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# Presenting the past: A case study of interpretive development at the fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park (Nova Scotia).

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**PRESENTING THE PAST:  
A CASE STUDY OF INTERPRETIVE DEVELOPMENT  
AT THE FORTRESS OF LOUISBOURG NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK**

by  
Melanie A. Townsend

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
Through the Department of History  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts at the  
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1994

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## ABSTRACT

By examining museum journals and in-house reports this thesis provides a historiographical analysis on the literature of the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, tracing its physical and philosophical evolution in relation to the contemporary issues that influenced its development. It disputes the characterization of historic sites as tidy packages that reinforce a perception of the past that is fixed and complete. This thesis suggests that public presentations should not be marginalized, but taken seriously and viewed critically because they serve as milestones for gauging the factors that influence our evolving perception of the past.

This study demonstrates how historic sites can mark developing trends in museum philosophy, research, historiography and the changing role of the past in contemporary political rhetoric and decision-making. Thus it provides an example of the potential in studying the interpretation and function of historic sites, and demonstrates the differences between conventional academic investigations and site interpretation. The application of a historiographical analysis to site development is uncommon, but the method permits the illustration of the possibilities of collaboration between professionals in the two fields.

**DEDICATION**

**To my hero, Big Ada.**

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## **PREFACE: Eighteenth-Century Louisbourg and the Origins of a Historic Site**

The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park is a reconstruction of the French colonial base on that site during the first half of the eighteenth century. Since the final defeat of the French in 1760, the site was abandoned and unfortunately, over the course of the following two centuries, Louisbourg's past remained, for the most part, ignored. The reconstruction of the Fortress which began in 1960 facilitated a reconsideration of the site's historical significance.

Throughout the War of Spanish Succession, Britain and France jockeyed for colonial supremacy. Ended by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the war significantly eroded French dominance in the New World. As a result, approximately seven hundred people from Plaisance, Acadia and France settled at Louisbourg and began fishing, trading and the establishment of a new French military stronghold.<sup>1</sup>

In 1745, war again broke out between Britain and France. British colonists in New England had grown resentful of Louisbourg because it had become a rival for trade and territory.<sup>2</sup> In addition, French privateers used the fortress as a base from which to launch raids against British merchant ships, while the French colonial government encouraged local Micmacs to raid across the border.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A.B.J. Johnston, The Summer of 1744: A Portrait of Life in 18th Century Louisbourg (Ottawa, Canada: National Historic Sites, Parks Canada, 1991), p.11. Some discussion of the strategic decisions involved in the choice of Louisbourg is available in J.S. McLennan's "Louisbourg: An Outpost of Empire," Canada and its Provinces, vol.1. Adam Shortt ed. pp.202-203.

<sup>2</sup>Julian Gwyn, "War and Economic Change: Louisbourg and the New England Economy in the 1740s," University of Ottawa Quarterly. 1977, pp.11-17. also see George A. Rawlyk's Yankees at Louisbourg, (Orono, Maine: 1967).

<sup>3</sup>"Fortress of Louisbourg Restoration Programme, 1966," Research Report, Record Group R 13, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, p.4.

Later that year, New England merchants and militiamen organized an expedition to attack Louisbourg, and after 46 days of siege the New Englanders were victorious. While they occupied the town they set about cleaning up debris, repairing and modifying the defences and adapting buildings to their own specifications. As for the French, the majority were exiled to France.<sup>4</sup>

Three years later, Ile Royale was returned to France by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. In 1749, those French settlers who had been exiled from Louisbourg returned to resume fishing and trading as before. Once reinstated, the French strengthened the defences of their fortress, although even with these improvements the fortress was not strong enough to withstand the second siege that occurred in 1758. The tactics of the English were strongly rooted in the successes of the first siege and again Louisbourg soon fell to British forces.<sup>5</sup> By 1760, the British began a systematic demolition of all its defences, and within a few weeks the massive fortress had crumpled into a heap of rubble.

For over a hundred years the rubble of Louisbourg remained undisturbed. Ownership of the site fell into the hands of several private residents, who used it primarily as grazing land. Shacks and dilapidated dwellings marked the landscape, while cattle, sheep and horses roamed the unkempt fields where once a bustling town had existed a century before. With the exception of historians who were interested in Louisbourg's role in the Anglo-French colonial struggle for North America, few people gave the site much thought.

By the late nineteenth century a new sensibility about Louisbourg and its ruins developed. Individuals in the Maritimes and elsewhere began to feel that the area deserved both commemoration and preservation. Despite growing enthusiasm in Canada during the last quarter of the nineteenth century for raising monuments,

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.5. For a detailed discussion on the weakness of the Fortress and a detailed account of the 1745 seige see John S. McLennan's "Outpost of an Empire," pp.213-218.

<sup>5</sup>"Fortress of Louisbourg Restoration Programme, 1966," Research Report, Record Group R 13, p.5.

Louisbourg was not among sites chosen for commemoration. Ironically, its first memorial during the nineteenth century came not from Canada, or even France or Britain, but from the United States as a means to promote New England's history through the Society of Colonial Wars.<sup>6</sup>

In 1903, retired Royal Navy captain, D.J. Kennelly organized the Louisbourg Memorial Association and initiated the purchase of properties around the former fortress. His activities were responsible for the passage in 1906 of an act in the Nova Scotia Legislature that declared Louisbourg a historic monument.<sup>7</sup> The act named eleven individuals as formal trustees of the Louisbourg ruins and gave them the power to acquire land and regulate the site however they deemed necessary.

After Kennelly's death in 1907, fund-raising efforts and restoration work ceased and no new initiatives were forthcoming for the next five years. The issue of governmental jurisdiction served to further delay preservation efforts because historic sites were not initially part of the Department of the Interior's mandate, or that of any other ministry. While a number of fortifications throughout Canada that had long outlived their military usefulness were controlled by the Department of Militia and Defence, no set procedures existed to transfer the land to a different department. The only body actively examining the question of historic site development at the time was the Historic Landmarks Association, a non-governmental body that became the Canadian Historical Association in 1922. Despite its knowledge of Canadian history and its ability to make recommendations for federal recognition, the Association lacked the resources and

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<sup>6</sup>A.B.J. Johnston, "Preserving History: The Commemoration of 18th Century Louisbourg, 1895-1940," *Fortress of Louisbourg, Preliminary Report*, January 1983, p.4 Johnston's study offers the only history of the Site's development from colonial base to national historic site. This study is also published in the 1983 Spring issue of *Acadiensis*.

<sup>7</sup>Doris Megill, "The ill-fated Fortress," *The Canadian Geographical Journal*, vol.83, no.4 (1971), p.123; also see Johnston "Preserving History" p.10

power to take significant action on its suggestions. In 1919, a partial solution to the problem was found when the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada was created. The Parks Branch of the Department of the Interior preferred to create a simple advisory committee without executive or financial power that would offer advice to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board Committee. Their proposals, however, were far more ambitious than either the HSMBC or the Parks Branch could support and neither was in any position to fund the development. The HSMBC had virtually no financial or political power, while the Parks Branch committed only five percent of its budget to historic sites because the bulk of its financial resources was spent on the natural parks in the West.<sup>8</sup>

Uncertainties surrounding land ownership also stifled development at the site. Ownership was divided among the Kennelly estate, the Cape Breton Railway Company and more than two dozen local families. Walter Crowe, a member of the HSMBC, directed the passage of a bill through the Nova Scotia legislature that would transfer the Kennelly lots, more than 70 acres of historic Louisbourg, from the site's trustees to the control of the Department of the Interior.<sup>9</sup>

In 1928 the federal government appropriated \$19,000 for the purchase of most of the private holdings at historic Louisbourg and an additional \$3,000 was provided for the initial development of the lands acquired. By the end of the summer of 1928, the federal government had secured thirteen properties for the Louisbourg site. With most of the fortress lands now in its possession, the government declared Louisbourg a national historic site and removed the dozen or so homes scattered over the site between 1928 and 1931.<sup>10</sup> Despite the lack of funds Crowe persuaded the Parks Branch by the late nineteen-twenties to provide

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.15.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.13 & 16 ; also see Edward Larabee, "Archaeological Research at the Fortress of Louisbourg 1961-1965," Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, no.2 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1971), p.11.

<sup>10</sup>A.B.J. Johnston, "Preserving History," pp17-18.

annual grants to the Louisbourg site for the purposes of excavating the remaining fortifications, and identifying of particular points of interest.

The trust was carried on by Senator J.S. McLennan's daughter, Katharine. The federal government extended its protection over the site in 1928 and built a museum there in 1936 to house and display artifacts related to Louisbourg.<sup>11</sup> The opening of the museum represented the culmination of years of effort to preserve, develop and acknowledge Louisbourg as a significant site in Canadian history.<sup>12</sup> For the moment, tourism seemed to be only incidental in the minds of these early promoters, although it later became the argument upon which preservation initiatives were justified.

By the end of the 1950s, many of the site's fortifications were altered by amateur attempts to stabilize and explore the ruins, but none of these were accompanied by archaeological excavation. More professional attempts to assess the fortress were launched in 1959 when J. Russell Harper was sent to Louisbourg by the National Historic Sites Service of the federal government to conduct exploratory excavations that were to serve as an archaeological feasibility study. His work identified excavation conditions, several types of structures and artifacts, and the physical condition of buildings and objects in designated areas. Although his work was not intensive in any one area, it was useful for guiding later detailed investigation and development throughout the large-scale restoration of the 1960s.<sup>13</sup>

All of the reconstruction programs throughout the mid-twentieth century, however, were initiated in an attempt to create employment. In 1930 petitions

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<sup>11</sup>"New Historical Museum Building on Site of Louisbourg Fortress," Ottawa Journal, (June 27, 1936), Nova Scotia Public Archives, Record Group MG 1 vol. 1792 F 3/8, Halifax, Nova Scotia. also see "Lord Tweedsmuir Officially Opens Federal Museum," Sydney Post Record, (Monday, October 4, 1937), p.1 & 4.

<sup>12</sup>A.J.B. Johnston, "Preserving History," p.21.

<sup>13</sup>Edward Larabee, "Archaeological Research at the Fortress of Louisbourg, 1961-1965," p.12.

from the communities of Sydney, New Waterford and Glace Bay appealed to the federal government to rebuild the Louisbourg Fortress, primarily as a plan to employ 2,000 unemployed youth and to attract thousands of tourist dollars into the Cape Breton economy.<sup>14</sup> Similar sentiments were echoed again in 1941 and in 1960 when the Royal Commission on Coal recommended the promotion of the reconstruction by the federal government as a scheme to increase employment in Cape Breton. Meanwhile reports from the Nova Scotia Information Service proclaimed that the reconstruction had "historical appeal far beyond our continental limits and should bring vast economic benefits to this entire region," by attracting tourists to the area and creating employment.<sup>15</sup> Despite opposition to the government's rigorous efforts to expropriate residential land for the project, critics were silenced by the general belief that the project would bring economic salvation to the region.<sup>16</sup>

Louisbourg became something much different than its original proponents intended. Reconstruction efforts after 1960 have served as a barometer of theories of regional economic development, commemorative programs, nationalist rhetoric, trends in history and the development of museum philosophy. Louisbourg became more than a job-creation project; it reflected the national political environment, the changing conventions of historical interpretation and the public presentation of the past. These influences shaped the fortress' presentation as well as established a

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<sup>14</sup>"Petition Re: the Louisbourg Fortress from Glace Bay and Adjoining Districts (5), Sydney and Adjoining Districts (2), New Waterford and Adjoining Districts (1), 1930," Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Record Group MG 4 #81, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

<sup>15</sup>"Nova Scotia Information Service Press Release, Manson, Hon. E.A. Minister of Trade and Industry, to the Louisbourg Restoration Committee, December 3, 1962," Record Group MG 100 vol.61 #97, Nova Scotia Public Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia. p.2.

<sup>16</sup>These sentiments were echoed by a variety of individuals Alf Nathanson, then President of the Sydney Board of Trade, cited them in a letter to the editor "An Appeal from Cape Breton," Chronicle Herald, (July 25, 1960), p.4; for support of job creation efforts see "Work Plan for Miners," Chronicle Herald, (June 19, 1961), p.1. and discussion on the land expropriation debate see "Land Expropriation Starts." Chronicle Herald, (January 30, 1962), p.11.

**new testing ground for museum development and inter-disciplinary historical investigations.**

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the physical and interpretive development of The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park from two perspectives. First, it describes the transformation of the site from a forgotten colonial port to an interpreted historic site. Second, it analyzes the relationship between contemporary political and cultural issues such as nationalism, regional economics and changing perceptions about the past and their influence on presentation and interpretation. This study investigates Louisbourg's early commemoration and the factors that led to its partial reconstruction, but it focuses primarily on the period from 1960 to the present.

By examining museum literature and in-house reports and performing a historiographical analysis on the literature of the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, this thesis addresses the larger issue of how perceptions of the past take shape. In this case study, the physical and philosophical evolution of the Louisbourg project is traced in relation to the contemporary issues that influenced development. The problems discussed here are applicable beyond public depictions of the past, although they have received little attention from academic historians.<sup>1</sup> The debates of many university historians to a large degree remain confined within their discipline and thus they remain unaware of how public presentations function or contribute to their audience's understanding of history. The continued isolation of academia from the professional public history movement emerging from historic sites, museum and other mediums it is argued, has created an artificial distinction between public and academic historical endeavors. At the same time professionals working in the public domain have

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<sup>1</sup>This issue is in part addressed by the collaborative works found in Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig Eds., Presenting the Past Essays on History and the Public, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).



gone (until recently) without academic training that provides them with a basic understanding of historical analysis, and museum literature has lacked an alternative perspective on the past that academics could provide.

The research for this thesis suggests that public presentations of history should not be marginalized, and they must be taken seriously and viewed critically if we hope to continue to understand the factors that influence our evolving perception of the past. This thesis provides an example of the potential in studying the interpretation and function of historic sites, and it demonstrates the differences between conventional academic investigations and site interpretation. The application of historiographical analysis to site development is uncommon, but the method permits the illustration of the possibilities of collaboration between professionals in the two fields.

The preface briefly examines the early commemoration and development of Louisbourg when historic sites and the museum profession were still in their infancy. As a site of "national interest" promoters determined that Louisbourg was an ideal candidate for development and thus, Louisbourg became a means through which the government could satisfy public demands for preservation while still actively promoting a national identity. Cape Breton's employment crisis, subsequent federal intervention and a new appreciation for the educational value of historic sites were the primary forces that shaped Louisbourg throughout the 1950s.

Chapter one discusses Louisbourg throughout the 1960s, when researchers and archaeologists began a unique, full-scale interdisciplinary examination of the past. Its physical and philosophical development continued to be influenced by politics, economic considerations and trends in the museum community. Nationalistic rhetoric proclaimed Louisbourg's past as the embodiment of the heritage of Canada's two founding peoples. Tensions in Quebec, such as the

Quiet Revolution, the FLQ crisis and the official adoption of bilingualism, demanded an acknowledgment of Canada's French heritage, and Louisbourg became a means through which that heritage could be embraced and appreciated.

During the 1960s, interpretive staff believed that they could "re-create" the past. Chapters two and three examine the Park from 1970 to the present and illustrate the acknowledgment by staff that the reconstruction was not a re-creation of the past, but a tool for understanding it. Keeping pace with museum philosophy, Louisbourg's staff planned programs and exhibits with the intent of communicating and interpreting its past, although public programs were also significantly influenced by the perception of Louisbourg in history. In the 1960s historians regarded the fortress as a pivotal site in the battle for North America in the eighteenth century, consequently interpretive programs explored Louisbourg's military past. As academic historians began to explore social elements of the past in the early 1970s, research and interpretive plans were modified to include Louisbourg's civilian population and to expand economic and social themes in the Park's programming. Attempts in the 1970s to present a more comprehensive examination of Louisbourg's past were in part a response to the site's new role in public education. This educational duty, in addition to debates within the museum community over the legitimacy of an interpretive role for historic sites, resulted in a serious questioning of Louisbourg's interpretive programming. Chapter three deals specifically with the Park after 1980 and discusses the validity of these debates and their influence on interpretation at Louisbourg.

Chapter four assesses the arguments for and against historic sites. In light of issues such as cultural sensitivity and new developments in museum philosophy and academic history, this chapter evaluates the successes and failures of Louisbourg's animation, interpretation and exhibition programs. Louisbourg is not without problems, but its programs are based on extensive research and

responsible interpretation. More importantly, the project has expanded our understanding of the eighteenth-century colony, raising heritage consciousness there and beyond.

Like academic history, Louisbourg's physical reconstruction and interpretation evolved under the influence of contemporary issues that offered new possibilities to examine and understand the past. The adoption of its interdisciplinary approach was virtually unprecedented and contributed to Louisbourg's unique contribution to public memory. Over the last 35 years Louisbourg's staff have shaped and reshaped the public's understanding of its past. This thesis disputes the characterization of historic sites as tidy packages which reinforce a perception of the past that is fixed, closed and complete.<sup>2</sup> It concludes that the staff at Louisbourg has been responsive to new trends in historiography which have led to a re-evaluation of the relevance and legitimacy of its presentations.

Typically academic historians, however, have shied from employing artifacts as primarily sources but public historians are now paving the way for understanding the bias and potential of these sources. Historic sites have shown how artifacts now have a place in our understanding of the past, providing another element in knowing those individuals who have not left records. Artifacts compliment traditional literary sources serving as illustrations of them as well as helping to pose new questions for historians. Thus this thesis has implications beyond the history of site development at Louisbourg. It suggest the arbitrariness of the distinction between academic and public historians, and it illustrates the potential for collaboration.

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<sup>2</sup>Chris Miller-Marti, "Local History Museums and the Creation of the Past," Muse, (Summer, 1986), p.36.; David Lowenthal's "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," The Geographical Review, vol.LXV, No.1 (January 1975), pp.1-36 and The Past is a Foreign Country, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). ; Marcella Sherfy, "Honesty in Interpreting the Cultural Past," Parks, vol.3, no.4. (January/ March, 1979), p.14.

**CHAPTER ONE: Unearthing the Past 1960-1970,  
from a make-work project to an interpretive historic site**

When Parks Canada broke ground in 1961, it embarked on a project larger than anyone could have anticipated; not only was the reconstruction the largest of its kind in North America, but it also became a testing ground for a full scale interdisciplinary examination of the past. Archaeologists, historians, architects and material specialists worked together to uncover the past of the eighteenth-century fortress. The following chapter is a history of the research and reconstruction of Louisbourg as well as an account of how the interpretation of the site was shaped by politics, trends in academic history and the development of museum philosophy.

Regional economic realities continued to be the most significant factors in Louisbourg's development but politics also spurred the reconstruction on. The use of the Fortress as a tool for promoting Canada's French and English heritage was necessitated by the desire to support the recent Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and the need to attempt to quell Quebec's Quiet Revolution. Interpretive plans to develop Louisbourg's military past were influenced by trends in academic history which tended to view the Fortress as inevitably doomed. The site's promotion as an allusion of the past reflected generally ideologies in the museum community that regarded historic sites as vehicles for public education.

A brief summary of the events leading to the federal government's decision on reconstruction will help to establish the justification of the site's development throughout the 1960s. The first recommendation for full-scale reconstruction of the Fortress came from Chief Justice Rand's 1960 Royal Commission on Coal. Rand's Commission, as well as other recommendations for reconstruction, were initiated as a means to alleviate the unemployment that ensued in Cape Breton as a result of the closing of most of the island's coal mines. Prime Minister

Diefenbaker announced the reconstruction in the House of Commons on June 17, 1961, touting the program as a means of teaching the nation's history to its citizens and visitors.<sup>1</sup>

In March of 1962, the federal cabinet allocated 12 million dollars over the next 12 years, an amount that would be increased several times during the years to come. Construction commenced on July 1, 1962; land sought by the government totaled 11, 350 acres surrounding the fortress site, and a 1, 050 acre lot east of the site. Much to the dismay of many locals, land expropriations began almost immediately.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest priorities for work on the Fortress, outlined in a submission by the Associate Board of Trade of Cape Breton Island, on March 11, 1959, proposed that cobblestone streets be uncovered and that overhead wiring and poles be converted to underground communication. Plans aimed to restore the original appearance of the excavation.<sup>3</sup> Additional initiatives focused on the reconstruction of the fortifications and auxiliary works that existed at the Fortress between 1713 and 1760 together with those used by the British attackers. Consideration was also given to the reproduction of ships of war, merchant ships and fishing boats to ride at anchor in the Louisbourg harbour or mounted as derelict on the shore. The ambitious plans were indicative of a lack of appreciation of the magnitude of the

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<sup>1</sup>Chester A. Bloom, "Fort Louisbourg," The Cape Breton Post, June 20, 1961, The Public Archives of Nova Scotia Report Group, MG 100 vol.61 #112 et al., Halifax, Nova Scotia.

<sup>2</sup>"Home Owners Protest Property Takeover," The Chronicle Herald, (December 10, 1962), Nova Scotia Public Archives, Record Group MG 100 vol.61 #113 also see "Fortress Home Owners Won't Get Extra Cash," (February 4, 1963), Nova Scotia Public Archives, Record Group MG 100 #114, "Homeowners ask N.S. Government Why should we Suffer?," (March 6, 1963), Nova Scotia Public Archives, Record Group #115, "Restored French Fortress to be Showplace of Canada," (June 26, 1963), Nova Scotia Public Archives, Record Group #116, and Edward Larrabee, "Archaeological Research at the Fortress of Louisbourg, 1961-1965." Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, vol.2, (Ottawa: Canadian Historic Sites, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1971), pp.4-5.

