

Acadia

The Importance of Acadia

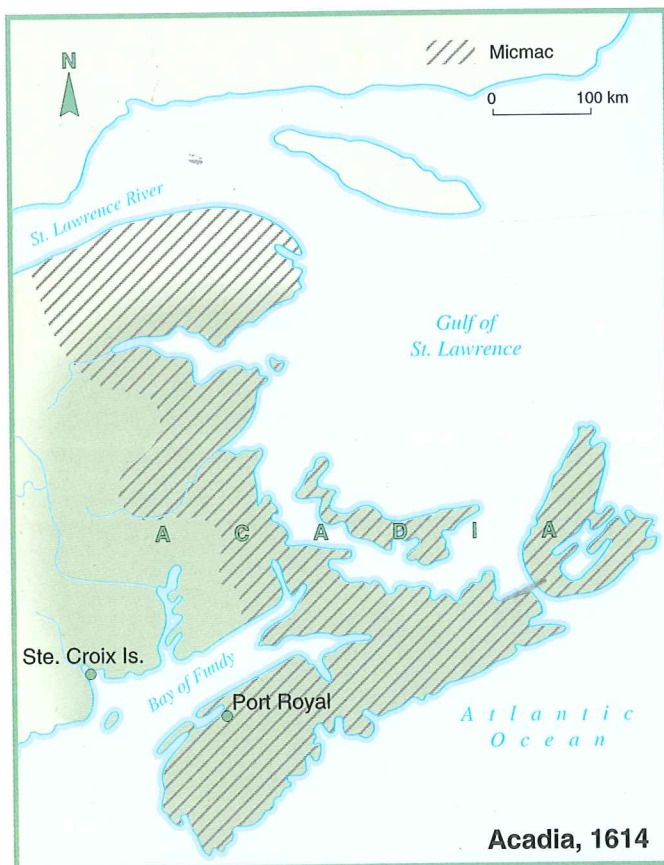
Quebec, Montreal, and Trois Rivières were important settlements in New France because they were profitable fur trading centres. The fur trade was the main source of wealth for France.

Acadia was also a French colony.* The earliest French settlement attempts took place in Acadia. De Monts and Champlain settled at Ste. Croix and Port Royal before moving to the richer fur areas along the St. Lawrence. French settlement in Acadia continued around the Bay of Fundy.

Struggle for Control



Although Acadia was not important to the French as a major supplier of furs, its location made it crucial. The English and the French were competing for the rich fish and fur resources in the region. Control of Acadia gave a nation power in North America. It is no wonder that the French and the English, who were competing with each other for power in the New World, also fought for possession of the colony of Acadia.

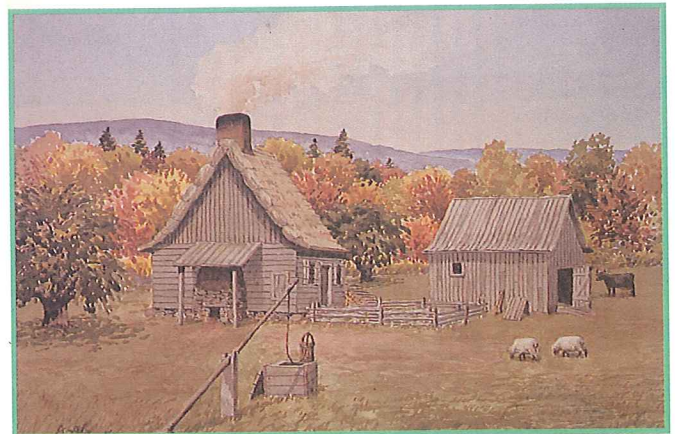


*Acadia included present day Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and parts of New Brunswick and Quebec.

A brief examination of Acadian history between 1614 and 1655 illustrates the struggle for control or power.

- 1614—Because the English feared that the French planned to expand south into the English colonies, they burned Port Royal. Only a handful of French settlers remained. No new settlers arrived until 1623.
- 1621—The English attempted to establish a Scottish settlement in Acadia. It failed after a few years.
- 1632—Acadia was officially returned to the French as part of a peace settlement of a European war between France and England.
- 1654—The English attacked Port Royal again and captured all French settlements around the Bay of Fundy. The English retained control over the southern part of Acadia, while the French controlled northern Acadia.
- 1655—The Treaty of Westminster returned French forts in Acadia to the French.

Acadian Way of Life



It was not until the 1630s that the first women and families settled in Acadia and large houses such as this were built.



Inside, the whitewashed walls provided a pleasing and warm atmosphere, as did the huge fireplace. Furniture was homemade, as was the clothing the people wore. Since families were large, usually with about nine children, there were always lots of helpers, both indoors and in the fields.

