

# THE PORT ROYAL HABITATION

Port Royal, Nova Scotia

Canada



**The Courtyard, Port Royal Habitation**

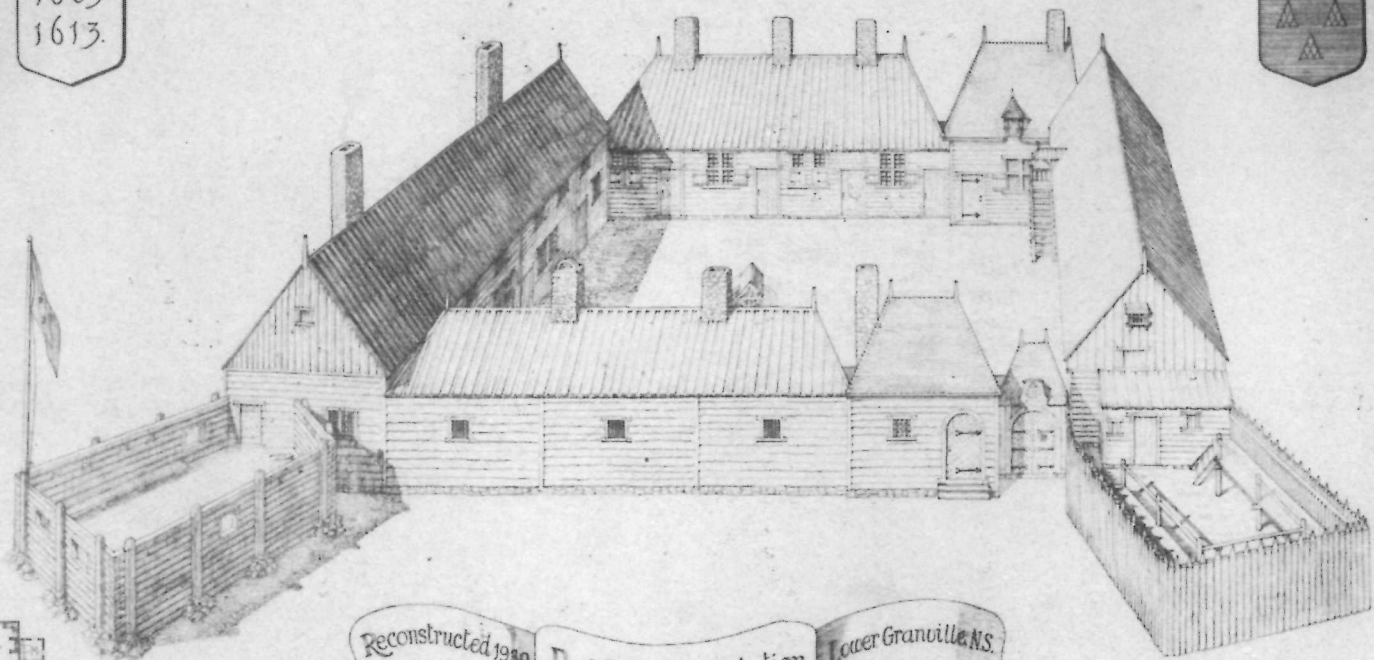
A WISE NATION PRESERVES ITS RECORDS  
- - - GATHERS UP ITS MUNIMENTS - - -  
DECORATES THE TOMBS OF ITS ILLUS-  
TRIOUS DEAD - - - REPAIRS ITS GREAT  
PUBLIC STRUCTURES AND FOSTERS NA-  
TIONAL PRIDE AND LOVE OF COUNTRY  
BY PERPETUAL REFERENCE TO THE  
SACRIFICES AND GLORIES OF THE PAST.

. . . Joseph Howe

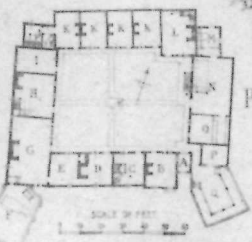
Issued under the authority of  
THE HONOURABLE JEAN LESAGE, Minister of  
Northern Affairs and National Resources



1605  
1613.



Reconstructed 1939 Port Royal Habitation Lower Granville, N.S.



PLAN.

REFERENCE.

