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Preserving History: The Commemoration of 18th Century Louisbourg, 1895-1940

DURING THE FIRST HALF of the 18th century Louisbourg was one of the best known settlements in North America, celebrated for its fortifications, fishery and trade. In the second half of the 20th century the site of the original French town has again become renowned, this time as the Fortress of Louisbourg, Canada's most ambitious historic park. For most of the long intervening period, however, Louisbourg was a largely forgotten spot, its population small and its significance on the world stage clearly behind it. The few people who gave the place much thought were historians or antiquarians interested in the Anglo-French struggle for North America. Fewer still were inclined to visit there in person, although those who did believed the trip worthwhile for the romantic exhilaration offered by walking among the ruins.

Late in the 19th century there emerged a new sensibility about Louisbourg and its ruins. Individuals in the Maritimes and elsewhere began to feel that the area deserved both commemoration and preservation. The first monument was erected in 1895; soon afterwards an organization was formed to preserve the most prominent ruins and to erect additional memorials. Other efforts followed, involving more cairns and plaques, land acquisition, and the establishment of a museum. In 1928 Louisbourg was designated a National Historic Site, and in 1940 it became the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park.

The study of the transformation of Louisbourg from an abandoned ruin to a historic park offers a case study in the history of heritage preservation in Canada. In the 19th century France and Great Britain had both taken steps to provide for the protection of historic properties. In the United States wealthy philanthropists, coalitions of concerned citizens, and local historical societies often came to the fore with money to support preservation efforts. But Canadians appeared to lack the same concern with heritage preservation or, more importantly, they lacked the willingness to donate money for historical matters. Private efforts to preserve and commemorate Louisbourg advanced slowly and with great difficulty. However, a small group of early enthusiasts persevered in the face of apparent indifference and inaction on the part of governments, and ultimately succeeded in establishing Louisbourg as an official historic site. In their efforts they encountered some typically Canadian difficulties in the construction of a national identity and they contributed to the evolution of a Canadian approach to heritage preservation.

When the British captured Louisbourg in July 1758, preparations began immediately to remove the French inhabitants. By the end of the summer most of the Louisbourgeois had been sent to France. For the next decade Louisbourg was a British garrison town,¹ though in 1760, in accordance with the wishes of Prime Minister William Pitt, who feared that Louisbourg might again be handed back to France as part of a peace settlement, the town's fortifications were systematically destroyed. Eight years later, the garrison was withdrawn. More than half of the 500 inhabitants who lived there in 1767 departed when the soldiers left the following year. Louisbourg became, in the words of the Governor of Nova Scotia, Lord William Campbell, a "decayed city. . .going to ruin".² Most of the people who chose to stay in the area decided to move to properties across and around the harbour. The area inside the walls of what had been French Louisbourg came to be known as "Old Town", a place of scattered houses, grazing animals, and ruins. The usable brick, stone, and lumber of the French period were incorporated into new structures, at Louisbourg or elsewhere, even as far away as Halifax. By 1805, when the Rev. John Inglis, later Anglican Bishop of Nova Scotia, visited Louisbourg, the historic townsite presented a desolate picture: "A more complete destruction of buildings can scarcely be imagined. All are reduced to confused heaps of stone after all the wood, all that was combustible was either burnt or carried away. . . The great size of the heaps of stone indicated the magnitude of the edifices. . . [I saw] the ruins of several barracks and hospitals, of the Intendant's and the admiral's house and various other publick buildings. . . [The current residents] are exceedingly poor. In the town and vicinity [sic] there are fourteen families..."³

Although the situation changed little in the course of the 19th century, visitors' perspectives on the site did seem to alter. No longer were people content simply to describe what the place looked like.⁴ In full romantic style visitors from the 1830s onward found historic Louisbourg to be a place of "melancholy contrast",⁵ "melancholy desolation",⁶ "perfect desolation",⁷ and "grassy soli-

- 1 The only detailed study of Louisbourg after the French departure in 1758 is Wayne Foster, "Post-Occupational History of the Old French Town of Louisbourg, 1760-1930", unpublished manuscript, 1965, on file at the Fortress of Louisbourg.
- 2 Campbell to Secretary for the Council of Plantation Affairs, Memorial No. 1, 28 June 1768, CO 217, A82, Public Record Office.
- 3 Quoted in Foster, "Post-Occupational History", pp. 63-64.
- 4 See for instance the comments of Monseigneur Joseph-Octave Plessis, the Bishop of Quebec, cited in A.A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*, Vol. I (Antigonish, 1960), pp. 291, 282-3.
- 5 The phrase was used by John McGregor in *British America* (1832) and is quoted by Foster, "Post-Occupational History", p. 91.
- 6 This expression was used by the correspondent of the *Toronto Leader* who followed the Prince of Wales on his visit to Nova Scotia in 1860: P.B. Waite, "A Visit to Nova Scotia and to Louisbourg in 1860", *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*, 2 (June, 1972), pp. 129-36.
- 7 John G. Bourinot, "Notes on a ramble through Cape Breton", *The New Dominion Monthly* (January, 1868), p. 88.

tude”.⁸ It was the perfect location for philosophical ruminations on the passage of time and the meaning of life. Few could resist making the obvious observation: *sic transit gloria mundi*. Given the romanticism of the era, the absence of appeals to protect or clean up the site is not surprising. It was precisely the juxtaposition of old ruins with fences, fish flakes, houses and sheep, the contrast of a glorious past with a humble present, that so captivated tourists. Moreover, to Anglophiles and other imperialist-minded visitors of the period, a French fortress turned to ruins may have struck them as being particularly appropriate. Had the ruins been threatened with destruction by some new development scheme,⁹ or had there been large numbers of curio-seekers taking home souvenirs, some of the 19th century visitors might have advocated preservation or renovation measures. But since isolated Louisbourg was not under any pressure to change and grow there was no apparent need to safeguard its ruins.

Commemoration was a different issue. Monuments, memorials, and statues were erected to historic events or figures throughout the 19th century in Europe and North America. A column to Nelson, put up in Montreal in 1809, and Brock’s Monument, erected on Queenston Heights in 1824, were among the earliest to be raised in British North America.¹⁰ By the 1880s, monument-raising was enjoying a definite vogue.¹¹ The most popular subjects to which people erected monuments or statues during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, were the War of 1812 (14), the Boer War (11), Queen Victoria (9) and the Northwest Rebellion (6). Other suitable subjects were the early explorers and religious figures, heroes and battles of the Seven Years’ War, the Loyalists, local disasters, and individual acts of heroism. The funds for the memorials usually came either from private societies (like the Women’s Christian Temperance Union who established a Loyalist fountain in Saint John in 1883), general subscription (such as the teachers and “friends of education” who put up a monument at

8 Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (New York, 1962), p. 388. First published in 1884.

9 This is what happened in Quebec City in 1872, which prompted Governor-General Dufferin to launch a campaign to preserve the historic character of the city. Dufferin’s work at Quebec has been examined by Marc LaFrance, “Le projet Dufferin: la conservation d’un monument historique à Québec au XIXe siècle”, in *Le Parc de l’Artillerie de les Fortifications de Québec. Etudes historiques présentées à l’occasion de la conférence des Sociétés Savantes, Québec, 1976* (Québec, 1981), pp. 77-93.

10 A number of the memorials and monuments erected early in Canadian history are listed in M.H. Long, “The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada”, Canadian Historical Association, *Report* (1954), p. 2.

11 The following information is drawn from *Landmarks of Canada, A Guide to the J. Ross Robertson Canadian Historical Collection in the Toronto Public Library* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 316-30: Monuments, Memorials, and Statues Raised in Canada: Pre-1800: 2; 1800-19:1; 1820-39: 4; 1840-59: 6; 1860-79: 6; 1880-99: 50; 1900-19: 71. The list, which is undoubtedly incomplete, totals 174 memorials, all but a few of which were erected in Canada. The few exceptions were related to Canadian history but were put up in Great Britain, France or the United States. There are descriptions for each of the different monuments, but the year in which they were erected is given for only 140.

Truro in 1872 to educator Alexander Forrester) or wealthy individuals (like Governor-General Matthew Whitworth-Aylmer, who had a truncated column erected in 1832 to mark the spot where Wolfe died). The federal government rarely became involved in such matters, though it did so on occasion, putting up statues in Ottawa and commemorating certain events and individuals in other locations as well. In 1895, for instance, it marked the Battle of Chateaugay and in 1904, Sieur de Monts.

While there was considerable enthusiasm in Canada during the last quarter of the 19th century for raising monuments to the past, Louisbourg was not one of the sites selected. The two sieges fought there, particularly the one in 1758, were widely acknowledged to have been historically important. Nonetheless, the area had not yet attracted anyone with either the money or, with one exception, the interest to push for some type of commemoration. Clerics, historians, and journalists offered their descriptions and comments on its ruins, but no fund raisers or organizers came forward to start campaigns to protect or mark the former French town. The only published call for a monument at Louisbourg appeared in *Picturesque Canada* (1882) in the entry on Cape Breton written by Rev. Robert Murray, editor of the *Presbyterian Witness* and J.S. McLennan, a Montreal-born industrialist involved in the development of Cape Breton coal mines. In the section on Louisbourg, almost certainly written by McLennan, the author asked "Should not some memorial be raised which would show that Canadians. . . are still mindful of the great deeds done on Canadian soil? There could be no fitter site than. . . Louisbourg, where French and English dust commingles in peace. . ." ¹² More of an observation than a request, the call for a "memorial" remained unanswered. But particularly noteworthy was the author's appreciation of the bicultural significance and appeal of the Louisbourg site. It was an idea that would be developed more fully in the future!

