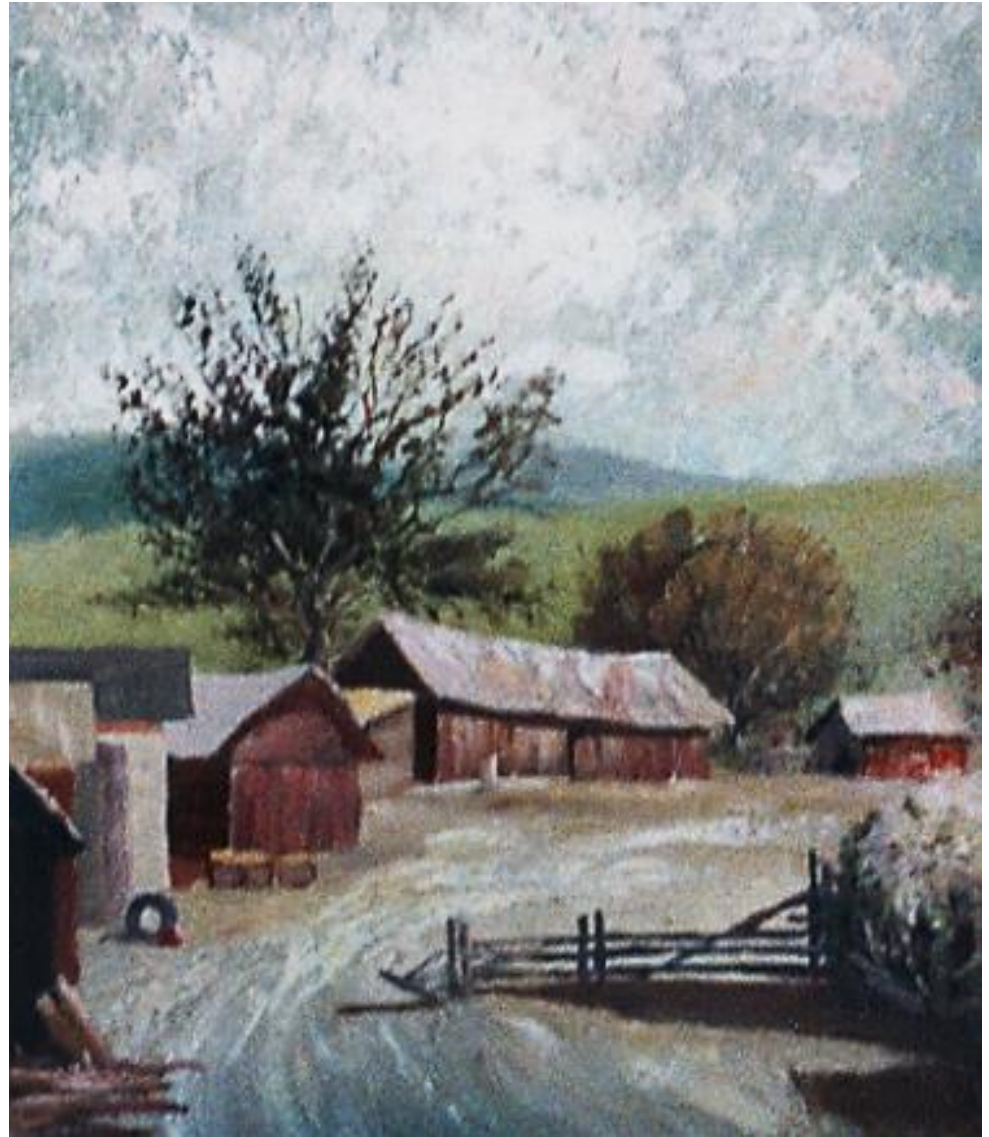
Back in the Annapolis Valley, the British sent for families in New England to take over the Acadian orchards, ranches, farms, and fisheries. The families were promised free land and free houses.

Of course the British had no problem getting families to come to Acadia. These families were later called "the New England planters."



The Mi'kmaq were pushed back, away from the coastal areas where they had supported themselves by fishing and gathering clams.

The Mi'kmaq purchased land in the interior of Acadia and developed their own farms using all the skills they had from their ancestors and anything they'd learned from the Acadians.



But the Mi'kmaq also tried to hang onto practices from their own culture. Periodically they would leave their interior farms to go out on hunting and fishing expeditions.



But when they returned they'd find British squatters had taken over their farms.



When the Mi'kmaq took their cases to the British courts, the British would not back the Mi'kmaq deeds. Newspaper articles of the time claimed that the Mi'kmaq had failed to give up their culture and, as a result, they should just be allowed to die out—not be helped to survive.

