



Heritage Notes

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The Town of Louisbourg in 1901

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In 1901 the mood in the newly-incorporated Town of Louisbourg was optimistic. The population stood at 1046. Six years earlier, in 1895, the Dominion Coal Company opened the Sydney and Louisbourg Railway line. In the town the Company constructed the S&L station, the coal pier and, a few years later, a freight pier. Louisbourg became a major transshipment port for coal, during the winter, and a year round fueling depot for steamships. There was a small but healthy fishery and some people were promoting tourism related to the historic ruins in the Old Town. Modern Louisbourg was a town of wood shingled houses and businesses, railroad tracks and coal dust, dominated by the coal pier and the steamers waiting to load. Here is a glimpse of Louisbourg in 1901 as reflected in the *Sydney Daily Record* and the *Sydney Daily Post*.

Louisbourg is Incorporated

On January 8, 1901 the ratepayers of Louisbourg voted 111 to 57 in favour of incorporation. The move for incorporation was led by Captain William W. Lewis, a merchant and relative newcomer to Louisbourg. He was supported by H.C.V. Levatte, born in Main à Dieu, but living in Louisbourg for a number of years. Levatte was the Warden of Cape Breton County and the main source of Liberal political power in the area. The motive behind incorporating was to put Louisbourg in a position where tax incentives and free land could be promised to industries wishing to locate here.

The *Daily Record* had anticipated a closer vote. It was rumoured that many of those who had been in favour of incorporation had changed their minds. The anti-incorporation lobby felt that by waiting until 1902 Louisbourg would have obtained certain "concessions" from the Provincial and County governments.

But the generally favourable support for the move in 1901 is reflected in the *Daily Record* for January 11 which states that, "It is certainly a somewhat small community to have its own chief magistrate and other administrative machinery, and will probably in point of population be the smallest incorporated town in the province. In point of importance

however it will not be the least. Not population, altogether but the enterprise and public spiritedness of its citizens determines the standing of a town or any community. That the people of Louisbourg are not lacking in these qualities is evident enough. Their determination to take up the burden of a separate and independent civic life shows this. It is also shown recently in their laying of a complete system of water works, a public utility to which many large towns throughout the county have not yet attained. Apart from this however Louisbourg has her prospects. She has the prospect of becoming one of the chief winter ports of Canada."

The municipal boundaries restricted the new Town to the north-east section of Louisbourg Harbour and did not include either the Old Town or West Louisbourg.

Notices were posted for election of a mayor and six councillors with nominations open until the 25th of ~~February~~ ^{Jan}. On that day William W. Lewis, the only nominee for mayor, was declared the winner. Election for councillors took place on February 1. The results of this first civic election were Neil Townsend 138, Joseph O'Toole 114, John E. Tutty 111, Fletcher Townsend 110, Dan J. McInnis 108, W. P. Cann 94, Duncan Lamont 85 and Edward S. McAlpine 48. The first six were declared elected. The only change to the slate until the next annual election resulted from the resignation of O'Toole and his replacement by James MacPhee in July 1901.

The political mix of the new council, according to the *Daily Record* for February 6, included a Liberal mayor, 3 Liberal councillors and 3 Conservative councillors.



Captain William W. Lewis the first mayor of Louisbourg