

fiddles & spoons

Journey of an Acadian Mouse



Written by Lila Hope-Simpson ★ Illustrated by Doretta Groenendyk

Text copyright © 2012, 2017 Lila Hope-Simpson
Illustrations copyright © 2012, 2017 Doretta Groenendyk

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission from the publisher, or, in the case of photocopying or other reprographic copying, permission from Access Copyright, 1 Yonge Street, Suite 1900, Toronto, Ontario M5E 1E5.

Nimbus Publishing Limited
3731 Mackintosh St, Halifax, NS B3K 5A5
(902) 455-4286 nimbus.ca

Printed and bound in Canada

Author photo: Ian Hope-Simpson
Interior design: Co&Co Design

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication
Hope-Simpson, Lila
Fiddles and spoons : journey of an Acadian mouse /
Lila Hope-Simpson ; illustrated by Doretta Groenendyk. — 2nd ed.

Reprint. Originally published: Montréal : Dery Publishing
Group, 2004.
ISBN 978-1-55109-903-3 (hardcover)
ISBN 978-1-77108-562-5 (softcover)

I. Groenendyk, Doretta, illustrator II. Title. III. Title: Fiddles and spoons.

PS8615.O52F54 2017 jC813'.6 C2017-903921-0

Canada



Canada Council
for the Arts Conseil des arts
du Canada

NOVA SCOTIA

Nimbus Publishing acknowledges the financial support for its publishing activities from the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and from the Province of Nova Scotia. We are pleased to work in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia to develop and promote our creative industries for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.





This book is dedicated to uprooted people from every place and time, whose spirits have proven that after adversity, life goes on.

And sometimes, there is even dancing.



It was fiddle night in the Dubois household, and under the floorboards, the mice were bursting with excitement!

Cécile Souris wore her linen dress, dyed a bright beetroot red, and her tail twitched with anticipation. On Saturday night, when the floorboards started to beat to the rhythm of the music and spoons and dancing upstairs, Cécile would grab her little brother, Étienne, and, together, they would dance until the moon lay low in the Grand Pré sky.





The best part of the musical nights was the food. On most nights, the mouse family would scrounge crumbs of flaxseeds, grains, and vegetable peelings, but on Saturday nights, when the Dubois family gathered around the kitchen table with their fiddles and drums, the aromas were delicious! There would be freshly baked corn bread, chicken fricot, and meat pie, with apple tarts or molasses taffy for dessert. And sometimes there would be cheese! The Souris family would wait for the crumbs to fall between the floorboards, then eat until they had their fill.

Papa Souris worked hard all week in the fields, gathering seeds, nuts, and kernels, and come Saturday night, he too was ready to indulge in the music and the foot-stomping merriment of the Dubois household. Mama Souris would take off her burlap apron and put on her fancy linen dress with the lace collar, and soon everyone would be in a jolly mood—dancing to the fiddles and spoons up above and squeaking with joy and happiness.





The Souris family lived a modest but happy life, under the floorboards of the Dubois homestead in Grand Pré in 1755. The small Acadian village was thriving, full of hard-working folks. The men worked the fields and built the dykes to hold back the mighty tides of the Bay of Fundy, creating some of the most fertile coastal farmland in all of Acadie. Meanwhile, the women tended the vegetable and herb gardens and made sure that hot, steamy pots of stews and soups hung over the fireplaces, ready for the evening meal. The children pitched in too, and took pride in their work and their lessons.

Monsieur Dubois was the village blacksmith, and his shop was a hub of activity. He was a strong, burly man, with thick black curls that fell over his forehead when he worked and a beard that the mice always thought would make a lovely nest!





Madame Dubois was small by comparison, but sturdy and able, with a quick laugh, and she grew the best cabbages in all Acadie. At least, the mice thought so! She had long brown hair that she tucked, braided, under her cap when she worked, and her cheeks looked like they had been kissed by summer roses.

There were five Dubois children, three girls and two boys: Amélie, Aislin, Alisse, André, and Armand. They helped Mama and Papa with the chores, and also learned how to write their names on slates and count cobs of corn.

Cécile Souris and her mouse family loved listening to the cheerful sounds of the Dubois family! But one day, the noises changed, and Cécile knew something was wrong in Acadie. She didn't hear the heavy footsteps of Monsieur Dubois' wooden sabots at the end of the long day. She didn't hear the sounds of a bustling family or squealing children. Instead, all was quiet.