When Louisbourg did finally receive its first memorial it came not from Canada, or even from France or Great Britain, but from the United States. One of the many organizations established in the United States during the 19th century ¹³ to promote history and patriotism was the Society of Colonial Wars. The first society bearing that name was formed by a "group of gentlemen" in New York in 1892. By the following year there were other Colonial Wars socie-

12 Rev. R. Murray and J. McLennan, "Cape Breton", in G.M. Grant, ed., *Picturesque Canada* (Toronto, 1882), Vol. II, pp. 841-52.

13 There developed in the United States during the 19th century a strong preservation and commemoration movement. Indeed, some Americans filled with patriotic fervor had begun to press for the preservation and marking of structures and places associated with the revolution soon after the end of the war with Great Britain. The movement gained momentum in the 19th century with numerous local and nation-wide campaigns to save or commemorate historic sites: Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Presence of the Past, A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg* (New York, 1965). David Lowenthal discusses the ambivalence of Americans toward the past in "The Place of the Past in the American Land-

ties in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Massachusetts, Connecticut and the District of Columbia, as well as a General Society, based in New York City, which was formed by delegates from each of the state organizations. The purpose of these groups was to perpetuate the memory of events from the pre-revolutionary period in American history.¹⁴ One of their first projects was to erect a suitable monument at Louisbourg to mark the 150th anniversary of the New Englanders' conquest of the French town in 1745. A monument was designed (a 26-foot column), a location selected (just outside the King's Bastion ruins) and a date set for the unveiling (17 June 1895).

As the details of the unveiling ceremony were being completed, word of the proposed commemoration reached unsympathetic ears in Atlantic Canada. Three French-language newspapers (*Évangéline*, *Courrier des Provinces Maritimes* and *Moniteur Acadien*), and one English Catholic weekly (*Antigonish Casket*) protested the idea of a group from a foreign country raising a monument on Canadian soil to what had been a Canadian defeat. They considered the project an "aggressive demonstration" by a "few Americans of the old school" that would be felt as an "insult" by all French-Canadians.¹⁵ One distinguished French-Canadian who certainly did feel that way was New Brunswick author and Senator, Pascal Poirier. Speaking in the Senate, Poirier informed his listeners that the memorial proposal had "aroused an unpleasant feeling" in the Maritimes and that it violated the norms of "international decency". He added his personal voice to the others protesting the commemoration and asked what the federal government would do to prevent it. Prime Minister Sir Mackenzie Bowell, a member of the Senate, replied simply that the government knew very little about it since the monument was being erected by a private society on private land.¹⁶

Two weeks before the scheduled unveiling new protests were made, from a group not normally regarded as being overly sympathetic to the sentiments of French-Canadians: the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada. Meeting in Montreal, the association resolved that the monument "will necessarily prove offensive to a great section of the Canadian people, and especially to the

scape", in Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden, *Geographies of the Mind, Essays in Historical Geosophy in Honor of John Kirkland Wright* (New York, 1976), p. 90. Lowenthal is probably the most perceptive and provocative commentator on American attitudes toward the past. See also his "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory", *The Geographical Review*, LXV (January, 1975), pp. 1-36, and "The American Way of History", *Columbia University Forum*, 9 (1966), pp. 27-32.

14 Gilbert Lewis Hall, *A Brief Historical Sketch of the Society of Colonial Wars in the District of Columbia on its Fiftieth Anniversary* (1944).

15 In a speech in the Red Chamber Senator Pascal Poirier mentioned the newspapers that had protested the project of the Society of Colonial Wars. He also quoted extracts from several of the journals: *Debates of the Senate of Canada, 1895*, pp. 136-39, Debate of 27 May 1895.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

Acadians” and therefore should be reconsidered. Their protest, likely motivated as much by anti-American sentiment as anything else, was forwarded to the solicitor-general, J.J. Curran, who referred the matter to Prime Minister Bowell, who took no action.¹⁷

Notwithstanding the various complaints, the monument was unveiled as planned, and with considerable government participation. Not only was it arranged to have two vessels anchored in the harbour for the occasion, identified as the HMS *Canada* and the “Dominion cruiser” *Curlew*, but the memorial itself was unveiled by Lieutenant-Governor Sir Malachy Daly of Nova Scotia on behalf of the Governor-General of Canada, the Earl of Aberdeen. Aberdeen sent his regrets that he could not be there in person, as did United States President Grover Cleveland. Twenty-five hundred people attended the festivities, which included two hours of speeches by various Canadian and American dignitaries. Most of the speakers were clearly aware of the protests that had surfaced in the months leading up to the unveiling and did their best to answer charges that the monument celebrated the defeat of the French. Nearly every person who addressed the crowd referred at least once to the achievements and valour of France and French-Canadians. Such remarks seem to have been inserted largely to mollify possible critics, for speaker after speaker emphasized what was in reality the main theme of the occasion: the unity and greatness of the Anglo-Saxon race.¹⁸ Just as England and New England had cooperated to conquer Louisbourg in 1745, so it was hoped that there would always be, in Lieutenant-Governor Daly’s words, “fraternal good will. . .between New England and Old England; and that every Canadian who may gaze upon it [the monument] may learn the lesson plainly taught by it, that what Colonists have done before, Colonists can do again”. The address of Sydney native Sir John G. Bourinot, chief clerk of the House of Commons, who could not attend in person but whose speech was nonetheless read to the assembled multitude, was perhaps the most explicit expression of Anglophile and Whig sentiments. He wrote that though it was not “the humiliation of France we celebrate. . .it was a happy day for Canada. . .for English as well as French Canadians — that the fleur-de-lys fell from the fortresses of Louisbourg and Québec”.¹⁹

Two days after the gala event Pascal Poirier rose in the Senate to repeat his

17 Two letters and motion of U.E. Loyalist Association, 4, 5, 7 June 1895, RG2 (Records of the Privy Council Office), Series 3, PC 1814, Public Archives of Canada.

18 The details of the 17 June 1895 unveiling, including the texts of the speeches, were published by the Society of Colonial Wars as “Report of the Committee on Louisbourg Memorial”, an appendix to the *Annual Register of Officers and Members of the Society of Colonial Wars* (New York, 1896), pp. i-lxi. Comments concerning the French defeat included one by Frederic de Peyster, Governor-General of the Society of Colonial Wars, that “Few laurels can be won by defeating a horde of Asiatic slaves, but to tear the lilies from this citadel was, indeed, a splendid achievement”, p. xii.

19 “Report of the Committee on Louisbourg Memorial”, pp. lv, xxiv-xv.

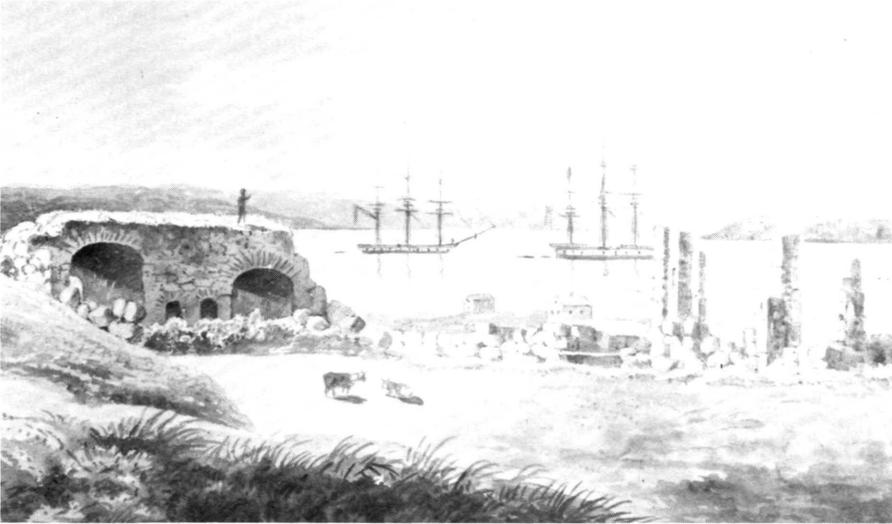


Figure 1:

Top:

View of the Louisbourg Ruins as depicted by J.E. Woolford in 1818 (Dalhousie University Library).

