



# Heritage Notes

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## 1995 - A Year of Commemoration

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Historic Louisbourg will be a busy town in 1995. That year, the Town of Louisbourg and the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site will commemorate significant events of a colourful past. 1995 will mark the 275th anniversary of the "official" founding of the fortress and the 250th anniversary of the New England siege. It will also be the 100th anniversary of both the arrival of the Sydney and Louisbourg Railway and the commemoration by the Society of Colonial Wars.

In August 1900 Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier attended the annual picnic of the Provincial Workmen's Association, held in Louisbourg that year. About 4000 gathered for the annual outing. In his speech Laurier reflected on the value of the historic town and fortress. *He said, "We stand today upon historic ground. Upon this spot consecrated by the blood of your forefathers, the English, and my forefathers, the French, let the memory of those conflicts of the last century be forever forgotten, or should they be remembered, let the lesson be that they strove to do their duty by their country. They did their duty; let us do ours whether we be English, Scotch, Irish or French... It is and shall be my effort and ambition to make of this country a nation in which all the elements shall be united and which shall be heard of in future ages."*

The challenge put forth by Prime Minister Laurier over 90 years ago has a particular importance today. We look to the future not only from French and English roots but as members of an increasingly multicultural Canadian society.

### • 1720

There are special reasons for honouring the year 1720 during the upcoming 1995 celebrations.

Seventeen twenty (1720) was the year which the government of France at the time decided was the "official" beginning of the fortified town of Louisbourg. True, the settlement had actually begun in 1713, when 116 men, 10 women, and 23 children re-located to Louisbourg from Placentia, Newfoundland. Reaching the harbour aboard the *Semslack*, the group came ashore at what until then had been known as English Harbour. And true again, a few hundred people lived in the settlement over the next several years. By 1718 there were 568 full-time residents living around the harbour.

What happened to make 1720 special was a decision by the French concerning Louisbourg. That decision was that Louisbourg - and not the rival Cape Breton communities of Englishtown (Port Dauphin) or St Peters (Port Toulouse) - was to become the administrative and military centre of the colony of Isle Royale (Cape Breton Island).





The decision began to be revealed in 1717. It was confirmed in 1719. Thus 1720 opened as the first year in which Louisbourg was acknowledged officially as the capital of new French colony of Isle Royale.

Being chosen as the most important town in Cape Breton was not just something to make its citizens feel proud. It also meant that a great deal of money would be spent in and around the community over the years to come.

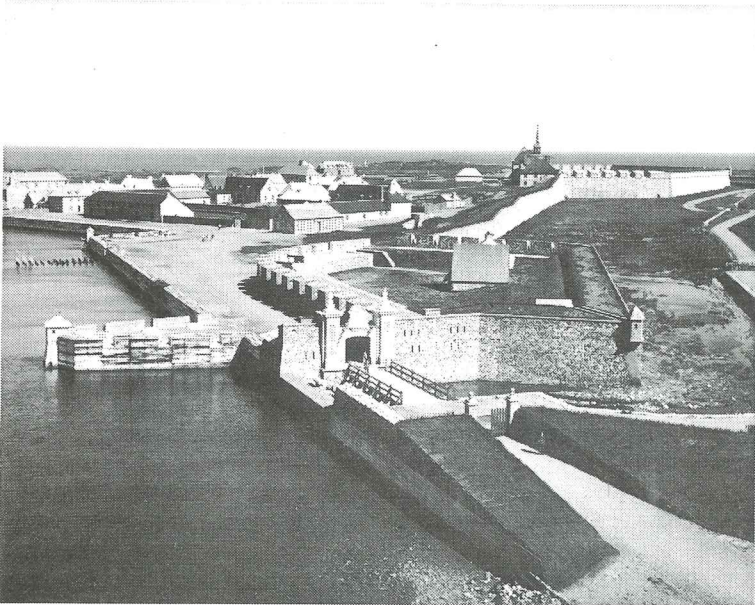
To turn the simple fishing port into a fortress stronghold would take time and money. Over the next several decades the French would spend over 20 million livres. When they were done, they had created a walled town that looked like it might have come from Europe. It had many features (such as a lighthouse, careening wharf, fine stone houses, and many imports) that could be found in few other places in North America at the time.

To mark the "official" founding of Louisbourg in 1720, French officials at Louisbourg organized a "laying the cornerstone" ceremony in the King's Bastion area. The governor and other royal officials were in attendance for what was regarded as the beginning of royal construction.

Meanwhile in France, government officials had special Louisbourg medals struck in a mint. The medals were sent across the ocean with the intention that they would be placed in the foundations of major buildings in town. In total, 18 medals were struck. Six were in silver, 12 in copper.