<sup>3</sup>"Proposal for Partial Restoration of the Fortress of Louisbourg, March 1961," Research Report, Record Group R 02 Appendix, "Submission by Associate Boards of Trade of Cape Breton Island, L.J. Doucet, President. March 11, 1959," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

project, something that later became clear as troubles arose from research investigations.<sup>4</sup> Other recommendations included restoration of the original thoroughfares and street furnishings of original type and the production of native vegetation. Furthermore, the existing museum would be contradictory although in the early stages it would be employed as a visitor reception center. Installation of hydrants and other fire prevention devices demanded attention as did plans for heating and cooling. Location had to be chosen with care so as to not intrude on the historical environment.

Early work commencing in 1961 focused investigations on the Royal Battery. A survey commenced of the surrounding area for outlying siege work, while accession work began on the quickly accumulating artifact collection.<sup>5</sup> All work focused on the fortress' military structures and primarily on the Citadel, with some excavation of its living quarters and major trenching across the fortifications of the King's Bastion, though no one element of the Citadel received complete investigation.<sup>6</sup>

Work began in the summer of 1961, clearing an area for administration buildings, laboratories and work shops, followed by a recruitment program to find historians and archaeologists needed for research.<sup>7</sup> Program initiatives in 1961 detailed the selection of specific buildings throughout the former town, but at no point was there any intention to reconstruct the Fortress completely.<sup>8</sup> Intentions to restore the Grand Battery, the Island Battery, French military vessels, ocean trade

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<sup>4</sup>"A Plan for the Restoration of the Fortress of Louisbourg and the Area Surrounding the Fortress which has Historical Significance, February, 1960," Record Group R 01 and PD 34, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.7-8.

<sup>5</sup>Edward Larrabee, "Archaeological Research at the Fortress of Louisbourg, 1961-1965," p.15.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.15.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. p.12. also see John Fortier, "Patterns of Research at Louisbourg: The Reconstruction Enters Its Second Decade," Canada- An Historical Magazine, vol.1, no.4. (June 1974), p.3.

<sup>8</sup>Ronald Way, "Initial Report by Ronald Way, Recommendations Concerning the Louisbourg Restoration Project, September, 1961," Research Report, Record Group R 04, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.10.

vessels and reconstruction of defenses at Gabarous Bay did not take visitor access and financial costs into account and were soon abandoned in favour of more realistic compromises. Proposals also suggested the reconstruction of the seawall moat and surrounding fortifications as well as the chapel, a corner of the hospital, bakery, tavern, a woman's shop, the apothecary, prison and a sample representation of homes typical of Louisbourg. As well, provisions were made for the reconstruction of a corner of the soldier's barracks, gun emplacements, including those of the attackers, a ship chandler's shop, a gunsmith's shop, and the king's garden.<sup>9</sup> These plans indicate a tendency towards the interpretation of the military aspects of the Fortress' past.

By the summer of 1963, work concentrated on the circuit around the King's Bastion. Archaeologists completed excavation of the left flank and the right face casemates as well as the living quarters of the Citadel. Excavations also began on the Star Fort, the area of three small earthworks that the British constructed after Louisbourg's 1760 demolition.<sup>10</sup> Efforts to increase staff by the end of the spring of 1964 were intended to keep archaeological and historical research ahead of construction, and to improve the quality, speed and pertinence of the archaeological reports. Excavations continued and were aimed toward obtaining thorough information from areas that were to be completely altered and reconstructed. Less critical areas, such as earthworks, were excavated less intensively by test pits and trenches, but all were intended to yield the most accurate reconstruction.<sup>11</sup> By the mid-1960s the staff abandoned initial plans for reconstructing one building here, stabilizing a ruin there and leaving untouched

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<sup>9</sup>"Proposal for Partial Restoration of the Fortress of Louisbourg, March 1961," Research Report, Record Group R 02, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.10. also see Ronald Way, "Initial Report by Ronald Way, Recommendations Concerning the Louisbourg Restoration Project, September, 1961," pp.11, 15, 31.

<sup>10</sup>Edward Larrabee, "Archaeological Research at the Fortress of Louisbourg 1961-1965," pp.14-17.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p.17.

areas between because it feared that such a random scheme would fail to create any meaningful atmosphere for the visitor. Staff developed a new plan to reconstruct a corner of the town comprising approximately one-fifth of the original site.<sup>12</sup>

Once initial plans were compiled, the looming task of research began. Archaeological research was already underway to provide information about structures planned for reconstruction and areas that risked being destroyed or disturbed as a result of reconstruction elsewhere. According to restoration historian Edward Larrabee, a major element in the archaeological program began, in the fall of 1963 to fill in the missing pieces created by overzealous reconstructive efforts.<sup>13</sup> Larrabee argued that this was part of a larger research program in which staff attempted to bring archaeological and historical studies into proper sequence. In doing so, project staff established an ordered dialogue between the disciplines, one that would present the evidence and draw the conclusions for an accurate mental reconstruction of the Fortress.<sup>14</sup>

Much of the archaeological work was as productive as it was destructive because any information that could not be rescued in the reconstruction area would be "irrevocably destroyed by the process of total reconstruction."<sup>15</sup> Determining the alignment and slope of walls and particularly the elevations of related features depended on excavation analysis. Despite the mass of cartographic evidence available, historical data yielded no such information. Most of the details that lent accuracy to the reconstruction of stone work, masonry, hardware and furnishings came from archaeological investigation.<sup>16</sup> Once a feature at Louisbourg had

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<sup>12</sup>"An Introduction to the Fortress of Louisbourg, September 1973," History Report, Record Group H F 62R, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, Section IV Planning p.1.

<sup>13</sup>Edward Larrabee, "Archaeological Research at the Fortress of Louisbourg 1961-1965," p.13.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p.13.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.



undergone historical and archaeological research, a design team composed of historians, archaeologists, draftsmen, engineers and interpreters collaborated to produce preliminary design drawings that helped to form the final construction drawings.<sup>17</sup> Reconstructing what remains from the past involved not only literary sources but also physical investigation that could only result from interdisciplinary investigations. Researchers at Louisbourg were put into channels of research and job situations often quite different from their training, every day working with colleagues in different disciplines, to solve design, research and interpretation problems. This interdisciplinary approach is still unorthodox in other professions, according to staff historian John Fortier, yet it was essential for Louisbourg's effective and thorough presentation.<sup>18</sup>

Despite volumes of archaeological research and archival data, early efforts to develop Louisbourg were not specific enough to guide the reconstruction or interpretation of the initial phases of Louisbourg's development between 1961 and 1964. The pressure to create employment sped the project at a rate faster than the Park's staff could effectively handle and the fact remained that Parks Canada lacked the experience necessary to launch such an ambitious project.<sup>19</sup> Construction was underway with little time to conduct extensive research. Pressure resulted in historians simultaneously gathering, organizing and analyzing masses of evidence against urgent deadlines, while archaeologists had to excavate sites before all the historical data could be made available. Staff are still attempting to remedy the loss of evidence, errors in structural design and some

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<sup>17</sup>John Fortier, "The Fortress of Louisbourg Development: 1961-1968." Park Development Report, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Record Group PD 08, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.15.

<sup>18</sup>John Fortier, "Patterns of Research at Louisbourg: The Reconstruction Enters its Second Decade," *Canada: An Historical Magazine*, vol.1, no.4. (June 1974), p.12.

<sup>19</sup>Terry MacLean, "Historical Research at Louisbourg: A Case Study in Museum Research and Development," *Cape Breton at 200, Historical Essays in Honour of the Island's Bicentennial 1785-1985*, (Sydney, Nova Scotia: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1985), p.21.

architectural gaucheries that resulted.<sup>20</sup> John Fortier argued that what could not be fully appreciated at the time was the vast amount of research that would be necessary for the degree of accuracy that officials in charge of the reconstruction were bound to insist on. For this reason, Fortier continued, the actual work of reconstruction was begun prematurely, but once staff realized how much historical and archaeological research was needed, program plans were modified and appropriate research staff was employed.<sup>21</sup>

Few of the initial research findings were suited for publication or reported in a comprehensive manner, a process indicative of staff objectives to furnish information for the excavation and reconstruction of selected properties, primarily the King's Bastion. Between 1961 and 1963, historians began combing archives and collections in France, Britain, Canada and the United States for references pertaining to Louisbourg. By 1966, there were some 350,000 documents, journals, maps, plans and official correspondence in the Louisbourg archives. Documentary evidence supplemented the one and a half million artifacts collected since 1961, the benefit of Louisbourg's status as one of the only major colonial towns in North America without a modern city built on top of it.<sup>22</sup>

In what was one of the most important and earliest statements of the philosophy behind the Louisbourg project, a memorandum on research by Ronald Way, general consultant to the project, proposed that a comprehensive research program in both history and archaeology be the only basis for an authentic

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<sup>20</sup>John Fortier, "Patterns of Research at Louisbourg: The Reconstruction Enters Its Second Decade," p.3.

<sup>21</sup>John Fortier, "The Fortress of Louisbourg Development:1961-1968," Park Development Report, Record Group PD 08, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.2. also see John Lunn, "Supplement to Interpretation Report of October 23, 1963," Park Development Report, Record Group PD 09, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.9.

<sup>22</sup>C.E. Thomas, "Reserarch notes of C.E. Thomas," Record Group MG 1 vol.2611 #24, Nova Scotia Public Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia. also see "Louisbourg Rises Again," Toronto Daily Star, (Saturday, March 19, 1966), p.16.

reconstruction of Louisbourg.<sup>23</sup> Submitted to the Director of the National Parks Branch, the memorandum recommended a historical research program in two phases. The first proposed the institution of an emergency program to provide information and guidance to the construction work. The second, a more orderly long-term initiative, suggested that archival and secondary sources be utilized to provide information for full-scale programming.<sup>24</sup> Reconstruction demands, however, placed interpretive research on hold until sufficient progress was made on buildings, and material could be gathered to allow for informed decisions on research and the development of the King's Bastion. Thus these early years and memoranda that came as a result of research concerned themselves exclusively with building and fortification features.<sup>25</sup>

Numerous factors pressured staff to begin work on the project immediately. There is no doubt that the overall aims of the Project would have been better served if historical and archaeological research had commenced years before actual reconstruction, but the crash program necessitated by the crisis in the coal mines made such foresight impossible. According to Fortier, the best that could be done in the early stages of the project was to use the newly-acquired work force in the construction of the various types of craft likely to be involved in the reconstruction. Early recommendations by Ronald Way proposed that over-riding consideration be given to the historical research in order to give a head-start to the actual reconstruction work.<sup>26</sup> Historians and archaeologists used this period to build up as much lead time as possible in the location and collection of documentation.<sup>27</sup> Historical research into structures remained happily a little ahead

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<sup>23</sup>Terry MacLean, "Historical Research at Louisbourg: A Case Study in Museum Research and Development," p.25.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ronald Way, "Recommendations Concerning the Louisbourg Restoration Project, September, 1961," p.19.

<sup>27</sup>John Fortier, "The Fortress of Louisbourg Development: 1961-1968," p.11.

of construction requirements, but research into subjects required for interpretation remained largely unexamined.

Park Superintendent John Lunn argued that the Park's success depended on the adequacy of its interpretation, although overburdened reconstruction researchers were in no position in these early years to conceive of full-scale interpretive efforts or fully perceive the changes that would inevitably affect them. Specific objectives of early research could not be met by standard research reporting. According to Terry MacLean, some of these methodologies were neither commonly used nor familiar to most university-trained historians.<sup>28</sup> MacLean's analysis provides "a case study on how a professionally trained researcher from an established discipline, in this case history, can adapt to the requirements of a companion discipline, archaeology."<sup>29</sup> Thus, the most significant change concerned the way in which evidence and conclusions were presented, as well as the type of source material consulted and subsequently included in reports. Traditionally, most university curricula do not explore source material that is not documentary in nature. Consequently, few university-trained historians had experience in the study of historical views, maps, plans, material specifications or construction technology. These were the domains of geographers and architectural historians, but the project was not able to attract many historical geographers to participate in the interpretation of these resources. Consequently, MacLean argued, the research emphasized evidence internal to colonial Louisbourg that lacked interpretation of the natural environment and cultural geography of Louisbourg's past.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Terry MacLean, "Historical Research at Louisbourg: A Case Study in Museum Research and Development," p.26.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp.29-30.

Historians were assigned to compile all the available evidence on a given site, attempting to determine the successive occupations and changes in structures and property line. The historian's job was to predict what the archaeologist would find, to present a guide to the excavation. The identification of the occupants, their possessions and activities would have direct reference to the evidence the archaeologist would encounter and to the considerations that would follow when the results were pooled for structural design. Theoretical research work leads to a better understanding of what kinds of artifacts could be found on the site. Thus, the planners concluded that without a fair knowledge of history, it was not possible to carry out efficiently research work or architectural work.<sup>31</sup>

The archaeologist revealed successive layers of construction, fill and debris that accumulated during the occupation of a site, the lowest one being the earliest, and succeeding stages in the history of the site could be seen in the ground by reference to features whose date was known historically, or to artifacts of known age and origin. Researchers at Louisbourg benefited from the variety of sources available to them and the remarkably complete documentation on the buildings in the town; using the dozens of excellent plans that survived, most features could be located within a few feet, or even inches, before digging began. The original town site was quite shallow, street levels were only a few inches below the present surface and many foundations were readily discernible before excavation. In reconstructing anything on an archaeological site, there inevitably were some hard decisions to make concerning which original features could be stabilized and preserved. As excavation proceeded, project staff evaluated the aesthetic significance of structures being uncovered and weighed that against the knowledge that was to be gained by continued excavation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Maurice Berry, "Restoration of the Louisbourg Fortress, May 1964," Research Report, Record Group R 05, Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.3.

<sup>32</sup>John Fortier, "Patterns of Research at Louisbourg: The Reconstruction Enters Its Second Decade," p.7

Reconstruction continued as historians struggled to stay ahead of the progress of archaeological and physical labour. Plans for a partial opening of the site to coincide with Canadian Centennial celebrations in 1967 indicate Louisbourg's continued promotion as a pivotal site in Canada's past.<sup>33</sup> Early rhetoric justifying the project continued to focus on nationalist sentiment and the romanticization of Canada's French and English heritage. Initial plans claimed that the partial reconstruction would pay tribute to the "exertion and sacrifice of two great races in the two climatic battles of 1745 and 1758" that thus far had "been but half-remembered and given only a grudging token recognition."<sup>34</sup> Such rhetoric developed in a time when emotions ran high, Canadians embraced a new national flag, and nationalism was growing throughout Canada. Quebecers by the late 1960s felt the tensions of their own nationalism as they faced the FLQ crisis while government introduction of official bilingualism was designed to draw two distinct identities together. The Federal Government and Parks Canada rhetoric exploited this situation as justification of the project.

The 1961 proposal for the partial reconstruction of the fortress stated that:

The partial restoration of the nation's program to mark the 1967 centenary fittingly and how better could this nation remember its first beginnings than now, at last, to restore this fortress to its proper place among Canada's national monuments and the revered historic sites of all the world?<sup>35</sup>

Early proposals by project supervisor Ronald Way argued that the message of restored Louisbourg should be the story of the progress of Canada's English and

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<sup>33</sup>"Louisbourg Rises Again," *Toronto Daily Star*, (Saturday March 19, 1966), p.16. also see Ronald Way, "Recommendations Concerning the Louisbourg Restoration Project, September, 1961," p.28.

<sup>34</sup>"Proposal for Partial Restoration of the Fortress of Louisbourg, March 1961," p.1.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p.4. also see I 01 John Lunn, "Interpretation, 1963," Interpretation Report, Record Group I 01, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Louisbourg Nova Scotia. p.9.

French heritage, once armed in hostility but now united in national partnership in contemporary Canada.<sup>36</sup>

Similar sentiments were echoed in John Lunn's 1966 Interpretation Plan for the Fortress of Louisbourg. He argued that what was being laid down at Louisbourg was the cement that holds our national fabric together.<sup>37</sup> If Louisbourg's staff did not approach its history in this light, he argued, they would fail to promote it effectively. According to Lunn, at this point in Canada's development her history and traditions must be sold to her people if she was to continue as a viable nation. Thus this "selling" of the current reconstruction at Louisbourg, and its vital interpretation, played a most important, indeed pioneer role in historic site development. Louisbourg was not the first effort to present the past in a physical sense, but it was the first federal effort, and it is by far, according to Lunn, the most significant attempt made in Canada "to create something great from the fabric of her past."<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Indian Affairs and Northern Development Minister Jean Chretien declared at the 1969 opening of the King's Bastion that although built by the French and destroyed by the British, the reconstruction of Louisbourg was the work of all Canadians, "French and English-speaking joined together in a demonstration of our shared heritage."<sup>39</sup> "Louisbourg is a symbol of an era of Canada's past and a symbol of today's attitude to that past," said Mr. Chretien.<sup>40</sup> Newspaper accounts too contributed to this rhetoric, touting the reconstruction as a "proud testimony that historians now recognize the important part these fortifications played in shaping Canada's destiny," arguing

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<sup>36</sup>Ronald Way, "Recommendations Concerning the Louisbourg Restoration Project, September, 1961," p.6.

<sup>37</sup>John Lunn, "Interpretation, 1966," Interpretation Report, Record Group I 07, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p.2.

<sup>39</sup>"To Invite an Invasion." *Time Magazine*, (September 12, 1969), p.14. also see "Mighty Louisbourg Fortress Rising Again- As A Park," *Chronicle Herald*, (Saturday, September 6, 1969), p.5.

<sup>40</sup>"To Invite an Invasion," *Time Magazine*, (September 12, 1969), p.14.

that as a result "Canadians themselves are acquiring a sense of history."<sup>41</sup> These arguments were by no means new, rather they were representative of a continuation of rhetoric that began in the 1950s, but they are indicative of the continued regard for history as primarily the study of military battles of the past.

Given the rhetoric romanticizing Louisbourg's siege and its pivotal role in the cultural fate of Canada, it is hardly surprising that early interpretive objectives focused on presenting Louisbourg's military history. Throughout this period, the goal to animate Louisbourg's besieged garrison and even to incorporate its British attackers is evident in early interpretive reports. Attempts to incorporate British elements at Louisbourg resulted primarily from the common perception of Louisbourg as a place under attack. Most histories were written from the viewpoint of the besieger and those that did not consider its citizens as a conquered people. This trend resulted from a preoccupation with the drama of the events relating to the two sieges of Louisbourg.<sup>42</sup> It is also attributable to the fact that documents from Britain and New England were considerably more available than French records until the project was well underway, although even French historians do not seem to have initiated any comprehensive investigation of the site beyond the general consensus.

Consequently, Louisbourg's first interpretive plan made provisions for the animation of the British forces of both sieges and proposed the location of Wolfe's outlook for a British military interpretive centre. While access to water and

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<sup>41</sup>"Restored French Fortress to be Showplace of Canada," Chronicle Herald, (Wednesday, June 26, 1963), p.5.

<sup>42</sup>for some discussion of these trends see Bruce Catton's pamphlet The Historian's Craft Prefaces to History, (Doubleday Company, 1970), Record Group MG 100 vol. 178 #2, Nova Scotia Public Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia. George A Rawlyk's Yankees at Louisbourg, (Orono, Maine: 1967); George F. G. Stanley and William Wood in Chronicles of Canada vols. 5 and 8.; Guy Fregault, La Guerre de la Conquete, (Montreal: 1955 ) Eng. ed. The War of the Conquest, (Montreal: 1969); Lionel Groulx, Histoire de Canada Francais Depuis la Decouverte, 4 vols 1950-1952 which focuses on agriculture and the Catholic character of New France; Francis Parkman, Montcalm and Wolfe, 2 vols, (Boston: 1884) and A Half Century of Conflict, 2 vols, (Boston: 1892).; Howard H. Peckham, The Colonial Wars, 1689-1762 (Chicago: 1964).



electricity were decisive factors, John Lunn and others argued that the emotional appeal of studying the progress of the sieges from the point which Wolfe himself chose as his lookout in 1758 was something they could not afford to ignore.<sup>43</sup>

Although the reconstruction of one-fifth of the fortified town provided the basis for the social, maritime and economic interpretation of Louisbourg, the primary focus of interpretive programming remained fixed on the military function of Louisbourg. According to project consultant Ronald Way, the goal of the reconstruction "should be to make it possible for the interested visitor to trace the progress of both sieges and all land acquisitions and road construction should be governed by this objective."<sup>44</sup>

In 1961, Ronald Way argued that:

A simple restoration occurs when it is possible to focus the entire project upon a specific point in history and the restored structure or structures are faithfully presented as they would have appeared at precisely the chosen time.<sup>45</sup>

Yet despite Way's and other appeals to focus reconstructive and interpretive efforts on a specified time period, military animation plans continued to focus on both sieges. Hopes of animating British artillery men and New England militia men from both sieges were soon abandoned for a more focused approach to the site's interpretation.

The timing of the decision to choose the summer of 1744 as the focus of presentation is unclear. By 1968, John Lunn explained the choice arguing that by 1744, the Fortress was complete and relatively new, and because thereafter, it was

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<sup>43</sup> John Lunn, "Interpretation, 1963," p.9. and John Lunn, "Supplement to Interpretation Report of October 23, 1963," p.9. also see A.D Perry and John Lunn, "Desiderata for a Permanent Reception Centre, January 1968," Interpretive Report, Record Group I 07, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.8.

