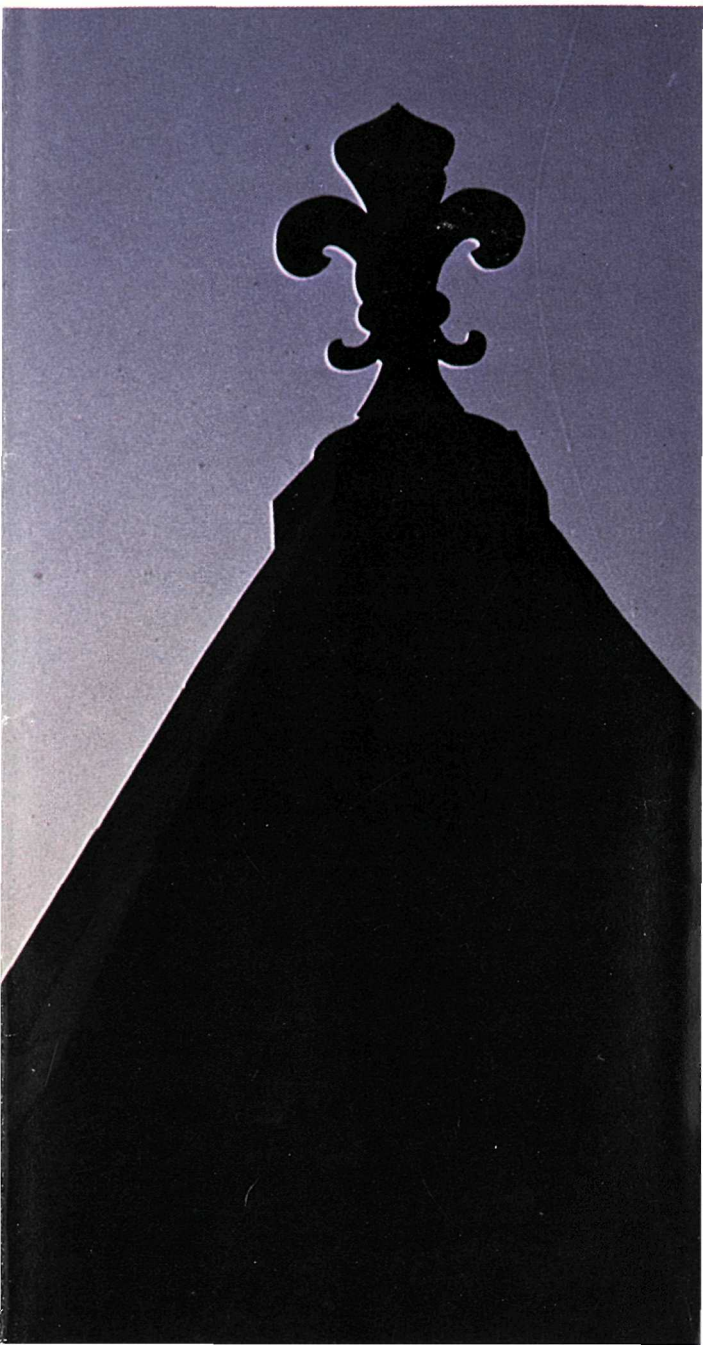


Nova Scotia

# Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park



Louisbourg – this great grey ghost on a bleak and rocky shore was built to save a French king's dream of empire. The year was 1713. The War of the Spanish Succession was lost, and only the shrewdness of Louis XIV's negotiators at Utrecht saved any of France's coastal colonies in North America.

To England went all of Nova Scotia (Acadia), Newfoundland, and the Hudson's Bay Company territory. Saved for France was Cape Breton Island (Isle Royale), Prince Edward Island, and the two tiny rocks called St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Alarmed at the threat to French fisheries in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the western Atlantic, as well as to her colonies inland, France belatedly determined to protect the water access to Quebec and to what lay beyond. A great fortress – Louisbourg – was planned to guard the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. The work began in 1720.

Thirty years of uneasy peace between France and England followed the Treaty of Utrecht. It gave the builders of Louisbourg time to raise the fortress and see the town it enclosed develop into a centre of commerce rivalling that of Quebec itself.

The building of the fortress was done by soldiers under the direction of two engineers, Verville and Verrier, following the principles of defence developed by the great military engineer, Vauban.