The images on the distinctive Louisbourg medals were all alike. Each had a bust of the king (Louis XV) on one side and a view of the town on the other. The view of Louisbourg was more of what the town would become than what it actually looked like in 1720.

Each side of the medal carried a Latin inscription. On the obverse (the side with the king), the inscription read: "*Louis XV, King of France and Navarre.*" On the reverse (with the view of the town), it read: "*Louisbourg, founded and fortified, 1720.*" In November 1720, Governor St-Ovide reported that he had placed six of the medals around the town.



The partially reconstructed Town and Fortress of Louisbourg

In 1962, during the early stages of the \$26-million dollar Canadian government project to reconstruct about one-fifth of 18th-century Louisbourg, more medals came to light. This time an entire, rectangular, lead box was found. It contained an interior wooden case which held two copper medals, and one silver. Workmen found them in the King's Bastion area, where work on the fortifications had begun in 1720.

Yet another indication of the way in which the French regarded 1720 as the "official" beginning of Louisbourg can be found on the King's Bastion barracks building itself. Above the central passageway there is a large, black marble plaque. The Latin inscription on the marble declares that Louis XV is the king and Louisbourg was founded and fortified in 1720.

The town that began with such promise lived up to its potential. Its harbour became one of the busiest in North America. Warships, merchant vessels, and fishing boats came and went throughout the shipping season. Louisbourg was an important port of call for ships coming from or sailing to France, the West Indies, New England, Acadia, and the settlements along the St. Lawrence River.

Thanks largely to its fishery and merchant trade, Louisbourg's population grew steadily. In 1720 there were 633 fulltime residents. By 1737 there were nearly 1500. It is estimated that there were between 2500 and 3000 by 1745. In 1758, on the eve of the second and final siege, there were about 10 000 people in and around the town.

Louisbourg's success during the French Regime was due to several factors. It had an excellent harbour, which was close to bountiful fish stocks. That harbour was well situated to take advantage of 18th-century trade routes to Europe and the West Indies. The town also benefitted from the large sums of money spent by France on the fortifications and other public works.

Last but certainly not least, Louisbourg had its citizens. The people of Louisbourg were hard-working. They showed determination and imagination when it came to solving problems in their society and in their economy. They took the resources they found and made the most of them. As a result, they made their town one of the busiest North American seaports of its era.

In part, it is the success of those early Louisbourg-ers, and the example they set, that we celebrate in 1995.

## ● 1745

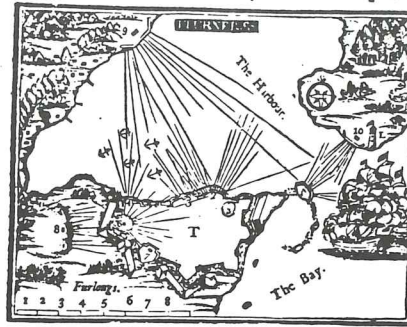
The siege of 1745 is one of the best known aspects of Louisbourg's history and was an important event in the history of North America.

Louisbourg became involved in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48) in May 1744 when news that Louis XV had declared war on Great Britain reached the town. French officials took steps to attack Canso and Annapolis Royal - the only British posts on mainland Nova Scotia. Their capture would regain for France the Acadian territory lost to Britain 31 years earlier.

While the French easily captured Canso, Annapolis Royal proved more difficult. Twice Louisbourg was unable to send the naval support needed to support land attacks and the assaults failed. In the war at sea in 1744, the French enjoyed early successes in privateering - a form of warfare



*At the Surrender of the City of Louisbourg on Cape Breton. Is at present the Subject of much Conversation, we hope the following Draught will be acceptable to our Readers, as it may prove to give them an Idea of the Situation and Strength of the Place, and render the News from thence more intelligible.*



EXPLANATION.

- (1) The Island Battery, at the Harbour's Mouth, 18 Guns. — Pounders.
- (2) The Town North East Battery, 18 Four pounders, on two Faces.
- (3) Three Flanks, with two Guns each, eighteen pounders.
- (4) A Small Battery of Eight Guns, Nine Pounders.
- (5) Demi Lune, or Circular Battery, of 16 Guns, 24 pounders.
- (6) The Magazine.
- (7) The Fort or Citadel, fortified directly from the Town, in which the Governor lived.
- (8) Three Fusile Batteries, erected by one People against the West Gun, &c.
- (9) The Grand Battery, of 16 Guns, 42 pounders, 18 against the Harbour's Mouth, &c.
- (10) A Redoubt Battery erected by the English near the Light-House, opposite to the Island Battery, and not quite half a Mile from it. From this Battery our People play'd so successfully upon the Island Battery, both with their Cannon and Mortar, that the Enemy abandoned it with the utmost Precipitation, and ran up to their Necks in Water, to secure themselves.
- T. The Centre of the Town. L. The Light-House.

at sea - but British and New England vessels gained the upper hand by autumn.

