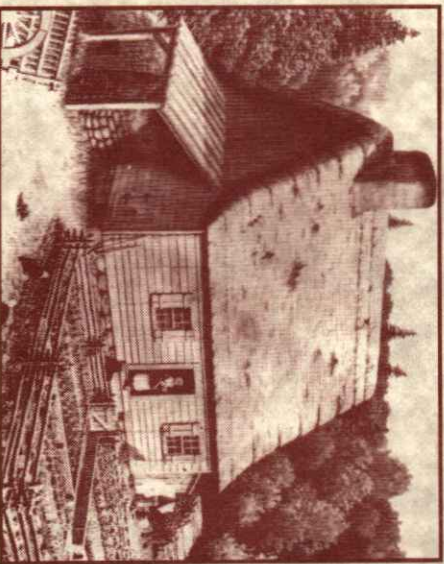


The people of Merligueche were isolated from the larger area of Acadian settlement in the Annapolis Valley. The nearest community was LaHave, reached overland by the trail still known as Indian Path. Travel to other communities meant more hazardous journeys by sea to Port Royal or Louisbourg or inland by canoe and portage to Piziquid (Wind-sor). Occasionally the conflict between Britain and France touched the community directly: in 1664, New Englanders raided the community and took the residents back to Boston where they were released after promising not to take up arms against the English. In 1726, one of Claude and Marguerite Guédry's sons, Jean-Baptiste, and his son, also Jean-Baptiste, were executed in Boston for piracy after an unsuccessful attempt to seize a New England fishing ship that had put into Merligueche.



The small community of Merligueche had no church or resident priest but the residents welcomed occasional visits from missionary priests who conducted formal baptisms and marriages and provided religious instruction both to the Acadians and their Mi'kmaq neighbours. Burials, marked by simple wooden crosses or field stone markers, took place at a cemetery at the head of Merligueche Harbour, near Old Labrador's farm. Still known as the Old French Cemetery, this site is the only visible reminder of the Acadians of Merligueche.

If you want to learn more about Merligueche, there is a research report prepared by Joan Dawson available at the town office.

For more information contact:

*Lunenburg Visitors Information Centre
open mid-May to mid-October*

Phone: (902) 634-8100

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Town of Lunenburg - Town Office

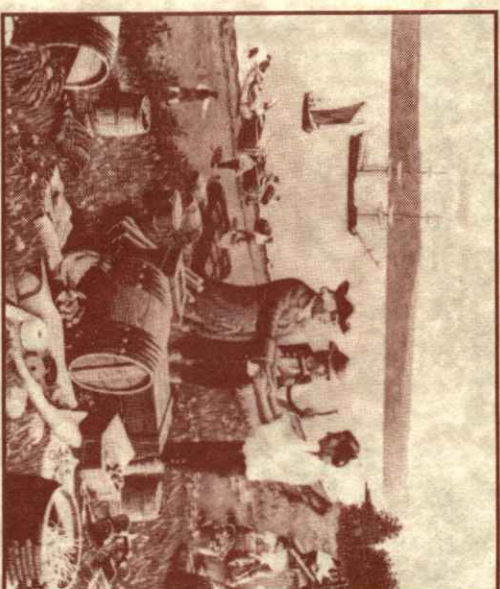
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We would like to extend credit to the Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax. The images used in this brochure are reconstructed by historians, archaeologists and an artist (Azor Viennau) for the Nova Scotia Museum.

Published by the Town of Lunenburg with the assistance of Parks Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage and Composites Atlantic Limited, Lunenburg

Lunenburg



*A brief history
of its
Acadian background*

*when it was
known as
"Merligueche".*

For centuries, the Milkmaq lived in the area known as Merigueche (now Lunenburg), fishing and hunting and, later, trading with merchants from France and New England. The French entrepreneur, Nicolas Denys, conducted a lumbering operation in the thick oak forests of the area for a few years in the 1630s. By the 1680s, a few Acadian families had established a small community that survived until about 1750. The residents lived chiefly by farming but some became well known pilots, guiding ships around Nova Scotia's rugged coast. Several of these families were still in Merigueche when Governor Edward Cornwallis visited in June 1749 on his way to establish the new capital at Halifax. But by 1753, they had departed, probably to other Acadian communities in Nova Scotia or to Ile Royale (Cape Breton) and the French fortress of Louisbourg. Only a man whom Colonel Charles Lawrence called "Old Labrador" remained on his farm beside a stream at the head of Merigueche Harbour.

Old French records can tell us a little about these early settlers. They were a large family by the name of Guédry (sometimes known as LaVerdure). In 1686, Claude Guédry and his wife Marguerite Petitpas

were one of two French families living at Merigueche. The other family consisted of Marguerite's brother and his wife, who soon returned to the Annapolis Valley to live. Claude and Marguerite had at least nine children and their family formed the nucleus of the settlement. Several of their children married into other Acadian families in the LaHave-Merigueche area, among them the Mius and Lesleunes. Others married members of the nearby Milkmaq families who had long been their neighbours and allies. Increased tensions between the Milkmaq and Acadians and the British authorities probably led most of them to leave Merigueche in the early 1750s. Some of the families were deported with other Acadians in 1755; others chose to live with their Milkmaq relatives. The man known as "Old Labrador" remained on his farm for several years after the arrival of the Foreign Protestants. His correct name was Paul Labrador and he was probably a son or nephew of Claude Guédry. By 1761, he too had left the area: he may have died or possibly joined neighbouring Milkmaq families.

Daily life at Merigueche in the 1700s was focused on subsistence farming. Over the years, the inhabitants cleared about 300 acres of land, probably including the area

where the Foreign Protestants later had their vegetable gardens, known as "Garden Lots." The houses at Merigueche were similar to other Acadian homes: simple wooden structures set on a stone foundation. Near each house there would have been cleared land for vegetable gardens as well as pasture land for cattle and sheep. Crops such as peas, cabbages, turnips, carrots and grain were common in the Acadian settlements. The women tended the vegetable gardens, baked bread, churned butter and preserved food for winter use. The men would have hunted game such as moose and caribou, to vary their family's diet. Salmon and other fish were plentiful in the harbour and nearby rivers. And fur trapping in the winter would have provided items to trade for such necessities as guns and ammunition, household utensils and agricultural tools.