*There were formidable problems to be faced at Louisbourg. The rapid thaw-freeze cycle of Atlantic springtime played havoc with the lime mortar used by the French, and the walls of Louisbourg were in need of constant repair. This problem was so acute that, during Louisbourg's two sieges, the defences crumbled nearly as much from the shock of guns being fired on the ramparts as from the effects of enemy fire.*

The choice of the site itself added to the difficulties. Much of the fortress was built on swamp. The French had to contend not only with crumbling walls and leaky roofs, but also with flooded basements. And when the rest of Cape Breton is enjoying sunshine, Louisbourg can be shrouded in fog.



Workmanship was a chronic problem to the builders of Louisbourg. The garrison soldiers employed by contractors were unskilled and their morale was low. Delays in pay, and the conditions in which they worked led to drunkenness and absenteeism.

*Nor were the contractors themselves above reproach. Corruption was rife, and money meant for Louisbourg ended up in many pockets. Louis XV himself is said to have protested that he expected to waken one morning in Versailles and see the walls and towers of Louisbourg rising over the western horizon.*

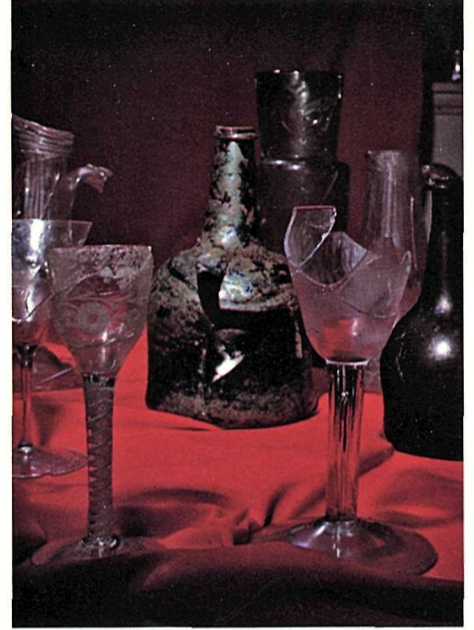
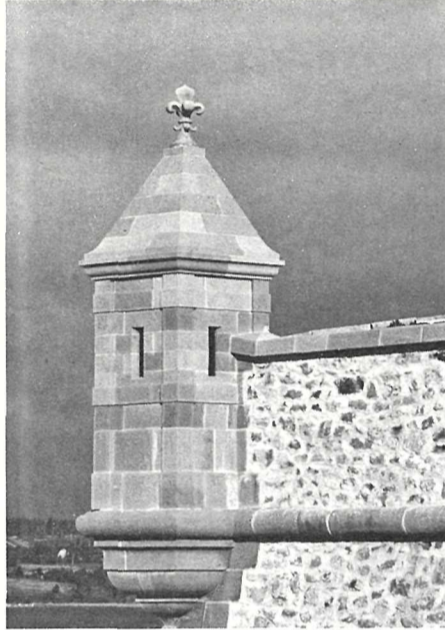
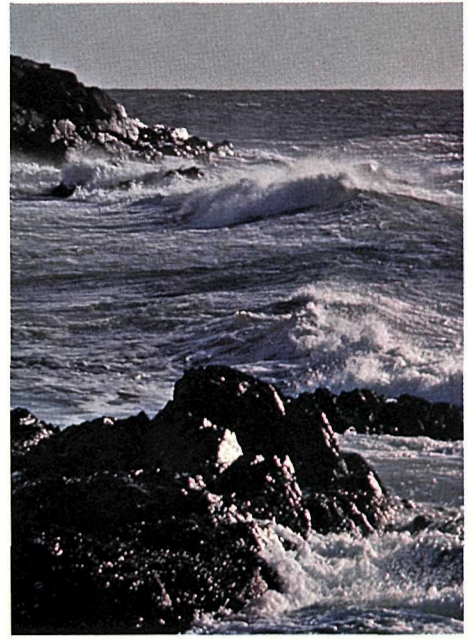
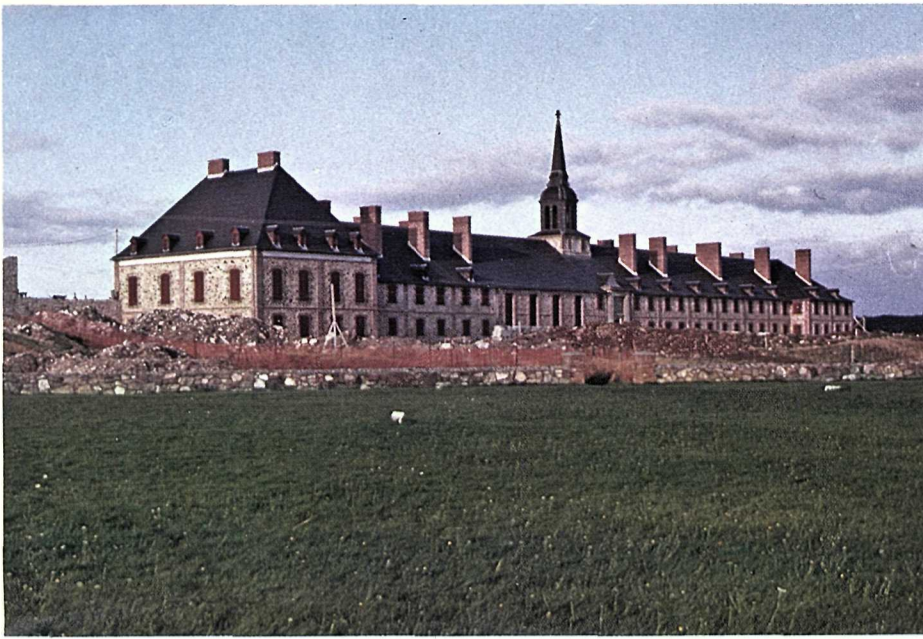
With such sums spent on a far-off island fortress, the myth of an "impregnable" Louisbourg was as easily believed by Parisians as it was by New Englanders. To the American colonists, Louisbourg seemed an overwhelming threat. Could they have seen it, they might have felt less threatened.

