

The Name "Acadia"

Extracted from a Paper read by Principal Dawson to
the Antiquarian Society, Oct. 1871.

The old most beautiful name Acadia or Acadie, by which New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and the neighbouring islands were known to the Early French Colonists, though it has a Celtic look and sound, is undoubtedly of aboriginal origin. Long before I was aware that any doubt or controversy existed as to its derivation I had it explained to me by an ancient Micmac patriarch named Martin St Pierre, or as he pronounced it "Maltun Supel", who used to visit my father's house, asking alms, when I was a boy. According to him the word means "plenty here", and he illustrated this by the ^{word} ~~name~~ Stubenacadie which still remains as the name of one of the

principal rivers of Nova Scotia,
Shuben he said or "Sgahum"
meant ground nuts & Indian
potatoes, and Shubenacadie
a place where there is plenty
of ground nuts. On the
authority of this venerable
Micmac Philologist, I gave,
in my first Edition of
my Acadian Geology, the
following explanation of
the term.

- a The aboriginal Micmacs of Nova Scotia, being of a practical turn of mind, were in the habit of bestowing on places the names of the useful articles which could be found in them, affixing to such terms the word *Acadie*, denoting the local abundance of the particular objects to which the names referred. The early French settlers appear to have supposed this common termination to be the proper name of the country, and applied it as the general designation of the region now constituting the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island; which still retain Acadia as their poetical appellation, and as a convenient general term for the Lower Provinces of British America as distinguished from Canada. Hence the title *Acadian Geology* is appropriate to this work, not only because that name was first bestowed on Nova Scotia, but because the structure of this province, as exposed in its excellent coast sections, furnishes a key to that of the neighbouring regions, which I have endeavoured to apply to such portions of them as I have explored. This title is farther justified

by the circumstance that the Acadian provinces form a well-marked geological district, distinguished from all the neighbouring parts of America by the enormous and remarkable development within it of rocks of the Carboniferous and New Red Sandstone systems. "

I find however that the Commissioners on the Settlement of the North-eastern Boundary had in 1851 given a very different explanation of the name. They say, as quoted by Prof Hind:—

"The obscurity which has been thrown in past times on the territorial extent of Acadia that Country of which DeMonts received letters patent in 1603, was occasioned by not attending to the Indian origin of the name, and to the repeated transfer of the name to other parts of the Country to which the first settlers afterwards removed.—Even before the appointment of De la Roche in 1598 as Lieutenant-Governor of the Country, including there

These parts adjacent to the
Bay of Fundy, the Bay into
which the St Croix empties
itself was known to the
Indians of the Mowseeet
(? Malicet) tribe, who
still inhabit New Brunswick,
by the name Perkadumquodish
from Perkadum fish and
Quodiah the name of a
fish meaning the cod;
which fish is supposed to
be that known as the
"pollack." They go on to say
that the French altered this
word Quodiah into Quadiac
Cadie and finally Acadie,
while the English have changed
it into Quoddy in the well
known name Papamaquoddy
still applied to the bay above
mentioned. Independently of
the natural objection of an
explanation & believe in the
derivation of this name

and euphonic name
from a word ~~in Sanskrit~~
meaning a kind of Cod-fish, I had great
doubts as to the correctness
of this etymology in any
respect; and with the
view of satisfying myself in
the belief of the derivation
of my old friend St Pierre,
Lurte & the Rev Mr Rand
whose acquaintance with the
Mormon and Mahometan languages
is second to that of no man
living, and am happy to
say that he confirms my
previous opinion and illustrates
it in many curious ways, so
that he need not any
longer speak of the meaning
or origin of the name Acadia
as doubtful.

Mr Rand informs me
that the word in its original
form is Käddö or Cadie, and
that it is equivalent to region,

field, ground, land or place;
but that when joined to
an adjective or to a noun
with the force of an adjective,
it denotes that the place
referred to is the appropriate
or special place of the object
expressed by the noun or
noun-adjective. Now in Micmac
adjectives of this kind are
formed by affixing suppreing "a"
or "ea" to the noun. Thus in
the word before quoted, Segubtunn
is a ground-nut, Segubtuna is a
relating to ground-nuts, and
Segubtunee-kaddy is the place
or region of ground nuts, or the
place in which there are to be
found in abundance. The following
may be given as examples of
actual Indian names formed
in this way.

