

Babin

(From “Acadians in Grey”)

In 1755, descendants of Antoine **Babin** of La Chaussée and Marie **Mercier** could be found in the Minas Basin, especially at Grand-Pré and La Famille, Pigiguit; and on Île St.-Jean. *Le Grand Dérangement* of the 1750s scattered them even farther.

A number of **Babin** families rounded up at Grand-Pré and Pigiguit were deported to Maryland, Virginia, and Massachusetts. The few Minas **Babins** who escaped the British found refuge at Miramichi and other refugee camps on the Gulf of St. Lawrence shore, or at Restigouche at the head of the Baie des Chaleurs. One of them, Basile, grandson of Antoine's oldest son Charles, either was captured by, or surrendered, to the British in the early 1760s and held in the prisoner-of-war compound at Halifax, where he married a **Saulnier**. Some of the **Babins** at Restigouche escaped the British in the summer of 1760 and settled at Bonaventure in Gaspésie on the north shore of the Baie de Chaleurs, present-day Québec Province.

Meanwhile, Claude **Babin** of Chignecto slipped away from the British, made his way to Canada, and settled at Cap-St.-Ignace on the St. Lawrence River below Québec City. His brother Jacques, however, was caught in the Chignecto roundup in 1755 and deported to South Carolina. After the war with Britain ended, especially after 1766, Minas **Babins**, probably those who had endured exile in Massachusetts, could also be found at Deschambault on the St. Lawrence above Québec City; at Trois-Rivières, St.-Jean-Port-Joli, and St.-Roch-des-Aulnaies on the St. Lawrence below Québec City; on Rivière St.-Jean in present-day New Brunswick; and on the French island of Miquelon off the southern coast of Newfoundland.

Typical of most, if not all, Acadian families, these *Acadiennes* of Canada lost touch with their *Cadien* cousins hundreds of miles away, and, until the Acadian reunions of the mid-twentieth century, may even have forgotten the others existed.

The **Babins** who were shipped to Virginia endured a fate worse than most of the other refugees deported from Minas. In mid-November 1755, when five transports appeared unexpectedly at Hampton Roads, Virginia governor Robert Dinwiddie, protested their deportation to his colony without his consent. Many of the exiles died on the filthy, crowded ships anchored in Hampton Roads while the Virginia authorities pondered their fate.

Acadians from one vessel were moved up to Richmond, two of the vessels were unloaded at Hampton, and two more at Norfolk. A hand full of

young Acadians managed to slip away and trek overland through fields and forests and over the mountains, to French territory, but most of the exiles remained in Virginia. Finally, in the spring of 1756, Virginia's House of Burgesses made its decision ... the Acadians must go! In May, the first shipment of Acadians in hired vessels left for England, and in two weeks all of them had gone--299 to Bristol, 250 to Falmouth, 340 to Southampton, and 336 to Liverpool--1,225 of the original 1,500. Their ordeal only worsened in the English ports, where they were grossly neglected and treated like common criminals and where hundreds died of smallpox. By 1763, more than half of them were dead. In May of that year, after prolonged negotiations between the French and British governments, the Acadians in England, including **Babins**, were repatriated to France.

At least two members of the **Babin** family who ended up in France did not get there via Virginia and England. Isabelle **Babin**, born in c1689, settled on either Île St.-Jean or Île Royale, now Cape Breton Island, in the 1750s. She lived with her grandson, Charles **Benoit**. When the British rounded up the Nova Scotia Acadians in the autumn of 1755, the Acadians on the Maritime islands remained untouched because they were living in territory controlled by France. Their respite from British oppression was short-lived, however. After the fall of the French fortress at Louisbourg in July 1758, the victorious British swooped down on Île Royale and Île St.-Jean and deported most of the island Acadians to France. Isabelle **Babin**, age 70, crossed with her grandson's family on the British transport *Tamerlane*, which left the Gut of Canso in late November 1758 and reached St.-Malo in mid-January 1759. Amazingly, the tough old lady survived the terrible crossing that claimed the lives of hundreds of her fellow Acadians. Paul, son of Pierre **Babin**, age 25, ended up on one of the five British transports that left the Gut of Canso in late November 1758 and reached St.-Malo in late January 1759. He settled at Pleudihen, near St.-Malo. In 1761, he joined the crew of the corsair *Le Tigre* but was captured and held in England until 1763. He returned to Pleudihen that year and then left for the Falkland Islands aboard *L'Aigle* in November 1765.