Having discovered how vulnerable their settlements and ships were to attacks from Louisbourg, the New Englanders wanted to see the French fortress captured. In the spring of 1745, New England, led by Massachusetts, raised an army of over 4000 men for an expedition against Cape Breton. In command was William Pepperrell of Kittery, Maine. Great Britain offered naval support; New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania gave money, arms and supplies.

In April 1745 the expedition set sail from the American colonies. First they went to Canso to prepare for the assault on Louisbourg. At the same time, part of the British fleet set out to blockade the French port. Spring drift ice delayed the attack for a while.

Louisbourg's defenders had to deal with several weaknesses. First, there was low morale among the troops because of a mutiny over living conditions the previous winter. Second, the garrison numbered only 500-600 soldiers, with another 900-1000 militia. That was not a large force. Third, the defences had their weak points. The Royal Battery was under repair and there were nearby hills dominating the major bastions. Fourth, without strong naval support Louisbourg could be blockaded. The port would be able to last only as long as it had supplies. Without reinforcements or additional provisions, Louisbourg would be taken.

The New England attack force approached the siege with strength and confidence. The land force consisted of approximately 4000 soldiers, organized into nine regiments from Massachusetts, one from New Hampshire, and one from Connecticut. The naval force numbered over 100 vessels, the most important of which were British warships, under the command of Sir Peter Warren.

In the early morning of 11 May 1745 the ships of the attacking fleet entered Gabarus Bay. Within hours the New Englanders landed. The French force sent to oppose them was too small and too late. The next day the French decided to abandon the Royal Battery. With the English safely ashore down the coast there was little hope that the battery could defend itself against an attack from the rear. Before they left the French "spiked" the cannons, so they could not be re-used. On May 13 the New Englanders took over the battery. Several of the abandoned French cannons were repaired and put into use by the attackers.

The besiegers soon established gun batteries to fire into the town. As the siege progressed, the attacking cannon positions moved closer and closer to the fortress walls. The Mi'kmaq fought the New Englanders several times along the coast outside Louisbourg. The largest fight at Little Lorraine involved approximately 180 Mi'kmaq and French against 400 New Englanders.

In another battle, New Englanders tried to take the Island Battery by boat. They failed miserably with a heavy loss of life. The attackers then changed their tactics and established a battery on Lighthouse Point, from which they could bombard the Island Battery. This was successful, with the French cannons on the island being silenced on June 24. Two days later all firing ceased and the two sides negotiated the terms of a surrender. On June 27 an agreement was reached.

Within a few weeks, nearly all the inhabitants of the town boarded ships headed for France. There they would stay until a peace treaty (signed in 1748) ended the war.

The retention in Boston of Mi'kmaq captives prevented the Mi'kmaq and the British from achieving a peace treaty for a number of years.

When France and Britain signed a peace treaty, Cape Breton was handed back to France. Louisbourg was re-occupied by the French during the summer of 1749. That same summer the new settlement of Halifax was established by the British, to counterbalance the stronghold at Louisbourg.

In 1745 the deciding factor was the besiegers' superiority in naval and land forces. Like any fortified town, Louisbourg could only hold out for a limited time. The distance to French reinforcements or supplies was too great to be overcome. That distance, and British naval superiority, sealed the fate of the fortress.

## • 1895

The year 1895 had two banner events - the opening of the Sydney and Louisburg Railway and the ceremonies to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the 1745 siege.

In the first half of the 20th century coal was a source of livelihood for the people of Louisbourg. Coal had been mined on Cape Breton since the time of the French, but with no great economic success. This changed dramatically in 1893 when H. M. Whitney and other industrialists from Montreal and Boston created the Dominion Coal Company. Whitney gained control of independent coal mines, a fleet of coal boats and the railway line between Sydney and Reserve Mines. Whitney and his fellow industrialists recognized that to develop and keep markets it was necessary to ship coal year round. The result was the extension of the rail line from Reserve Mines through Morien, Mira, Catalone and on to Louisbourg.

Louisbourg Harbour attracted attention in the 1890s for the same reason that it drew the French to Louisbourg in 1713. During the winter the harbour remains relatively ice free. Consequently, most of the coal shipped from Cape Breton in the winter was able to leave through Louisbourg. Once a steel plant was established in Sydney at the turn of



the century, iron ore arrived through Louisbourg and finished steel products left the harbour in winter. Louisbourg was also the winter terminus for the Newfoundland ferry, a bunkering port for ships, and a staging area for materials and supplies during both World Wars. All this was possible because of the Sydney and Louisburg line.

