

Book Review

Acadie, Then and Now: A People's History

under the direction of Warren Perrin, Mary Broussard Perrin and Phil Comeau

(published by Andrepont Publishing, L.L.C., Opelousas, La. 2014)

Reviewed by W. Thomas Angers

A *cadie, Then and Now: A People's History* is a monumental event in publishing. Never has anyone sought to assemble all things Acadian in one place and one volume, until now.

This incomparable anthology of 470 pages, available in both French and English editions, is a compilation of 65 scholarly essays written by 50 authors, all compiled by Warren A. and Mary Broussard Perrin and Phil Comeau.

Warren A. Perrin, a Lafayette lawyer and current chair of the Louisiana State Bar Association's Francophone Section, has long been active in the movement to preserve and promote Louisiana's French and Acadian culture. He served as a long-time president of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana and is a skills professor at Loyola University College of Law. The author of six books dealing with Louisiana culture and history, Perrin is also well-known for filing a petition for an apology for the Acadian deportation, resulting in the famous Queen's Proclamation signed on Dec. 9, 2003, wherein the British Crown formally acknowledged tragic consequences of the deportation, including deaths of the Acadian people and their trials and suffering from the expulsion from present-day Nova Scotia, then known as Acadie.

His wife, Mary Broussard Perrin, is a mixed media artist and author. Phil Comeau,

a film director, writer and editor, was born in Nova Scotia and presently lives in Montreal, Canada.

The three compilers assembled the works of authors from the United States, France and Canada, from all regions settled by Acadians. They include professors, folklorists, historians, broadcasters, lawyers, jurists, professors of law, scientific advisers, musicians, producers, poets, playwrights, film directors and producers, Acadian museum directors, business persons, journalists, editors, communication educators, genealogists, policy analysts, Acadian and cultural activists, directors of Acadian associations, translators, and specialists from other disciplines. The compilers could never have assembled a more informed body of expertise on the subject.

The word "Cajun" refers to persons of Louisiana Acadian descent. The word "Acadian" was shortened to "Cadien" and then to "Cajun." But, Acadians have lived and settled worldwide.

The goals of the book, according to Mr. Perrin, include identifying Acadian communities existing today throughout the world, identifying places where the Acadian exiles moved after the British expelled them from the Canadian Maritime Provinces in 1755, and identifying all things Acadian, commencing with the settlement of Acadia in 1605 by French immigrants and continuing up to the present date.

As Mr. Perrin said, "I wanted to know why we have an Acadian flag and other remnants of Acadie, even though it ceased to exist three centuries ago." Mary Broussard Perrin explained, "There is very little written about Louisiana — or any place. We had to piece it together like a quilt."

Mr. Perrin discovered an Acadian community near Montreal known as Lanau diere that began about 1765 when his ancestor, Joseph Broussard, arrived in Louisiana. "I thought I understood what Acadie meant, but I had no idea this region existed. It caused me to think, how many other places exist and what does Acadie mean today?" So, the seeds of this publishing journey were sown. The book addresses where the Acadian people have gone, where they remain and their cultural and demographic history.

Acadians today reside in the states of Louisiana, Texas, Maine, Massachusetts and Michigan; in the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Quebec; in the Caribbean; in South America and the Falkland Islands; and in the French regions of Nantes, Poitou, Belle-Ile-en-Mer, Saint Pierre and Miquelon. The book reveals that the Acadian experience is truly a three-continent phenomenon, but ultimately is worldwide in scope.

Like the Huguenot experience, also originating in repression, expulsion and deportation, the Acadian experience has



been characterized by cohesion and remarkable continued identity. To this day, certain specific French names can be identified as Acadian or Huguenot after several centuries.

The book also touches on historical and legal issues of ethnic cleansing, genocide and systematic violation of human rights, which show that the Acadians are another element in the matrix of world citizens fleeing denial of personal and political freedom and seeking escape from repressive governmental conduct.

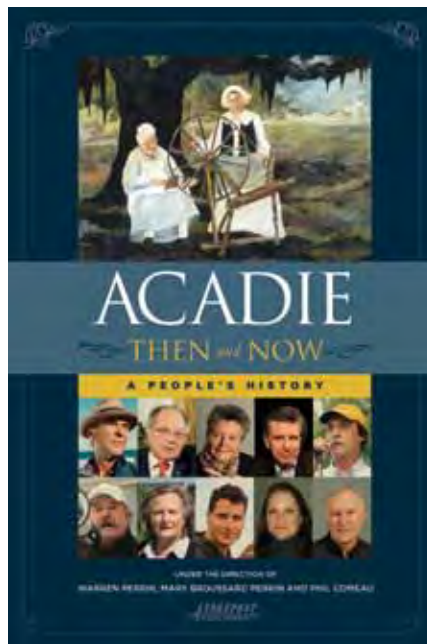
The book is divided into five sections titled “World Acadie,” “Cultures of Acadie,” “Remarkable Acadie,” “Dignity of a People” and “Acadian Regional Histories.”