Bottom:

Unveiling of Society of Colonial Wars Monument, 1895 (Cape Breton Regional Library — Louisbourg).

objections, and to express his disappointment that the monument was unveiled by a representative of the crown. He also asked questions about the ownership of land at Louisbourg. Poirier found it difficult to believe that the area did not belong to either the Nova Scotia or Canadian government, as other former British ordnance lands had been transferred to the governments at the time of Confederation. He urged the federal authorities to clarify the status of the site. Prime Minister Bowell explained that for reasons unknown the Louisbourg fortifications had not been included in the ordnance lands transferred to the Canadian Department of Militia and Defence in 1882. (By 1895 the site of historic Louisbourg was divided into more than 20 different lots, all owned privately). As for the Society of Colonial Wars ceremony, Bowell understood that "due praise" had been given to the French by the various speakers. On the general question of historic site preservation and monument-raising the Prime Minister commented that initiatives in that area were praiseworthy as they tended to "nationalize our people".²⁰

Senator Poirier continued to press for action at Louisbourg. In 1902 he travelled to Cape Breton on behalf of the Royal Society of Canada to view the ruins and surrounding area. The society took this action partially in response to a letter from Professor Benjamin Rand of Harvard University that had been read at their May 1900 meeting. Rand described Louisbourg as "the most interesting historical ruin in the eastern part of North America" and urged the Government of Canada to acquire it "as a public park for all time to come". Poirier presented his report at the annual meeting of the Society, and published an article in *Acadiensis* that made the same basic points.²¹ Poirier described historic Louisbourg as "a field of desolation and ruin. . . occupied by squatters" and vandalised by souvenir-seeking tourists. Worse still, the site might soon undergo massive redevelopment by American concerns. The harbour was Canada's closest to Europe (already it served as the winter port for Cape Breton coal) and there was talk that "United States capitalists" were building a road from Canso to the area, where they had "taken an option of all the ground where the old Louisbourg fort stood". Poirier could envisage the entire historic area being sacrificed to the interests of foreign capitalists and he deplored the prospect. He asked when Canada would enact legislation such as France had done in 1887 to protect its properties of historic and artistic value. Surely if the government of Canada could spend \$80,000 to purchase the Plains of Abraham, it could spend what was needed to stop the "wanton devastation" and preserve "at least the remaining ruins of old glorious Louisbourg".²²

20 *Debates of the Senate*, 19 June 1895, pp. 332-38.

21 Benjamin Rand to Sir John Bourinot, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, VI (1900), p. ix; Pascal Poirier, "Historic Sites of Acadia", *Acadiensis* (October, 1902), pp. 229-37, and "Louisbourg en 1902", *Mémoires de la Société Royale du Canada*, 2e Série (1902-03), Tome VIII, Section I, pp. 97-126.

22 Poirier, "Historic Sites of Acadia".

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One who shared Pascal Poirier's concern for the preservation of the Louisbourg ruins was Captain D.J. Kennelly, ironically one of the industrialists who was reshaping the face of Cape Breton at the turn of the 20th century. Born in Ireland, employed in India by the East India Company and the Royal Indian Navy, Kennelly also trained as a lawyer in England before coming to Cape Breton during the 1870s. Initially, he represented a group of London capitalists who were interested in constructing a railway from New Glasgow to Louisbourg (thereby linking Cape Breton to the other train networks of the eastern seaboard), and then in establishing an express steamship service between Louisbourg and Milford Haven, England. The hope was that Louisbourg, not New York, would thereby become the North American terminus of trans-Atlantic passenger travel.²³ Funds were never secured to implement the idea, but Kennelly stayed in the area and became the general manager of the Sydney and Louisbourg Coal and Railway Company, as well as a large shareholder in the Cape Breton Coal, Iron and Railway Company.²⁴ He is credited with introducing the first coal-cutting machines into eastern Canadian collieries and with being the first Cape Breton businessman to employ a stenographer and typewriter.²⁵ Modern though his business ideas were, Captain Kennelly was also fascinated with ruins and relics.

Kennelly came to acquire more than a dozen pieces of property in the Louisbourg area.²⁶ Two of the lots, purchased between 1901 and 1903, were within the confines of the old French town; upon them stood the most prominent of the 18th century ruins, the arches of the casemates of the King's Bastion. Starting with the need to protect those structures Kennelly began in 1903 an international campaign entitled the Louisbourg Memorial Fund. The premise of the fund in Kennelly's mind was that it was a "sacred duty" of the 20th century to preserve "remnants" of the past and as far as Louisbourg was concerned, to "keep in memory" the "heroic dead". Specifically, he called for the stabilization of the casemate ruins, the fencing and improvement of nearby burial grounds, and the

23 Biographical information on Kennelly's early years is given in his obituaries (*Sydney Record*, 28 August 1907, *Sydney Daily Post*, 28 August 1907) and in an article entitled "Reminiscences About Late Capt. Kennelly", *Sydney Post-Record*, 3 July 1939. See also C.C. Gillispie, ed., *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, Vol. VII (New York, 1973), pp. 288-89. The Louisbourg to Milford Haven project is described by Kennelly himself in his booklet *The Atlantic Ferry. Louisbourg and Milford Haven* (London, 1901).

24 The story of the ill-fated Cape Breton Coal, Iron and Railway Company and its plans for Broughton, C.B., are outlined in *The Montreal Daily Star*, 25 May 1907. Kennelly held \$88,000 worth of bonds in the company at the time of his death. His will, dated 23 August 1907, and other documents pertaining to his estate are located in the Probate Office for the County of Cape Breton, Sydney.

25 "Reminiscences About Late Capt. Kennelly".

26 In his will Kennelly listed 12 pieces of property at Louisbourg which belonged to his "general estate" and referred to others which were to go to a specific trustee: Probate Office, County of Cape Breton.

erection of a large masonry tower within which there would be a museum as well as marble panels listing the names of the ships, regiments and officers who fought in each siege.²⁷ In front of the tower he planned to erect a bronze equestrian statue of Edward VII, "The Peacemaker". Beneath the tower Kennelly envisioned "underground Mortuary Chambers to contain the relics of the dead found on the site and. . .for the remains of Canadian heroes of the future".²⁸

Kennelly convinced a remarkable number of prominent people to lend support to his scheme. The patron of the Louisburg Memorial Fund was Edward VII; vice patrons, of whom there were more than 40, included Sir Charles Tupper, Robert Borden, the governors of five American states, six Canadian lieutenant-governors, 14 British peers, and the president of Harvard University. Premier G.H. Murray of Nova Scotia was the president of the fund, and committee members included five other premiers, three Canadian senators (including Pascal Poirier) and various wealthy Americans. President Theodore Roosevelt did not join the organization, but did send his "cordial good wishes" for success. Kennelly contented himself with the title Honorary Secretary.²⁹

Captain Kennelly estimated that it would cost \$25,000 to accomplish his programme of preservation and commemoration. He hoped that the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia would contribute \$5,000 each³⁰ and that the rest could be obtained through a fund-raising drive. To that end, he promised that everyone who gave ten dollars or more would have his portrait preserved in the museum; lesser contributors would have their names listed. By late 1905 he had raised more than \$1,200, about half of which came from Great Britain, mostly from the regiments that had served at Louisbourg.³¹

In April 1906 Kennelly took his campaign to the Nova Scotia legislature, where he secured the passage of "An Act to incorporate the Trustees of the French Fortress and Old Burying Ground at Louisburg as an Historical Monument of the Dominion of Canada and as a Public Work".³² Kennelly boasted

27 [D.J. Kennelly], *Louisburg Memorial Fund* (Louisbourg, 1904).

28 Report of F.H.H. Williamson on a visit to Historic Sites of the Maritimes, no date, File FLO 2, Vol. 2, Central Registry, Parks Canada, Ottawa [PCO]. The idea about future heroes being buried at Louisbourg was not mentioned in the promotional literature.

29 The patrons, committee members, etc. of the fund are listed in *Louisburg Memorial Fund*. President Roosevelt's letter to Kennelly, dated 7 July 1905, is transcribed on the sheet "Louisburg Memorial" enclosed within the above brochure.

30 Kennelly expressed this hope in his will: Probate Office, County of Cape Breton.

31 "Louisburg Memorial", *Louisburg Memorial Fund*.

32 The legislation was introduced by Cape Breton MLA Neil J. Gillis on 3 April, and it received third reading on 10 April. There is no record of any debate, though it was listed among the bills which were amended in committee: *Debates and Proceedings of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly 1906*, pp. 128, 144, 147, 157, 160. The act itself is located in *Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1906*, Chapter 56, pp. 80-82.

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that it was the first time in Canadian history that a historical monument in the country had been “legalized”. The act named 11 individuals (one British, one American and the rest Canadian) as the formal trustees of the Louisbourg ruins and burial ground and gave them the power to acquire whatever land they needed “for the purpose of said memorial, historical monument and public work”. It also empowered them to make whatever regulations they deemed necessary, as long as they were not contrary to provincial law, to manage the site. Finally, it spelled out the fines (from four to 40 dollars) or jail terms (up to 60 days) to be assessed for vandals and public nuisances.

