



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).