And many did die.



But what happened to Alma's family? Well the Boucher family had ended up on a boat that took them to French-occupied Louisiana. After wandering without a home for weeks, Alma's parents were finally able to get jobs at a fishery in New Orleans.

There Alma's father cleaned fish and her mother collected clams and mussels.

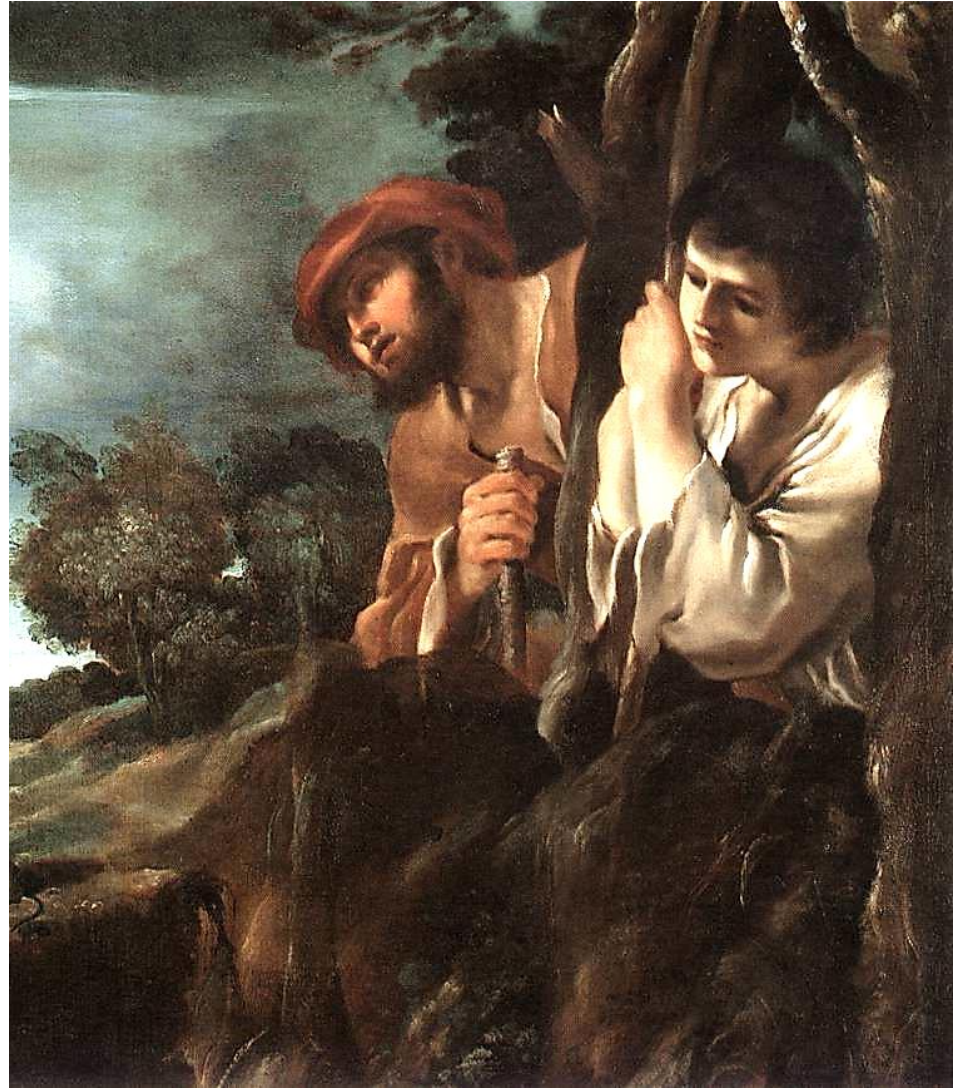


After many years, the Boucher family was able to open another butcher shop—this time in New Orleans.

Alma worked behind the counter with her father.



And very slowly the Bouchers began to send for their relatives back in Acadia. First they sent for their Mi'kmaq family, as they were the most at risk.



When the Mi'kmaq relatives arrived, they found that they got along quite well in New Orleans. See, the city had attracted a mixed race Creole population already.



Then Alma's family sent for their Acadian relatives. These came and joined all the other Acadian families that had been kicked off their land.



Over the years,
these Acadians
came to be known by
a different name.

Cajuns.



And Alma and many of her relatives lived to see the glorious development of the French Quarter in their new home—New Orleans.

But not a one every forgot Acadia.



The end

Let's talk!!!