

Cajun predecessors here in Chelmsford

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in his epic poem "Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie," tells the tragic story of the Acadians.

In the mid 18th century Acadia was a French province that included present day Nova Scotia. Longfellow's story begins in the village of Grand Pre', where the villagers were rounded up by the English military and transported into involuntary exile in the various English colonies.

Many of those sent to the southern colonies eventually established the Cajun settlement in Louisiana.

Of those settled in New England, two families were assigned to Chelmsford. The record prepared by the selectmen listed Jean Landrie, age 62, and his wife, Maudlin, age 60. She was reported to be "weakly & unable to labour & labouring under the misfortune of a broken arm." Their children, ages 16 to 22, Asam, Simon, Charles, and Paul were all "able to labour" except Charles who was sickly. Another son, 26-year-old Joseph Landrie and his wife were both "Healthy & able to Labour." They had a son, "2 years, sickly and weakly," and a five-month-old daughter.

The other family consisted of the parents,

The way It was

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29-year-old Charles Trawhorn and his wife, Tithorne. While she was "able to Labour," her husband was "sickly & not able to labour." However, it appears that Tithorne was probably not idle with a sickly husband to care for along with raising five children ages seven months to six-and-a-half years.

History tells us that in 1756 "Jean Landrie and a large family, being French from Nova Scotia, were thrown upon the town and maintained at the public expense until the end of the [French and Indian] war in 1763, at an expenditure of 200 pounds which was reimbursed by the province, agreeable to an order of Counsel."

No mention is made of the Trawhorn family in this particular account, but perhaps they were relatives and included in the "large family" of Landries.

The selectmen, or overseers of the poor, of

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the various towns were ordered to bind out to service all children of the Acadians for whom places could be found. Many were taken from their parents to serve under hard taskmasters.

A petition was sent to the provincial governor and the General Court by Jean Landrie and Acadians from several other towns stating that the sorrow caused by their forced exile was nothing compared to having their children taken from them and asking compassion. This petition resulted in an order on April 15, 1756 that there should be no more binding out, and the Acadians were to be provided with such things as they could work up for necessary clothing, and they were to be treated with kindness and humanity.

It is not known what became of these people, but possibly they returned to Canada as did many of the Acadians who were detained in the northern states.

Included in the roster of soldiers in the expedition to Nova Scotia in 1755 were 22 Chelmsford men of which 14 were with Col. Winslow at Grand Pre'.

George Adams Parkhurst is a Chelmsford historian whose family has lived in town since 1654.