French settlers managed to establish homes and farms in spite of the conflict between the French and the English. Since the land was fertile, farming became the basis of the Acadian way of life. In Acadia there were trees to provide lumber for the building of homes, furniture, barns, mills, and boats. Any leftover crops could be traded for manufactured goods such as woven fabrics, tools, and molasses.

Top Right: *Trading.* Very few French ships came to Acadia to trade, so the Acadians traded with people from the Thirteen Colonies—wheat and furs for manufactured goods.



Above: *Repairing a Dyke.* The Acadians reclaimed low, marshy lands from the sea. Dykes were built of earth covered with sod. The dykes held back the water so the fields could be dried out and used for farming.

Right: *Acadians Cutting Saltmarsh Hay.* Each Acadian family had a vegetable garden, fruit orchards, fields of wheat, hay, and livestock. Hay was cut and dried to feed livestock during the winter.



Above: The Micmac lived in Acadia for centuries before the Acadians settled in this area. This painting, titled *Micmac Indians*, shows use of the local environment.

Below: #6663, National Gallery of Canada.

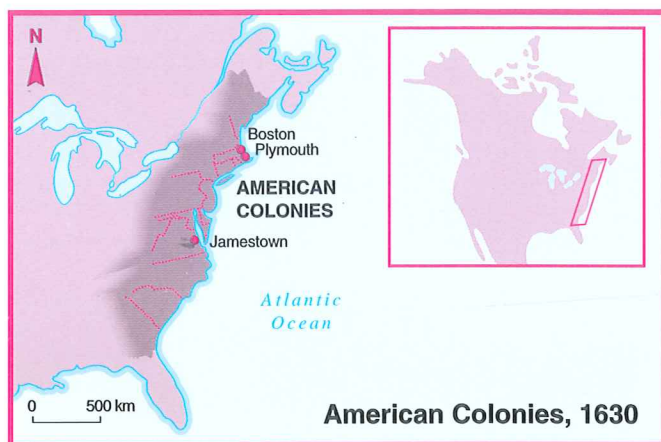
British Colonization

The American Colonies



In the early 1600s, England began to establish colonies in the area now known as the northeastern United States. The English mercantile system differed from France's because the English merchants, not the state, directed the economy. English individuals or groups who applied to the king or queen for charters were interested in profit. The charters allowed them to create settlements in the hope of increasing their profits. The merchants became wealthy and the state became more powerful. This approach allowed the state to remain free of responsibility for the new settlements. It also provided the state with a new source of revenue from taxes, which could be placed on any of the colony's exports.

The first successful English colony was established at Jamestown in 1607. A trading company, the Virginia Company of London, sponsored the colony. The company



Below: This is a group of singing townfolk at the reconstructed Plymouth Colony.