The S&L affected the way of life in Louisbourg. A small fishing village for most of the 1800s, it grew quickly with the coming of the railroad. In 1901 Louisbourg was incorporated as a municipality with a mayor and six councillors. People from outlying settlements such as Big Lorraine, Baleine and Clarke's Road moved into town. A Presbyterian church and manse was built as were houses for Roman Catholic and Methodist clergy. For a time Baptists and the Salvation Army had houses of worship in Louisbourg.



The S&L Station - A Provincial Heritage Property

The S&L line opened Louisbourg to a larger world by making access to Sydney and the growing coal town of Glace Bay easier. The line also had impacts on the social life of the town, transporting church groups to the Mira for picnics and ferrying out berry pickers, fishermen and hunters.

The 1950s saw the S&L with 31 steam locomotives operating on 116 miles of track. The railroad employed 400 men, and hauled 4,000,000 tons of freight annually - more per mile than any other railroad in Canada.

The decline in the world demand for coal in the 1960s spelled the end for the S&L. By 1968 the track between Louisbourg and Port Morien was torn up. The Louisbourg station stood derelict until saved by local railroad enthusiasts and former S&L employees. The new Sydney & Louisburg Railway Museum opened officially in June 1972.

Today the S&L station is a provincial heritage property and the only remaining station of the Dominion Coal Company. It is operated and maintained as a museum and tourist bureau by the Sydney & Louisburg Railway Historical Society and receives more than 20,000 visitors each summer.

The other 1895 event of importance in Louisbourg was the Society of Colonial Wars visit and the unveiling of a red granite column at the fortress site. Memories of that event lived on in the minds of citizens for generations.

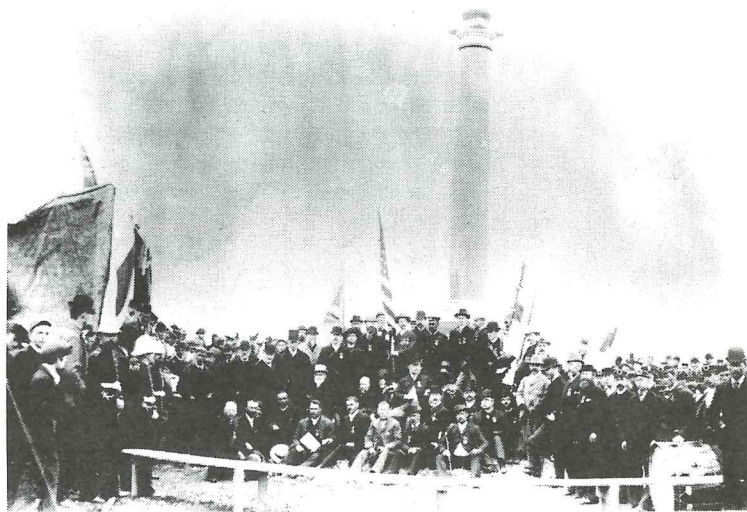
The Society of Colonial Wars was organized in New York in 1892. Soon there were chapters in other states. The pur-

pose of the Society was to commemorate events from pre-revolutionary period of the United States.

One of the first projects of the Society was to erect a monument at Louisbourg to mark the 150th anniversary of the New England siege of 1745. The announcement of the idea was not greeted with universal applause. Three French-language newspapers and the Antigonish Casket protested the idea of a group from a foreign country raising a monument on Canadian soil to what had been a Canadian defeat. Additional protests came from the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada. Still, the ceremony went ahead.

On June 17, 1895, two trains carrying 1000 people left Sydney. The first train carried Lieutenant Governor Daly of Nova Scotia, the Society of Colonial Wars committee, the Sydney committee and guests. The Lieutenant Governor was met at the waterfront by a cutter from H.S.S. Canada and was taken aboard. The actual ceremony was delayed from noon until 3:55 PM to permit the more than 2000 visitors to assemble. According to the official Report of the Committee on Louisbourg Memorial, "*Her Britannic Majesty's ship Canada, the Dominion cruiser Curlew, and merchant vessels anchored in the harbor displayed their colours, the Canada being dressed in bunting from stem to stern. Flags were also flying over many houses in the town, and the streets filled with people, as the event was a great gala day for Louisbourg and vicinity. Many of the churches held bazaars, and, near the site of the monument, tents and platforms were erected, where the lads and lassies were dancing to the inspiring music of bagpipes.*"

The Louisbourg Committee included: H.C.V. Levatte - Chairman, Edward S. McAlpine - Secretary, James MacPhee - Treasurer, Rev. T. Fraser Draper, Neil J. Townsend, Charles R. Mitchell, Wm W. Lewis and Roderick McDonald.



Some of the 2000 visitors attending the Society of Colonial Wars commemoration on June 17, 1895

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