Soona - Kaddy - (Simacadie) - Place
of Cranberries

Kata - Kaddy - Sea-ground.

Tullukka Kaddy - (Kacade) -
probably place of residence
dwelling place

Sküdtä kümoochewä - Kaddy - short
or spunt land, is the somewhat
difficult name of
a large island in the Bear
I or Lake once used as
a burial ground

Buna - Kaddy - (Bunacade or Bena-
acade) is the place of hanging
prison, a place resorted to
by Moore at the calving season.

Leponäma - Kaddy - place of
suspension, suspension on
Alutka River.

According to Mr. Rand Quoddy or
Cochia is merely a modification
of Kaddy ^{in the language of the Maliseets} ~~of the Maliseets~~ ^{and replacing the other form}
in certain compounds. Thus:

Nooda - Kwöddy, (Noodquoddy or
Wanketka Haulma) is place of
Deals, or, more literally, place
of seal-hunting.

Koohejo - Kwoddy - giant - land
a land of giants,

Boonamoo - Kwoddy - Iron - red
ground: -

- and lastly -

Pestū moo - Kwoddy - Pollack - ground
about which we look to
Papumagwody and to the
learned denotation of the

as unsuccessful
in etymology
as in the first
settlement of
the boundary,

Comupian, who, have
merely changed the meaning
of the first component of the
word into a general term
for fish, and have taken
Kwoddy for the equivalent
of Pollack, very likely be-
cause its sound resembled

that of Cod. ^{Or because some Malacca}
it enters his imperfect English by the ^{Indian} word "Pollack fish here"

So much for the etymology
of Cadie or Quoddy, now
as to its application to the
large region known as Acadie.
No explanation may be
given of this. Just the name

May be a mere abbreviation, as
suggested by the Europeans,
of that of the bay which
lay at the western extremity of
Acadia, and where ^{aboriginal} people
were called by the English the
^{perhaps because of the frequent occurrence of the word in their} Quoddy Indians. This name ^{names of places} which
remains in Quoddy Head the
last point of the United States
next to Acadia. Secondly the
name, as suggested by me
in the first edition of Acadia
Journals, may have originated
in the frequency of names with
this termination in the lan-
guage of the natives. The
early settlers were desirous of
information as to the localities
of useful productions, and in
giving such information the aborigines
used again so often the
term "Cadie", that it might
very naturally come to be
regarded as a general name

for the Country. I still think
the latter ~~appetate~~ explanation
the more probable.

Abundia therefore signifies
primarily a place or region,
and in combination with
other words a place of
plenty or abundance. Thus
it is but only a beautiful
name, which should never
have been obliterated for
such names as New Brunswick
with a Nova Scotia, but
it is most applicable to
a region which is rich
in the "chief things of
the ancient mountains,
the precious things of the
lofty hills and ~~for~~
the precious things of the
earth and of the deep
that coucheth beneath"
than any other portion
of America of similar dimensions.

Farther since by those un-
changing laws of geological
structure and geographical po-
sition which the Creator him-
self has established, this region
must, always notwithstanding any
artificial arrangements that
man may make, remain dis-
tinct from Canada on the one
hand and New England on
the other, the name Acadia
must live, and I venture
to predict that it will yet figure
honourably in the history of
this western world. The resources
of the Canadian Peninsula must neces-
sarily render them more wealthy
and populous than any area
of the same extent on the ^{East} ~~East~~
coast from the Gulf of
~~St. Lawrence~~ ^{Fundy} to the Gulf of Mexico
^{in the St. Lawrence valley} from the Sea to the
head of the Great Lakes. Their
Maritime and Mineral resources
constitute them the great Empire
of Eastern America and though

Merely agricultural capabilities
may give some inland
and more southern regions
a temporary advantage, but in
the end assert its
natural pre-eminence.

1847

June

Acacia