The town itself was strongly influenced by its function as a harbour for French fish-

ing fleets, which used the port to dry their catches before shipping them to Europe. The harbour shore, cluttered with fishing shacks, as well as parts of the town itself, was given over to fish flakes. Throughout Louisbourg there hung the stench of drying codfish, mingled with more obnoxious smells; for standards of hygiene and sanitation were not high during the 18th century.

If the choice of site was unfortunate from its effect on living and working conditions, it was disastrous from the strategic point of view.

While the harbour was so well defended as to make a forced entry virtually impossible, insufficient attention was paid to the surrounding country. The main line of landward defences took advantage of a natural line of hillocks. But beyond this was a series of low hills, some of which lay dangerously close to the fortifications. All of them were excellent locations for siege batteries.



The French failed either to defend these hills or to provide the fortress with gun emplacements to command the heights, thereby contributing to their own defeat.

The attack came in 1745, following the declaration of war on England by France. The people of New England raised an army to attack Louisbourg; the British navy provided transport. After 46 days of siege the "impregnable fortress" was captured.

But the victory of the New Englanders was undone by the peace terms arranged by England and France at Aix-la-Chapelle. In April, 1748, Louisbourg was returned to the French. It would fall again.

In 1756 began the final struggle for the New World; it was England versus France once more.

Without a strong French navy to patrol the sea beyond its walls, Louisbourg was impossible to defend. An English army led by Sir Jeffrey Amherst besieged and captured the fortress in 1758 for the second and final time. At the head of the leading assault and prominent during the siege was Brigadier-General James Wolfe, who later captured Quebec for the British.

It was decided that, should the French return again as they did in 1748, no fortress would await them. The summer of 1760 was spent in blowing up its defences. The town remained, occupied by a declining number of residents, chiefly time-expired British soldiers and their families, who later built new homes and farmed among the ruins. The fortress area was set aside by the Canadian government in 1928 as a National Historic Site.

Throughout the period from its demolition until the establishment of the park, the site was used liberally as a quarry for dressed sandstone, brick and rubble. House foundations in the locality, roadbeds, and the present causeway to the fortress, have all been built from the ruins.

#### The Reconstruction

Partial attempts at restoration were made earlier this century. As a result, the King's Bastion casemates and the foundations of

the Château St-Louis, the hospital, and the Intendant's house have been known as landmarks for some years. By and large, however, the fortress remained a series of grassy mounds until interest in it revived again with the inception in 1961 of the federal government's program to restore at least part of Louisbourg to its 18th century appearance.

The decision was made with the idea of providing employment for the displaced coal miners of Cape Breton. Having an immediate work force posed a problem: what the planners needed was time, not men – time for research before actual reconstruction.