Kennelly also devoted attention to the ruins he wished to protect. In 1903 he began to “preserve” the casemates of the King’s Bastion by removing layers of earth and stone and replacing them with cement. This project continued during each of the next three summers, with Kennelly personally supervising all aspects of the work. He even had a small building containing sleeping quarters erected beside the ruins so that he could stay as close as possible to the site.³³ Although Kennelly had created, on paper, a large organization to oversee the project, and he was only one of 11 legal trustees, the captain seems to have carried out his preservation efforts according to his own desires. A fellow trustee, lawyer and former Mayor of Sydney, Walter Crowe, stated that Kennelly spent the funds that came in “according to his own notion, without consulting or reporting to anyone”.³⁴ Crowe told Kennelly that he was “going at the thing in the wrong way”, but the former naval captain chose to disregard him.³⁵

Captain Kennelly died in August 1907, aged 76, and the first attempt to preserve what was left of 18th century Louisbourg died with him. The fund-raising stopped and the work on the ruins came to an end. Although there were ten other trustees to carry on the project, no initiatives were forthcoming from them for the next five years. When at last a meeting was called by Walter Crowe in January 1913, no one but Crowe was able to attend.³⁶ Undoubtedly Kennelly had realized that none of the trustees possessed the same commitment to Louisbourg that he did. Yet he obviously hoped that somehow his project might be brought to completion. In his will of 23 August 1907 he bequeathed his fortress properties and \$88,000 worth of bonds in the Cape Breton Coal, Iron and Railway Company to the premier, chief justice and another justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, as trustees, to finish the work he had started.³⁷ Unfortunately, that bequest was impressive only on paper. The bonds were

33 “Louisburg Memorial”, *Louisburg Memorial Fund*.

34 W. Crowe to Hon. R.E. Harris, Chief Justice of Nova Scotia, 18 May 1925, Archives of the Fortress of Louisbourg [AFL].

35 Crowe to J.P. Edwards, 4 May 1923, AFL.

36 Letters to and from H.C. Burchell and Walter Crowe concerning the proposed meeting of the Trustees for 8 January 1913, AFL.

37 Kennelly Will, Probate Office, County of Cape Breton.

without any market value³⁸ and the land gift served only to delay and complicate subsequent development. Later court action was required to have the sections in Kennelly's will pertaining to Louisbourg declared null and void. According to the decision of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia in 1919, Kennelly's Louisbourg lots were to be sold "for the best available price".³⁹ They were not sold, however, and remained tied up in Kennelly's estate until 1924.

Despite Kennelly's obvious achievements, a decade after his death historic Louisbourg was still a jumble of ruins and shanties. Indeed it is questionable whether Kennelly's efforts had improved the site or made it worse. His preservation work was judged in 1920 to have been "somewhat amateurish", with insufficient waterproofing and drainage,⁴⁰ and his proposals for a memorial tower and equestrian statue left the area with two foundations that had "nothing to do with Old Louisbourg and are an eyesore and an anachronism".⁴¹ In 1930 they would be "razed to ground level and the waste material removed".⁴²

Not long after the death of D.J. Kennelly and the ensuing collapse of the Louisbourg Memorial Fund, new appeals were made for the federal government to take action at Louisbourg. Speaking to the Nova Scotia Historical Society in 1908, J.S. McLennan, by this time a retired industrialist and the publisher of the *Sydney Post*, declared that "the preservation of historic sites is too large a task for private or co-operate undertaking. Indeed, part of its significance would be lost were it not for the action of the people through their governments".⁴³ McLennan's thoughts were echoed by others: L.B. Runk addressing the Pennsylvania Society of Colonial Wars in 1911, and Beckles Willson in the *Canadian Magazine* in 1914.⁴⁴ Both called for government acquisition of the historic area and a general clean-up of the grounds. McLennan possessed a far grander vision of what could be accomplished. Well into his research on the French occupation of Louisbourg,⁴⁵ McLennan knew the rich documentary and carto-

38 "Valuation of Real Estate, Mortgages, Bonds. . . Capt. D.J. Kennelly", Probate Office, County of Cape Breton. The total value of Kennelly's estate was placed at \$70,085, with the bonds being described as of "unknown value".

39 Vincent Mullins, Executor of D.J. Kennelly, Plaintiff, Versus The Trustees of the French Fortress, Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, B-3016 (1917), Probate Office, County of Cape Breton. The decision was handed down on 9 March 1919.

40 Report of F.H.H. Williamson. . . , n.d., FL0 2, Vol. 2, PCO.

41 Crowe to J.B. Harkin, 2 November 1929, *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, PCO.

42 S.O. Roberts to T.S. Mills, 19 December 1930, *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, PCO.

43 J.S. McLennan, *A Notable Ruin, Louisbourg* [Paper read before the Nova Scotia Historical Society, 10 November 1908], (n.p., 1909).

44 Louis Bancroft Runk, "Fort Louisbourg: Its Two Sieges and Site To-Day", [Address before the Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 9 March 1911], (Philadelphia, 1911); Beckles Willson, "Louisbourg To-Morrow", *The Canadian Magazine* (February 1914), pp. 349-61.

45 McLennan wrote a chapter in Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty, eds., *Canada and Its Provinces*, (Toronto, 1914), Vol. I, "Louisbourg: an outpost of empire", pp. 201-27. He completed

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graphic record the town had left behind. He argued that it was possible “to reconstruct the city as it was. . . [it] is only a question of intelligence and outlay”. Though later he would ask for more, in 1908 McLennan urged the reconstruction of only a single building, the intendant’s house, which would serve as a museum.⁴⁶ Beyond that he hoped to see the streets, major structures, siege positions, and courage of individuals marked or commemorated in some way.

It was one thing to recommend that a historic site be acquired by the federal government; it was quite another to find a department or agency with the inclination or capability to oversee such sites. Since 1885, when the government acquired the Banff Hot Springs, the Department of the Interior had administered selected natural areas as National Parks.⁴⁷ Historic sites, however, were not initially part of Interior’s mandate, or of that of any other ministry. The Department of Militia and Defence controlled a number of fortifications which had long since outlived their military usefulness, and which would eventually become historic sites and parks, but there was no set procedure for that transformation. Fort Howe (Saint John) and Fort Anne (Annapolis Royal), both believed to have been sites of “stirring events in the early history” of the country,⁴⁸ had been added *ad hoc* to Interior’s National Park system in 1914 and 1917, but those steps were taken without specific legislation or policy guidelines concerning the acquisition and administration of historic sites. The only body actively examining the question of historic site development at the time was a non-governmental body, the Historic Landmarks Association (which became the Canadian Historical Association in 1922). The Landmarks Association had been created by the Royal Society of Canada in 1907 to prepare for the Quebec Tercentenary celebrations the following year. Beyond that it was to work for the preservation and commemoration of historic landmarks across the county. Yet while the Historic Landmarks people had the knowledge of Canadian history to make appropriate recommendations, they lacked the money and power to take significant action on their suggestions.

A partial solution to the problem was found in 1919, when the Historic Sites

the manuscript of *Louisbourg From Its Foundation To Its Fall* in late 1913 and submitted it to the Champlain Society for publication. Since it was not simply a collection of documents the Society was not interested in publishing it. The outbreak of the First World War delayed publication until 1918, when Macmillan of London brought it out. Reviews of the study appeared in the *English Historical Review* (July 1919), *Canadian Historical Review* (March 1920), and *The Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* (1922).

46 McLennan, *A Notable Ruin, Louisbourg*.

47 W.F. Lothian, *A History of Canada's National Parks*, Vol. II (Ottawa, 1977). The first distinctive piece of national park legislation was passed in 1887, the Rocky Mountains Park Act. See also Robert Craig Brown, “The Doctrine of Usefulness: Natural Resource and National Park Policy in Canada, 1887-1914”, in J.G. Nelson, ed., *Canadian Parks in Perspective* (Montreal, 1970), pp. 46-62.

48 The quote was made about Fort Anne: *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior (1916-17)*, Part V, p. 60.

and Monuments Board of Canada [HSMBC] was created. Instrumental in the establishment of the Board was J.B. Harkin, an Ontario-born journalist who in 1911 had become Commissioner of the Dominion Parks Branch of the Department of the Interior. As both the public servant in charge of Canada's parks and a member of the Historic Landmarks Association, Harkin was aware of the need to bridge the gap between the worlds of administration and historical knowledge. His solution, suggested in 1919, was for the federal government to appoint "an honorary board or committee. . . of men from all parts of the country who are authorities on Canadian history, to advise the Department in the matter of preserving those sites which preeminently possess Dominion wide interest". Arthur Meighen, Minister of the Interior at the time, approved the principle and the first members of the board were selected: two from Ontario, one each from Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well as two civil servants, including Harkin. The first meeting of the new advisory body took place in Ottawa in October 1919.⁴⁹

One of the first sites to be considered by the HSMBC was Louisbourg, which was considered historically important because the siege there in 1758 had played a pivotal role in determining the outcome of the Anglo-French struggle for North America. Anxious though the board was to have the historic area of Louisbourg preserved, it was uncertain what course of action to recommend because of the complicated land situation there. Ownership was divided among more than two dozen local families, D.J. Kennelly's estate, and the Cape Breton Railway Company.⁵⁰ The Department of the Interior had title searches and general investigations carried out during 1920 and 1921, and in May 1921 the board made its recommendations: first, that the Kennelly properties be acquired by the government and second, that a caretaker be hired for the summer months "to stop people from taking away relics".⁵¹ One month later the Parks Branch acquired its first land at Louisbourg; two lots (comprising 69 acres) that had formerly belonged to the Cape Breton Railway Company were transferred to the Department of the Interior by the federal Department of Railways and Canals.⁵² While Louisbourg was not yet an official historic site, a beginning had been made.