The mice were curious. They peeped out of their hole and saw that the kitchen was empty. The floor, which was usually spotless, making it difficult for the mice to gather their own evening meal, was still strewn with the remains from the midday lunch. And then they heard the thumping sound coming from outside.

“What’s that noise?” asked Étienne, frightened.

“Let’s go and see,” said Cécile, taking her brother’s hand.

The mice squeezed under the front door and froze as they felt the vibration of the earth, while soldiers in heavy boots marched over the meadows of their beloved Grand Pré, speaking in another language, unknown to the mice.





The night noises sounded familiar enough. The chickadees sang from the branches of the apple trees, the breezes danced over the wildflowers, and the leaves rustled in the night air. But something wasn't quite right, and Papa Souris was determined to find out what it was.

He warned his family to stay behind, then scampered warily over to the church, without looking back.

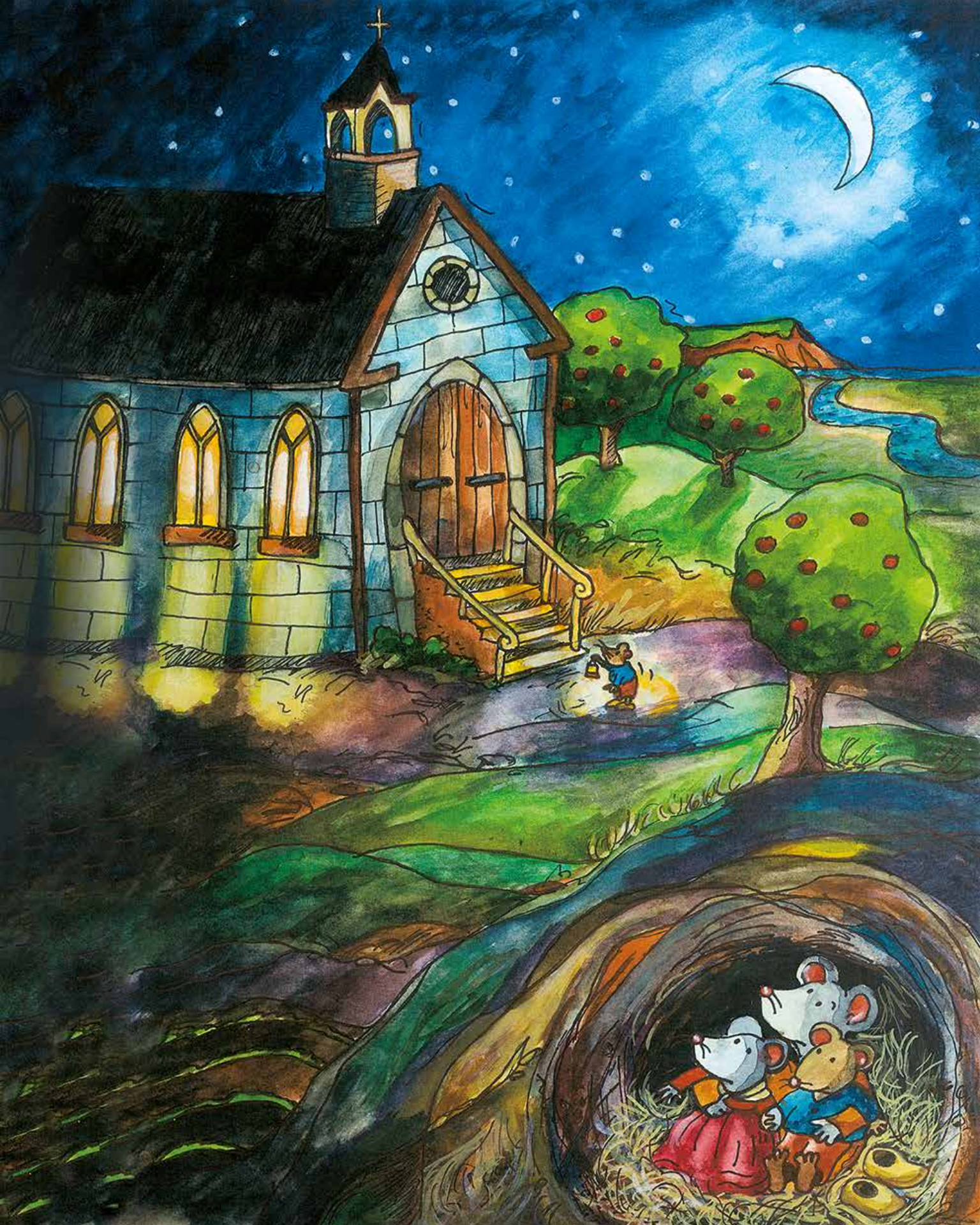
Mama Souris, Cécile, and little Étienne huddled together, gaining strength from each other's warm soft fur.