<sup>44</sup>Ronald Way, "Recommendations Concerning the Louisbourg Restoration Project, September, 1961," p.13.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p.3.

in a state of constant repair.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the "moment in time" chosen for interpretation could be buttressed by volumes of historical evidence and provided the opportunity to present the town at the peak of its existence both socially and physically, although historical research would need to be reconciled with archaeological evidence of an earlier period than presently existed.

Until 1963 interpretive efforts had focused on the way in which individuals had shaped developments at the Fortress. In that year staff established the Park as a complex of sites, set in a natural resource, not merely a historic site.<sup>47</sup> Staff justified plans for an ecological interpretive centre because of the significance of factors that led the French to settle at Louisbourg in the first place. In order to understand Louisbourg, Lunn argued that one must also understand the influences of ocean currents, fish stocks and defensive geography and other ecological factors on the site and its settlement.<sup>48</sup>

The recommendations for an ecological interpretation centre fueled a 1967 Interim Report on a possible natural history interpretation. Supporters argued that the natural surrounding of the Fortress influenced the lives of all who were associated with it during its role as a defense installation. They cited historical evidence that considerable forest clearing operations for several miles inland accompanied construction of the fortress.<sup>49</sup> Suggestions also included plans to include a marine aquarium of sea life, especially species that played an important part in the lives of early inhabitants, although this plan seems to have been abandoned because it conflicted with established mandates not to infringe on the reconstruction.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>John Fortier, "The Fortress of Louisbourg Development: 1961 to 1968," p.8.

<sup>47</sup>John Lunn, "Interpretation, 1963," p.5.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p.3.

<sup>49</sup>R.D. Muir, "Interim Report: Possible Natural History Interpretation at Louisbourg National Historic Park, June, 1967," Interpretation Report, Record Group I 05, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.2.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p.5&6.

By 1967 reconstruction efforts focused outside the King's Bastion, interpretive planning shifted away from the Fortress' military aspects, and the reconstructed town became the backdrop for civilian animation plans. Lunn's 1968 interpretive plan advocated the reconstruction of buildings representative of practically all levels of society and occupations found in eighteenth-century Louisbourg. Therefore he proposed to refurbish representative examples of these dwellings, providing for the public houses that typified their occupants.<sup>51</sup> The completed project would present to the visitor a bustling town animating various aspects of civilian and military life.<sup>52</sup> These attempts signified a deliberate break with early efforts to portray Louisbourg's military aspects as the central focus of the Park's interpretation and were followed by park development reports projecting the hiring of civilian animators to surpass military animation within the next 5 years.<sup>53</sup> The aim according to research staff was not only to restore and refurbish Louisbourg but to "repopulate" it, in the hope of stimulating popular interest, while at the same time making a valuable contribution to the fields of historical and archaeological research.<sup>54</sup>

Interpretive planning in the late 1960s was also characterized by an emerging sensitivity to the creation of a historic environment. Reports written by project staff reveal an appreciation for the implications of their work and the historical environment that they were creating. In detailing plans for the construction of the visitor's centre for example, the project consultant argued the importance of creating the illusion of the past and the necessity of insulating the

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<sup>51</sup>John Lunn, "Interpretation at the Fortress of Louisbourg: A General Survey, March, 1968," Interpretation Report, Record Group I 07, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.3.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p.2.

<sup>53</sup>L. Cockrell et al., "Management Improvement Study for National and Historic Park Branch: Fortress of Louisbourg- Preliminary Report, 1969," Park Development Report, Record Group PD 10, Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.33.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p.2.

reconstructed site from the sights and sounds of the modern world.<sup>55</sup> Plans advocated the desirability of concealing the modern parking lot and reception area with a screen of trees as to conceal the modern world from the vantage point of eighteenth-century Louisbourg.

John Lunn's plans also advocated the importance of ensuring a historic view, one that was unimpeded by twentieth-century elements, such as cars and buildings. Similarly, informative signs were also to be kept to a minimum. In the creation of such an environment, Lunn advocated the introduction of eighteenth-century props, buckets, garden tools, and animals, all of which enhanced the authenticity of the reconstruction. The limitations of this approach were obvious to Lunn who argued that animation should not include the aromas of foul sewage or drying fish but "we must go as far as we can."<sup>56</sup>

Interpretive programming took more active forms in the late 1960s at Louisbourg and throughout the museum community. Preservation, restoration and reconstruction of historic sites served as the ground work for interpretation. Technology contributed to this shift, as new gadgets such as audio recordings, contrast lighting and films were introduced to the museum community. Thus far, interpretation via museum displays at Louisbourg concentrated on models and graphic displays to illustrate the various aspects of the history of the Fortress. The most prominent trend in the museum community was the increasing contemporary look that characterized their exhibits, resulting from the use of new materials and electronic devices.<sup>57</sup> Education programming was more noticeable than ever as interaction and stimulation became key ingredients to interpretive theory. The aim was to engage and stimulate the visitor through audio, visual and tactile

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<sup>55</sup>Ronald Way, "Initial Report by Ronald Way, Recommendations Concerning the Louisbourg Restoration Project, September, 1961," p.17-18.

<sup>56</sup>John Lunn, "Interpretation at the Fortress of Louisbourg: A General Survey, March, 1968," p.2.

<sup>57</sup>Loris S. Russell, "Current Trends in Museums," *CMA Bulletin*, vol.13, no.3 (1961), p.1.

experiences. The reconstructed site, therefore, became a vehicle for communication between the program staff and the public.

By 1969, program staff introduced bilingual audio hand-sets to restored rooms in the Citadel that were designed to provide the visitor with background information on the furnishings and function of the rooms. Audio recordings introduced "ghosts" to other restored rooms, suggesting the sounds of an eighteenth-century banquet in progress in the Governor's dining room or the sounds of a legal trial in Council chambers. Elsewhere in the Citadel interpretive staff planned and implemented museum displays devoted to the story of the reconstruction of Louisbourg, incorporating display models and original artifacts to tell the story.<sup>58</sup>

Contemporary literature suggested that the "best" type of interpretation for any historic site is one given in person by a well-informed, enthusiastic, and friendly human being.<sup>59</sup> Labels, guidebooks and mechanical devices were best thought of as supplements to live interpretations and certainly by the late 1960s this too was the case at Louisbourg. Although reconstruction work was not yet complete, plans were in the making to establish civilian and military animation to the site in museum displays and period rooms.

By the late 1960s, passive displays were regarded less favourably by interpretive staff who believed that contemporary reconstructions of historic environments were relatively useless without animation. The reconstruction was intended to take the visitor back in time, but was successful only if the inhabitants could in some way be represented as well as the buildings. Lunn's proposal for park development in 1968 argued that "if houses, shops and taverns, storehouses and defensive works are to be convincingly historic, then some attempt must be

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<sup>58</sup>John Fortier, "The Fortress of Louisbourg Development: 1961-1968," p.17.

<sup>59</sup>Shirley P. Low, "The Human Approach," Technical Leaflet no.32. *History News*, vol.20, no.11. (Nashville: AASLH, November, 1965) p.1.

made to give the visitor the feeling that the houses are lived in, shops sell goods and the taverns ale, the storehouses store goods and defenses are manned."<sup>60</sup>

This shift of interpretive focus away from the reconstruction in favour of animation of the site indicates the profound change in rationale behind the project throughout the 1960s. When the project to reconstruct Louisbourg began, Parks officials knew little if anything about reconstruction, outdoor museums, or the criteria for the development of historic sites. From a make-work project for Cape Bretoners, it became a major element in the promotion of tourism throughout eastern Canada and a valuable historic resource for laypeople and scholars alike. Interpretive concepts also changed greatly, directly influencing the type of research conducted.

The installation of modern facilities and services within the reconstructed area solved problems for the visiting public, but hindered the staff's attempts to present a historical environment. Determining which buildings were suitable for period refurnishing, the installation of museum exhibits, and which could best be utilized for modern services, washrooms, and restaurants were to be serious considerations in the years to come. Designs would have to take into account structural requirements, the decreasing availability of original building materials, installation of modern devices to protect the buildings and the visiting public, all of which had to be incorporated in such a way that the exterior of all buildings remained true to the town's eighteenth-century character.

Buildings were reconstructed to their appearance in 1744, since the town was at its high point architecturally, not having suffered the effects of the siege. Yet the buildings themselves, while they were intended to be accurate to the time period were regarded primarily as a stage setting for exhibits and live animation.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>John Fortier, "The Fortress of Louisbourg Development: 1961 to 1968," p.18.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

The primary goal of the program remained the realization of Louisbourg's extraordinary educational opportunities, although research by the late 1960s shifted focus towards uncovering Louisbourg's social history.

The philosophy behind interpretive programming at historic sites began to engage alternative ways of presenting the past to the public through display audio recordings, theme lounges, period room and animation, but staff seemed to have little appreciation of the implications of their work. Interpretive coordinator at Williamsburg, Shirley Low, argued that effective interpretation must be a presentation of the past in clear and unmistakable statements.<sup>62</sup> Personnel must communicate to visitors a full and accurate knowledge of the facts and develop exhibitions to interpret the significance of these facts.<sup>63</sup> "The historic site thus, argued Low, becomes a background for men and events of real significance."<sup>64</sup> According to Louisbourg's interpretive statements and Low's rhetoric, only the histories of great men and great battles were of importance. What they failed to acknowledge was that the significance of these events is *perceived*; thus they lacked an appreciation that what was not chosen for interpretation was equally as important as what was chosen. Low was correct in claiming that "Museum people have the privilege and responsibility of preserving significant parts of our heritage," but they must acknowledge how their attitudes and training influence their own and the visitors they inform what is preserved from that past.<sup>65</sup>

The artifact, and its contemporary facsimile, were critical to the historic site's presentation of the past. Archaeological and artifact-based research executed at Louisbourg and other sites, despite its potential for scholarly investigation, contributed to the alienation of work done at Louisbourg and other sites from

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<sup>62</sup>Shirley Low, "The Human Approach, " p.4.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p.4 &5.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p.4.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

mainstream historians. The use of artifacts as historical evidence was subject to the same general qualifications, rules and uses applied to other types of historical evidence. Reconciling the inevitable bias of material sources was the responsibility of the historical archaeologist, yet academic historians seemed reluctant to explore material culture despite the acknowledged biases inherent in the use of literary sources such as elitism, the precariousness of their survival and perceived relevance to historic figures and events. Clyde Dollar's discussion at the Conference on Historic Site Archaeology defined the role and theory behind historical archaeology, the new discipline developing at Louisbourg. Dollar explained that the late 1960s was the "time to give serious thought to the recognition of historical archaeology as a distinct socio-scientific discipline with a methodology designed to cope with the unique problems encountered during the excavation of historic sites."<sup>66</sup>

The lack of recognition on behalf of other related disciplines was the result of ignorance of their methodology as well as the absence of professional training. Historical archaeology, according to Dollar, could be applied to any given body of site artifacts with a knowable past. Dollar warned that data derived from these sources had not yet been proven to produce totally non-distorted historical data, and therefore, was not to be used alone in the construction of historical hypotheses.<sup>67</sup> Distortion was inevitable, according to Dollar, because artifacts found at a historic site have at least two separate and related time periods: the historical period, defined by the historic significance of the site and the alter period, the period that is previous to or after the historical period.<sup>68</sup> In the case of

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<sup>66</sup>Clyde D. Dollar, "More Thoughts on Theory and Method in Historical Archaeology," Conference on Historic Site Archaeology, Stanley South, Editor. vol.4, Part 1. (University of South Carolina, 1969), p.83.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p.84.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p.84.



Louisbourg, artifacts introduced to the site during British occupation must be distinguished from those representative of the French period.

Despite efforts to establish professional standards in the museum community, work at historic sites continued to develop without much notice from other historic disciplines. In the wake of a developing profession, changes in Louisbourg's interpretive goals were attributable to shifts in focus by staff, development in museum philosophy and changes in Louisbourg's historic treatment. As academic historians began to examine economic and social elements of the past, research staff and interpretive planners questioned the predominately military past of Louisbourg. Professional literature throughout the 1960s promoted the historic sites as a vehicle through which to teach the public about history while the development of Louisbourg's animation program employed the site as a means to instruct as well as explore new avenues of the past. Certainly many individuals continued to regard history as existing between the pages of dull, mildewed books of unrelated dates and battle scenes, and old objects in dusty museums or historic plaques posted at the sites of dilapidated ruins. But Louisbourg's staff had at least begun to provide new and engaging ways to present the past.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> "History Relived Images of 1969," Intercom, vol. XII, no.6. (December 1969)

**CHAPTER TWO: Refashioning Louisbourg 1970-1980,  
an examination of changes in interpretive programming and  
the professionalization of the museum community**

Regard for Louisbourg's historical significance changed much in the ten years since reconstruction, from a place where sieges were waged to a bustling, cosmopolitan port. Interpretive programming took its current shape in the early 1970s and the reconstructed fortress became a physical illustration of its past in a variety of dimensions. At the same time developments in historic scholarship and the political arena brought into question the predominately Anglo-Saxon political voice traditionally behind museum curatorship, by giving a voice to French-Canadian history and French-Canadian nationalism. Questioning the conventional view of the past contributed to a new appreciation for Louisbourg's past. With this new appreciation at Louisbourg and elsewhere, come a responsibility for public education which has manifested itself in developing programmes which like trends in academic history actively developed elements of the Fortress's social past.

The aim of the government and the museum community in the early 1970s was to increase access to cultural activities to all taxpayers and to make cultural symbols available to all Canadians, by seeking to democratize and decentralize museums. In 1974, the tenth General Conference of the International Council of Museums declared that museums throughout the world were coming to regard themselves less as self-contained professional units and more as cultural centres for the communities within which they operated.<sup>1</sup> Museum advocates such as Edward P. Alexander, former Director of Colonial Williamsburg and Museum Studies at the University of Delaware, furthered these sentiments, arguing that

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Hudson, Museum's for the 1980's: A Survey of World Trends. (London: UNESCO, 1977) p.1.

museum objects constitute an important part of our heritage, thus nurturing a feeling of continuity and cultural pride within the community.<sup>2</sup>

With this praise also came a large helping of condemnation waged against the museum's interpretation of the past, and historic sites in particular. Critics inside and outside the museum profession during this period charged that living history museums were historically inaccurate distortions, with programs that lacked conviction and effectiveness. Responding to these charges, institutions began the long, hard effort to create a historical atmosphere evoking a "lived-in" look that would suggest to visitors that actual people had once really lived and worked there. Thus, Louisbourg's interpretive plans developed with a new appreciation of their role as interpreters of the past.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most noticeable shifts to take place in the 1970s within the museum field, according to Robin Inglis, was the growing emphasis on public exhibition and interpretation, at the expense of the more traditional museum functions of collection, identification, conservation, research and publication.<sup>4</sup> By way of exhibit, theme lounge, and animation, Louisbourg's interpretive efforts were designed to reveal for the public the relationships between elements of the past and their meanings through first-hand experience and illustrative media rather than simply the communication of factual information.<sup>5</sup> Programming at Louisbourg offered itself as a reflection of contemporary educational philosophy in practice. The site consequently provided a historical environment conducive to

<sup>2</sup>Edward P. Alexander, Museums in Motion, (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), p.14.

<sup>3</sup>Much of this criticism was waged by preservationists and will be discussed in some detail in the following chapter, for reference see Sydney F. Wise, "Historical Preservation: The Antiseptic Time Machine," Preserving the Canadian Heritage, The Royal Society of Canada 14th Symposium, October 7-8, 1975 pp.123-136 and in the same volume Sir John Pope-Hennessy, "Why Preserve the Heritage?" pp.3-13. Douglas Richardson, "Politics and Priorities in Architectural Preservation," Heritage Canada, vol.2, no.1. (Winter, 1976), pp.28-31.

<sup>4</sup>Robin Inglis, "Opinion," CMA Gazette, vol.8, no.1. (Winter, 1975), p.4.

<sup>5</sup>Claribel Gesner, "Louisbourg: A Town Out of Time," The Atlantic Advocate, vol.60. (August, 1970), p.45.

the learning process allowing, as Paul L. Benedict pointed out, the visitor to study the many factors that influenced the lives and thoughts of people of the past.<sup>6</sup>

Historic sites throughout the 1970s took on a deliberate educational purpose. Interpretation of the past was based on original objects but supported by historical research although making use of sensory perception whenever possible. This sensory approach, according to Edward Alexander, author of Museums in Motion, evoked an emotional response to learning that should "supplement but not replace the customary rational avenue to understanding provided by words and verbalization; together they constitute a powerful learning process."<sup>7</sup> The main purpose of historic site programming therefore was to communicate with a segment of the past. Participation by visitors in these experiences, limited though they may have been, tended to deepen their perceptions and understanding of the past, according to Alexander.<sup>8</sup>

As a historic recreation, their validity did not hinge on the quality of "real", "original", or "authentic" material found in the fabric of its structures, furnishings and equipment. According to Wayne Colwell's article "Windows on the Past," their function was not to be the past, but to be a presentation of the past as the facts were known.<sup>9</sup> Colwell was correct in arguing that we will never literally recreate the past, but we are capable of presenting some of the tangibles of the past, and from a physically re-created environment, we can communicate what is known.

The valuable function of museums, according to Albert Parr, was their ability to convert the literary abstraction of history into images of a tangible

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<sup>6</sup>Paul L. Benedict, "Historic Site Interpretation: The Student Field Trip," Technical Leaflet #19 History News, vol.26, no.3. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, March 1977) p.1.

<sup>7</sup>Edward P. Alexander, Museums in Motion, p.196.

<sup>8</sup>Wayne Colwell, "Windows on the Past," Museum News, vol.50, no.10. (June, 1972), p.37.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.38.

reality.<sup>10</sup> Museum workers looked for new directions for the expansion of their domain when they began to develop misgivings about the adequacy of basing their existence primarily upon the paraphernalia of great persons and events. By exploring avenues of social history and sociology in the study and presentation of the past, museums gave new value and function to folk museums, historic buildings and period environments.<sup>11</sup>

William Alderson and Shirley Low's 1976 book, The Interpretation of Historic Sites, was the first such work since Freeman Tilden's 1957 attempt to address the goals of site interpretation.<sup>12</sup> The book was written to fill a noticeable gap in the literature on historic sites, which, despite Tilden's apt treatment of the principles of interpretation, provided only limited advice for the historic site. Their work was a benchmark for site interpretation because they established guidelines for the differences between the documentary and representative history site.<sup>13</sup> By focusing the restoration on the summer of 1744, Louisbourg defined itself as a documentary site because the sites reconstructed are animated as the homes and shops of the people who actually lived there. However, because the reconstructed area constitutes only one-fifth of the original town, these building also serve as representative models for other establishments in the eighteenth-century Fortress. In either case, throughout the 1970s Louisbourg, like other historic sites, was actively developed as an educational medium.

The first interpretive reports of the 1970s set the tone for the rest of the decade. No fundamental change in the overall plan for the interpretation and operation of Louisbourg was planned, although it was clear by the late 1960s that

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<sup>10</sup>Albert Parr, "History and the Historical Museum" Curator, vol.XV, no.1. (The American Museum of Natural History, 1972), p.54.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>William T. Alderson and Shirley Payne Low, Interpretation of Historic Sites, (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1976).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.8, 120.

the site had taken on a new face and the 1970s would usher in this change. Louisbourg was no longer the site of siege, but a fortified town complete with military and civilian elements.<sup>14</sup>

Interpretive staff at Louisbourg took their newly revered education role very seriously. Geared to present an intellectual challenge as well as an honest portrayal of life, plans for interpretive programming included exhibits, animation and publications.<sup>15</sup> Project staff regarded Louisbourg's greatest asset as the opportunity it provided the visitor to experience the immediacy of the past, claiming that visitors would be able to immerse themselves in an environment that incorporated significant original features of a site that was highly evocative, both for the importance and variety of events that occurred there and for its climate and unspoiled beauty.<sup>16</sup> Interpretive staff at Louisbourg believed that the recreation of a segment of life through reconstruction and animation coupled with the exhibition of artifacts and documentary data would enable the visitor to leave with a better understanding of his own place in time and a desire to inquire more fully into the forces that are shaping his future.<sup>17</sup>

To make animation successful and convincing, attention to the historical record was a necessity. The building must be faithful in line, level and fabric because although they are only points of departure, according to John Fortier, they provide "a physical setting in which to explain and encourage understanding of an earlier way of life."<sup>18</sup> The ultimate objective was to produce a picture of the fortress and town in 1744, presenting a cross-section of French society in

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<sup>14</sup>John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretive Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 12, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.14.

<sup>15</sup>John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, September 1971," Record Group I 14, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg Nova Scotia. p.1. also see John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, April 1972," Record Group I 15, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.2.

<sup>16</sup>John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, September 1971," p.2.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.2.

<sup>18</sup>John Fortier, "Louisbourg Lives Again," *Conservation Canada*, vol.2, no.3. (Autumn, 1976), p.6.

eighteenth-century Ile Royale from the Governor to shore-worker. Success, especially in animation, depended on research and attention to detail. Costumes needed to be researched, hand-made and hand-dyed in the same way as they had been made two hundred years earlier. Rooms required furnishing, animals and gardens needed to be raised. Sights, sounds and smells had to be reproduced, and staff had to be trained in life, social habits and customs of Louisbourg's former residents.