To those who cared most deeply about Louisbourg, the initial land acquisition was far from sufficient. McLennan, who had been made a Senator in 1916, com-

49 Long, "The Historic Sites and Monuments Board", pp. 3-4. The first members of the Board were Brigadier-General E.A. Cruikshank, Dr. James H. Coyne, Dr. Benjamin Sulte, W.C. Milner, Archdeacon W.O. Raymond, J.B. Harkin, and F.H.H. Williamson. For a biography of Harkin see William Russell, "James Bernard Harkin (1875-1955)", in *Miscellaneous Research Papers*, Manuscript Report No. 216 (Ottawa, Parks Canada, 1975-77).

50 W.W. Cory to G.J. Desbarats, 4 November 1919, Desbarats to Cory, 26 November 1919, G.A.R. Rowlings to W. Stuart Edwards, 8 January 1921, FLO 2, Vol. 2, PCO.

51 Extract from minutes of HSMBC meeting of 21 May 1921, *ibid.*

52 G.A. Bell to W.W. Cory, 23 June 1921, *ibid.*

plained privately and publicly of the “negligence” the Department of the Interior was showing toward both Louisbourg and Fort Cumberland.⁵³ Harkin of the Parks Branch responded with assurances that Louisbourg was a top priority and definite progress was being made, but McLennan was not satisfied. He urged, as he had more than a decade earlier, that a special commission be formed to look after the historic sites of the Maritimes.⁵⁴ Otherwise, argued McLennan and New Brunswick physician, historian and museologist Dr. J.C. Webster, the neglect of the region’s sites would continue. To a certain extent, their complaint that Maritime history was being ignored or forgotten by the rest of the country was but one more variation on the widespread sense of alienation present in the region during the 1920s, and which produced the Maritime Rights movement.⁵⁵ A more practical idea than a Maritime commission on historic sites perhaps was the proposal to give the National Battlefields Commission at Quebec control over sites such as Louisbourg.⁵⁶ The Minister of Militia and Defence, Sam Hughes, had stated that was to be the government’s approach to Louisbourg,⁵⁷ but government officials were reluctant to create a new commission or to expand the mandate of the Battlefields Commission. The fear, as expressed by Harkin, was that such commissions might propose elaborate schemes and large-scale expenditures, which would prove “embarrassing” to the government. The option preferred by Harkin and other officials within the Parks Branch was to create a simple advisory committee, without executive or financial power, to offer advice to the HSMBC. The board in turn would pass on recommendations to the government for its consideration.⁵⁸ Accordingly, in 1923 the two Maritime members of the HSMBC, Major J. Plimsoll Edwards of Halifax and J.C. Webster of Shediac, were designated a special sub-committee to report on the situation at Louisbourg. Both men were already on record as favouring greater commemoration and development at Louisbourg. Edwards

53 Known today as Fort Beauséjour National Historic Park at Aulac, N.B.

54 Harkin to Cory, 22 November 1922, Charles Stewart to J.S. McLennan, 28 December 1922, FLO 2, Vol. 3, PCO; McLennan to J.C. Webster, 23 November 1922, McLennan to Harkin, 1 December 1922, J.C. Webster Correspondence, New Brunswick Museum, [NBM]. McLennan first suggested the formation of a commission to take charge of Louisbourg’s development in 1908: McLennan, *A Notable Ruin, Louisbourg*, p. 23.

55 See Ernest R. Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927, A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal, 1979).

56 Beckles Willson suggested this approach in 1914 in “Louisbourg To-Morrow”, p. 361.

57 W.C. Milner, later a member of the HSMBC, discussed the subject with Sam Hughes in 1916, and was told that the government intended to put the development of Louisbourg and other historic sites under the Québec Battlefields Commission: Milner to Commissioner, Dominion Parks, 29 May 1916, FLO 2, Vol. 2, PCO.

58 Harkin’s thoughts on this matter were most clearly expressed in a 1929 memorandum, though he obviously held the sentiment years before. [J.B. Harkin] to R.A. Gibson, 11 April 1929, FLO 2, Vol. 10, PCO.

had told the other board members that Louisbourg “was one of the most important [historic sites] in Canada, and its present condition was a disgrace”. Webster had expressed similar views in public, and privately he told McLennan that the only reason he had joined the HSMBC was because Charles Stewart, the Minister of the Interior, had personally assured him “that a new forward policy will be adopted in the Lower Provinces”.⁵⁹

Webster and Edwards arrived in Cape Breton in the summer of 1923 to tour the Louisbourg site and meet with two of the local people most interested in its development, Senator McLennan and Archdeacon T.F. Draper, Anglican minister at Louisbourg. Their persuasiveness, combined with the “disgraceful”⁶⁰ condition of the historic area, convinced the two visitors of the need for prompt and extensive action. The programme they recommended went far beyond anything that had been suggested to date. Webster and Edwards, seconded by McLennan and Draper, proposed the acquisition of the entire site of historic Louisbourg (town, fortifications, detached batteries, lighthouse), the removal of all buildings and fences, the appointment of a permanent caretaker and the construction of a residence for him, and the employment of a military engineer to mark, with two-foot-high stone markers, the streets and principal buildings of the 18th century town. In addition, the fortifications were to be put “in some sort of order”.⁶¹

The proposals were impressive, far more impressive than either the HSMBC or the Parks Branch could support. Board chairman Brigadier-General E.A. Cruikshank, a noted historian of central-Canadian topics, wrote Harkin that as far as he was concerned, for the time being four cairns should be erected at Louisbourg and nothing more. The more elaborate ideas did not merit discussion until Parliament voted a special appropriation for “commemoration on a grandiose scale”.⁶² Harkin was undoubtedly relieved to receive Cruikshank’s views, for the Parks Branch was in no position to pay for the development Webster and Edwards were urging. The bulk of the branch’s funds were committed to the natural parks in the west. Only five per cent or less was being spent on historic sites,⁶³ and this imbalance was a source of some bitterness among

59 Extract from minutes of HSMBC meeting of 25 May 1923, *ibid.*, Vol. 4, PCO; Harkin to Crowe, 25 June 1923, Webster to McLennan, 9 January 1923, AFL.

60 Even before his July or August visit to Louisbourg Edwards had said Louisbourg’s “present condition was a disgrace”: extract from minutes of HSMBC meeting of 25 May 1923, FLO 2, Vol. 4, PCO.

61 Edwards to Harkin, 15 August 1923, *ibid.*

62 E.A. Cruikshank to Harkin, 27 August 1923, *ibid.*

63 The five per cent figure comes from the projected expenditures for 1929. In that year the total amount to be spent by the Parks Branch was to be \$1,358,000. Of that total, \$42,000 was to be spent on historic sites across the country, \$4,500 on Fort Anne and \$10,000 on Fort Howe. In 1928 \$23,000 had been spent at Louisbourg: *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1929, 12 June 1929, pp. 3547-48. Most of the money was earmarked for the western parks. Similarly, most of

historical enthusiasts. As Webster commented in 1924, "It is all very well to preserve the buffalo, but when our historic centres suffer on their account the people are justified in raising a storm".⁶⁴ Webster may have been comforted somewhat when former Prime Minister Arthur Meighen told him that he would "help pass a special appropriation for Louisbourg" in the next session of Parliament.⁶⁵

Preservation efforts at Louisbourg proceeded very slowly. The failure to acquire and protect the historic ruins meant that they continued to deteriorate. Nothing illustrated that more clearly than what happened in 1923 to the ruins of the 18th century French lighthouse. In 1922 fire destroyed the Louisbourg light erected during the 19th century near the site of the old French lighthouse. Construction of a replacement light began in 1923, but the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries, which held responsibility for coastal navigational aids, decided to rebuild on the site of the original 18th century lighthouse. At the time, the ruins of the old French lighthouse consisted of seven to eight feet of exterior wall, an intact entrance doorway, and several steps of the circular staircase. According to Archdeacon Draper, "the greatest part of this was ruthlessly torn down" in preparation for the new structure. The 200-year-old ruins were dismantled stone by stone until the workers came across the original foundation tablet. At that point the engineer in charge was called in and he decided to select another location for the new lighthouse. As Draper put it, "it was a case of shutting the door after the horse was stolen".⁶⁶ Dr. Webster added his lament, informing the Parks Branch that he was inclined to "lay the matter before the Premier" and that he would not be sorry if the press raised a "howl" about it. The fact that a government department had been responsible for the destruction made it a particularly "sickening story".⁶⁷ In Ottawa, Harkin shared the dismay and through the Deputy Minister of the Interior a request was made to the Department of Marine and Fisheries to have the remaining lighthouse ruins and any artifacts found there transferred to the jurisdiction of the Parks Branch.⁶⁸

The Parks Branch began to address the ownership problem in the mid-1920s.

the Branch's attention was focused on those same parks, as a review of the *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior* for the 1920s and 1930s clearly indicates.

64 Webster to Harkin, 11 October 1924, FLO 2, Vol. 5, PCO.

65 Webster to Harkin, 7 August 1923, File FB 2, Vol. 2, PCO. The figure Webster mentioned that should be raised was \$50,000.

66 Draper to Harkin, 25 January 1924, FLO 2, Vol. 5, PCO.

67 Webster to Harkin, 11 February 1924, *ibid.*

68 Cory to E. Hawken, 12 October 1923, *ibid.*, Vol. 4. Equally damaging over the long run was the unchecked ransacking of ruins by residents and tourists in quest of unusual curios and souvenirs. As long as most of the site lay in private hands nothing would be done to prevent it, but even after the area was acquired by the Parks Branch the view that artifacts were simply trivial curios persisted in some circles. One Louisbourg town official wrote Ottawa that during the stabilization work "we are digging up all kinds of old French bottles, broken, the bottoms would make dandy ink bottles. . . or ash trays": Louis Cann to T.W. Fuller, 16 July 1935, AFL.

