

PEOPLE OF LOUISBOURG



People and Clothing

Look for men, women and children in their eighteenth century dress all around the town of Louisbourg.

With a little practice, you may learn to read the clues in their clothing. Consider five features:



Clothing as fashion

Look at costume as an expression of the taste of the century. In the 1700's fashion is exploring all the ways crisp new silks from the Far East can be pleated and folded into new designs. A wide, sometimes bell-shaped, silhouette wins favour, and the body is wigged, corsetted and padded into compliance. But the effect is never severe, and the draped, flowing lines are decorated in lively colours and patterns.

Clothing as display

Look at how people display their wealth on their backs. The richer people wear better fitting clothes of finer fabrics, carefully layered and enlivened by fashionable accessories. Down the social scale, clothes are heavier for durability, more often patched and more loosely fitted. Some working people wear the mismatched castoffs of the rich, but many proudly display the garb that identifies their own trade or profession.

Clothing as texture

There are no synthetics in eighteenth century dress, but look at the variety of materials. Clothing is brocade skirts and lace cravates, fine linen shirts and coarse leather aprons, whalebone stays and wooden shoes. Fabrics of every weight and hue are matched and layered, stitched, woven, embroidered, and dyed. Think of it all as handwork.

Clothing as industry

Look at cloth as the great manufacture of pre-industrial Europe. The products of scores of little textile towns came out to clothe the people of Louisbourg, and the clothing trade made work for Louisbourg's shopkeepers, tailors, wigmakers and *couturières*. Clothing demanded everyone's time and care. Fashionable ladies embroidered and made lace. Working people made and mended their own clothing. Servants washed and ironed and sewed, when they were not helping their masters and mistresses into their elaborate fashions.

Clothing as recovered craft

Look for the craftsmanship in every piece. Today Louisbourg's clothing is made in Louisbourg. The clothes you see the townspeople wearing are researched, designed, made and worn here, another part of the Fortress of Louisbourg's quest to help you create "a moment in time".

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People of Leisure

Velvets and lace: one of Louisbourg's leading families sits for a portrait. Delicate fabrics of varied texture are perfectly tailored and set off by costly accessories. The bewigged patriarch wears a slightly old-fashioned cravate that suggests dignity and a certain conservatism.

The colourfully dressed little boy will soon be giving up the plaid skirt of infancy for his first pair of boyhood breeches. Already the fine bleached linen of his chemise proclaims his status.

The pastel shades of the young woman's matched ensemble express nobility at its ease. No one who worked for a living would wear these pale colours and delicate textures. She may have embroidered her own stomacher, but these people receive the constant attention of servants: who powder Monsieur's wig, starch Madame's neckerchief, dress the little girls in their grown up outfits, and make perfect every fold of Mademoiselle's bonnet.



People of Property

No idle dandy, the merchant wears a work-a-day brown suit, but details from the buttons to the shoe buckles testify to his prosperity. The clothing he imports is a foundation of his fortune - to inspect the latest arrivals at the quay he has added a swirling cape to the standard three piece suit of his day: breeches, vest, and knee-length *justaucorps* coat.

Over a loose striped skirt shaped by hooped petticoats, the walking woman wears a popular short cape. Every tuck and fold of her hood has been carefully placed by her servant. The older woman has chosen a simple apron and bonnet for home wear, but a brightly printed skirt and loose jacket serve fashion as well as comfort.



People Who Labour

The clothes of working people display the tough, practical textures of natural materials: unbleached linen, coarse woolens, leather, even wood. The fisherman wears the trademark clothes that identify his work. So does the servant girl in loose layers of plain durable fabrics and a voluminous apron. Her attire contrasts sharply with the delicate colours and textures proudly worn by the infant she serves.

The young lad, perhaps an artisan's son soon to be apprenticed to some seagoing trade, seems comfortable enough in his rough, ill-fitting hand-me-downs.



People Who Guard

Camouflage plays no part in eighteenth century war, and uniforms are meant for display. Though soldiers stand low on the social scale, their uniforms are often well made by convicts who have become skilled weavers in France's prison workshops.

Each soldier's regiment is identified by the bright colours of his *justaucorps*, vest and breeches. The lad in blue and white is a recruit of the colonial regular troops, the *Compagnies franches de la Marine*. Red coat and striped vest identify a Swiss soldier of the *Régiment de Karrer*. Most elaborately dressed of all is the Marine drummer, a focus of attention on parade ground and battlefield alike.

Nova Scotia's Micmac people joined the French against the British in the eighteenth century wars. Louisbourg's commanders distributed weapons and clothing to seal the alliance. This warrior mixes traditional and European dress for practicality and colour.