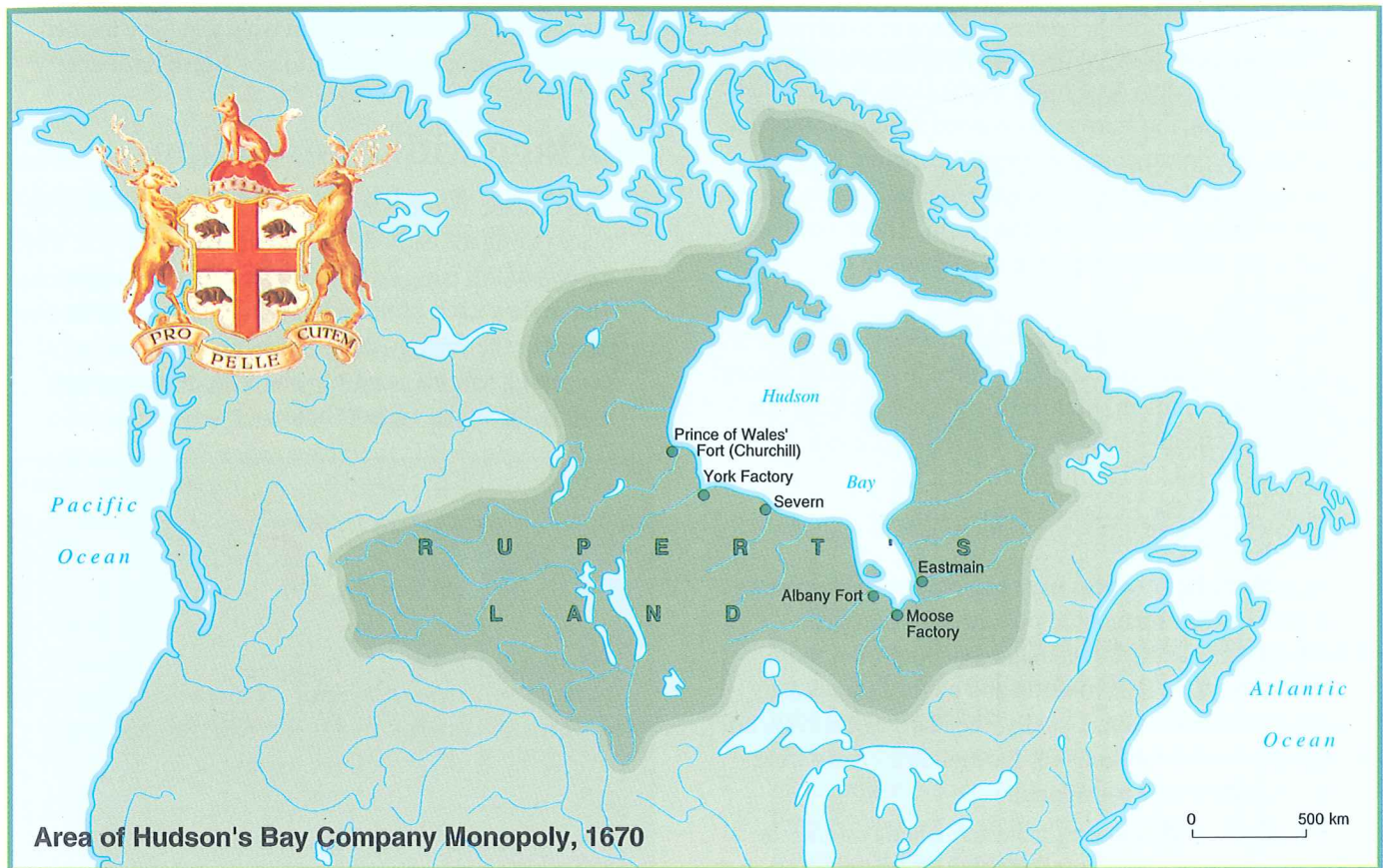
This young man at the reconstructed colony of Plymouth is bringing in hay to provide food and bedding for his animals.

had originally expected the settlers to copy the Spanish and find gold and silver to make themselves and the company rich. This did not happen and the settlers nearly starved to death. Only the development of tobacco as a cash crop saved the colony and made it a financial success.

Other English colonies were begun along the east coast of North America. Plymouth Colony was established in 1620 by a group of people who wished to find religious freedom in North America. This colony grew quickly and became prosperous. In 1630, the colony of Boston was established.

The English settlements quickly developed into 13 separate colonies that stretched southward down the Atlantic Coast of North America. These settlements became known as the Thirteen Colonies. They were settled by the English, Irish, Scottish, German, and Dutch. By 1770, the population of the Thirteen Colonies stood at approximately 2 100 000. Fishing, farming, and fur trading were the most profitable industries in the colonies.

The Hudson's Bay Company



Like the French, the English were very interested in gaining wealth from the fur trade in North America. The Hudson's Bay Company proved to be the most lasting of all of the fur trading institutions. Surprisingly enough, considering French and English rivalry and conflict, the Hudson's Bay Company was formed on the advice of two French fur traders, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and Chouart des Groseilliers. These two had tried to persuade the French that the best way to develop the fur trade was to set up trading posts on Hudson Bay. This way, all of the Native peoples whose river systems fed into the Bay could bring in their furs by canoe. The French were not interested—in fact, the French governor fined Radisson and Groseilliers for illegal fur trading—so they presented their idea to the English. The English saw this as a way to increase their power and influence in North America, and to make profits from the fur trade.

The Hudson's Bay Company was formed by a group of English investors. These men persuaded King Charles II of England that huge profits could be made by developing the fur trade in the northern part of North America. They asked for a charter and exclusive trading rights on a large tract of land, which would be controlled by the Company.

The king agreed, and on May 2, 1670, he granted a charter to "The Governor and Company of Adventurers Trading Into Hudson's Bay." The charter was granted in the name of Prince Rupert, the king's cousin. As a result, the Hudson's Bay Company land became known as Rupert's Land. The charter gave the investors a monopoly over the trade in all the territory whose rivers drained into Hudson Bay.

Although the Europeans acted as if the land were uninhabited, there were many tribes who made their homes in Rupert's Land. The Company did not talk to the Native peoples about taking over their lands, or consider how this might affect them.

The Hudson's Bay Company forts were erected at the mouths of the main rivers flowing into Hudson Bay. Native peoples acting as go-betweens brought furs by canoe to the forts for trading. These furs were exchanged for European goods and were in turn traded for more furs from the Native peoples. The Company was dependent on the Native peoples for their interior trade.

Through the fur trade both the Native peoples and Europeans got goods that they could not produce themselves.