



**A BOY  
FROM ACADIE  
ROMÉO LEBLANC'S  
JOURNEY  
TO RIDEAU HALL**

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Beryl Young

**BOUTON D'OR ACADIE**



**A BOY FROM ACADIE**



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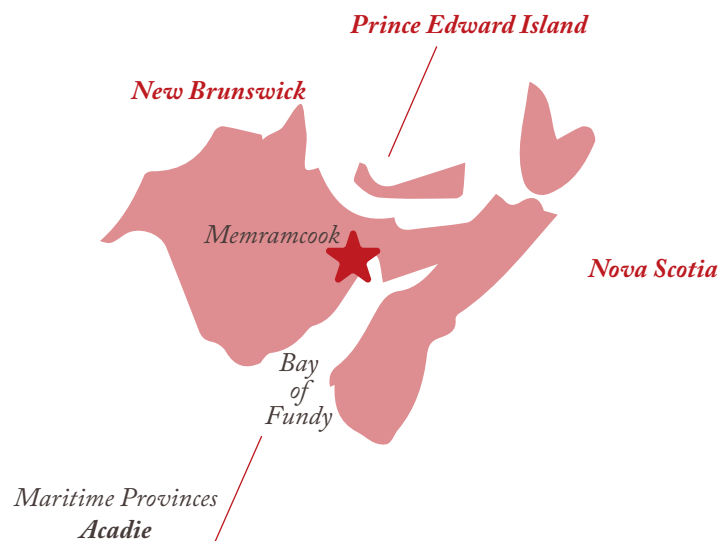
This book is dedicated to the family of Roméo LeBlanc  
and to my new Acadian friends.







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# INTRODUCTION

Never in a million years would an Acadian boy growing up on a small farm in New Brunswick dream that one day he would meet the queen and become her representative in the highest position in his country.

But that is the true story of a Canadian boy named Roméo.

It's the story of the youngest of seven children who would never have gone on to high school without the help of his sister sending money from her work as a maid. The story of how the boy's hard work and love of learning led to scholarships for study at the Sorbonne in Paris.

This book tells how Roméo LeBlanc came to serve with three prime ministers, how he worked to protect Canadian fishing rights, and then became governor general of Canada.

This boy, who loved the Acadian custom of dipping bread into the molasses on the underside of his plate, would one day be comfortable dining with Queen Elizabeth II in Sandringham House.

I am honoured to tell the inspiring story of how a man of humble origins became the first Acadian governor general of Canada, Roméo Adrien LeBlanc.



*The elementary school Roméo attended in Cormier's Cove*



## CHAPTER 1

# SCHOOL AT LAST



When you are six years old, the first day of school is the most exciting day in the world.

As the youngest child in the LeBlanc family, Roméo had to wait. He watched impatiently as his six brothers and sisters started school, one after the other. Waiting for them to come home made the days long for Roméo. But in the evenings, his sister Alice would let him sit next to her and turn the pages of her books. The bright little boy was learning a great deal before he even started school.

Roméo lived with his large family in Cormier's Cove, near the village of Memramcook. Their farm was part of a small Acadian community not far from the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick. Like other Acadians, they were Catholic and spoke French, and their ancestors had come from France to settle in the New World, in a community that became known as "Acadie."

Roméo's father, Philéas, worked at the busy Canadian National Railway work yards in nearby Moncton.

Finally, when he was almost six years old, in September of 1933, the great day came when Roméo could start school.

With his heart beating hard in excitement, he walked along the trail to the small village school with his sister Alice, who was ten, and his brother Léonard, who was eight.



From the very first day Roméo loved the school, with its big black coal stove in the middle of the room, the desks in rows around it. For the first three years, his teacher was nineteen-year-old Miss Dorilla Blanchet. She was only five feet tall with blond curly hair and a welcoming smile. There were fifty-seven children and seven grades in her classroom!

Roméo was so excited he'd arrive early in the morning to help Miss Blanchet. The job he liked was smacking the chalk out of the blackboard brushes. At lunchtime he ate bread and molasses sandwiches packed by his mother and his oldest sister Irène, who was twenty.

Many of his schoolmates had the same last name as he did, LeBlanc. They were all descended from Daniel LeBlanc, one of the early Acadian settlers from France.