New research data made it possible for the first time to analyze the occupants of various buildings to be restored, their occupations, their families and in a few fortunate cases the very contents of their houses, commercial establishments and storehouses. By continuing archaeological and documentary study, staff improved their knowledge of the size, character and quality of the buildings providing the foundation for future civilian animation.<sup>19</sup> With reconstruction nearly finished in 1970, historians could now focus on the "people" aspect of Louisbourg. Historians drew information from parish records, court records and inventories, while others designed and recreated furnishings, household goods, costumes and documented behavioral patterns. Such research provided the data need for exhibition and live animation.<sup>20</sup>

In the summer of 1973 the animation program made a modest start. Park interpretation was also carried out by means of handout literature and slide presentation, in what staff regarded as an attempt to make "an accurate presentation of daily life, trades, crafts, military drills and related activities that will help the viewer correct some of the many myths that have been generated, and are still reflected in so many textbooks, concerning the eighteenth century and

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<sup>19</sup>John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretative Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s," p.27.

<sup>20</sup>John Fortier, "Patterns of Research at Louisbourg: The Reconstruction Enters Its Second Decade," Canada: An Historical Magazine, vol.1, no.4. (June, 1974), p.10.

history in general."<sup>21</sup> Research staff got a jump on animation in 1968 by extending costume research and employing a professional costume designer commissioned to study typical garment design of the period. After almost two years of research, he was able to prepare a set of costume designs that would be unique to Louisbourg, designs reflecting the typical eighteenth-century dress of various occupations and social classes, and also reflecting the local adaptations that would have been made by the inhabitants of colonial Louisbourg.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, other items were reproduced in accordance with period animation and period rooms guidelines set forth in a 1975 report.<sup>23</sup> Their chief concern was to maintain the quality of the visitor's experience, by ensuring that everything seen and done in the Fortress setting be validated according to research. The intent was to reproduce the required articles with the least inclination to compromise or substitute. Prototypes endeavored to present articles that were as near to the original as possible, by employing like materials and techniques, and which were developed from artifacts excavated at the fortress site and/ or French antiques dating prior to 1745.<sup>24</sup>

Louisbourg staff defined 'Period Presentation' as everything done or shown in a period environment. In order to defend and to enhance the rigorous authenticity, period interpretation was confined to the reconstructed fortress. Furthermore, the only events to be presented to the public in that environment were to be those which had a connection to the original town and the experiences of the original people who lived there. According to park superintendent John

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<sup>21</sup>John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, April 1972," p.7. also see John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretive Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," pp.31-32.

<sup>22</sup>Monique La Grenada, "Civil Costume at Louisbourg: 1713-1758," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group HF 62R Section VIII, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg Nova Scotia. p.2.

<sup>23</sup>"Guidelines for the Reproduction of 18th Century Articles for use at the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, September 8, 1975," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group OB 9, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp.1,2.



Fortier, interpretive staff felt that anything less would be disrespectful toward the people whose lives were being interpreted.<sup>25</sup>

Each member of the costumed staff represented someone, if not an original inhabitant, than at least a specific class of townspeople. Animators received the name of an original inhabitant and a dossier of the historical information on that person so that they might better understand the person they were to represent. The inn and cabaret observed the rules of fast and abstinence established by the Catholic Church during the eighteenth century. Although measures may appear extreme, according to Fortier the only way to appreciate history is to begin by taking it seriously and to encourage activity that is relevant to the historical environment, rather than merely posing in costume.<sup>26</sup> Fortier also explains that interpretive staff advocated the relevance of their methods in spite of critics who claimed they were creating a *fake* and *sanitized* past. Staff defended their methods arguing that:

"Living history" programs of outdoor museums help to reach an audience full of people who would otherwise have difficulty sensing their place in the continuum of history. If it is worthwhile to safeguard the natural elements in Canada's national parks for our benefit, education and enjoyment, or just so they will be there then we should also have in certain well-chosen places a similar kind of cultural preservation.<sup>27</sup>

This kind of activity seeks not merely to entertain, but also to educate, argued John Fortier.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>John Fortier, "Louisbourg: Managing A Moment in Time." *The History of Atlantic Canada: Museum Interpretations*, no.32. (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series History Division, 1981), no.32.

p.1. also see "Guidelines for Cultural Activities at the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, October, 1975," *Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group OB 10, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.* p.1.

<sup>26</sup>John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretive Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," p.17.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>28</sup>John Fortier, "Louisbourg Lives Again," p.7.

In my opinion, animation has a valid role in the interpretation of historic sites and buildings, particularly to a North American audience. If we lead people to believe that in our historical environments they really can discover the past, then we owe them the whole thing; if our presentation to visitors is any less complete than life itself we will merely substitute our own cloudy view of the past for the one they had before.<sup>29</sup>

The philosophy behind their approach simply advocated that people learn most easily when all their senses are involved. The outdoor museum accordingly had an advantage in the variety of ways it could stimulate a visitor's interest in and understanding of the past.<sup>30</sup>

The consequence of this responsibility determined training as a high priority. Over ten per cent of the budget for guide staff was devoted to training time, and similar efforts were made to train artisans in historic trades who were now establishing the park's period maintenance unit. Interpretive staff learned the techniques and basic information required for effective interpretation, then attended specialized classes to train them in the role or station to which they were assigned.<sup>31</sup> Interpretive staff were quick to point out that an animator must live with the realization that research "facts" are essentially interpretations of evidence that can radically alter the study of the past as new information and new points of view are brought to attention. Consequently, Fortier and the others responsible for park training recommended that a stated purpose of the Park's training effort should be to keep animators from becoming dogmatic, and to ensure that they remain capable of accommodating new viewpoints in their presentation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>John Fortier, "Thoughts on the Recreation of Historic Environments, September 1979," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group PD 43, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia," p.7.

<sup>30</sup>John Fortier, "Thoughts on the Re-Creation and Interpretation of Historical Environments, September 1979," p.8.

<sup>31</sup>John Fortier et al., "Training for Interpretive Staff, February 1973," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 16, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.3.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p.8.

The reconstruction is not a time trip or a re-creation of the past. According to Fortier, who by 1975 had become park superintendent, it is a framework to re-experience the lives of real people who lived in Louisbourg and to examine the insights that we ourselves can gain from viewing specific households and going about the same activities.<sup>33</sup> The reconstruction was so specific and the research so complete that Louisbourg's animators bore the added burden of representing someone who really lived there in the eighteenth-century. Costumed animation, however, was not only a form of demonstration for visitors; it became a process by which the animators themselves could understand their role and describe it as a learning experience.<sup>34</sup> Role-playing was suspended between costumed staff and visitors except in certain, carefully orchestrated situations. It was still practiced among animators but was encouraged to be done by deportment and gestures rather than by speaking.<sup>35</sup>

Expansion of social and commercial history occurred throughout the 1970s in a variety of ways. During 1972, a pair of pigs was purchased and later sheep, geese, ducks, poultry, cows and a horse. All livestock purchases were selected based on citizens' inventories and all, despite contemporary hybridization, were selected from older, genetically unimproved strains. Animal husbandry has rapidly progressed over the last two hundred years, so livestock at Louisbourg did not consist of the sleek well-groomed animals of the modern countryside, but rather the type common to the eighteenth century, a much smaller and leaner variety.

The decisions behind these selections were based on the belief that it was the role of the museum to preserve that which approaches extinction, and

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<sup>33</sup>John Fortier, "Louisbourg: Managing a Moment in Time," p.108-9.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p.109.

according to John Lunn and others, this was true for animals too.<sup>36</sup> Their contribution to the sights, sounds and smells of the historic atmosphere however was more than justification of their existence according to interpretive staff. Animals like costumed people were vital to the animation program, since practically every property had a few animals. Although it was not proposed that livestock animation should ever go this far, a representative selection was made mandatory.<sup>37</sup>

The problem of feeding visitors at the site became another concern for interpretive expansion if visitors were expected to stay on site all day. Someone would have to advise on appropriate period recipes, ways of cooking and serving the food, and occasional modifications to the menu. There were those who argued that the restaurants adjoining outdoor museums should be free to serve hot dogs and whatever *cuisine* they liked, but a great deal is compromised by introducing non-period elements to the environments. Moreover, as Fortier pointed out, eating provides an additional opportunity for interpretation since it is the most basic experience a visitor can have.<sup>38</sup>

To support the period environment, interpretive staff wrote detailed guidelines for period food services (the only kind allowed inside the fortress), for the forms of cultural activities and special events that were acceptable within the reconstruction, and for the display techniques considered appropriate in period buildings.<sup>39</sup> All food served on site was to be true to eighteenth-century French cooking as modified by the subculture that evolved at Louisbourg. Since the

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<sup>36</sup>Louisbourg Task Force, "Interpretive Plan for the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, March / April 1973." Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 22, Section "Livestock", Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. also see "An Introduction to the Fortress of Louisbourg, September 1973." Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group H F 62R Section VII, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.3. and John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, September 1971,"

<sup>37</sup>John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, September 1971," p.21.

<sup>38</sup>John Fortier, "What to do After the Architect Leaves," *CMA Gazette*, vol.9, no.2. (1976), p.12.

<sup>39</sup>John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, September 1971," p.111.

primary responsibility was to ensure the integrity of the period environment, earlier plans to provide contemporary food items were abandoned. Similarly, provisions were also made to conceal all modern equipment so as to not intrude on the historical environment.<sup>40</sup> In accordance with these guidelines, concessions became an important extension of the interpretive program, providing visitors with an opportunity to participate in a meaningful and memorable learning experience.<sup>41</sup>

During the 1970s staff focused on the promotion and interpretation of the site realizing that the reconstruction was not an end in itself, but rather a means to communicate the past. Consequently, interpretive experimentation was not limited to animation. Plans to introduce theme lounges and exhibit areas to the site were design to help fill gaps in interpretation.

By breaking the story-line down into individual subjects in different buildings, interpretive staff hoped to provide much greater variety, accommodate more visitors, offer more shelter in wet weather and alleviate museum fatigue.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, staff did not assume that Louisbourg's interpretation should rely exclusively on costumed animation, accordingly they demanded a more varied interpretive repertoire.<sup>43</sup> The reconstruction of a complete corner of the town left staff with some buildings about which too little was known to present them in period, so these sites became the new homes to formal exhibits and theme lounges.

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<sup>40</sup>John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretive Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," p.22 and John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, April 1972," p.11.

<sup>41</sup>"Guidelines for Food Concessions, April 1975," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group O B 12, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.12. also see John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, April 1972," p.30. and "Guidelines for Restaurant Concessions at the Fortress of Louisbourg, June 1975," National Historic Park Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group O B 11, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

<sup>42</sup>John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretive Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," p.20 & p.32.

<sup>43</sup>John Fortier. "Managing a Moment in Time," p.112.

The 1973 "Interpretive Plan for the Fortress of Louisbourg" was the first document to define the parameters for exhibition at the Park.<sup>44</sup> Since then, however, the need for change became apparent for a variety of reasons. According to William O'Shea, head of exhibits, the practical experience gained in operating the site, a refinement of ideas about interpretive services, an increasingly critical evaluation of the role and responsibility of historic sites and the reality of economic restraint contributed to the realignment of the Park's organization in 1978.<sup>45</sup> This realignment led to changes in the exhibit program, the most significant of which was the introduction of the theme lounge. In part an attempt to provide a rest stop for fatigued and elderly visitors, the theme lounge was also designed to fulfill interpretive demands that could not be met by current exhibit or animation. The sieges for example were lengthy and complicated events, involving thousands of people and widespread destruction. It was not feasible to represent these events through the animation program, so the introduction of a multi-media exhibit was intended to illustrate the expansive drama and historical importance of the two conflicts without limiting its potential to animation or exhibition alone.<sup>46</sup>

The ground rules for these exhibit areas and theme lounges were different from those of a conventional museum because of the responsibility of ensuring the integrity of the historic environment outside. First, they had to respect the layout and limitations of the period buildings in which they were installed. Second, modern exhibits and media display were not to be visible from the street, a restriction that limited the placement of lighting, labels and display cases. Lastly,

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<sup>44</sup>Louisbourg Task Force, "Interpretative Plan for the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, March/April 1973,".

<sup>45</sup>William O'Shea, "Working Paper in Preparation for 1981 Operations Review," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, I 23 part 1, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.9.

<sup>46</sup>"Draft Interpretation Plan, May 1987," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 32, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.29.

these areas were designed to supplement the period milieu by dealing with themes and subjects too complex to be handled by conventional animation.<sup>47</sup>

Ten exhibition rooms in the King's Bastion were opened to visitors in 1970. Satisfying the visitor's curiosity to understand the reconstructed site as well as the eighteenth-century site, one gallery of rooms was dedicated to illustrating the reconstruction project. One exhibit explains how the reconstruction was carried out; another presents basic types of artifacts that have been excavated. In another area, barrack rooms were set up as well as the Governor's residence, domestic quarters and the Chapel, thus illustrating for visitors their original use. Exhibits within the town dealt with a variety of themes that included topics such as: eighteenth-century construction, the life of a soldier, historic perceptions of Louisbourg and a comparison between twentieth-century life and that of the eighteenth-century site. By 1972, the reception centre was equipped to handle exhibits of Louisbourg's history, illustrating choices leading to the naval base and the history of the two sieges.

While three-dimensional exhibits were to be focal points, establishing the continuity between the historical period and today's visitor, the absence of appropriate objects necessitated the use of reproductions, graphic exhibitions and multi-media displays which continued to develop throughout the 1970s. Such development was indicative of the underlying purpose of these display areas. Because they were to be assimilated into the site, they remained distinguishable their main function being was to explain the "moment in time" animated outside, and to convey what could not be interpreted by it or any other means.<sup>48</sup> The exhibits, according to John Fortier, were essentially the labels for the reconstruction and the activities outside and therefore the subjects chosen and their

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p.112. also see John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, April 1972," p.10.

<sup>48</sup>Hoarst Paufler, "Exhibits Proposal Presented at the 1978 Operations Review," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group EX 9, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.1.

content were heavily influenced by the need to explain the historical milieu rather than merely to present prize objects in the collection.<sup>49</sup>

Arrangements were also made during the 1970s to extend interpretation to children, by providing an activity centre where parents could leave their children with interpreters for their own special tours and activities. By combining outdoor play areas with indoor games, the aim was to provide for children an appreciation for if not an understanding of the past at Louisbourg. Playing games and taking tours of the site were designed to help bridge the gap in understanding between the child's perception and interpretation geared predominately towards adults.<sup>50</sup>

Exhibits and activity centres were by far the most developed forms of complementary interpretation to the period environment, but other forms of interpretation were also planned throughout the 1970s. Siege works, prominent ruins around and beyond the town as well as the Atlantic coastline itself, were developed by way of self-guiding trails. The desired result was to combine visits to features of historic interest with those illustrating certain natural values. The aim of interpretive staff was to encourage those individuals less interested in history to have the opportunity to appreciate the site in a different way. Such avenues of interpretation demonstrated the degree to which inhabitants of the eighteenth century were involved with their environment. Not only did the environment determine their choice of site, but their very existence depended on its ecology.<sup>51</sup> Although this departure was not unique to the Canadian Park's system, it had the potential to serve as a fundamental component of Louisbourg's interpretive program. Unfortunately, much work remains to be done. Natural

<sup>49</sup>John Fortier, "Thoughts on the Recreation of Historic Environments, September 1979," p.14.

<sup>50</sup>Barbara Macdonald, "Final Report of the Children's Interpretative Program Fortress of Louisbourg, August 31, 1977," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group O A 9 01, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. also see John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretive Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," p.21.

<sup>51</sup>John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, April 1972," p.9 and John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretive Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," p.15.



history remains less successfully developed than other forms of interpretation at Louisbourg. Nonetheless, its limited development does served the Park's educational purpose.

Still very much a new departure in the museum during this period, the primacy of the museum's educational role was indeed beginning to come into common acceptance. Museum journals and books dedicated much attention to this new educational philosophy. For staff at Louisbourg, the site itself took on new meaning as they gained an acute awareness of their responsibility to remind the public that what they were trying to create at Louisbourg was not the past. Rather as park superintendent John Fortier explained, the site served merely as a point of departure from which to understand and explain the past, and one that was subject to change as new research revealed new information.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the site offers glimpses of typical living conditions at the time and place it represents and in this sense, it takes the perspective of history as sociological evolution rather than heroic exploits. The ability of the historical museum or historic site to illustrate social history stemmed from what was now the appreciated value of material culture.

Reverence for the artifact and for artifact study came into its own as a potential primary source for history during the 1970s. Material culture advocates such as E. McClung Fleming argued that artifacts as the earliest records of human activities include objects made to satisfy many needs, to extend physical and psychic power over nature and fellow humans, delight their fancy, affirm their sense of form, and create symbols of meaning. The artifacts made and used by people were not only basic expressions of those people; they were, like culture itself, a necessary means of human self-fulfillment, according to Fleming.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>John Fortier, *The Fortress of Louisbourg*. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.15.

<sup>53</sup>E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1974) pp.153-154.

Despite the zealous admiration for material culture studies, even the most basic methodology was still lacking. Even Fleming conceded that although studies in cultural history have made use of both practical and artistic objects, yet no developed models or methodology for the analysis and interpretation of this kind of primary source currently exists.<sup>54</sup>

Given the lack of methodology, it is hardly surprising that artifact studies at Louisbourg remained only basic excavations into the past. Artifact studies out of Louisbourg during the 1970s focused on such things as earthenware, glass and ceramic found during excavation work. These artifacts yielded information about the complexities of trade and methods of creation, but virtually nothing about the value systems and social customs of their uses.

Consequently, as material culture studies continued to germinate, artifacts and reproductions at Louisbourg were not put to use for study and research so much as for illustration and interpretation. The site and the objects in it became the means through which Louisbourg's interpretive message was expressed. According to material culture historian S.M. Becknow, museums engage in the interpretation of either acts or artifacts for the purpose of illuminating culture. Thus in carrying out this type of examination, museum scholars undertake a historical inquiry.<sup>55</sup> According to Becknow, the museum scholar gives the community a sense of social relatedness through displays and exhibitions that set out the facts of national development and common experience; in doing so they generate not only an appreciation of certain events, but also argue for certain courses of action. The purpose museums serve in our nation is complex and varied; some increase awareness of our multicultural heritage, while others instill a sense of local, civic or regional pride.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp.154-155.

<sup>55</sup>S. M. Becknow, "Culture, History and Artifact," *Gazette*, vol.8, no.4. (Fall, 1975), pp.13-15.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p.15

The 1970s ushered in a new period of archaeological research as fortification reconstruction came to an end, and a new focus shifted investigation towards civilian areas of the town. Archaeological research yielded information relating to the construction, repair and abandonment of buildings, but they contributed little to the understanding of Louisbourg residents. Building materials, pots, pans, and remnants of cloth told little of daily life but did offer insight into homes, walking surfaces, wells, and latrines, while reconstructed buildings placed them in context. The lives of these individuals occurred but are not archaeologically explicit. Hinges remain but not the opening and closing, fire hearths exist but not the cooking, walking surfaces remain but not the walking. Activity at Louisbourg was real but it cannot be documented. Only through the objects unearthed and responsible animation can lives be illustrated and understood.<sup>57</sup>

Not surprisingly the greatest proliferation of scholarship in social history grew out of this period, influencing interpretive plans and more importantly the historic perception. During this period, in-house reports included studies on gardening, population, costuming and other subjects that leaned to a more comprehensive knowledge of Louisbourg's past.<sup>58</sup> Research at Louisbourg solidified and shaped interpretation interpretive programming in the 1970s also gave rise to the first scholarly publications addressing Louisbourg's social history. Park historians Christopher Moore and Ken Donovan were among the first to produce studies that addressed the lives of individuals and families rarely studied in traditional studies. Linda Hoad brought to life the first investigation of

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<sup>57</sup>"Excavations at the Fortress of Louisbourg." Record Group F 5015 C21 #382 abstract, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia. pp.1-2.

<sup>58</sup>Nicole Durand, "Study of Louisbourg's Population 1713-1745," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group, HD 15e, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. Alfred Aucoin, "Report on an 18th Century Potager Garden, September 1975," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group OC 01, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

Louisbourg surgeons, the first study of the site's medical history.<sup>59</sup> Research throughout this decade significantly shaped interpretive programming, but more importantly it changed the way that Louisbourg was regarded in history.

History prior to this period was typically written by the victors, who readily assumed that their success was preordained. Such trends apply to the perception of historic Louisbourg, as there has long been a widespread assumption that the fall of Louisbourg and the collapse of New France were inevitable and so to be taken for granted. Research for the reconstruction at Louisbourg has shed new light on the importance of the fortress and refutes some old ideas about the place. No longer an outpost of New France, no longer a besieged fortress and no longer a conquered people, Louisbourg was unique and worthy of attention.

Interpretive efforts in the 1970s began to shift focus towards social history but the philosophy behind the project remained much the same. Nationalism continued to fuel philosophy behind Park rhetoric, while interpretive reports echoed the rhetoric of the 1960s, citing Louisbourg's ability to "help inculcate a heightened sense of the common patrimony that the various peoples of Canada enjoyed in an earlier age."<sup>60</sup> Louisbourg was promoted as a proud symbol of the two great cultures whose interplay made our nation possible, and the traditions that both have bequeathed to us. According to this rhetoric Canada would have few

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<sup>59</sup>Linda M. Hoad, "Surgeons and Surgery in Ile Royale," *History and Archaeology*, no.6. (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1976).; Christopher Moore, "Street Life and Public Activities in Louisbourg," *Manuscript Report*, no.317 Four Studies for Animators, (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Parks Canada, National Historic Parks and Sites, 1974). ; Kenneth Donovan, "Family Life in 18th century Louisbourg," *Manuscript Report* no.271, (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Parks Canada, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, 1977). and "Communities and Families: Family Life and Living Conditions in Eighteenth Century Louisbourg," *Material History Bulletin*, no.15. (1982) pp. 33-47.