The first of the private lots to which it sought to acquire clear title were those tied up in D.J. Kennelly's estate, and upon which stood the ruins of the casemates of the King's Bastion. Walter Crowe was employed to oversee the passage of a bill through the Nova Scotia legislature that would transfer the property left to the Trustees of the French Fortress to the control of the Department of the Interior. Crowe contacted all the trustees to obtain their approval for the scheme, drafted the legislation, found an MLA to introduce and support it, and then answered questions about it at the committee stage. In May 1924 the Parks Branch had finally acquired the much-photographed symbol of Louisbourg's vanished glory.⁶⁹ With the transfer of the Kennelly lots to the federal government the Parks Branch possessed more than 70 acres of historic Louisbourg, or roughly one-fifth of the total area recommended for acquisition. Crowe, and to a lesser extent J.C. Webster, urged Harkin to work to have the site declared a National Park, and to add on to it as the years went by. Harkin demurred, stating that it was not "an opportune time" because of the demand "for economy in public expenditure".⁷⁰

While unwilling to see Louisbourg declared a National Park, the federal government did grant the site its first official recognition as a historic place in 1926. On 10 August 1926, before about 400 onlookers, four commemorative plaques, on cairns, were unveiled at selected locations around the harbour.⁷¹ Each of the plaques was bilingual, although there had initially been some doubt whether French versions of the text were called for.⁷² But when an official within the Parks Branch pointed out that Louisbourg was "as much. . . or even more" a French site than an English one, and that the full support of francophone MPs would be needed to obtain a special appropriation for the development of Louis-

69 Copies of Crowe's many letters concerning this legislation are located in AFL, dated February through May 1924. See also Crowe to Harkin, 5 April 1924, FLO 2, Vol. 5, PCO. The bill submitted to the government by Crowe's firm for the legal work was for \$22.47; Edwards to Deputy Minister of Interior, 26 June 1924, *ibid.*

70 Webster to Harkin, 1 December 1924, Crowe to Harkin, 26 December 1925, Harkin to Crowe, 22 January 1926, Crowe to Harkin, 30 January 1926, FLO 2, Vol. 6, PCO; Crowe to Webster, 18 December 1925, Webster Correspondence, NBM.

71 A report on the day's activities is located in Crowe to Harkin, 21 August 1926, FLO 2, Vol. 7, PCO.

72 All four texts were written in English, jointly or with input from J.P. Edwards, Senator McLennan, J.C. Webster and Walter Crowe: Edwards to Martin, 25 September 1923, FLO 2, Vol. 4, PCO. It was E.A. Cruikshank, chairman of the HSMBC, who raised the question of how many of them should be translated into French. He believed that at least one of them, the one which emphasized the valour of the French, should appear in both languages. J. Plimsoll Edwards opined that while it "might be a good thing" to have the one plaque in French and English, it would be "unnecessary" to have the other three translated. He felt it would make the lettering too small: Cruikshank to Harkin, 5 October 1923, FLO 2, Vol. 4, PCO; Edwards to Harkin, 6 November 1923, *ibid.*, Vol. 5.

bourg, it was decided to erect bilingual plaques.⁷³ In a similar vein, in choosing the date for the 1926 unveiling the dates of the two capitulations of Louisbourg were considered but deliberately rejected so as not to “wound the feelings of our French-Canadian friends”.⁷⁴

Foremost among the French-Canadians of the 1920s who were interested in the fate of historic Louisbourg was Henri Bourassa, the Quebec nationalist, journalist and politician. In August 1927 Bourassa stopped at Louisbourg in the company of a large group of French-Canadians from Quebec and Ontario who were touring the Maritimes. It was his second visit to the site — he had been there 30 years earlier — and he was “amazed” by the deterioration of the ruins during the intervening period. Standing on the remains of one of the bastions, Bourassa addressed a crowd of 200 Acadians, the English population of modern Louisbourg, and his companions from central Canada. Bourassa vowed to “bring before Parliament. . .the necessity of preserving what is left of the historic Fort Louisburg”. He kept his promise the following year, rising in the House of Commons to complain of the “terrible state of abandonment” at Louisbourg, and of the need to clean up and protect the site. The Minister of the Interior, Charles Stewart, commented only that “This is being done”.⁷⁵

Indeed, at long last, some major steps were being taken at Louisbourg. In 1928 the federal government appropriated \$19,000 for the purchase of most of the private properties at historic Louisbourg and an additional \$3,000 for the initial development of the acquired land. By the end of August, 13 properties had either been obtained or had options taken on them. With the terrain now in its hands, the government was finally prepared to make the long awaited announcement; Stewart officially designated Louisbourg a National Historic Site. Appropriately, discussion began within the Parks Branch on how best to develop its latest site.⁷⁶ Two quite different approaches were recommended. The first was chiefly a landscaping approach, designed to maximize the aesthetic and emotional experience of visiting the ruins. The second approach placed an emphasis on educating the public about the nature, extent and lay of the original town.

The simpler approach was advocated in 1923 by Thomas Adams, a British town planner who had come to Canada to work for the Commission of Conservation.⁷⁷ Following a visit to Louisbourg on behalf of the Parks Branch, Adams offered his thoughts on how best to develop the historical area. He wrote

73 Handwritten note from F.H.H. Williamson to J.B. Harkin, with Harkin's concurrence indicated in the margin, n.d. *ibid.*, Vol. 5.

74 Crowe to Webster, 18 December 1925, Webster Correspondence, NBM.

75 *Toronto Star*, 13 August 1927; *Debates of the House of Commons, 1928*, pp. 2652-54.

76 The details of property acquisitions, including photographs of the buildings then on the site, and the early plans for development are in FLO 2, Vols. 8 and 9, PCO.

77 Thomas Adams, *A Study of Rural Conditions and Problems in Canada* (Ottawa, Commission of Conservation, 1917).

that the site was “an impressive one. . . There is a certain grandeur and wildness . . . that makes one feel in a mood to enjoy its romantic character and visualize the historic events”. Adams regarded the existing structures as impediments to enjoyment of the site and recommended that they be removed. The 1895 monument he considered “harmless”, but “it is the ruins, the earthworks and the barren burying ground that make the real memorials”. He strongly urged the branch not to spend any money to reconstruct the fortifications, but to concentrate its efforts instead on making “the ruins endurable as ‘ruins’. . . to give the site the appearance of not having been tampered with by ‘restorers’ and only suffering from natural decay and the effect of time”.⁷⁸ Before travelling to Cape Breton Adams had been told by F.H.H. Williamson of the Parks Branch to contact only Archdeacon Draper during his visit to Louisbourg.⁷⁹ Such an instruction is surprising considering that Senator McLennan, Walter Crowe and Dr. Webster were the most vocal and prominent of the site’s boosters at the time. The explanation is likely that the branch feared the grandiose schemes these men might have proposed to Adams, and that the planner might have agreed with them. It must have seemed safer to have him talk only to the knowledgeable but less “restoration”-oriented Archdeacon Draper.

And indeed, when McLennan, Crowe and Webster later formally submitted their schemes for the development of Louisbourg their recommendations were far more elaborate. This second approach was first worked out in detail by McLennan in 1928, following a visit to Valley Forge. The senator was extremely impressed by the American site and he drew up a development plan for Louisbourg using the same “underlying principles”.⁸⁰ His ideas were endorsed by Webster and Crowe and formed the basis of the report the two HSMBC members submitted to the Parks Branch in 1930.⁸¹ Their plan envisioned the reconstruction of selected areas of the original settlement so as to give the “ordinary visitor a vivid picture of the place where events of so great historical significance” had taken place. Secondary objectives included the collection and display of documents and artifacts in a permanent, fireproof museum and the provision of research material to interested archaeologists and historians. None of the proponents of this approach, including McLennan, had in mind anything as sweeping as the modern Fortress of Louisbourg reconstruction, but they did wish to see some of the fortifications, two gates, and a couple of the major buildings rebuilt, along with the marking of such things as streets and siege positions.⁸² The call for such extensive development reflected the approaches McLennan, Webster and Crowe had seen in the United States at Valley Forge

78 Thomas Adams to Harkin, 11 June 1923, FLO 2, Vol. 4, PCO.

79 *Ibid.*; Adams mentions this at the start of his memo.

80 McLennan to Webster, 28 November 1928, Webster Correspondence, NBM.

81 Webster and Crowe to Harkin, 29 November 1930, with attached report, FLO 2, Vol. 13, PCO.

82 Both approaches, Adams’s and that of McLennan, Webster and Crowe, considered as essential



Figure 2:

Top:

Unveiling of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque commemorating the King's Bastion, 1926. (Courtesy Parks Canada).