In the spring of 1763, after prolonged negotiations between the French and British governments, the Acadians in England were repatriated to France, several **Babin** families from Minas who had endured seven long years of captivity in the fetid ports of England were repatriated to France. They arrived at St.-Malo in late May and settled in parishes around the city. Marguerite **Dupuis**, age 60, widow of Claude **Babin** of Grand-Pré, reached France aboard *La Dorothée* with her two youngest sons, Laurent, age 24, and Jean-Charles, and 21. They lived at St.-Servan, near St.-Malo, until the fall of 1765, when they went with other Acadian exiles to Belle-Île-en-Mer, off the southwestern coast of Brittany. Marguerite **Dupuis's** older son Joseph **Babin**, a native of Grand-Pré, age 29 in 1763, had married Marine, daughter of Jean **LeBlanc** and Anne **Landry**, at Southampton,

England, in November 1756. Joseph, Marine, age 27, and four of their children--Joseph-Nicaise, age 6, Bonaventure, age 4, Marie-Théotiste, age 2, and newborn Marie-Victoire--also came to France aboard *La Dorothée*. After a short stay at St.-Servan, they followed Joseph's mother to Belle-Île-en-Mer in the fall of 1765 but returned to St.-Servan in 1773. They did not remain there. Later in the decade, they, along with other Acadians in France, re-settled on the French-controlled islands of St.-Pierre and Miquelon, off the southern coast of Newfoundland. Joseph's sister Anne, wife of Alain **LeBlanc**, followed her widowed mother from England to St.-Servan and then to Belle-Île-en-Mer, but they, too, left the island in 1773. They did not return to St.-Servan, however, but followed other Acadian exiles to the Isle of Jersey in the England Channel before returning to North America. Jean **Babin** of Grand-Pré, age 63 in 1763, Claude **Babin's** younger brother, came to France as a widower aboard *La Dorothée* with son Paul, age 31, and daughter Anne, age 18, and also lived at St.-Servan, where they remained. Jean's son Simon, a native of Grand-Pré, age 28 in 1763, had married Anastasie **Thériot** at Southampton, England, in c1757; she was age 21 in 1763. Simon and Anastasie followed his father and siblings to France aboard *La Dorothée* with three children--Anne, age 5; Marie, age 3; and Simon-Magloire, age 1. They, too, lived at St.-Servan, where Simon and Anastasie buried at least three children: Anne died at St.-Servan in July 1765, age 6; Anastasie-Victoire, born at St.-Servan in October 1764, died there at age 3; and Pierre-Joseph, born at St.-Servan in June 1769, died 18 days after his birth. François-Marie, born at St.-Servan in November 1766, survived childhood. Another, much younger Jean **Babin**, age 25, reached St.-Malo "from other ports" in 1763; he came alone. He lived at Pleudihen, near St.-Malo, but moved on to Morlaix in 1764.

Another Joseph **Babin**, son of Jean and Marguerite **Bourg**, ended up in France by a different route. He escaped the British roundup at Ste.-Famille, Pigiguit, in 1755, at age 12 but ended up a prisoner of war at Halifax in the early 1760s. He married Françoise, daughter of Joseph **Dugas** and Marguerite **LeBlanc**, at Notre-Dame-des-Ardiliers, Île Miquelon, in May 1766; he was age 23 and she was age 20 at the time of their marriage. In 1778, during the American Revolution, the British, again at war with France, captured îles St.-Pierre and Miquelon and deported the Acadians there to France. Joseph, Françoise, and four of their children--Marguerite-Françoise, age 8, Simon, age 7, Joseph, *fils*, age 4, and Anne-Adélaïde, age 5--left Miquelon aboard *La Jeannette*. They reached St.-Malo that November and settled at nearby St.-Servan among their **Babin** cousins.

In the early 1770s, Simon **Babin**, his wife Anastasie **Thériot**, and their three remaining children--Marie, Magloie, and François-Marie--were part of an attempt to settle Acadians in Poitou. French authorities were tired of providing for the Acadians languishing in the port cities. A French nobleman

offered to settle them on land he owned near the city of Châtellerault. Anastasie died at Châtellerault in April 1775, leaving Simon a widower. He promptly remarried to fellow Acadian Anne **Poirier**, widow of Gabriel **Moulaison** and Joseph **Granger**, at Châtellerault that September. When the Poitou venture failed after two years of effort, Simon, his new wife, his three children, and two stepchildren, retreated to the port city of Nantes with hundreds of other Poitou Acadians. In October 1780, Simon died aboard the ship *Le Prince Inzare* at St.-Martin-de-Chantenay, near Nantes. Daughter Marie married Louis-William, son of Stanislas **Stebens** and Anne **Colcein** of Boston, Massachusetts, at St.-Martin-de-Chantenay in January 1783.

In the early 1780s, the Spanish government offered the Acadians in France the chance for a better life in faraway Louisiana. Four of the **Babins** still in the mother country--François-Marie, Magloire-Simon, and Marie, children of Simon **Babin**, along with Marie's husband Louis-William **Stebens** and their three young children; and Bonaventure, son of Joseph **Babin** and Marine **LeBlanc**--agreed to take it. At least one family remained. Laurent, son of Claude **Babin** and Marguerite **Dupuis**, married Marie-Françoise, daughter of Martin **Carrière** and Jeanne-Martialle **LeGoff** of Le Palais, at St.-Gérard, Le Palais, in February 1766. Between 1766 and 1773, Marie-Françoise had given him six children, two sons and four daughters, on the island. When his brother Joseph and sister Marie left Belle-Île-en-Mer in 1773, Laurent stayed. He was still there in 1792, when his fellow citizens elected him a municipal officer at Le Palais. He remarried to Marie-Louise **Lyot** probably at Le Palais in 1797 but divorced her the following year. He died a "*rentier*," or annuitant, at Le Palais in 1807, age 47. Two of his daughters married in France.