<sup>60</sup>John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, April 1972," p.7.

claims to nationhood without these disparate traditions and the dialogue stimulated by them.<sup>61</sup>

Nationalist rhetoric prevailed but the fundamental goal of education became increasingly evident throughout this decade. A variety of techniques was developed to help visitors relate to the site and explain its historic significance. Presentation was intentionally styled away from the formal classroom, yet the work of a historian at Louisbourg reaches more persons in a single year than a professor in a classroom can reach in a lifetime. Yet the influence of the project extended beyond its visitors. Reconstruction research debunked myths, uncovered elements of Louisbourg's social history thus far unexplored and significantly refashioned the traditional academic perspective of Louisbourg.

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<sup>61</sup> John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretive Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," p.1. ; Louisbourg Task Force, "Interpretive Plan for the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, March / April 1973."

**CHAPTER THREE: Historic Sites Come of Age 1980-1994,  
Louisbourg's interpretive development and the struggle  
for credibility**

Educational objectives established throughout the 1970s were realized in this last period of Louisbourg's development. From 1980 to the present, program staff strove to improve the quality of both the visitor's experience and the *history* taught at Louisbourg. When the reconstruction drew to a close in 1980, researchers were freed to shift their focus exclusively to social themes and generally fleshing out established programming.

Site promotion remained nationalistic in nature while the reconstruction of the Louisbourg site became one way to understand the development of the Canadian nation.<sup>1</sup> Nationalist rhetoric promoting the site was also indicative of the necessity to justify the continued infusion of federal money into an economically depressed Cape Breton. In the same vein the promotion of the site was also an attempt to infuse the tourist dollar in Louisbourg and Cape Breton. The site has provided a nostalgic justification to woo capital and federal investment into a region that has been economically depressed from the advent of the Louisbourg project itself.

The need to attract tourist dollars potentially created sites that were simplistic representations of the past, often with political agendas which critics and advocates alike argued undermined the historical integrity of the projects.<sup>2</sup> These charges are even more poignant with regard to Louisbourg because it was

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<sup>1</sup>F.G. McGill, "Operating an 18th Century Town in the 20th Century, University of the Air, 1981," *The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group OB 07, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.* p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Chris Miller-Marti, "Local History Museums and the Creation of the Past," *Muse*, (Summer, 1986), p.36.; Albert E. Parr, "History and the Historical Museum," *Curator*, vol.15, no.1 (1975), p.58.; Thomas Schlereth, *Artifacts and the American Past*, (Nashville, Tennessee: The American Association for State and Local History, 1980), p.211.; Marcella Sherfy, "Honesty in Interpreting the Cultural Past," *Parks*, vol.3, no.4. (January/ March, 1979), p.14.

and continues to be developed as a make work-project. But the fact that heritage has become a commodity in the Maritimes much as oil has in the West or manufacturing in Ontario does not lessen its importance or the quality of historic initiatives in the province. Louisbourg's staff recognized that selling the site's past was a fact that stood independent of value judgments, but by the early 1980s was forced to acknowledge these criticisms.

Educational objectives too remained much the same, citing the importance of understanding Louisbourg's role in the context of European settlement in North America and the consequences of its sieges on regional, national and international development.<sup>3</sup> A recognition of the importance of interpreting a total history for Louisbourg was solidified in this period. Six interpretive themes exploring Louisbourg as a capital, a fishing base, a trading centre, a fortress, a naval port and a community were designed to provide a focus for research and interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Although this approach might be regarded as an over-simplification of Louisbourg's past, staff hoped that these thematic guidelines would provide a flexible framework through which to improve the totality of interpretation.

Research for Louisbourg's "Interpretative Summaries" of 1980 explored a variety of themes to be incorporated into a framework previously dominated by topics such as imperialism, administration and military conflict.<sup>5</sup> New themes included the study of relations at Louisbourg with the native Micmac population, slavery, health and medicine, religion, inn, cabarets and entertainment, gardening and animals. Information provided by these studies was designed to be incorporated into the animation program.

<sup>3</sup>"Draft Interpretation Plan, May 1987," The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 32, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.5

<sup>4</sup>Kenneth Donovan, "The Six Themes of Louisbourg Fortress of Louisbourg, 1981," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group, H F 60, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

<sup>5</sup>"Interpretive Summaries, 1980," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group O C 05, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

By the end of reconstruction in 1981, the town consisted of four blocks that included homes, official residences, businesses and other buildings flanked by streets, yards and gardens.<sup>6</sup> Louisbourg's animation program continued along the same guidelines established in the 1970s, expanding into several themes particularly the development of trade and commerce animation. A small out-building in the area outside the Fortress was built in 1982 to represent a fishing district known as Fauxbourg.<sup>7</sup> Research and construction of two small ship's tenders commenced, in 1989, in an attempt to add another dimension to Louisbourg's commercial animation program.

Throughout this period, animation was the most actively expanded element of the interpretation program. Research goals were primarily established to improve knowledge for the Park's animation staff. Although exhibits areas were important, animation continued to take priority because Louisbourg's interpretive staff generally believed that no amount of passive display could replace the planned animation that brought a sense of living back to the Fortress.<sup>8</sup>

This fact did not lessen the importance of exhibition areas at the site. Staff believed that Louisbourg was unique in its approach to combining animation with modern exhibition areas. Other living history sites, such as Colonial Williamsburg and Upper Canada Village, continued to keep their display areas isolated in orientation centres or simply used modern communication methods in their period environments, treating it as an unavoidable phenomenon like the twentieth-century visitors themselves. Louisbourg by the early 1980s was unapologetic of the intrusion of display areas on site, pointing to the responsibility toward ensuring the integrity of the historic environment.<sup>9</sup> Animated areas were dependent upon these

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<sup>6</sup>"Draft Interpretation Plan, May 1987," p.32.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.31.

<sup>8</sup>F.G. McGill, "Operating an 18th Century Town in the 20th Century, University of the Air, 1981," p.12.

<sup>9</sup>"Completion Plan," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group PD 74 section 3, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.3



exhibition environments because they had as much, and in some cases more to say about the site and remained a significant part of interpretation provided that they did not intrude upon it.

Interpretive development began in 1982 on the *Commissaire-Ordinateur's* Residence (Bigot's House). The approach adopted for its interpretation differed from any other at the Fortress. Previously interpretive staff maintained "period" houses separate from those areas designated for exhibits. Due to its size and layout, Louisbourg staff felt the two approaches could be combined. Interpretation focused on the financial administration of the colony and the bureaucratic function of the *Commissaire-Ordinateur* as well as his personal life in so far as it reflected aspects of upper class life in Louisbourg society. Equally important it provided the opportunity to examine contemporary themes pertaining to the challenges for interpretive staff.<sup>10</sup>

The *Vestiges* exhibition housed here was intended to demonstrate that few furnishings and other objects on site can actually be traced back to eighteenth-century Louisbourg. Despite reference to massive archaeological records and thousands of archival documents, very few personal belongings were found. Environments such as the *Vestiges* exhibition, in addition to theme lounges, guided tours and publications were, according to Park staff, all part of developing a cohesive and believable interpretation of the eighteenth-century living environment. The intent was to provide an understanding of a representative cross-section of Louisbourg's social and architectural environments.<sup>11</sup> The process of reconstruction, staff argued, satisfied a number of goals: exhibits satisfied public curiosity by expanding on issues not covered by animation as well as

<sup>10</sup>A.B.J. Johnston, "The Commissaire-Ordonnateur's Residence: A Manual for Animators and Interpreters, April 1985," The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group OC 32, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.2.

<sup>11</sup>William O'Shea, "Exhibits Plan, 1984," The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 23 R part 3, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.14.

introducing contemporary issues such as advances in research, archeology and reconstruction of the Louisbourg project itself. Staff argued that the site additionally encouraged a more sophisticated appreciation of the historical process by using artifacts and reproductions to illustrate complex historical themes and ideas.<sup>12</sup>

Interpretive planning also included the development of trails in outlying areas of the Park. Formal plans were outlined in John Lunn's "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretative Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s" and the 1971 "Interpretative Prospectus" but by their own admission these plans were by no means exhaustive.<sup>13</sup> The move to develop trails in the outlying areas was designed to fulfill several objectives, primarily a desire to interpret siege works and outlying historic features; a recognition of the importance of the geographic relationship required interpretation that is difficult to present within the confines of the fortress.<sup>14</sup> By developing outlying areas, staff hoped to enhance its general interpretation, widen the range of visitor experience, and make contact with many local visitors who travel in the Park without actually visiting the reconstructed area.<sup>15</sup>

By the 1980s interpretive staff viewed Louisbourg as a communication system that involved a variety of media. These media evolved from objectives to provide specific information about Louisbourg past and present. Furthermore they served to reinforce one another and provided the visitor with a full varied

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<sup>12</sup>William O'Shea, "Working Paper in Preparation for 1981 Operations Review," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group, I 23, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.2.

<sup>13</sup>John Lunn, "Fortress of Louisbourg Interpretative Plan: A Pattern for the 1970s, February 1970," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 12, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. and John Lunn et al., "Interpretive Prospectus, September 1971," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 14, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg Nova Scotia.

<sup>14</sup>The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group I 21, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.5, 16.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., I 21 R part 1, p.5, 16

experience. The fine tuning of interpretive media demanded provisions be made to provide visitors with an introduction to Louisbourg's history and culture.

Guided tours were also more rigorously developed during this period. Although recommendations for guided tours were made in the late 1960s, their limited capacity relegated them to the periphery of interpretive programming. Guided tours were used by 1980 as a grounding element in interpretation, working in conjunction with animation to present a personal, well-rounded orientation to Louisbourg which park staff regarded as necessary for a successful visit. In addition to developing guided tours of the site, publications were, for the first time, addressed as a critical element of on-site interpretation, necessitating primarily the development of a basic guide to Louisbourg's history and culture in a format that would appeal to each visitor regardless of age and education.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the most effectively expanded interpretive element at Louisbourg was the development of the children's programming. Staff regarded it as essential to interpretation because children find it difficult to understand abstract concepts and the notion of historic time. Costumes, food, literature and other aids were employed to reinforce interpretive efforts exploring alternative sensory mediums and participatory experiences. Staff intended children to assume an active role in the learning process and maximize their understanding of Louisbourg.<sup>17</sup> Understanding was achieved, according to staff because this form of living history interpretation facilitated the incorporation of smell and touch as well as the auditory and visual senses to make history a stimulating experience for the child.

Interpretive programming throughout the site is geared toward adults and the past presented pertaining almost exclusively to adults. Part of improving the

<sup>16</sup>The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, I 23 R part 2, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.9.

<sup>17</sup>The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, O A 02, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.1. also see The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group O A 27, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

child's learning experience is to communicate a sense of the lives of their eighteenth-century counterparts. Thus, the introduction of costumed children was also a means by which the child's experience can be known. Children in the animation program cannot realistically be expected to haul wood and scrub clothes in an attempt to provide "accurate" animation. Despite this shortcoming, interpretive staff regard some approach to portray children as a better solution than none at all.<sup>18</sup> Yet despite over a decade dedicated to the expansion and development of children's programming to date, no manual exists specifically geared to children's interpretation or animation. While interpretive efforts are commendable, until children's programs are more developed they, will continue to subordinate the learning experience of children and validate the primacy of adult history over that of children.

Such shortcomings are inevitable because no medium for interpretation is flawless; no matter how much we know about the past, we can never re-create it. No amount of research can duplicate attitudes, values, opinions, beliefs and other intangibles. The white-washed, neatly groomed appearance of most historic parks has given people a romantic image of the past that rarely existed. The success of interpretation during this most recent phase of development hinged on the attempts of interpretive staff to interpret unpleasant or controversial subjects, such as the hardships of soldiers, lice and poor sanitation, to visitors in hope of providing a clearer picture of what life was like in eighteenth-century Louisbourg.<sup>19</sup>

Site interpretation came of age during this period, making Louisbourg's interpretive staff aware, more so than at any other time, of the shortcomings of their site and site interpretation in general. The Des Roches property for example

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<sup>18</sup>P. Kell, "Children's Volunteer Program Activities Manual, 1988," The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group O A 29, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.1

<sup>19</sup>Margaret Fortier, "The Application of Research to Historical Display, February 1982," The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group PD 61, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.10.

was successful as a credible example of eighteenth-century fishing properties at Fauxbourg. The small fishing village that developed outside of Louisbourg's fortified walls accounted for two-thirds of the town's cod fishing. Its interpretation was important as a significant element of eighteenth-century trade and commerce.<sup>20</sup> Despite the success of the Des Roches presentation, however, staff regarded it as "fundamentally incomplete" because it was located outside the main gate to the reconstruction and is the one building most congested with visitor traffic.<sup>21</sup>

Recommendations were proposed in 1987 to locate the site closer to the Dauphin Gate and away from the transit terminus. The property was moved and completed as a typical Louisbourg fishing operation with a fish stage and *cabanes* to represent workers' living quarters.<sup>22</sup> Moving the structure curiously posed no conflict to Louisbourg staff because the original location of the Des Roches property has not accurately been determined. Moreover, the Fauxbourg story took precedence over the particulars of George Des Roches' life and times. In this case the Des Roches building served as an example of how a specific site was employed as a representative site, serving not only to document the lives of the inhabitants but also to represent the hundreds of small fishing houses along the harbour.

Interpretation of Louisbourg's natural resources and the impact of the environment on its development were also identified as critically underdeveloped themes. Staff argued in the 1987 Draft Interpretation Plan that the interpretation of the factors determining site selection and ones that continued to affect the economy, social and military life of the Fortress were crucial to understanding the Louisbourg story. Proposed solutions included the development of nature trails

<sup>20</sup>F.G. McGill, "Operating an 18th Century Town in the 20th Century, University of the Air, 1981," p.7.

<sup>21</sup>"Draft Interpretation Plan, May 1987," p.34.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p.48.

and the commission of a map of the North Atlantic including the coastlines of Europe, Africa and the Americas. The illustration was intended to establish a global context for Louisbourg's trade, although supplemental interpretation was also planned in the Fortress' theme lounges.<sup>23</sup>

Despite of a variety of acknowledged weaknesses, the largest obstacle facing interpretive planners was, and continues to be, a lack of an appropriate number of staff. Animation roles represented were closely linked to the reconstructed buildings. Non-residents and inhabitants who lived outside the reconstructed area are not represented and generally do not appear in the animation, although during the moment in time represented, Louisbourg was busy and full of people. The only permanent inhabitants of the site today are the animals, and the job of portraying a cross-section of a town of thousands falls to a daily staff of about one hundred and fifty. Visiting sailors, English prisoners, Swiss mercenaries and diverse street characters could provide lesser known elements of the colonial population. The employment of extra staff, proposed in hopes of providing sufficient numbers to demonstrate this cultural diversity, still has yet to be realized. This limitation is explained by the political realities of the summer of 1744. Much of the garrison would have been away invading Canso, and the sailors and merchants typically in the harbour during the summer would have stayed away, fearing the recently-declared war between the English and French. Thus, the population of the Fortress would have been much lower than usual.<sup>24</sup> Legitimate or not, staff shortages have resulted in a missed opportunity to demonstrate immigration as a theme of Louisbourg's and Canada's development.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p.46.

<sup>24</sup>F.G. McGill, "Operating an 18th Century Town in the 20th Century, University of the Air, 1981," p.7,8.

Both the planning and implementation of programs at Louisbourg raised larger questions, some of which were being addressed in the professional literature. Among the more significant issues being debated were the ability of historic sites to accurately portray the past and consequently the validity of their interpretation of it. Staff at Louisbourg, throughout this last period of development, grew increasingly more aware of the need to refine the "total" interpretation of the Fortress. As well they began to question the validity of the "history" they were presenting. In the same vein, critics and advocates alike addressed the issue of creating a three-dimensional view of the past. Chris Miller-Marti offered an enlightening assessment of history museum exhibits, arguing that they often tell us more about ourselves than about the ancestors we are attempting to portray.<sup>25</sup> Such claims are true but hardly surprising given interpretive shifts at Louisbourg. Early interpretation reflected a preoccupation with commemorating the Fortress' military past first as a besieged site and later as a defensive installation. The advent of social history and the reconstruction of the civilian town led to shifts in research towards economics, class, and leisure activities as well as the introduction of gardens and entertainment establishments to the reconstructed site.

More than this, museum critics during this the last decade questioned not only the museum's ability to revise the past, but also its ability to present any "accurate" version of it. The past, as Miller-Marti argued, has been used not only for the validation and justification of the central authoritative agencies in society, but to create feelings of patriotism and to reinforce political ideals in the population. Certainly this was true for development at Louisbourg. "All history is

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<sup>25</sup>Chris Miller-Marti, "Local History Museums and the Creation of the Past," Muse, (Summer, 1986), p.36.

a production," Miller-Marti wrote, "a deliberate selecting, ordering, and evaluation of past events and experiences."<sup>26</sup>

Today the question of the authenticity and validity of museums' interpretation of history is of greater importance because sites have taken on a larger public role, demanding that standards be employed to ensure that sites teach based on factual evidence, as well as entertain. Critics and advocates alike argued that many historic sites were guilty of exploiting the unusual or the bizarre but unimportant aspects of a given site thus stooping to false dramatizations or unwarranted exaggerations in the hope of captivating its audience rather than educating it.<sup>27</sup> Such initiatives call into question concerns as to the historic validity of site interpretation. There is not one historic truth waiting to be uncovered, and objectivity must be pursued, but when objects and structures do not remain sufficiently intact to tell their own story, exhibit interpretation is an effective means of communicating a sense of the past to the public.<sup>28</sup>

One concern emerging is the notion that history is a commodity. As a tourist attraction, some critics argue that the historic site has sold out to commercialism. In his recent book The Past in Contemporary Society, Peter Fowler pondered the uses people make of the past. It is difficult enough to establish simply what happened for long periods in the past, in addition to agree on sequence, chronology and significance, argued Fowler. Furthermore, the past does not contain a framework of events with only one meaning, as historiography and archaeology's own past bear witness. Discovery and research reflect as well as promote change in the past as it is perceived and in our attitudes toward a series of

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p.37.

<sup>27</sup>This concern is echoed in the writings of Alderson and Low, Jay Anderson, Sir Pope-Hennessy, David Lowenthal, Douglas Richardson, Sydney Wise and others.

<sup>28</sup>The development of the quest for objectivity in the historical profession is addressed in Peter Novick's, That Noble Dream, The Question of Objectivity in the American Historical Profession, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).



changing pasts. Fowler maintained that by promoting the concept and practice of management in our dealing with the past, we openly admit that it can not only be fixed, but manipulated.<sup>29</sup> About restoration, Fowler argued that "the only danger is that participants and watchers dupe themselves into thinking that what they are doing is history."<sup>30</sup> To clarify, Fowler argued that by participating in reenactments and historical animation, spectators come to believe that the past has been recreated.

Today literary discussions in museum journals continue to question the museum community's ability to interpret the past effectively. Historians, anthropologists, philosophers and geographers are lending their opinions to what still remains a largely undisciplined profession. Although literature has evolved along with other academic disciplines, the museum community has been slow to respond in practice. Scholastic programs exist but they are few and relatively small. Graduate programs are available at the University of British Columbia and University of Toronto, but instruction gives little attention to the historic analysis or method. Lesser known institutions such as the University College of Cape Breton and Algonquin College also offer programs, although they are geared more towards developing museum skills than historic discipline.

What has developed at Louisbourg and at other historic sites is a new way of looking at and examining the past, according to Robert D. Watt. His concern however is that they are moving toward a three-dimensional view of the past that is not as historically sound as it could or should be.<sup>31</sup> The term "three-dimensional view of the Canadian past" is used by Watt to denote "the sum total of the impressions and statements conveyed by all the historical exhibitions,

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<sup>29</sup>Peter Fowler, The Past in Contemporary Society, Then, Now, (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.4, 8.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>31</sup>Robert D. Watt, "Toward a Three-Dimensional View of the Canadian Past: Can Material History take us There?" Material History Bulletin, vol.8 (Special Issue, Ottawa: 1979).

collections and restorations whenever they occur in Canada, together with the published and unpublished documents arising from them."<sup>32</sup> They present no uniform view of the past, according to Watt. In part because although material history and history are complementary parts of an overall effort to understand and preserve our past, history is often narrowly defined as studies of the past based on the forms of evidence traditionally preserved by archives. Material history refers to the development of collections of artifacts as well as the history that results from the study and exhibition of them. At the core of his argument is the fact that material history should be considered a legitimate province of historical inquiry. Watt argued that as historians in the museum community exert energy improving the quality of investigations into political, economic, social and intellectual history, they ignore the continued disregard for objects evinced by the academic historian.<sup>33</sup> What Watt failed to realize is that material history has only begun to develop as a discipline and even now, its purpose and methodologies are neither employed nor understood in most Canadian museums.