Initially, then, the new work force was employed in building the training and workshop facilities for the various crafts likely to be involved in the restoration. Coal miners began learning such crafts as stone cutting, stone masonry, wrought iron work, carpentry and timber hewing. Some trade skills, such as slating, had virtually disappeared in Canada. A French expert had to be brought in to aid in the intricate slating and leading on the tower of the Château St-Louis.

This period of retraining was used by historians and archaeologists to build up as much lead time as possible in the location of documents, and in the excavation of sites to be reconstructed. The archaeologists in particular found it difficult to excavate effectively in the absence of coordinated historical data on their sites.

Historians, meanwhile, combed through archives and collections in Britain, France, Canada and the United States for every documentary reference to Louisbourg that could be traced. There are now some 350,000 documents, journals, maps and plans in the Louisbourg archives.

Another result of the research effort is the large and important collection of French and British artifacts excavated from the fortress site. This includes ceramics and glass of many types, clay pipes, weapons, tools, building hardware, and even toys. The historical and archaeological evidence together reveal much about life at Louis-

bourg, and provide an excellent base for the study of the French culture in North America.

The restoration effort is being directed toward a Louisbourg as it was in 1745, immediately before the first siege. Then the fortress was complete and relatively new; thereafter it was in a state of unending repair and modification. Although the best historical evidence favours reconstruction of the 1745 fortress, the archaeological excavations often bring to light structures that did not exist at the time of the first siege but were constructed between then and 1758. This makes the research task a complex one.

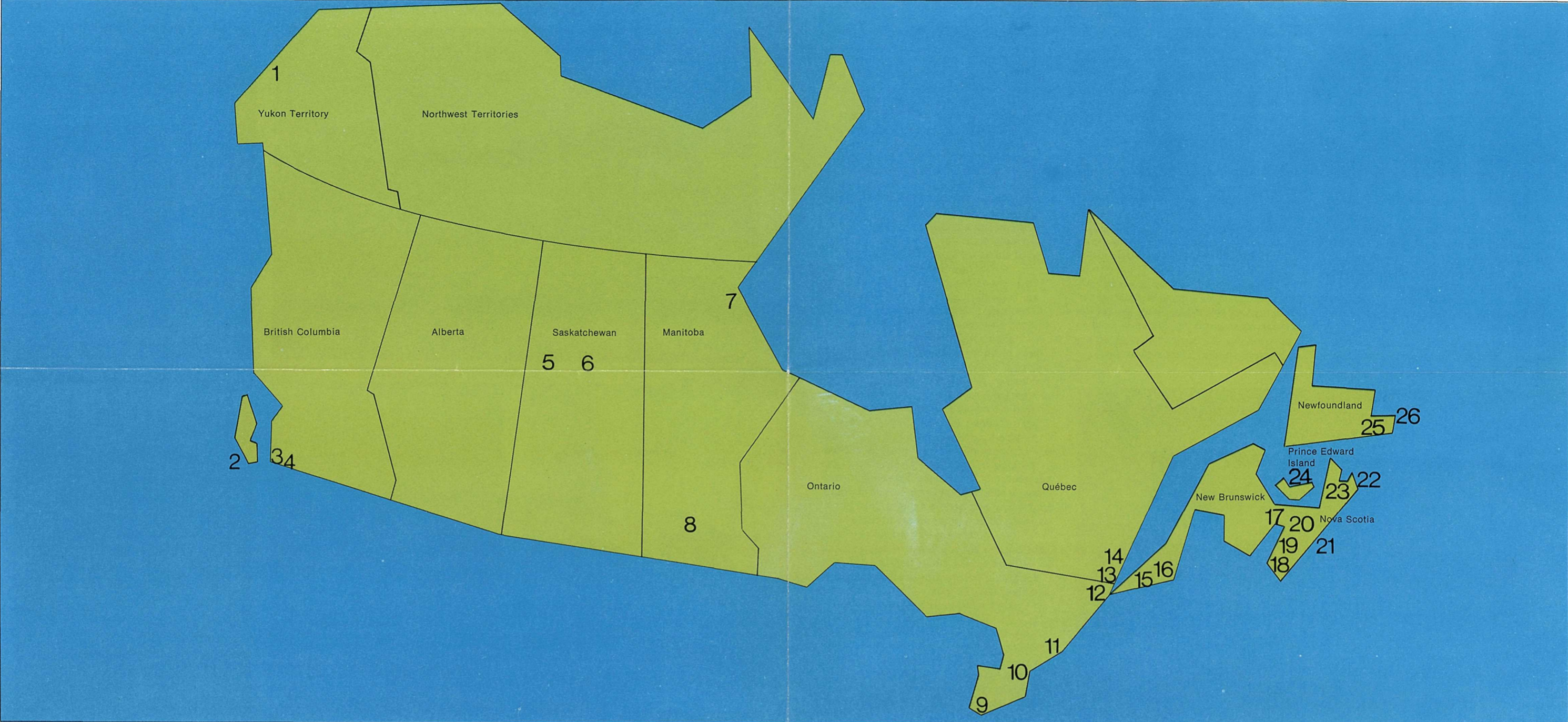
Once a feature at Louisbourg has been historically and archaeologically researched, a design team consisting of historian, archaeologist, draftsmen, and, at times, engineers and interpreters, produce preliminary design drawings.