In North America, meanwhile, Acadians being held in the prison compounds of Nova Scotia faced a hard dilemma. The Treaty of Paris of February 1763 stipulated in its Article 14 that persons dispersed by the war had 18 months to return to their respective territories. However, British authorities refused to allow any of the Acadian prisoners in the region to return to their former lands as proprietors. If Acadians chose to remain in, or return to, Nova Scotia, they could live only in small family groups in previous unsettled areas or work for low wages on former Acadian lands now owned by New England "planters." If they stayed, they must also take the hated oath of allegiance to the new British king, George III, without reservation. They would also have to take the oath if they joined their cousins in Canada. After all they had suffered on the question of the oath, few self-respecting Acadians would consent to take it if it could be avoided. Some Halifax exiles chose to relocate to Miquelon, a French-controlled island off the southern coast of Newfoundland. Others considered going to French St.-Domingue, where Acadian exiles in the British colonies already had

gone, or to the Illinois country, the west bank of which still belonged to France, or to French Louisiana, which, thanks to British control of Canada, was the only route possible to the Illinois country for Acadian exiles. Whatever their choice, they refused to remain in L'Acadie. So they gathered up their money and their few possessions and prepared to leave their homeland. Of the 600 who left Halifax in late 1764 bound for Cap-Français, St.-Domingue, two were young **Babin** sisters, daughters of Basile and his widow Nanette **Saulnier**.

The many **Babins** in Maryland endured life among English colonists who did not care much for the French "papists" who had been thrust upon them. In July 1763, after the war with Britain had finally ended, colonial officials counted nearly a dozen **Babin** families at Georgetown, Fredericktown, Princess Anne, Port Tobacco, Upper Marlborough, and Oxford. These were the **Babins** from the Minas settlements--Grand-Pré, Rivière-aux-Canards, and Pigiguit--whom the British had deported to the colony eight years earlier. When word reached the Acadians in Maryland that they would be welcome in Louisiana, where many of their relatives had gone, they pooled their meager resources to charter ships that would take them to New Orleans. At least 61 of them were **Babins**. They left for the Spanish colony in 1766, 1767, and 1768 and settled in a number of communities there. Other **Babins** chose to remain in Maryland. Surrounded by fellow exiles and French expatriates, some of these stay-behinds settled at Frenchtown in Baltimore, where their transition from *Acadien* to *Americain* went faster for them than for their cousins who had gone on to the Spanish colony.

The last group of **Babins** to come to Louisiana--six of them--did so in a unique way. During *Le Grand Dérangement*, Marine **LeBlanc**, wife of Joseph **Babin** of Grand-Pré, became a widow either in France or after her family returned to North America. In 1788, Marine, now age 52, and five of her children were living on Île St.-Pierre, Newfoundland. Joseph **Gravois** of Chignecto, probably a kinsman, was captain of the schooner *La Brigitte*. Marine and her five **Babin** children--Marie-Victoire, age 25, François-Laurent, age 22, Pierre-Moise, age 20, Anne-Marguerite, age 18, and Mathurin-Louis, age 15--and Marine's uncle Charles **Babin**, age unrecorded, agreed to accompany **Gravois** and his family to Louisiana aboard *La Brigitte*, which reached New Orleans in December 1788--the only group of Acadians to travel directly from greater Acadia to Louisiana and some of the last Acadians to reach the bayou country. Anne-Marguerite married Valentin-Désiré, son of fellow Acadians Amand **Richard** and Marie **Breaux** and widower of Susanne **Marique**, at St.-Jacques on the river in July. One wonders what became of her siblings.

Another Acadian **Babin** came to Louisiana decades after Joseph **Babin**'s children arrived from Île St.-Pierre. Early in the antebellum period, in 1809, while Louisiana was still a territory of the United States, thousands of refugees from Haiti via Cuba and Jamaica arrived at New Orleans. With them were Acadians who had left the British colonies in the 1760s and settled in the French colony of St.-Domingue, today's Haiti. Among these refugees may have been Victoire, daughter of Chares **Babin** and Marie **Hébert**, who married Anglo American Lewis **Morrow** of Boston, Massachusetts, at the St. James church, St. James Parish, in September 1816. The priest who recorded the marriage called Victoire a "nat. of St. Nicolas, Santo Domingo." One wonders if she was the Victoire **Babin** who died in Ascension Parish at age 81 in September 1862. The priest who recorded her funeral did not give her parents' names or mention a husband.