Like Watt, S.M. Becknow and Gregg Finley contend that artifacts offer historians new sources through which to understand the past, provided they are analyzed both in terms of their function and the values their creators attached to their use.<sup>34</sup> When we work with artifacts, we are not attempting to know them in their physical fullness, but in their cultural meaningfulness. The artifact accordingly provides a vehicle through which culture can be explained in physical terms. A watch, Becknow argues, cannot be explained without references to ideas of time, converted motion scheduling, and so on.<sup>35</sup> The work of the curator as a

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p.28.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>S.M Becknow, "The Nature of an Artifact," *Gazette*, vol.9, no.1. (Winter 1976) pp.24-27. and Gregg Finley, "The Museum and the Historian: Toward a New Partnership," *CMA Gazette*. vol.11, no.2. (Spring, 1978), pp.6-9.

<sup>35</sup>S.M Becknow, "The Nature of an Artifact," *Gazette*, vol.9, no.1. (Winter 1976), p.26.

material historian is only just beginning, according to Watt, Finley and Becknow, once a physical description is complete. The function of the museum scholar or curator is to recover ideas of the past by preserving human artifacts and then by unlocking their meaning within their original context and associations.<sup>36</sup> Louisbourg's exhibition areas would benefit from a recognition of this view. In part they are plagued by a lack of established methodology but also an unwillingness to employ the artifact as a demonstration of culture. Certainly a lack of personal artifacts has contributed to this reluctance, but in light of the assertion that approximately three-quarters of a million artifacts have been uncovered, there must be more use for them than as mere models for or furnishings for the reconstruction. Any effort to begin an analysis of artifacts in such a way as to wed them with literary and archival sources is in my mind a step in the right direction.

Academic history provides little theoretical or methodological direction for interpreting the past through the analysis of material objects, and this may account for the misunderstood purpose of collections gathering and research in local history museums. The problem is critical because despite the self-acknowledged superiority of academic history, the heritage industry has become the most influential interpreter of history for the public. For many years, however, the museum curator and historic site administrator have been the orphaned cousin of the academic historian. Beginning to reconcile this rift can only be to the advantage of the discipline of history itself.

Material culture, according to Thomas Schlereth, implies both the subject to be researched and the method of studying the subject.<sup>37</sup> Its principal task is to

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Thomas Schlereth, "Material Culture Research and Historical Explanation," The Public Historian, vol.7, no.4. (Fall 1985), p.22.

uncover what can be known about the past and present creations of humankind, but creating an understanding not entirely independent of documentary or statistical data.<sup>38</sup> Subject to the same problems as other sources, durability is a problem for the study of artifacts; the material composition of the object inevitably determines the rate at which it will deteriorate. For example, few if any wooden structures still stand from the eighteenth century, yet many stone buildings remain. One might wrongly conclude from a contemporary observation that most eighteenth-century buildings were constructed of stone. Similarly historians are further troubled by the fact that some objects are valued over others. Nostalgic items and momentos are saved while common items tend to be discarded, as well as society's tendency to destroy and discard items that have been improved upon by technology.

This bias of primary source material is not exclusive to material evidence, but historians are simply more accustomed to dealing with the biases inherent in more familiar literary sources. But by ignoring material evidence, Mary Johnson argues, we run the risk of losing insight into the socio-economic conditions, political circumstances and cultural norms that help bridge the gap between public and private history.<sup>39</sup> Schlereth further argues that material culture evidence that survives for cultural analysis often provides us with a broader cross-section of society and, therefore, a more representative source of information than if we were to rely on written statistical records alone. Thus, artifacts help to mitigate some biases inherent in literary source material.

One must wonder whether the past can be known at all, given the degree to which our perceptions are shaped by the present and the exclusivity of source material. Critics continue to attack historic sites, despite a variety of other forms

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p.23.

<sup>39</sup>Mary Johnson, "What's in a Butterchurn or a Sadiron? Some Thoughts on Using Artifacts in Social History," The Public Historian, vol.5, no.1. (Winter 1983) p.77.

of popular history, because they exert an inordinate influence over the average person's view of the national past and on their understanding of history as a way of knowing. Critics of historic sites argue that they create a nostalgic representation of the past, a sanitized environment without the hardship, stench and isolation common to it.<sup>40</sup> By creating these charming worlds, David Lowenthal argues, historic sites rob the past of their life.<sup>41</sup>

Interpretative staff however recognized the shortcomings of animation. The introduction of exhibit areas and theme lounges to Louisbourg were indicative of staff attempts to remedy the shortcomings of our presentness. Interpretive planners did not and cannot ask animators to carry lice and empty chamber pots in the name of historic accuracy, so they must make concessions and seize alternative opportunities to re-direct presentation where they can. Undeterred by complaints that their interpretation has been called revisionist nostalgia, Park staff have successfully taken steps to provide an atmosphere "evoking a lived-in look," according to Jay Anderson.<sup>42</sup> Interpretive staff also broke new ground by supplementing animated interpretation with exhibits and display areas in an attempt to complete their presentation of the past.

Moreover, Louisbourg's reconstruction has successfully changed the way its history has been examined.<sup>43</sup> The reconstruction and historical interpretation of eighteenth-century Louisbourg has coaxed historians to seek answers to questions that have rarely been asked of the besieged fortress. Interpretive staff had to ask numerous questions in the 1980s and 1990s to know the social history of Louisbourg in order to interpret the lives of the people in the eighteenth-century

<sup>40</sup>Thomas Schlereth, Artifacts and the American Past, (Nashville, Tennessee: The American Association for State and Local History, 1980) p.211.

<sup>41</sup>David Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.356.

<sup>42</sup>Jay Anderson, Time Machines: The World of Living History, (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), p.69.

<sup>43</sup>Kenneth Donovan, "The Six Themes of Louisbourg Fortress of Louisbourg, 1981," p.1.

town. Studies of diet, food, clothing and social structures of the Louisbourg colony were not only important to provided an "accurate" presentation of the past but also served to establish Louisbourg as a unique colony independent of New France. Although literary and archival sources continue to be most the frequently utilized sources of the past, Louisbourg's artifact collection has served as the basis for the reconstruction, interpretation and animation of the material elements of the site. Archaeological investigation was also utilized to provide material evidence of the validity, complexity and sophistication of the variety of life in Louisbourg during the French Regime.<sup>44</sup>

Interpretive development continues at Louisbourg, although it has primarily geared toward expanding the animation program. In-house reports give little indication of what lies ahead. Next year will mark the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the first siege of Louisbourg. Word has it that mock landings and battle skirmishes are in the works with the intent to involve British re-enactors. Plans are underway at Louisbourg to include the development of medical history and the opening of a billiard hall for the upcoming season. All attempts at expanding interpretation will undoubtedly be done in the hopes of improving the Park's total interpretation of Louisbourg's past, as staff members have declared their responsibility to instill in their visitors an appreciation of archaeology, history, reconstruction processes and the interpretation of historic sites using Louisbourg as a model.<sup>45</sup>

The broad objective, according to staff, is to offer a high-quality interpretation program to the public. To achieve this, Parks Canada employs a period setting, costumed animators, modern exhibits, films and slide shows, tour guides, dramatic productions, publications and other media to communicate its

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<sup>44</sup>"Draft Interpretation Plan, May 1987," p.36.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p.30.

message.<sup>46</sup> However, as John Fortier explains, Louisbourg's interpretive staff recognizes that theirs is not the last word on the Fortress' interpretation. Research remains the most important element of interpretation and subsequent applications of it provide tracks that others check and build on for future use. Changes, therefore, do not undermine Louisbourg's past interpretive efforts. According to staff, interpretive changes form another stage in Louisbourg's development. Moreover, changes are representative of a conscious effort to meld theory and practice into reasonable guidelines.<sup>47</sup>

Some changes introduced at Louisbourg have made important contributions to understanding its past, although the original interpretive concepts have remained the same. Louisbourg's interpretation has changed to take into account the extensive research findings that have been accumulating since the project began. John Fortier explains that when staff no longer viewed Louisbourg primarily as a fortress, they were free to base interpretation on a variety of themes, exploring new avenues of the past.<sup>48</sup> This much fuller framework has led to some significant departures from the way Louisbourg is integrated into Canadian history. For years, Fortier argues, if people knew anything about the site, it was the myth of the mighty fortress and the story of the two sieges told from the English point of view. Typically the Fortress was regarded as an outpost of Quebec, and any history done on New France was regarded as applicable to the Ile Royale colony as well. The economic importance of the Atlantic fisheries and the unique social life of this distant colony made it different from the rest of North America. Research for the reconstruction broke new ground, shattering the former preoccupation with a "Laurentianized" perspective on New France.<sup>49</sup> Essentially, research staff have

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<sup>46</sup>"Completion Plan," p.5.

<sup>47</sup>"Draft Interpretation Plan, May 1987," p.50.

<sup>48</sup>John Fortier, "Managing a Moment in Time," p.105

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. changes in this perspective have been initiated by the works of Terrence Crowley, A.B.J. Johnston and Christopher Moore.

influenced the public's perception of the site; by affecting visitors and reinterpreting Louisbourg's past in publications, staff have altered the way lay people and academics alike understand its role in the history of this nation.

Thus Louisbourg's greatest asset is this evolving approach towards interpretation and a recognition that the past is continually rediscovered in light of present issues. History itself is an evolving discipline, to which historiography is a testament. What constitutes historical significance is and always has been tied to present concerns, since we can only understand past human thought and action within a framework of our own experience. Moreover, the subjects selected for study are a constant reference of our own time. Despite noble attempts, history has never been an objective science, because its subjects are not an immutable series of facts confined to the past. History has become a tool to understand the past and address contemporary concerns. In the end, Louisbourg's greatest success lies in its three-dimensional presentation of the past, a past which has been mined for scholarship and economic salvation.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: ASSESSING A THREE-DIMENSIONAL VIEW OF THE PAST**

The story of The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park is significant in two ways: first because it reflects trends in interpretive development across Canada and second because it offers a way to measure the impact of contemporary issues on our perception of the past. From the beginning of the reconstruction project in 1961, the official presentation of Louisbourg has changed from a predominately military to a social examination of the site's past. The road to understanding Louisbourg has not always been a smooth one because much of this change grew out of a time when historic site interpretation was challenged and criticized more than ever before. Historic sites took on an increasingly greater role in public education during the past twenty-five years, and with that came the responsibility of learning more about the past and presenting it in a way that was accountable to research and scholarship. This chapter will examine the successes and failures of Louisbourg's interpretive staff in order to understand the way in which we perceive and investigate the past and the ways it is presented for public consumption.

The quality of the work at Louisbourg and indeed the feasibility of trying to represent the structural and conceptual environment of an earlier era have been vehemently challenged by architectural preservationists. They believe that buildings provide a sense of continuity between the past and present and that their preservation in our urban landscape is beneficial to understanding our heritage. When reconstructed for the museums and historic sites, preservationists have argued that these artificial landscapes not only undermine the continuity between past and present but attract financial support away from urban preservation efforts.

Buildings, Sir John Pope-Hennessy and others have argued, can be preserved, but ways of life cannot.<sup>1</sup> Art historian Douglas Richardson feels that urban preservation efforts have gone largely unsupported because governments have continued to finance military history and museum reproductions at the expense of architectural conservation.<sup>2</sup> According to this argument, as modern cities grow, their cultural landscapes slip away in favour of artificially-created tourist environments. Richardson vehemently opposes the credibility of historic site development, claiming:

It is ludicrous in the light of other more pressing problems, for example, that the Federal Government pours twenty-three millions of dollars into the fabrication of Louisbourg (which, not incidentally, was destroyed so conscientiously two centuries ago) or that the Province of Ontario spends ten million that we know of to resurrect Fort William (tactfully translated to a new site). No matter what pains are taken, so-called living museums in this country- based upon the relatively slender evidence (from an art historian's point of view) of the best archaeological excavations and historical research are, comparatively, as dead as any artificially animated rubber dodo that might be mounted on a genuine skeleton from Mauritius.<sup>3</sup>

Rhetoric of the preservation movement rests upon the conviction that material objects from the past are subject to historical explanation, and that the quality of our lives is enhanced if we live with and understand these objects. Similarly, Louisbourg as John Fortier points out, may not be preserving old buildings, but it is preserving a heritage and a way of life.<sup>4</sup> Implicit in Richardson's criticism is the fact that survival predicates significance, that is what survives is important and

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<sup>1</sup>Sir John Pope-Hennessy, "Why Preserve the Heritage?" Preserving the Canadian Heritage, The Royal Society of Canada 14th Symposium, (October 7-8, 1975), p.7.

<sup>2</sup>Douglas Richardson, "Politics and Priorities in Architectural Preservation," Preserving the Canadian Heritage, The Royal Society of Canada 14th Symposium, (October 7-8, 1975), pp.57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>John Fortier, "Louisbourg: Managing A Moment in Time." The History of Atlantic Canada: Museum Interpretations, ed. Peter E. Rider, no.32. (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series History Division, 1981), p.98.

what has not is simply no longer worthy of our attention. Accordingly, since Louisbourg was destroyed by the British two centuries ago, it is no longer relevant to us. If all historians conducted their research according to this criteria, history would only be a validation of victory. Moreover, the matter of the relatively slender evidence of nearly half a million archival documents and one and a half million artifacts upon which Louisbourg's interpretation was initially based are more than a solid foundation in my mind. These criticisms represent a prevalent lack of appreciation within the preservation community for the work of historic sites and their function.

Preservationists object to reconstructions like Louisbourg because they lure money away from the preservation of existing buildings. For them it is an either or proposition, but it need not be. Supporters of reconstruction like Fortier argue that reconstructions serve as a new and promising kind of museum whose buildings serve as an interpretive springboard. Moreover, they contend that their efforts to interpret the past will make the public more willing to support preservation efforts of all kinds.<sup>5</sup> In any case, museum villages have grown increasingly popular and it seems clear that reconstruction or restoration in some form will continue to be used as an interpretive device.

At the root of most criticism waged against historic site presentation is a primarily philosophical argument over the re-creation of the past. Critics have argued that any attempt to create a historic environment is doomed since we cannot ever know the past as it was. David Lowenthal, author of The Past is a Foreign Country, argues that

the more strenuously we build a desired past, the more we convince ourselves that things really were that way; if we profess only to rectify our predecessors' prejudices and errors and to restore pre-existing conditions,

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<sup>5</sup>John Fortier, "What to Do After the Architect Leaves," Gazette, vol.9, no.2. (Spring, 1976), p.7.

we fail to see that today's past is as much a thing of today as it is of that past; to bolster faith that the past originally existed in the form we now devise, we minimize or forget our own alterations.<sup>6</sup>

Lowenthal's assertions are correct to a point. The past is indeed malleable and what constitutes historical reality is constantly changing. This change is defined by Sydney Wise as the result of the multiplying perspectives of the historian's profession.<sup>7</sup> The question at hand is whether our evolving discipline is refashioning or merely developing a more complex understanding of the past. In my mind, Lowenthal and Wise have dismissed the fact that history is essentially a compound discipline in that current research either builds on or refutes that which has come before it; but that in either case it is dependent upon it. If we continue to support university research and the merits of the historic discipline, then we must also believe that historians do not profit from distorting the past and that rather they are motivated by their duty to understand it.

Advocates of re-creation, or of "living history" as it is sometimes called, argue that the past is an intellectual construct, and that since historians cannot agree about a 'true' interpretation, any sense of 'reality' is valid in helping us understand it. This argument, too, is naive since, as Peter Fowler points out, to dress up and act out events from the past extends the action without necessarily lending it any validity or reality.<sup>8</sup> However, some positive benefit does come from "living history. Certainly the past cannot be re-created, but in exploring the physical dimensions of the past, we come to know past skills, rediscover techniques and even gain understanding of past human experiences.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>David Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.326.

<sup>7</sup>Sydney Wise, "Historical Preservation: The Antiseptic Time Machine," Preserving the Canadian Heritage, The Royal Society of Canada 14th Symposium, (October 7-8, 1975) p.125.

<sup>8</sup>Peter Fowler, The Past in Contemporary Society: Then, Now, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.15 & 113.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.12.

If limited by the present, how does one begin to know the past? History is a selective interpretation of past events based on primary evidence, but the past does not exist complete and neutral waiting to be unearthed by any interested researcher. This is one of the truisms of history which, according to Fowler, seems seldom to be grasped.<sup>10</sup>

Critics of site interpretation argue that the past is dead and cannot be brought back to life, and that attempting to recreate the past serves only to trivialize it. Animation and reconstruction consequently create a nostalgic version of a past that did not exist. Lowenthal argues that unlike places that are geographically remote, what is distant in time is forever inaccessible. Nor can we fully apprehend the past through research: because it is vanished, our ideas about it can never be verified as we verify our scientific hypotheses by observations and experiment.<sup>11</sup> Even if we acknowledge that scholarly investigations of the past are interpretations of knowable data, Lowenthal contends that the past we know was not a present that was ever experienced. We interpret the ongoing present while living through it, he asserts, whereas we stand outside that past and view its finished operation, seeing it not only as itself but in its implications for the known future.<sup>12</sup>

Lowenthal concludes that reconstructions like Louisbourg reorder past scenes, creating wholly new ones.

Even when we strive for fidelity to the past we create something new that reflects our habits and preferences. As we erode and alter the inherited past, we more and more contrive our own. Creatures of historical processes beyond our control, we shape landscapes and artifacts to conform with illusory histories, public and private, that gratify our tastes. All the

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p.30.

<sup>11</sup>David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," The Geographical Review, vol. LXV, no.1. (January, 1975), p.24.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p.25.

lineaments of the present are historical yet they are continuously reborn in the minds of every culture and every generation.<sup>13</sup>

Lowenthal fails however to acknowledge that historic sites are not simply malleable landscapes and artifacts without a past. When operated with a duty to the past and interpreted with the support of documentary and archaeological evidence, these “landscapes” can successfully facilitate our understanding of the past rather than our reinvention of it.

Philosophical arguments such as Lowenthal’s have no place in a serious discussion of the merit, value or significance of historic sites. There is some truth in the argument that we cannot know the past, but we have no truthful knowledge of the present either. The increasing global perspective of the world, nationalism, spin doctors and the mass media continually reinvent the present while our own reality and experiences limit our perspectives. Curiously, it is easier to “know” individuals who are no longer evolving. Louisbourg is not a nostalgic recreation of memory as Lowenthal would have us believe. It is a scholarly and disciplined exercise to reconstruct, teach and communicate something of the past.

What Lowenthal and others argue may have some validity in light of sites such as Greenfield Village or even Upper Canada Village, (which have been composed of buildings from a variety of unrelated landscapes and constructed on a foundation with no associated past), but they have no place at Louisbourg. The reconstruction and interpretation at Louisbourg have forced historians to re-examine the traditional view of its past, correcting myths and misconceptions along the way. In this sense, Louisbourg has been developed as a different sort of historic site, not so much as a historic environment but a history classroom with a myriad of visual aids. Changes in the lesson plan reflect an evolving understanding of the past.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.33.

The incorporation of various and sometimes extensive pieces of structural fabric into the reconstruction is more than a mere gesture at Louisbourg. According to Fortier, it provides continuity between the past and present. One basic premise at Louisbourg is that because the town has been rebuilt on the site itself, it offers an intangible validity more like historic preservation than the "synthetic" reconstructions with which it has been categorized. The debate over Louisbourg's validity has continued since work began, and the answers often depend on one's point of view.<sup>14</sup>

From the beginning, Louisbourg's purpose was fundamentally educational. Project consultant Ron Way argued in 1961 that historical reconstruction was a means to an end; that end result being the visual presentation of history. In Way's mind, the average person does not have the imagination or education required to visualize the factors of history that contribute to our Canadian heritage. A historical reconstruction provides the assistance to bring the people and events of the past within the grasp of everyone's understanding.<sup>15</sup> The experience of reconstructing and interpreting Louisbourg has forced staff to consider the purpose of major reconstruction and its place in preservation. In the end, they have come to see the site as an interpretive springboard through which visitors can come to appreciate the past.

Historic sites face criticisms not only because of what they have not done but also because of what they do. Many critics charge that animation, that is having people inhabit period buildings, dressed in period clothes trivializes the past. Marcella Sherfy, United States National Park Service historian, summarizes

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<sup>14</sup>John Fortier, "Louisbourg: Managing a Moment in Time," The History of Atlantic Canada: Museum Interpretations, ed. Peter E. Rider, no.32. (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series History Division, 1981), p.94.

<sup>15</sup>Ronald Way, "Initial Report by Ronald Way, Recommendations Concerning the Louisbourg Restoration Project, September 13, 1961," The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group R 04, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.3.

the case against living history as it is presented by many outdoor museums, including Louisbourg. It has become a form of communication used more to attract interest and praise than to translate park values into understandable terms, argues Sherfy. She further adds that when sites are used as a vehicle for transmitting contemporary social and political beliefs, they exploit the people and our sense of the past.<sup>16</sup> In some respects Louisbourg has been guilty of this. The site has been promoted as the great hinge upon which turned the cultural fate of our nation. Its French and English battles have been praised as the heritage of our "founding peoples". This in many ways undermines the existence and contribution of First Nation peoples, and romanticizes our notion of the "glorious" battles of our past. Interpretive staff believe, however, that the fortress' past is significant in this regard and it is difficult to charge them with exploiting the past when their intentions are honourable and their interpretations historically substantiated.

In their efforts to present a realistic version of the past based on fact, Louisbourg and other sites have been chastised for avoiding the sordid and repulsive aspects of the past. The towns of these historic sites have no rats or prostitutes; their modern garrisons carry no body odor or lice and their streets are not soiled with sewage. Thus historic sites, Albert Parr argues,

glorify the past in relation to the present, thereby confusing our judgment of the direction in which we are moving toward the unknown future. It seems important that the museums should take responsibility for completing our image of former days, so that we can have a clear view of where we have been to help us set the course for where we are going.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, Sherfy contends that our claims to presenting a total re-creation of the past are misleading and destructive and our certainty that we can "know" earlier generations denies their essential human complexity. More importantly, that claim

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<sup>16</sup>Marcella Sherfy, "Honesty in Interpreting the Cultural Past," *Parks*, vol.3, no.4. (January/March, 1979), p.13-14.