Then they heard something. They heard the Dubois family running home, but something was wrong. Madame Dubois was stumbling and weeping, and the children, who were usually busy and playful, were clinging to each other quietly.

Cécile started to count, as she had learned in her lessons from under the kitchen table. "One, two, three. Where are Armand and André? Where is Monsieur Dubois?" she wondered.

"And where is Papa Souris?"





Mama Souris hurried Cécile and Étienne down the mouse hole to their quarters below. She smelled the worry in the air, and soon nobody was even thinking about supper any more. They were too frightened.

The days after that were long and sombre. The men and boys were gone, gathered within the grounds of the church. The anvil in the village blacksmith shop lay quiet and the forge was stone cold. The dykes beckoned and the cows bellowed in the fields of Grand Pré but the farmers stood still, watching, waiting.

Women, children, and little mice shivered with fear and even the fireplaces of the cozy village homes could not warm their hearts. So the mice just nibbled whatever tidbits of roots, berries, and kernels they could find, and they too watched and waited.





The beaches on the Acadian shore were filled with soldiers shouting orders and boats coming in and out with the tides. When the day finally arrived and the vessels were ready, the women and children were ordered to wait on the beach. The mice gathered their meagre belongings and scurried, unnoticed, along the path to the shoreline, following the scent of the sea.

“If the Dubois family is leaving their Grand Pré home,” said Mama Souris, with a new strength in her voice, “We will not abandon them!”





he Acadians, with the mice scurrying about underfoot, waited on the cold, muddy Acadian beach until the tide made its way to the shore. Beyond the Minas Basin was the comforting sight of Cape Blomidon, where the Mi'kmaq chief, Glooscap, silently watched. It was then that the families were pushed onto the boats, crying and clinging to each other. As the last of the Dubois children walked toward the boat, little Amélie Dubois grabbed a rock from the beach and clutched it tightly in her fist. Cécile Souris, not far behind, watched her, and scooped a few grains of sand and a shell into her front paw too.

The boat was rocky and cold and scary. The mice had never been near the water before, for fear of shore birds and owls. Now they huddled under the bench, their tails quivering, beneath the shivering Madame Dubois and the three girls. Monsieur Dubois, Armand, André, and Papa Souris were on another boat, bobbing far ahead, and they all prayed that they would end up on the same faraway shores.

The mouths of the Dubois and Souris families were parched and dry, and water was scarce, but no one complained. With the force of their Acadian spirit, they sang soft melodies.



a brief history of the acadians

The French founded the historic village of Grand Pré on the Minas Basin in Nova Scotia in about 1675. It served as one of the chief settlements of Acadia and lies between the towns of Wolfville and Windsor. The name Grand Pré means “large meadow” in French.

Following the Queen Anne’s War in 1713, the French gave Acadia to the English with the Treaty of Utrecht. The Acadians, however, remained loyal to the French and kept close ties with the Mi’kmaq. In 1755, the Acadians refused once again to pledge an unconditional oath of allegiance to the British king. As a result, a force of New England colonial troops gathered up the inhabitants of Grand Pré and other Acadian communities, from Port Royal to New Brunswick, and deported them to American colonies along the Atlantic coast. (Many mice families are said to have also made the voyage!) The majority of Acadians found themselves in areas now known as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, although some ended up as far away as French Guyana.

Many Acadians were refused entry at their destination points and were sent on a long voyage to England, where they were imprisoned until 1763 and then sent to France. Many of these Acadians eventually emigrated to Louisiana.

After enduring much hardship, some of the exiled Acadians along

the eastern seaboard made their way back to Acadia and lived in peace after the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Others migrated westward to Louisiana, a former French colony. Descendants of these Acadians are known as Cajuns.

A replica of the church in Grand Pré was dedicated in 1922 and is now a museum. Acadia is best known as the poetic name of Nova Scotia, the famous setting for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's romantic poem, "Evangeline."

In the summer of 2004, the Congrès Mondial Acadien was held in Nova Scotia to bring together Acadians from all over the world and celebrate their heritage.