Bottom:

In the foreground, the excavated ruins of the King's Bastion barracks; in the background, the masonry museum completed in 1936, and beside it the former interim museum. (Courtesy Parks Canada).

and Fort Ticonderoga, and echoed the ideas being put forth in post-World War I America where “for the first time, groups of people organized to reconstruct significant buildings that had ceased to exist.”⁸³ Webster personally hoped to see France and Great Britain put up columns on the other heights of land similar to the Society of Colonial Wars monument. However, Senator McLennan was “steadfastly opposed” to this proposal, arguing that in a country “such as Canada is now, I think we want to avoid the suggestion that any work we do marks the victory of the British over the French” — which he felt would be the case if the British monument were on a higher hill than the memorial to the French. Moreover, in McLennan’s opinion, anything erected at Louisbourg should be “strictly in the spirit of the period, or exact replicas”.⁸⁴

Once the historic terrain at Louisbourg was finally in the Parks Branch’s control, how did it assess the development options and select the course of action to follow? To what principles or policy guidelines did it turn to decide whether it would have evocative ruins, reconstructed walls and buildings, commemorative markers or some other approach? Being much more preoccupied with its large western natural parks, the branch had not yet acquired much experience in historical matters and largely made up its policy as it went along. Some decisions were relatively easy, such as not allowing people to sell artificial flowers or open a tea room on the historic site.⁸⁵ But on the broader questions of development philosophy the branch was much less certain. Without much experience on its own small staff, it leaned heavily on the advice of the HSMBC members and knowledgeable citizens, such as Senator McLennan. But however impressed the staff of the Parks Branch may have been by the submissions of the Louisbourg enthusiasts,⁸⁶ there were certain budgetary realities they had to keep in mind.

the removal of the dozen or so “modern” houses on the site. The fact that this small community had lived in the area for a century and a half, far longer than the 45-year lifespan of Louisbourg, was of no apparent concern. As a result, the buildings were removed soon after being acquired, with the exception of two houses that served an interim museum and caretaker’s residence. They would later be demolished during the mid-1930s. See *Landmarks of Canada*, p. 323, for the adoption of a similar policy at Quebec City in 1908.

83 Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, p. 146. Both Crowe and Webster were enthusiastic about the work being done at Fort Ticonderoga, while McLennan’s respect for the treatment at Valley Forge has already been mentioned. Webster called his visit to Ticonderoga “one of the happiest experiences” of his life. Webster to Harkin, 20 July 1923, FLO 2, Vol. 5, PCO; Crowe to Harkin, 14 July 1929, *ibid.*, Vol. 10; Report appended to Crowe’s letter of 23 March 1929 to McLennan, AFL; McLennan to Webster, 28 November 1928, Webster Correspondence, NBM.

84 Webster proposed the two additional monuments on several occasions, beginning in 1924: A.A. Pinard’s memo of 5 January 1924, FLO 2, Vol. 5, PCO; Webster to Harkin, 1 December 1924, *ibid.*, Vol. 6. McLennan spelled out his opposition to the idea most clearly in 1935: McLennan to G.W. Bryan, 17 May 1935, AFL; McLennan to Webster, 28 March 1935, Webster Correspondence, NBM.

85 Harkin to Miss Minnie Mosher, 10 June 1936, Harkin to D.R. Ingraham, 21 October 1936, FLO 2, Vol. 19, PCO.

86 The enthusiasts’ proposals were generally grounded in their knowledge of the history of Louis-

They simply did not have the funds to pay for all the projects urged by the site's boosters. They were constrained to begin modestly and spread the work over many years. Nevertheless, the plan they adopted incorporated most of the ideas put forth by McLennan, Webster, Crowe and others.

The Parks Branch programme began in 1929, and continued during the summer months over the next decade, with additional projects being undertaken in 1949, 1950 and 1955.⁸⁷ This work consisted primarily of doing further preservation work on the casemates of the King's Bastion, excavating selected building locations (barracks, hospital, convent, the De Mézy residence), reconstructing the walls of those structures to a height of several feet, and uncovering several of the streets of the original town. Progress was slow but the advancing work finally stopped the appeals for a special Louisbourg commission to take charge of the development of the site.⁸⁸ Instead, a group of interested and knowledgeable local people, including Senator McLennan, his daughter Katharine, Archdeacon Draper, and Mayor M.S. Huntington of Louisbourg were chosen to advise board members how best to proceed at the site.⁸⁹ The advisory committee's recommendations were numerous and well received, and the fact that they were made to feel a part of the process meant that there was largely an end to the earlier complaints concerning the Parks Branch's inaction or lack of expertise.⁹⁰ The branch also selected an Honorary Superintendent and a caretaker from the local population to look after the year-round maintenance and upkeep of the

bourg. For McLennan, and to a lesser extent Webster, that familiarity had been gained through original research using 18th century documents. For Crowe and others, their perspectives on the French regime in Cape Breton were likely shaped by conversations with McLennan and Webster, reading their books, and the books and articles of Francis Parkman, J.C. Bourinot and Richard Brown.

87 F.J. Thorpe to R.L. Way, 4 June 1962, "Louisbourg 'Restoration' 1930-60", AFL. That the work began in 1929, not 1930, was reported in S.O. Roberts to T.S. Mills, 19 December 1930, FLO 2, Vol. 14, PCO.

88 Discussion of a commission continued into 1930, then stopped: Crowe to Webster, 26 December 1928, 27 March 1929, Webster Correspondence, NBM; [Harkin] to R.A. Gibson, 11 April 1929, FLO 2, Vol. 10, PCO; Crowe to Harkin, 17 October 1929, Harkin to Crowe, 11 January 1930, Crowe to Harkin, 26 February 1930, *ibid.*, Vol. 11. Instead of a separate commission, the HSMBC named Webster and Crowe as a special sub-committee to advise the Parks Branch on Louisbourg's development: extract from minutes of HSMBC, 16 May 1930, *ibid.*, Vol. 12.

89 An advisory committee of non-government and non-HSMBC members was first suggested in 1928 (Crowe to Harkin, November 1928, *ibid.*, Vol. 9) then recommended again in 1931 (Webster and Crowe to Pinard, 10 March 1931, *ibid.*, Vol. 13). The board expressed its appreciation to the committee in May 1931, (extract from minutes of HSMBC, 29 May 1931, *ibid.*, Vol. 14). See also Harkin to D.C. Harvey, 20 October 1932, *ibid.*, Vol. 15.

90 For a sampling of criticisms of the Branch see McLennan to Webster, 17 December 1928, Webster to McLennan, 21 December 1928, AFL; Webster and Crowe to Charles Stewart, 16 January 1929, FLO 2, Vol. 10, PCO; Crowe to McLennan, 23 March 1929, AFL; Crowe to Webster, 8 January 1934, 8 November 1933, Webster Correspondence, NBM.

historic site. Those appointments, combined with the employment generated by the projects carried out each summer, generally won the support of the nearby community for the work of the Parks Branch. The only contentious issue to surface between the branch and members of the community were charges that political affiliation was a factor in determining who was hired at various positions.⁹¹

To protect and display the artifacts recovered during the excavations, as well as other objects donated to the site, a masonry (that is, fireproof) museum was completed in 1936. Placed in charge of the collection, and given the title of Honorary Curator, was Katharine McLennan, who held the position for the next 25 years. Her contributions, all of which were made as a volunteer, included cataloguing the artifact collection, organizing the displays, writing the site's historical brochure, making two large models, and coordinating all special events. In many ways the opening of the museum represented the culmination of years of effort to preserve and develop Louisbourg as a historic site. Captain Kennelly had envisioned a museum within his proposed tower, and Senator McLennan, Dr. Webster and Walter Crowe had pushed for the construction of one throughout the 1920s and early 1930s to achieve the educational objectives they set for a properly developed historic site.⁹²

In 1940, after additional land had been acquired in the area and following a campaign by another Cape Breton historical enthusiast, Albert Almon, an outsider to the McLennan, Webster and Crowe group,⁹³ the status of the site was raised so that it became the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park. The inclusion of "fortress" in the official name was not welcomed by everyone because it did not reflect the 18th century designations of the place, which had been as either "Ville de Louisbourg" or "Port de Louisbourg". Both Crowe and Webster had complained to Harkin in 1929 about the site being referred to by

91 Charles Shaw of Louisbourg, who worked at the site during the 1930s, recalled that Liberals got the jobs when the Liberals were in power and Conservatives when the Conservatives were in office. He stated that it was a fact of life and no one minded much: Interview by A.J.B. Johnston, 10 December 1981. However, there were some people who were not quite so philosophical about losing their jobs with changes in government. The first Honorary Superintendent, A.A. Martell, protested bitterly about being removed from his position in 1931; Lawrence Price, the first caretaker, was dismissed at the same time, but complained less strenuously: Martell to Harkin, 30 November 1931, Martell to Harkin, 24 December 1931, Price to Harkin, 4 November 1931, FLO 2, Vol. 14, PCO.

92 At one point Webster, with the blessing of the federal government, even pursued the matter with the Carnegie Foundation. The hope was that the American philanthropic institution would put up the \$40,000 required for the construction of suitable museums at Louisbourg and Beauséjour. When the idea fell through the government funded the projects on its own. Senator McLennan had hoped the De Mézy residence might be reconstructed to serve as a museum, but in the end the government decided to build a larger structure on land opposite where the King's Garden had been: Harkin to H.H. Rowatt, 9 July 1932, Webster to Harkin, 26 October 1932, FLO 2, Vol. 15, PCO; G.W. Bryan for J.B. Harkin to Webster, 12 August 1933, *ibid.*, Vol. 16; Harkin to Dr. F.P. Keppel, President, Carnegie Corporation, 2 August 1932, FB 2, Vol. 9, PCO.