<sup>17</sup>Albert E. Parr, "History and the Historical Museum," *Curator*, vol.15, no.1. (1972), p.58.



distorts our visitor's understanding of history and its value to the present.<sup>18</sup> No one is suggesting that rats be recruited or chamber pots be employed in order to capture the past, with sights and smells both nostalgic and repulsive, but we need to acknowledge that the presentation of the past is not the past itself. This has been given great consideration at Louisbourg. Unlike other historic sites, interpretive staff seem well aware of the short-comings of their medium. Exhibits, theme lounges and supplementary literature have been designed to fill in the gaps in interpretation left by animation at Louisbourg, but this is not always the case elsewhere.

In part, much of this criticism of the nostalgic, sanitized site is a result of the fact that sites are inherently dependent upon the tourist dollar. The desire to create and develop tourism has always been a reality at Louisbourg. There is no denying that the project was the direct result of economic disparity, not historic interest. These factors however do not necessarily discredit the work here. Many arranged marriages are successful, argues John Fortier, and at Louisbourg history and tourism have not been mismatched. There is nothing wrong with making money. It lets you do more, according to Fortier. The problem with tourism begins when it no longer serves your other educational objectives.<sup>19</sup>

Past attempts to remain true to the historic environment ironically created more criticism than praise at Louisbourg. When the period environment was initially planned, it was hoped that it would surround visitors. Staff assumed that visitors would welcome the experience and the opportunity for discovery, but after several years of operation, John Fortier explains that project staff were much less optimistic that most visitors desired anything remotely like the discomfort and

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<sup>18</sup>Marcella Sherfy, "Honesty in Interpreting the Cultural Past," p.14.

<sup>19</sup>John Fortier, "Heritage is our Business, 1982," The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group PD 60, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.10.

disorientation that resulted from the "real" period environment.<sup>20</sup> The limitations of "living history" soon became apparent to them as attempts to ensure accuracy drew public criticism and discontent that was reflected in the fact that by the late 1970s the average visit lasted only two and a half hours. "Concluding that we must either take account of our audience or lose them, we began to reconsider interpretation from a visitor's point of view" says Fortier.<sup>21</sup> Guided tours, public toilets, wheel chair and strollers were made more available to the public. Theme lounges incorporated rest stations with comfortable chairs, films and reading material, providing the visitors with a place to rest and re-orient themselves from the fatigue of the period environment.

Much of the Louisbourg project has been an experimentation in site interpretation. As the staff has grown more experienced, they have come to recognize that what they are creating is not the past. This in turn has led to a more honest and realistic acknowledgment of certain limitations. The Fortress is not, nor will it ever be a microcosm of eighteenth-century French culture. Louisbourg's French heritage has simply failed to survive, and the present-day town is almost entirely anglophone. The reality of employment means that the reconstruction employs a core of local people whose culture and language are vastly different from the historical characters they represent.<sup>22</sup> To its credit however, the Park actively employs a large percentage of francophone and bilingual interpreters, many of whom reside during the remaining year in the Acadian communities of Arichat and Cheticamp. This lack of cultural continuity at Louisbourg has been the price it has paid as the only colonial site in North American without a modern community living on it. Many museum villages have been installed on artificially created locations, and while many have admirable programs, they cannot interpret

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<sup>20</sup>John Fortier. "Louisbourg: Managing a Moment in Time," p.115.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.121.

the legitimate history or offer the sense of immediacy of the past that Louisbourg enjoys. Fortier believe that this has forced programming staff to consider their interpretation more carefully, not only making the most of the reconstruction (which itself is a product of the interpretation of evidence) but also to place their presentation in perspective against the history and promotion of Louisbourg itself.<sup>23</sup>

The reality of Louisbourg's past has created as many problems for interpretation as it has resolved. The known past of the site must be reconciled with contemporary agendas and cultural sensitivity. Louisbourg in the twentieth century exists in a political environment that is striving to be more sensitive to issues of gender, race and class, not only in contemporary society but also in the analysis of the past. Discussion of issues such as the treatment and role of women, minorities and slaves affect our understanding of the past, but also remain subject to contemporary opinions as interpreters strive to communicate the past without being offensive in the present. In light of an ever-growing multi-racial and multicultural nation, the dilemma of dealing with the realities of slavery at a site that relies most heavily on animation as a form of interpretation holds serious implications. In the contemporary struggle to gain social equality for blacks and other ethnic groups, the federal government does not promote the employment of individuals to animate elements of the past that we are still attempting to correct.

Slavery existed at Louisbourg however and continuing to ignore social groups based on current sensitivity only serves to further alienate them from mainstream scholarship. To date, historian Ken Donovan has documented the existence of one hundred and seventy-five slaves at Louisbourg, and most of them were blacks from the West Indies bound to French masters in the Fortress.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Claudia Pinsent, "Most Louisbourg Homes had African or Native Slaves," Chronicle Herald, (March 12, 1993), p.B 12.

Primarily they worked as household servants and gardeners. Documentation of their existence comes to us ironically as a result of the 1685 Black Code that established French slavery policies, insisting on the basic humanity of the slave, and demanding that they be instructed, baptized and ministered to as Christians. Since baptisms were routinely recorded and often included the individual's place of birth, Donovan has been able to use those records with others such as court proceedings to document slavery at Louisbourg.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to Louisbourg's numerous black slaves, Donovan discovered that twelve of the Fortress' enslaved inhabitants were Amerindians.<sup>26</sup> Yet, neither group is represented in Louisbourg's animation program, and Louisbourg's staff cannot credibly argue that cultural sensitivity is the reason for this neglect. The presence of native people at the Fortress was not limited to slavery. Despite rather limited relations at the Fortress with the Micmac population of Ile Royale, some did enter the town as guides, interpreters and in a limited trading capacity. The frequency of their presence was also augmented by the impending conflict, because scouts would have been in higher demand.

Park officials denied the Micmac presence at Louisbourg based on limited research in the mid 1970s. On 19 October 1977 unsettled grievances between Micmacs and the federal government prompted a mock siege of the Fortress by Micmac Band members. Micmac band members demanded representation at the Fortress of Louisbourg, arguing that an over ninety percent unemployment rate amongst the Micmacs of Nova Scotia deserved more consideration than an impersonal fetish of historical accuracy.<sup>27</sup> The initial response of Park officials was to demand historical proof for the presence of Micmacs at the site, although

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid. Ken Donovan's research has been used for incorporation into the 1994 Interpreter's Manual

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>"Micmacs Stage Seige of Fortress," *Micmac News*, vol.7, no.3. Sydney, Nova Scotia (March, 1978), p.31.

complaints from native peoples eventually resulted in the addition of three Micmacs to its animation staff. Each was able to speak the Micmac language and was expected to represent and explain native culture.<sup>28</sup> This occurrence, however, was over fifteen years ago, and to date there are no native people on the animation staff at Louisbourg; nor is there any evidence of the incorporation of their story into the interpretive agenda.

In an ironic twist of fate, the debate over historical authenticity has taken a new turn in light of contemporary affirmative action. Interest groups in 1990 called the hiring of Citadel soldiers in Halifax discriminatory. At that time only white males could depict the 78th Highlanders, a nineteenth-century Scottish military regiment re-created on the hill during tourist season.<sup>29</sup> Advocates and critics charged that the Citadel move was a compromise of history. Debi Forsyth-Smith, head of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women argued that no matter who is dressed up in those military uniforms, whether women or blacks, park officials are still ignoring the role of women and minorities in our past and thus continue to regard them as unworthy for interpretation.<sup>30</sup> Media reports seem to indicate that the official word at Louisbourg over the hiring of women and other minorities as soldiers has wavered. Louisbourg however has managed to free itself from the debate, rescued in a sense from the realities of its own past. The Fortress environment provides many opportunities for women to animate in a variety of civilian capacities thus ensuring some consistency. The question for other minority groups remains thus far uncertain. Presently, Cape Breton's population is largely of European descent. Demographic realities have not presented challenges to these trends.

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<sup>28</sup>John Fortier, "Louisbourg: Managing a Moment in Time," p.119.

<sup>29</sup>Susan LeBlanc, "Louisbourg Says No to Women Soldiers," Chronicle Herald, (July 4, 1992), p.A 3.

<sup>30</sup>Susan LeBlanc, "Fortress Jobs Open to Women, Blacks," Chronicle Herald, (July 7, 1992), p.A 4.

Multiculturalism is not a significant component to Louisbourg's animation program. Historically, the town was known to be a cosmopolitan port, providing homes to Swiss mercenaries, English, Spanish and Portuguese fishermen. Their contribution to Louisbourg's past, however, is not always evident. Animators may be aware of the cosmopolitan character of the eighteenth-century town and historical names assigned to them are known to represent individuals of various backgrounds. But when animation is played out, the diversity of experience and culture that they brought to the Fortress is not communicated to the visitor. Museum exhibitions and multi-media displays may be a solution to this problem, but thus far they remain unexplored.

Over the past thirty-five years, Park staff have been quick to acknowledge their limitations. Sometimes their scholarship is weak; ethnic groups and gender issues have been neglected and limitations of the medium whether intended or not cause the presentation to lean toward entertainment at the expense of historical accuracy. These tendencies are inherent in the business, claims Fortier.<sup>31</sup> These limitations do not invalidate their efforts but merely require careful and constant attention. Workers and promoters of historic sites should be the first to quell rhetoric about "re-living the past" and "re-creating history just as it was," argues Fortier, because historic sites can never do more than interpret evidence and they can never understand or explain more than a shadowy version of the past.<sup>32</sup>

All of this is important because an accurate, informed version of the past is the fundamental point of departure for any use made of the past. And it is fundamental to maintaining quality in the heritage business. You cannot be all things to all people, and you can't overcome the limitations of the medium, but you can concentrate on improving the skills, programs and custodianship that comprise the state of the art.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>John Fortier, "Heritage is our Business, 1982," p.23.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.24.

Despite Fortier's noble words, the fact is that his writings from the early 1980s remain the last word on Louisbourg's self-conscious assessment. Twelve years later in 1994, one must wonder what if anything has changed? Is Louisbourg continuing to evolve or beginning to stagnate?

Louisbourg has successfully ascribed to the dual purpose of enhancing Cape Breton Island's tourist industry, while at the same time fulfilling Parks Canada's primary goal of "education through recreation."<sup>34</sup> The most important elements according to staff rhetoric are the uniqueness of the fortress as a focus for history and the high degree of credibility Park staff have established by insisting on the integrity of the eighteenth-century environment. Park staff considered it mandatory that standards for integrity and authenticity be accepted and maintained by all animators involved at Louisbourg. Initially, activities in the fortress site were limited to those designated which "might reasonably have been encountered" in eighteenth-century Louisbourg. Exceptions to this rule included concessions made involving an event of "outstanding cultural importance" in which the site would be employed as a backdrop with no intention of portraying an authentic eighteenth-century Louisbourg experience. In all cases, however, each proposed activity on or off the fortress site was to be judged on its individual qualifications by the Cultural Activities Committee.<sup>35</sup>

Guidelines established in 1975 for on-site cultural activities were echoed by Fortier in 1982. In his article "Louisbourg: Managing a Moment in Time", Fortier emphatically stated that just as animators do not appear outside the Fortress, Park staff did not welcome visitors in costume, nor the filming of commercials or

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<sup>34</sup>"Guidelines for Cultural Activities at the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, October 1975," Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Record Group O B 10, Fortress of Louisbourg Archives, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. p.1.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

similar presentations that merely use the site as a stage to promote their own message.

We do not agree to the fortress being filmed as a substitute for some other place, such as Quebec or France. If these uses do not respect and portray the history of the fortress and its people, they are not, in our opinion, compatible with serious interpretation. This policy has been unpopular at times, but it has saved the historic site and the heritage it represents from exploitation, both commercial and cultural. As for publicity, we find that nothing promotes the image we want better than scrupulous integrity in our interpretation.<sup>36</sup>

Twelve years later, Fortier's honourable sentiments were forgotten as Louisbourg became the Plymouth, England backdrop for Touchstone Picture's movie, "Squanto: A Warrior's Tale". The film, set for release in the fall of 1994, upset interpretation of the fortress by introducing movie crews, equipment, and additional set buildings including a bear pit to the fortress.

Even in the best of circumstances, noble duties to the past are often forgotten when finances are strained. Promotional campaigns for the Park have not been aggressive enough in the struggle to attract tourists. Louisbourg's failure to become a self-sufficient enterprise has resulted in its continued reliance on federal support for its existence; this is a poignant reality given the recent discussion to privatize the Park as a solution to its current financial dependence. This event is an illustration of how present-day economic realities can compromise the integrity of historic sites.

Other shortcomings of Louisbourg's interpretive medium are obvious. Its animation staff consists of no elderly people, no prostitutes or beggars, no sick or disabled. In their absence, and much to the credit of programming staff, town drunks appear in the streets, public arrests are made, auctioneers sell items to the town's residents, and a town crier brings them news. With the help of the children

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<sup>36</sup>John Fortier, "Louisbourg: Managing a Moment in Time," p.111.



of members of the Louisbourg Volunteer Association, children augment the largely adult population. These efforts lend credibility to the animation program and in a state of suspended disbelief give a sense of realism to the site. Problems in animation, however, are more the result of staffing than planning.

Louisbourg's three food concessions offer an excellent opportunity to provide instruction on dining etiquette, social atmosphere and customs, but aside from the menu and environment, they fall desperately short of their potential. It is my understanding that the wait staff is hired through the Louisbourg Volunteer Association and because they are employed in the food concession, they receive no formal animation training. Manual and research reports indicate that a great deal of research has gone into planning these concessions. Menu planning and food preparation correspond with food items available at Louisbourg in the eighteenth century as well as provide for the observance of religious feast and fast days. Providing training and research information, as well as an introductory speech for patrons would greatly enhance interpretation there. As it stands now, few of the servers seem capable of answering even the simplest of visitors' questions. These food concessions provide the visitor with the opportunity to experience eighteenth-century Louisbourg with a multitude of tactile experiences not available elsewhere. Aside from merely eating, visitors dine at these establishments in order to explore additional elements of Louisbourg's past. They are a critical component in the Park's interpretation, and should be treated accordingly.

The second problem with the animation program again concerns staff. Credibility of the interpretation is weakened because there is a general lack of consistency among animators concerning their historical persona. All animators are assigned the name of an individual from Louisbourg's past. Animators, however do not consistently identify with the characters they portray. Some

animators address the public as their character while others address the public as only representing a person. This inconsistency undermines the historic environment. The public is reminded once again that they are still in the twentieth century. Certainly one must acknowledge that period animation succeeds because the tourist suspends disbelief, but park staff should make the suspension as easy as possible. Memory lapses will occur but training sessions should attempt to establish guidelines for animation as well as providing historical information.

It has always been acknowledged at Louisbourg that animation alone cannot successfully interpret the site for visitors, and this is the very reason why exhibits and theme lounges were introduced. As the contemporary view of the past changes, these alternative mediums were intended to reflect new perceptions and advances in research. In 1982, Fortier explained that:

The reconstruction, the park, and the presentation of history at Louisbourg are still finding their level. That is all to be expected, and we are probably better at our job when we are continually challenged to explain ourselves. This process will continue although the rebuilding has ended. The tension of self-examination, the search to improve, the challenge to communicate, the management dilemma of preserving while using may well be the most remarkable things about Louisbourg as a national historic park in the years ahead.<sup>37</sup>

Fortier's comments are now thirteen years old, and unfortunately little has changed at Louisbourg since.

Exhibits and theme lounges are among the most disappointing elements of the Louisbourg experience, and in some respects they reflect the fact that the Park is staffed primarily by historians rather than museum professionals. Certainly research has continued, permitting additions to the Park's animation manuals, but exhibits and theme lounges have grown increasingly outdated over the past decade. In general, exhibition areas attempt to address the six interpretive themes of the

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p121.

site, although at times even this is unclear. In a larger sense, exhibition staff have simply failed to evolve in light of more recent research regarding the fortress. The media presentation of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* provides an effective supposition of the life of a Louisbourg soldier, investigating the hardships of labour, poor diet and lack of social opportunities. It effectively illustrates that the lure of the new world's promise of opportunity and fortune left many disillusioned. The presentation is designed to illustrate the fortress as a community but neither the film nor the exhibit offer discussion of social structure, slavery, and the multicultural aspects of Louisbourg. Equally disappointing was the film offered in the De La Plagne House on the French Regime of Ile St. Jean. The film is intended to narrate the history of present-day Prince Edward Island and its relevance to the Louisbourg colony. Certainly, the history of present-day Prince Edward Island is important to the colony, but less so in light of more relevant themes such as: medicine, slavery, gambling, childhood, all of which have been researched in recent years.

Exhibits are generally lacking a professional touch. They are no longer current in view of recent research, while many objects remain without labels and text panels. Although most people do not take the time to read all or any labels, this is not an excuse to sacrifice relevant detail for brevity. Similarly, reconstructed buildings that remain closed to the public are not interpreted. The absence of text panels and signs leaves them muted, serving only to enhance the landscape of the reconstruction. If the preservation of the historic environment is threatened by such signs, then guide manual and maps need to be updated to accommodate their interpretation. It was disappointing to find buildings closed, not labeled and thus disassociated from the past that Louisbourg is attempting to present. Other exhibits employ costly handsets, back lighting and visual devices that understandably prevent easy disposal or disassembly. Their employment is

costly and inhibits changes in exhibitions that should be keeping pace with current historiographical themes. Themes and perceptions change, and it is only through change that we continue to reevaluate the past in our attempt to understand it. It would seem that in recent years that exhibition staff at Louisbourg have been riding on their laurels.

Despite these criticisms, in terms of construction, research, training and presentation, The Fortress of Louisbourg remains among the best examples of three-dimensional history on the continent. There is no perfect medium through which to communicate the past. It is difficult to determine why individuals who acknowledge the limitations of other forms of communication, books, lectures and films for example, have come to expect so much from "living history." Certainly there are sites that do not base their programs on extensive research, and there are many more whose sites and buildings are not original, and in fact whose very historical existence is a complete fabrication. This simply has not been the case at Louisbourg, where the project has expanded our understanding of the colony, and raised heritage consciousness there and beyond.

## CONCLUSION

Historiography has proved to be a useful tool not only in understanding the past but in assessing the contemporary factors that influence our perception of it. The study of historic sites holds similar potential and challenges for the historian, serving as much as a statement on the past as the present in which they are developed. By performing a historiographical analysis on the documentation of The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, this study demonstrates how historic sites can mark developing trends in museum philosophy, research and historiography and the changing role of the past in contemporary political rhetoric and decision-making.

The present site is a physical reminder of the changing perception of its past. Louisbourg's museum and cairns, which dates from the 1930s and earlier, reflect the passive military commemorations that prevailed at historic sites prior to the 1960s. Initial reconstruction efforts focused on the fortress' citadel while interpretive programming employed audio recordings and static period rooms. These efforts typify new educational initiatives at historic sites in the 1960s and represent the continued primacy of the site's military past. Louisbourg's civilian animation program introduced to the reconstructed town throughout the 1970s indicates the more active role the site was playing in public education and developing trends in history which were addressing more social elements of the past. During the last fifteen years, theme lounges, restaurants and modifications to interpretation plans in general mark the attempt to present a total history of Louisbourg's past and an acknowledgment by staff of the limitations of the medium which became increasingly evident in light of the growing debate over the legitimacy of site representations.

Critics of three-dimensional interpretations of the past argue that the artificial landscapes created at historic sites undermine the continuity between the past and present, destroying real landscapes in favour of artificially-created environments. Comparisons between buildings in our urban landscape and these educational environments, however, are moot. Critics of historic sites fail to recognize that their fundamental purpose is educational. Organizers and developers have abandoned earlier claims that they could recreate the past in favour of an acknowledgment and acceptance of the site as a vehicle for understanding the past, engaging and even entertaining the public with presentations based on scholarship and research rather than nostalgia.

We cannot know the past through historic sites, but this reality is true of all interpretations; they like other media can only facilitate an understanding of it. In part this is a result of the fact that sites have not been held accountable for uniform professional standards and thus their credibility has been undermined. Throughout this examination one comes to appreciate that there is no perfect medium to communicate the past, yet critics who acknowledge the limitations of other forms of communication expect much from "living history". It is true that Louisbourg is a testament that historic sites can become tools of political rhetoric, but propaganda has long been an element shaping our history. The challenge is not only to understand historic sites but discover why and how they argue what they do.

This thesis illustrates the need for historians to acknowledge and understand the role of historic sites and the material culture they preserve in our endeavors to understand the past. Archaeological research at Louisbourg contributed to a better understanding of Louisbourg's residents, and thus the fortress itself, helping to shift the typically political and military understanding of its past toward a more comprehensive understanding of Louisbourg's social and commercial dynamics.

Building materials, pots, pans and remnants of cloth revealed little of daily life but offered insight into homes, buildings and physical environment. The lives of its citizens, however, are not archaeologically explicit. Only through the objects unearthed and responsible animation can lives be illustrated and understood. Thus far, however, historians have been reluctant to enter the debate over the legitimacy of the history produced at historic sites.