From these, final construction drawings are produced by draftsmen of the Engineering Section. These final drawings may range from 20 different sheets, in the case of a small building, to 50 or more for a large building. In the case of the Château St-Louis, well over 100 sheets were required. Each averages a week of drafting.

Considering that the restoration will involve between 40 and 50 buildings and a series of massive defences, some idea may be gained of the tremendous design task involved.

Reconstruction of the Citadel – consisting of the King's Bastion and the Château St-Louis – began with the Bastion itself in 1963 and the Château in 1965. In 1967, construction moved outside the Citadel with the building of the Magasin Général, chief storehouse for government supplies.

A number of buildings have been scheduled for reconstruction in the years ahead, and planning for development of the Park has been projected through to 1976. The Park will, however, be fully operational in the summer of 1972.

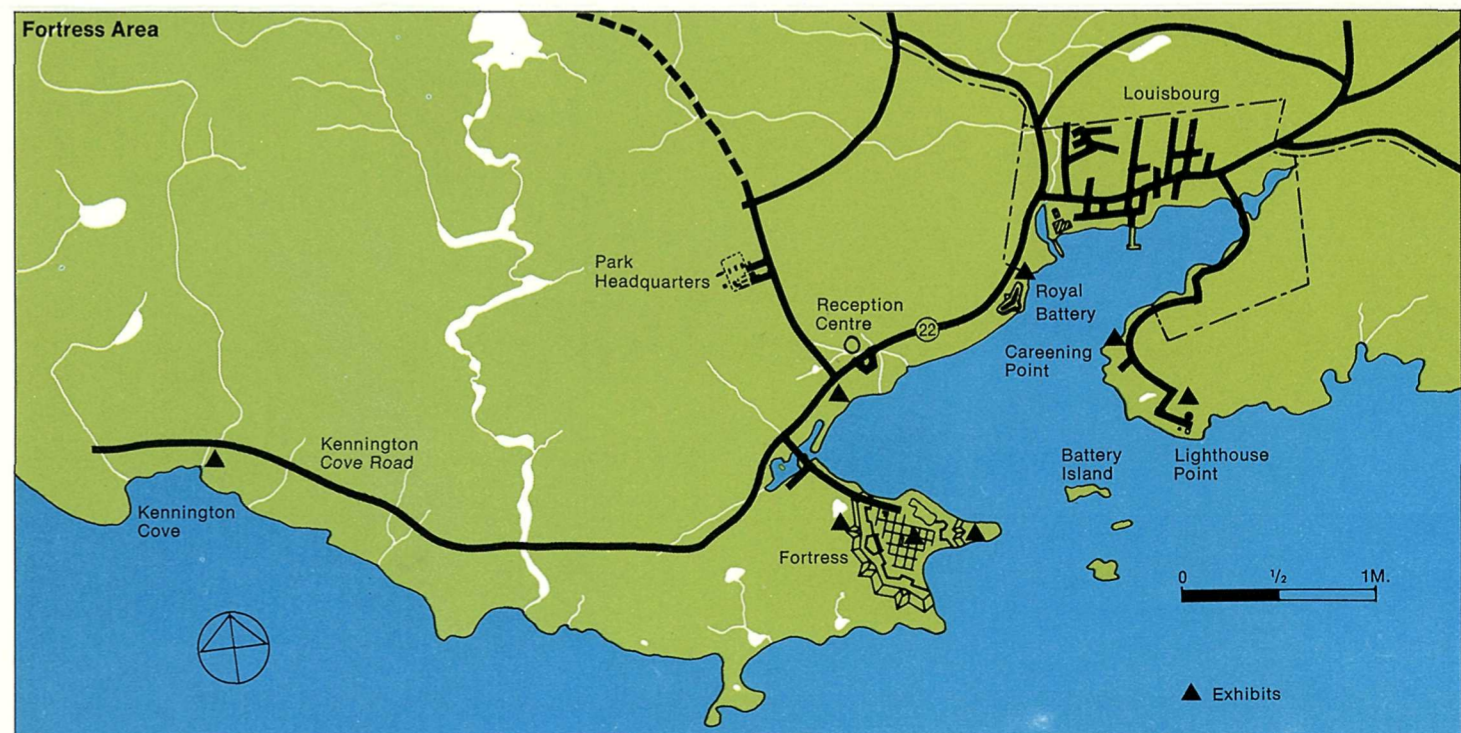
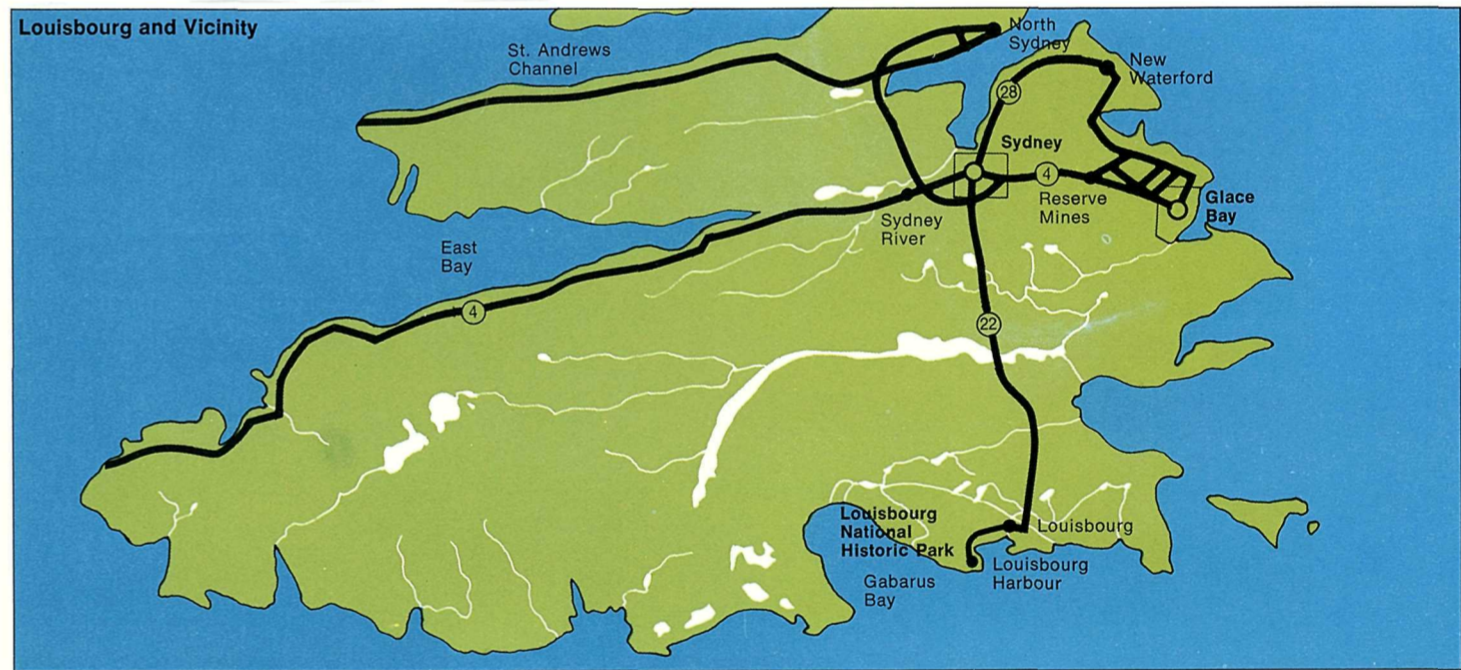