93 Almon was a Glace Bay plumber and amateur historian. Despite a lack of higher education and

branch personnel as Fort Louisbourg, a name which they considered “unfortunate and inappropriate”, apparently because it suggested that the original settlement had been little more than a military outpost. Their preference was for simply Louisbourg National Historic Park.⁹⁴ McLennan likely shared that view as he thought there should not be too much made of the military history at Louisbourg because “the two races who there competed... are making Canada what it is” today.⁹⁵ Such views differed drastically from those expressed earlier in the 20th century and throughout the 19th century. Where Louisbourg had earlier been regarded almost exclusively as the site of one of the principal battles in the struggle for North America, McLennan and others were consciously attempting to minimize the military conflicts. It was the beginning of a trend that continues today in the modern reconstruction, with its emphasis on French civilian and garrison activities of 1744.

The story of the preservation of historic Louisbourg is largely one of a few dedicated individuals who believed, for a variety of reasons, that the site of the 18th century French town deserved to be protected and commemorated. To that end, according to their perspective and means, they erected monuments and organized and prodded others into action. When the only private initiative, Kennelly’s Louisburg Memorial Fund, failed, subsequent enthusiasts sought the blessing and financial assistance of the federal government. In that respect the situation was quite different from that which was occurring in the contemporary United States where wealthy philanthropists or groups of ordinary citizens were achieving similar results without government involvement. Most of the people involved in the preservation of Louisbourg considered government ownership of the site not only necessary but also desirable. Budget constraints and a general lack of familiarity with historical matters caused the government to react slowly, at Louisbourg and elsewhere. But in the end, through perseverance, the historical enthusiasts convinced the federal authorities to carry out a programme during the 1930s that achieved most of their development objectives.

And what was the overall goal of the effort? Why bother with the ruins of a settlement that had existed for less than five decades and then virtually disappeared from history? Obviously their purpose was not to foster ancestor worship

leisure time he worked throughout the 1930s and 1940s to promote Louisbourg and its history. Notwithstanding his efforts, Almon was not held in high regard by at least some of the other Louisbourg enthusiasts. But in 1949 St. Francis Xavier University awarded Almon an honorary M.A. for his historical work. Examples of negative remarks about Almon may be found in Webster to K. McLennan, 1 August 1935, 20 August 1936, Louisbourg Museum File, J.M. McConnell Library, Sydney; K. McLennan to J.C. Webster, 8 December 1940, Webster Correspondence, NBM. Almon’s papers are located in the Beaton Institute of the University College of Cape Breton.

94 Webster to Harkin, 14 February 1929, Crowe to Harkin, 16 February 1929, FLO 2, Vol. 10, PCO.

95 McLennan, “Memorandum on Louisbourg”, October 1936, *ibid.*, Vol. 19.

as none of the individuals involved, except for a few of the New Englanders, could claim to be descended from people at all associated with 18th century Louisbourg. Nor was it to preserve structures of architectural or aesthetic merit. Tourism was often cited as a likely side benefit, but never as a major goal. For Captain D.J. Kennelly, who seemed to feel an almost mystical bond with the past, the preservation of places like Louisbourg was the "sacred duty" of the 20th century. To most of the other enthusiasts, however, the project deserved to be undertaken for more commonplace, though no less worthy reasons. The most common argument was that a preserved Louisbourg would inspire Canadians. Henri Bourassa, for instance, stated that a trip to the site might be like "passing through the ruins of Pompeii", stimulating visitors to think of their nation's history. In particular, he mentioned that it might arouse in the "considerable foreign population" of industrial Cape Breton, "a desire to study the past of their adopted country".⁹⁶

Dr. J.C. Webster was of a similar opinion, maintaining that historic sites like Louisbourg offer an "inspirational stimulus and foster an interest in the country". Webster contrasted historic sites, which he thought should be accessible to everyone, to the resort areas in natural parks which "cater to the rich" and which "the toiling masses will never see".⁹⁷ In a critical assessment of Canada's educational and cultural conditions, published in 1926, he lamented that the average Canadian "thinks of his land not as part of a mighty heritage which has been won through blood and sacrifice, and made sacred by the memories of the past, but merely of its value in dollars".⁹⁸ Webster saw historic site development as a way to counteract this deplorable situation. In the United States, he pointed out, citizens were taught to respect past achievements and heroes. He hoped that in Canada heritage preservation might encourage patriotism and a distinct identity.

Senator J.S. McLennan also seems to have believed that the preservation and development of historic Louisbourg might contribute to the creation of a distinctive national identity. More than any of the others involved in the project McLennan was sensitive to the bicultural reality of the country and the need to cultivate goodwill between French and English Canadians. Part of the explanation for this sensitivity seems to have been his Montreal upbringing,⁹⁹ for both he and his brother William, a well-known 19th century novelist, were captivated by French-Canadian history. Yet nationalistic considerations only partly

96 *Debates of the House of Commons, 1928*, p. 2653, 3 May 1928.

97 Webster to K. McLennan, 28 March 1938, Louisbourg Museum File, McConnell Library.

98 John Clarence Webster, *The Distressed Maritimes, A Study of Educational and Cultural Conditions in Canada* (Toronto, 1926), pp. 15, 16.

99 Rodolphe Lemieux comments on the "bicultural" sympathies of McLennan and his family in his review of McLennan's book on Louisbourg: *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, (1922), Sect. I, pp. 121-27.

explain McLennan's passionate interest in preserving Louisbourg. The short, tumultuous history of the town fascinated him, and aware as he was from his years of research that "there is abundant material for an almost complete reconstruction of the town and its fortifications", he could never lose sight of that possibility. McLennan's proposals were always the most elaborate to be submitted, but more importantly, he placed the greatest emphasis on the need for professionalism in the treatment of the site, calling for thorough research and expert advice on specialty matters. It was McLennan's earnest hope that "in the future those who see what has been done at this time, will recognize that the people in charge had high standards as to what their work should be" and that it will reflect "credit" on them.¹⁰⁰ He wished "to build up a monument — not only of the historic past — but to the intelligence and goodwill of all concerned in bringing it into existence".¹⁰¹ One suspects that the preservation and development of historic Louisbourg was to McLennan above all else an intellectual challenge, a jigsaw puzzle of enormous proportions.

Ironically, most of the commemorative efforts of 1895-1940 did not have a long lifespan, at least in their original form. During the reconstruction project of the 1960s the Colonial Wars monument was relocated and damaged in the process. Two of the HSMBC cairns and plaques were simply removed. Most of the ruins excavated and stabilized during the 1930s were re-excavated, and then had buildings erected over them. Even the museum was not safe. Not only were its contents removed but there was also talk for a time that the structure itself might be torn down. Despite these changes, the early efforts must be judged a success, in that they had helped draw public and government attention to the 18th century history of the site at Louisbourg. J.S. McLennan's dream of a reconstructed Louisbourg was not to be accomplished in his lifetime because he died in 1939, 22 years before that project began.¹⁰² But the basic principles that he enunciated, first that preservation work must be undertaken only when it is based on research and directed by people with expertise, and second, that it is posterity and not just present-day concerns that will judge the merit of the work, have become the guiding rules at the best heritage projects across the country.¹⁰³

100 McLennan to Webster, 28 November 1928, Webster Correspondence, NBM; McLennan to Bryan, 17 May 1935, AFL.

101 McLennan to A.G.L. McNaughton, 21 March 1934, FLO 2, Vol. 17, PCO. McLennan wrote McNaughton because there was talk that an extensive "make-work" project might be carried out at Louisbourg to alleviate unemployment, and he spelled out his ideas on the development of the site in his memorandum.

102 Following the recommendations of I.C. Rand's *Report of the Royal Commission on Coal* (Ottawa, 1960), the federal government began the reconstruction of one-quarter of the original 18th century town. That project, which began in 1961 as a make-work programme for unemployed coal miners, ultimately exceeded the most grandiose plans of the early enthusiasts.

103 It is difficult to say how typical were the early commemoration and preservation efforts at Louisbourg because there has been so little research on the topic elsewhere in Canada. Was there a national pattern of failed private initiatives followed by appeals for government action?

And in those cases where government involvement was sought, were the inevitable delays perceived as proof that Ottawa was neglecting that region's history? One assumes it was fairly common to have a small group of professionals or socially prominent individuals acting as a pressure group, but was it? And where did the enthusiasts in other areas get their ideas for their projects? For Crowe, Webster and McLennan the inspiration clearly came from heritage projects in the United States, but were American examples followed elsewhere in Canada, or were British or French approaches adopted more often? And did distinctively Canadian programmes emerge in some areas? How many sites were "bicultural" and how did Canadians view that issue? The evolution in commemorative approaches adopted at Louisbourg, from monument-raising to preservation of extant ruins to the excavation and interpretation of archaeological features to the establishment of a museum, seems in retrospect to have been a natural, almost inevitable, progression. But there were definite obstacles and options along the way and the development of the site could have turned out quite differently. How common the Louisbourg experience was will only be demonstrated by other case studies and further research.