For the student of history and the historian, Louisbourg provides an excellent example of the challenges and rewards of analyzing an enormous mass of historical and archaeological evidence and turning it into scholarship that is insightful, provocative and interesting. Through the use of artifacts and reproductions, historic sites can offer a framework for discovery helping visitors to assess their place in relation to the past. This reality makes the historic site a powerful educational medium that is worthy of our attention. Moreover, they illustrate the potential that lies in collaboration between academic and public historians. The Louisbourg project has revealed itself to be a profoundly academic pursuit whose research remains strongly rooted in historical discipline and literary source material. According to public historian Theodore J. Karamanski, "Making history available, making it applicable to people's lives, is the way the historical profession completes its ethical responsibilities to the larger society."<sup>1</sup> History is a profoundly diverse profession, but as Louisbourg proves, that should be its strength, not its weakness.

The challenge to illustrate physically Louisbourg's past is one fraught with problems, but in the end it has developed new ways to understand and communicate. Although change is an inevitable consequence of time, project consultant Ronald Way's words ring truer today than they did in 1961.

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<sup>1</sup>Theodore J. Karamanski, "Making History Whole: Public Service, Public History, and the Profession," The Public Historian, vol.12, no.3 (Summer 1990), p.93.

To study history in an ivory tower just for the sake of mental exercise takes it into the field of recreation. I for one could never afford to treat history merely as an exercise for my brain cells. If history is good for scholars, in proper dosage it is good for everyone.<sup>2</sup>

Louisbourg has broken new ground in the way we preserve and understand the past but its greatest success is that it communicates to the public something of the Canadian past in a way that is meaningful and engaging.

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<sup>2</sup>cited in Dick Snell, "He Makes a Present of Our Past," Imperial Oil Review, June 1964, p.26.



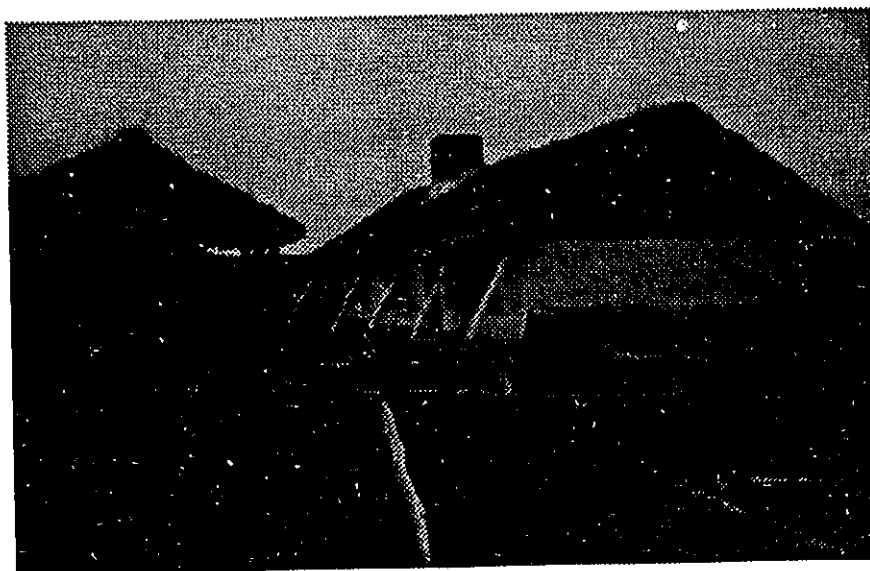
## PHOTOGRAPH APPENDIX

### RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST

FIG. 1 Louisbourg rising beyond the once heavily forested area cleared for the initial construction.



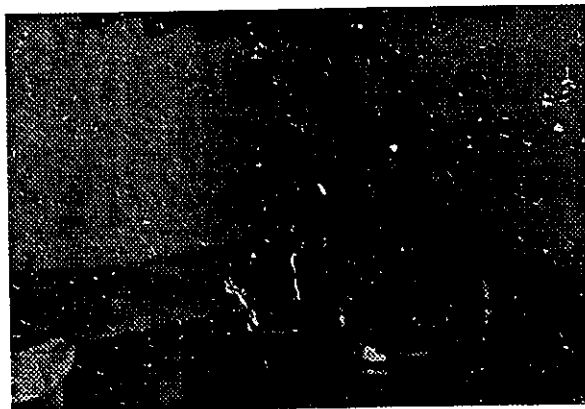
Fig. 2 Des Roches House  
The first home on the site, George Des Roches house and its Cabannes set the stage for the interpretation of Louisbourg's fishing operations.



**Fig. 3 Inside the Dauphin Gate**  
Upon arrival at the entrance to the town, visitors are introduced to the town's soldiers, the Compagnies Franches de la Marine.



**Fig. 4 Barracks**  
Typical soldier's barracks as found within the walls of the Dauphin Demi-Bastion.



**Fig. 5 The Quay**  
The centrally located Frederic Gate welcomed arriving dignitaries to Louisbourg bustling waterfront.

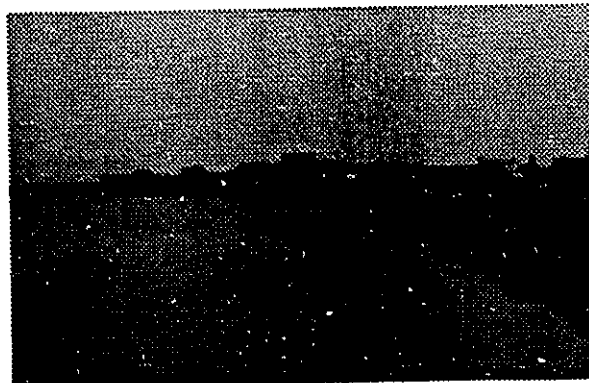


Fig. 6 Animal Husbandry  
Livestock located in the King's Bastion.



Fig. 7 The geese of merchant Michel Rodrigue.

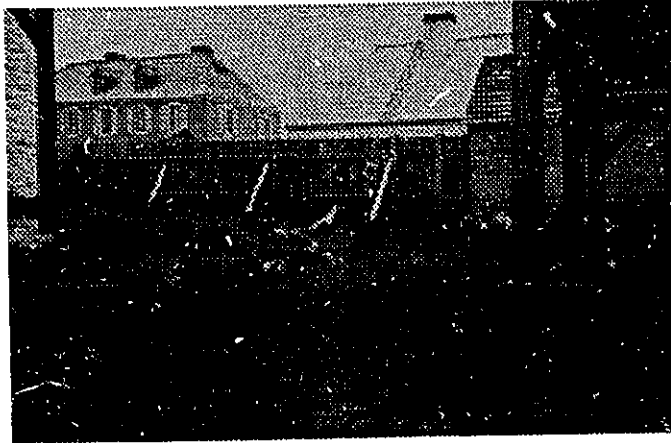
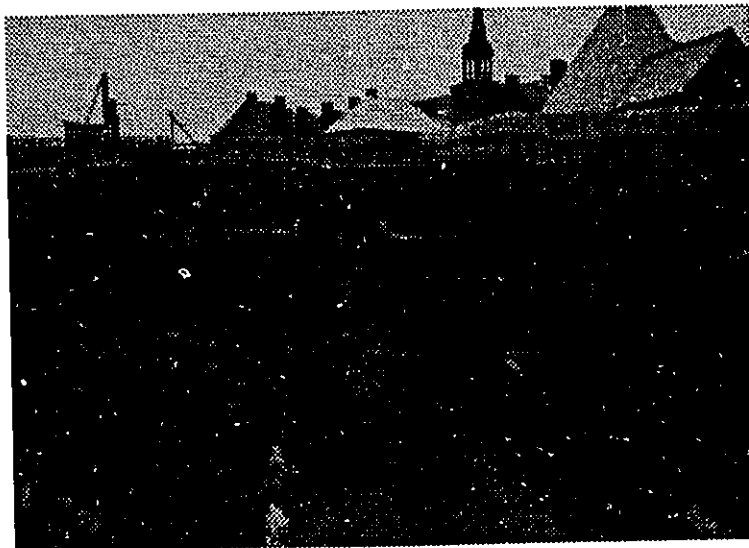


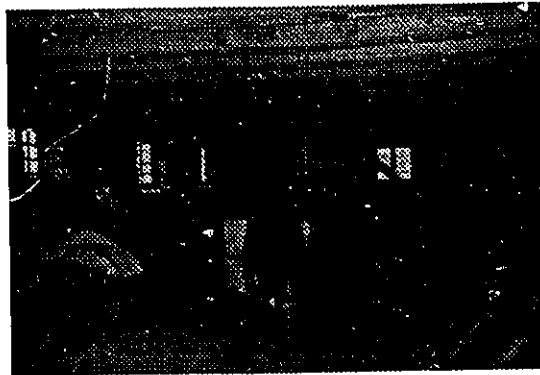
Fig. 8 The gardens of Captain Des Gaines.  
One of six original gardens brought to life at Louisbourg.



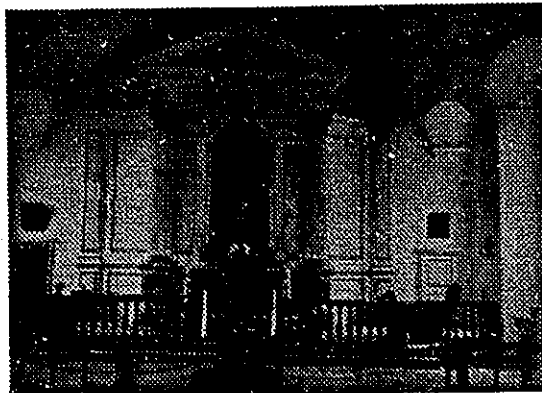
**Fig. 9 Verrier's Kitchen**  
This kitchen at the engineer's home was complete with the most modern of 18th century cooking implements.



**Fig. 10 Commercial Life**  
One of the two warehouses owned by the De La Valliere family of merchants.



**Fig. 11 Religious Life**  
The Chapel at the King's Bastion- a place of worship for Louisbourg's residents.



## ANIMATING THE PAST

Fig. 12 Social Life  
Volunteer children animating 18th century ball games.

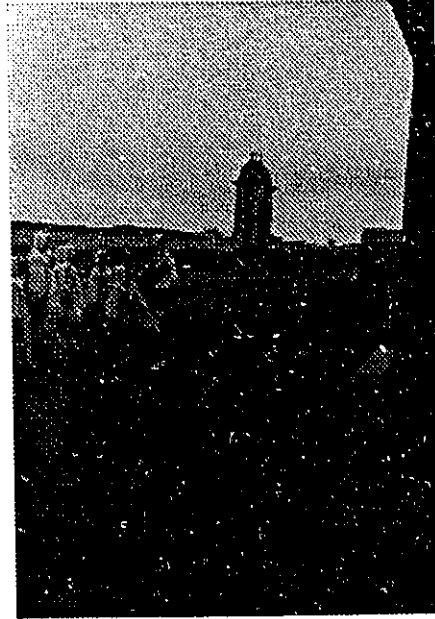
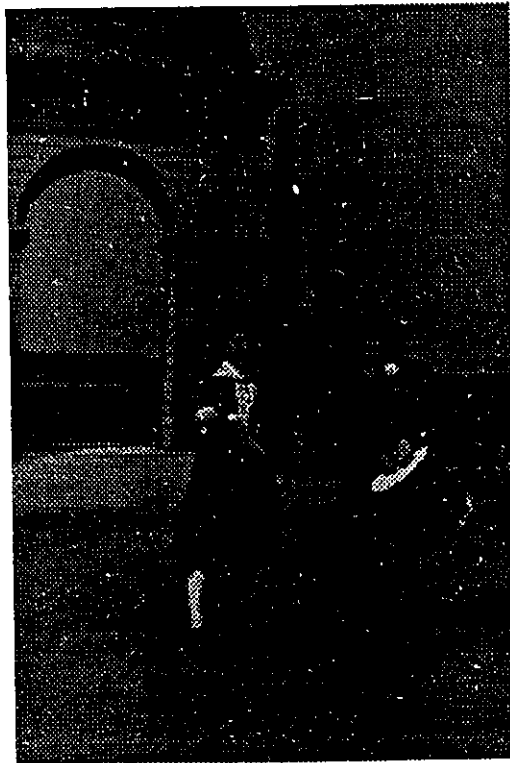


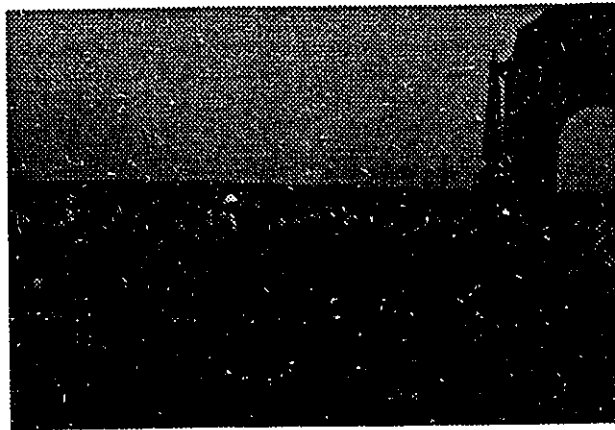
Fig. 13 "Depars Le Roi!"  
The town crier reading the day's announcements.



**Fig. 14 Maintenance**  
Masons make repairs on the Hotel de la Marine.



**Fig. 15 "Tire!"**  
Soldiers of the Compagnies Franches demonstrate musket firing on the Quay.



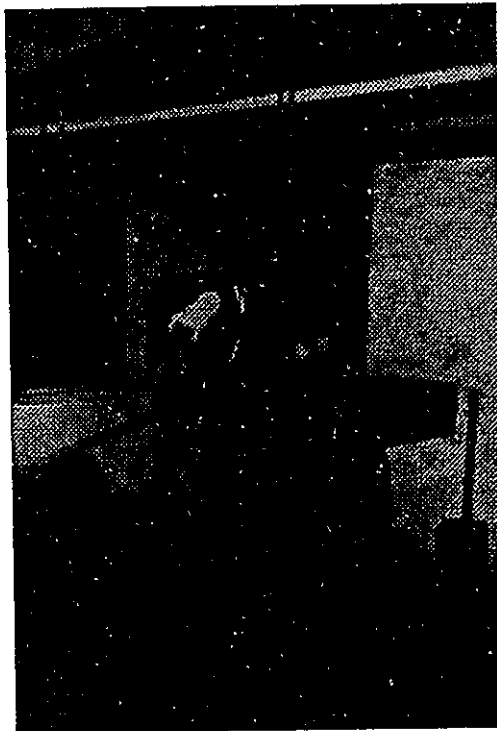
**Fig. 16 Returning to France**  
An unsuccessful fisherman sells his goods at a public auction.



Fig. 17 Auction attracts buyers from all classes  
A wealthy merchant purchases some discounted items.



Fig. 18 Feeding the Soldiers  
A Baker at work in the King's Bakery.

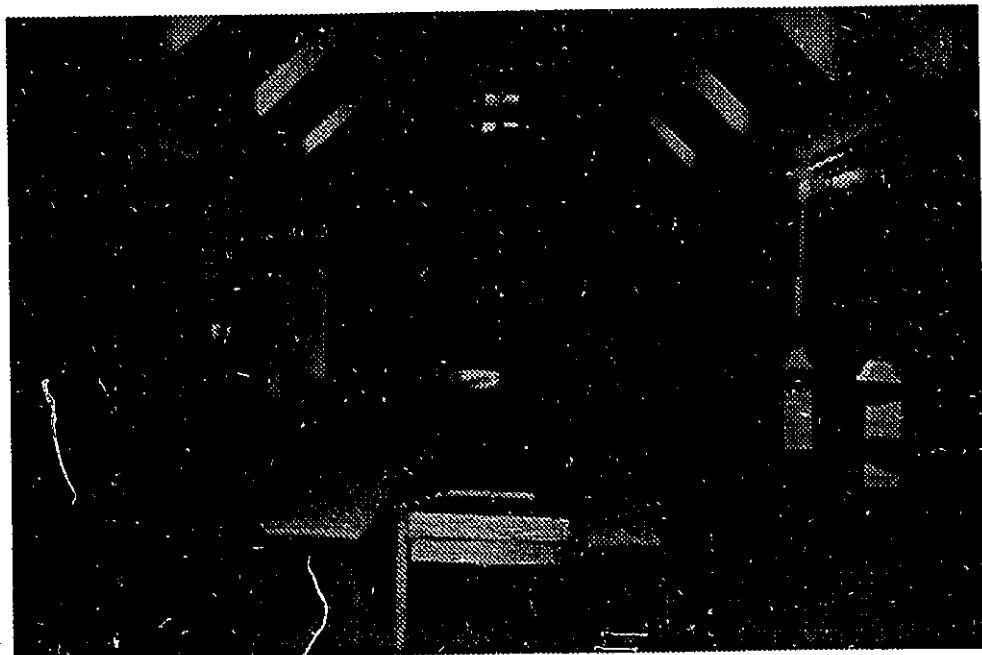


**Fig. 19** Crime and Punishment  
The arrest of a town drunk.



### **EXHIBITS AND THEME LOUNGES**

**Fig. 20** The old museum, built in 1936, illustrates early commemorative efforts at Louisbourg. The displays, artifacts and models represent early interpretation at the site.





**Fig. 21** One of the rooms in the King's Bastion that explains the process of the reconstruction to the public. It illustrates the responsibilities of the historian and the duties of the archaeologist in uncovering together Louisbourg's past.



**Fig. 22** Period Rooms like the Governor's Quarters, established in the late 1960s, rely on handsets to explain the lives of Louisbourg's officials.

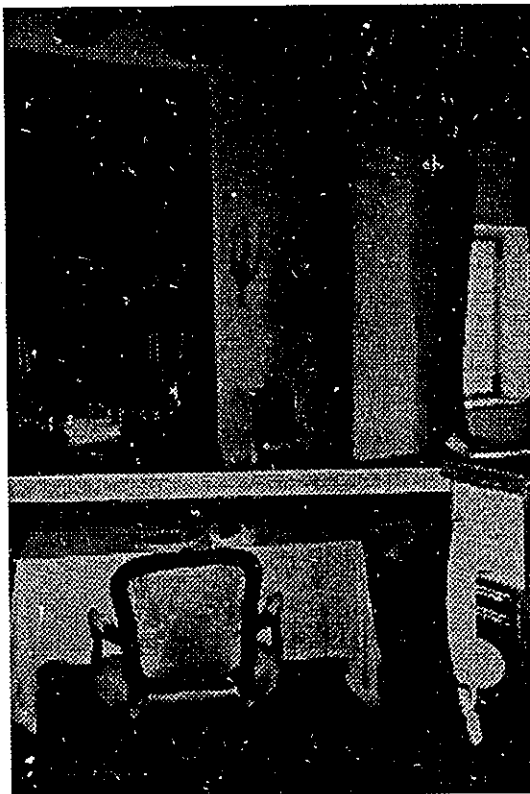
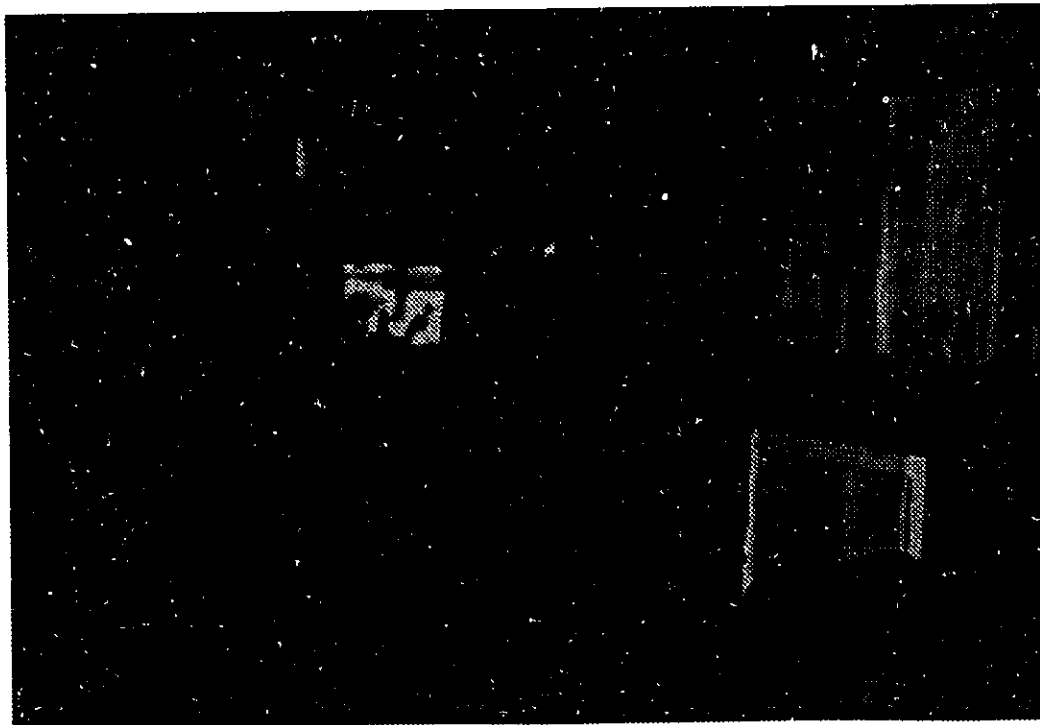


Fig. 23 Demonstrative exhibit on 18th century French building techniques in the Carrerot House.



Fig. 24 The multi-media display in the Du Haget House interprets Louisbourg as a community.



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