The “World Acadie” section includes essays on the Acadian demographic history, contemporary effects of the Acadian Diaspora, and the French language and the Acadians in North America. The “Cultures of Acadie” section covers the topics of Acadian and Cajun cultural tourism, Cajun music, Acadian cinema in Canada, Cajuns in film, Cajun cuisine, and the Métis of Mi’kmaq Indians and their connections with Acadians. The “Remarkable Acadie” section includes essays on “The Landscape of Grand Pre” and “Evangeline: The Icon Who Just Won’t Die.” In the “Dignity of a People” section, articles discuss John Winslow, the British officer who masterminded the deportation, “The Protection of Minority Rights in Canada” and “Acadian Refugees or Prisoners in Acadie: 1755-1765.” The “Acadian Regional Histories” section contains essays on Acadians living in more than 15 places in the world.

Through this extraordinary assortment of articles and images, the authors carefully weave a volume which fully explores the physical, cultural, multi-ethnic, culinary, legal and political history of the Acadian people, and provides much imagery confirming their journey.

In addition to many fascinating and well-written essays, the book also appeals to the visual-minded with superior maps, illustrations and photographs.

The map indexing is divided into “then” maps and “now” maps. In the “now” maps section, locations of Acadians in Atlantic Canada, Louisiana, Texas, Quebec, Maine and France are identified. One two-page map (pages 16-17) titled “Acadian Migrations 1758 to 1816” shows the migrations, sub-migrations and cross-migrations throughout



the Western Hemisphere and Europe, even including certain verified historical migrations of Acadians returning from France to the Western world.

Illustrating the “Visual Arts of the Cajuns of South Louisiana” essay by Mary Broussard Perrin are images of George Rodrigue’s “The Aioli Dinner” and a photograph of Rodrigue in his studio with a canvas depicting the iconic Blue Dog; photography by Debbie Fleming Caffery, a Louisiana artist with works published by *The Smithsonian*; and works by artists Elemore Morgan, Jr., Troy Dugas, Mary Beyt, Lou Blackwell, Megan Barra and Camille Comeaux.

Illustrating the essay “The Acadian Aboiteau: A Cultural and Economic Keystone” by Dr. Whitney P. Broussard III are images depicting marsh reclamation started in Port Royal, Acadia’s first permanent settlement, marsh reclamation at the village of Grand Pre and a portrait of an Acadian community repairing an aboiteau, a dike-and-sluice structure that made agriculture possible in the marshland environment.

It is noteworthy from an economic history point of view that the Acadians dealt with marsh reclamation and farming in a marsh environment, both in Acadie and in south Louisiana.

The essay titled “The Cajuns in Louisiana” by Warren Perrin includes photographs of iconic Louisiana Cajuns, among them, Dr. Thomas Arceneaux, former Louisiana State Comptroller Roy Theriot, Sr. and Judge Allen Babineaux, with the official Acadian flag in 1974. Dr. Arceneaux is credited with

designing the Acadian flag and Judge Allen Babineaux was a lifetime leader of the Louisiana Acadians and the French Renaissance movement who studied and made known the history of the Acadian people.

The first use of the Acadian flag in a business and in print was by this author’s father, the late Robert J. (Bob) Angers, Jr., who founded *Acadiana Profile Magazine* in 1968, using the image of the Acadian flag on the cover. Artist Al Esteve reduced the image to print with the first rendering of it on paper.

In the book’s epilogue, Mr. Perrin relates extensive details of his personal journey in exploring the physical and cultural Acadian world, which underscores his motive in producing the book. He emerges as a freedom fighter personality, fighting for the rights, liberties, dignity and vindication of his beloved Acadian people so the world will know the pain, struggles, progress and continued viability of the Acadians.

In the end, *Acadie, Then and Now* is a journal of the lives of Warren and Mary Perrin over many decades, as they attempt to discover and redeem the Acadian people. The Perrins seek the ultimate redemption, vindication, dignity and promotion of the Acadian people, and, in a superb way, they have succeeded magnificently with this volume.

The book is available for purchase online via Amazon, www.amazon.com, or online at the Acadian Museum (Erath, La.) boutique, www.acadianmuseum.com/boutique.html.

W. Thomas Angers, a Lafayette attorney, practices in the areas of personal injury, environmental damages and BP claims. He serves on the board of the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education. He is a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association’s Francophone Section. He is a former member of the Lafayette Bar Association’s board of directors. He is an author and president of Beau Bayou Publishing Co., a book publisher. He is co-author of My Wars: Nazis, Mobsters, Gambling and Corruption, Colonel Francis C. Grevemberg Remembers, the biography of former Louisiana Superintendent of State Police, Francis C. Grevemberg, who fought mob-controlled illegal gambling, public corruption and vice, and who signed an affidavit before Angers confirming specific details of a cover-up, public corruption and obstruction of justice relating to the killing of Huey Long. (thomas.angers@lusfiber.net ; 131 South Audubon Blvd., Lafayette, LA 70503)