**National Historic Parks**

- 1 Dawson City, (Yukon Territory) Centre of the Klondike Gold Rush. Palace Grand Theatre and riverboat S.S. Keno preserved as national historic sites.
- 2 Fort Rodd Hill, (British Columbia) Nineteenth century British coastal fortification with historic Fisgard Lighthouse nearby.
- 3 Vancouver, (British Columbia) The schooner, St. Roch, first vessel to navigate the Northwest Passage from West to East; built in 1928 for the R.C.M.P.'s Arctic patrol service. It is now part of a maritime museum.
- 4 Fort Langley, (British Columbia) A partial reconstruction of palisaded Hudson's Bay Company post of 1850's.
- 5 Fort Battleford, (Saskatchewan) North West Mounted Police Post built in 1876 in the territory of the Cree Indians. Original buildings house interesting museum collection and are surrounded by a log stockade.
- 6 Batoche Rectory, (Saskatchewan) Headquarters of the Metis during the North West Rebellion of 1885 at Duck Lake.
- 7 Fort Prince of Wales, (Manitoba) The most northerly fortress on the North American continent built by the Hudson's Bay Company between 1733-1771. Opposite Churchill.
- 8 Lower Fort Garry, (Manitoba) Stone fort built by the Hudson's Bay Company between 1831-1839. Located on west bank of Red River about 20 miles north of Winnipeg.
- 9 Fort Malden, (Ontario) At Amherstburg, museum buildings and earthworks of a defence post built in 1797-1799 facing the Detroit River.
- 10 Woodside, (Ontario) At Kitchener, the boyhood home of William Lyon Mackenzie King, tenth prime minister of Canada.
- 11 Bellevue House, (Ontario) At Kingston, home of the first prime minister of Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald.
- 12 Fort Wellington, (Ontario) At Prescott, defence post built between 1812-1814, with restored block-house dating from the 1830's and museum.
- 13 Coteau-du-Lac, (Québec) Late 18th-century British military post and site of first canal on the St. Lawrence River at Coteau-du-Lac.
- 14 Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Birthplace, (Québec) House at St. Lin des Laurentides where Canada's seventh prime minister was probably born.
- 15 Fort Chambly, (Québec) Fort first built by French in 1665 was destroyed by fire and rebuilt between 1709-1711. It was occupied by the Americans and British. At Chambly, about 19 miles southeast of Montreal.
- 16 Fort Lennox, (Québec) On Ile-aux-Noix in the Richelieu River near St. Jean, an island fort, first built by the French in 1759, rebuilt by the British in 1782. Other buildings were added in 1812 and later years.
- 17 Fort Beauséjour, (New Brunswick) Site of early French fort and once the capital of Acadia. Later settled by British settlers from Yorkshire and defended against the Americans in 1776. Near Sackville.
- 18 Port Royal, (Nova Scotia) Restoration of "Habitation" or first fort built in 1605 by Champlain, DeMonts and Poutrincourt.
- 19 Fort Anne, (Nova Scotia) At Annapolis Royal, well-preserved earthworks of fort built by the French, 1695-1708, and enlarged by the British, 1710-1750. The museum building is a reconstruction of the Officer's Quarters built in 1797.
- 20 Grand Pré, (Nova Scotia) Evangeline Chapel and museum stands near the village where the principle events in the expulsion of the Acadians took place.
- 21 Halifax Citadel, (Nova Scotia) Nineteenth-century stone fortress, one of the largest in North America, contains three spacious museums relating to Canada's naval, military and provincial history.
- 22 Fortress of Louisbourg, (Nova Scotia) The French outpost on the Atlantic coast remaining to the French after the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. In 1720 work began on the defences and a sizeable town was built within its walls. Restoration of buildings and some massive defences reconstructed to the 18th-century period. About 23 miles south of Sydney.
- 23 Alexander Graham Bell Museum, (Nova Scotia) A large museum of original design at Baddeck contains extensive collection of relics of experiments in many scientific fields by Bell and his associates.
- 24 Fort Amherst, (Prince Edward Island) At Rocky Point across the harbour from Charlottetown, site of Port La Joie, French settlement of 1720, captured by the British in 1758. Earthworks of the fort built there still visible.
- 25 Castle Hill, (Newfoundland) Ruins of harbour fortifications begun by the French at Placentia about 1662. Interpretation centre.
- 26 Signal Hill, (Newfoundland) Rocky headland at entrance to St. John's harbour. Site of numerous early fortifications and the last battle during the Seven Years' War in North America. Includes John Cabot Memorial Tower.

Published by the National and Historic Parks Branch under the authority of Hon. Jean Chrétien, P.C. MP Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development  
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Prepared by the National Historic Sites Service and the Conservation Group, Office of the Public Information Adviser. Design: Gottschalk+Ash Ltd.



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▲ Exhibits

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