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| A Entrance Gateway  | U Kitchen            |
| B Dwelling Building | V Officers' Quarters |
| C Blacksmith Shop   | W Stable Building    |
| D Store Room        | X Indian Tent        |
| E Barracks          | Y Storehouse         |
| F Cannon Platform   | Z Trading Room       |
| G Community Hall    | 1a Warehouse         |
| H Artisan's Shop    | 1b Warehouse         |
| I Chapel            | 2 and 3 and          |

Kenneth D. Adams  
Architect in Charge of Project  
Engineering & Construction Services  
Department of Man & Environment  
1939 1941 1942

# THE PORT ROYAL HABITATION

## *Port Royal National Historic Park Port Royal, Nova Scotia*

THE Port Royal Habitation has been reconstructed on its original site as nearly as practicable as a replica of the trading and colonizing settlement that was built in 1605 under the leadership of the Sieur de Monts, founder and first governor of Port Royal. Samuel de Champlain, famous explorer and Chief Geographer to Henry IV of France, whose headquarters it was for about two years, states that de Monts allowed him to choose the location and to draw up the plan of the settlement.

The Habitation comprises a group of buildings arranged around a courtyard in the manner of 16th Century farms in northern France, and is fortified at the two southerly corners by a cannon platform and a stockade or palisade. The reconstructed buildings stand as an example of the earliest European building traditions that were transplanted to the New World. Champlain's engraving or picture plan of the Habitation, together with the descriptions published in his "Voyages" in 1613, formed the principal basis of the reconstruction work. References and descriptions relating to the activities and mode of life of the occupants of the Habitation from Lescarbot's "History of New France" and from the "Jesuit Relations" were also an important help in the reconstruction of the settlement.

The following is a brief description of the various units of the Habitation, which, unless otherwise mentioned, are shown on Champlain's picture plan.

**The Entrance Gateway.**—This small building is framed up of hewn oak with walls of contemporary French construction, known as "en colombage", and is roofed with oak shingles of the same size as those used on small buildings of the period in Picardy. The studded oak doors are handmade and hung and fitted with wrought ironware of period design. The peep-hole in the outer door was known as a "Judas". The coat of arms painted on the oak standard over the Gateway is derived from that shown on Lescarbot's map of Port Royal and on several other contemporary documents. The arms are those of France (left) and Navarre (right)—of which countries Henry IV was King.

**Small Building Next to the Entrance Gateway.**—This building is described on the legend accompanying Champlain's picture plan as "a small building in which was kept the rigging for our pinnaces. This the Sieur de Poutrincourt had later rebuilt, and there the Sieur de Boulay lodged when the Sieur du Pont returned to France". The interior wall boarding of the building is of spruce, moulded in the manner of some of the earliest French-Canadian houses of which there is a record. The fireplace is of local stone, lined with bricks of authentic size made of clay dug at the site. The leaded glass windows are of contemporary French pattern, as are also the hand-wrought ironware of doors and windows and the candle sconces, which would have been made by the blacksmiths at the Habitation. The roof is covered with hand-split pine shingles.

**The Blacksmith Shop.**—It is probable that malleable iron was brought from France and that most of the ironware used throughout the Habitation for doors, windows, and fireplaces was hand-wrought at the forge. The iron-workers also made tools, utensils, and arrowheads for trading with the Indians in exchange for furs and pelts. Repairs to muskets and other military equipment would be made by an armourer or locksmith here. The forge is of authentic French pattern, built of handmade bricks and local stone. The casement windows are handmade of oak, showing the square block bar intersections peculiar to the period in Normandy. They are filled in with oiled parchment, treated as a substitute for scraped and oiled buckskin, or linen or paper which may have been used.

**The Kitchen.**—The cooking for the settlement generally would have been carried out here. It is recorded by Lescarbot that for their rations the company had peas, beans, rice, prunes, dried cod, and salt meat, besides oil and butter, and that in due season they procured mussels, lobsters, crabs, and cockles. He also states that sturgeon, herrings, and sardines were plentiful and that “of all their meats none is so tender as moose-meat (whereof were also made excellent pasties) and none so delicate as beaver’s tail”.

**The Bake Shop.**—As evidence of the amount of baking that must have been done here, it is recorded that at one time there were eighty-four people living at the settlement. The wheat for baking was at first ground by hand, but was later gristed at the mill built by de Poutrincourt. The bake-oven is heated by a fire-box underneath, which has a flue at the back connecting with the kitchen chimney; this is distinctive of French bake-ovens of the period.

**The Cannon Platform.**—Champlain describes the cannon platform thus: “At one corner on the western side is a platform whereon were placed four pieces of cannon”. The roughly squared, hewn timbers enclose a fill of heavy boulders, the foundations of which were found at the side. The timber work, gun embrasures, musket loop-holes, observation benches, and flooring are in pioneer fort style.

**The Community Room.**—This room, which is not shown on Champlain’s picture plan, would have been used for general assemblies and meals, it being in close proximity to the bake shop and kitchen. The celebrations and festivities in connection with the Order of Good Cheer, which was instituted by Champlain in the winter of 1606-7, were observed here.

Lescarbot refers to this Order as follows: “Never at breakfast did we lack some savoury meat of flesh or fish, and still less at our midday or evening meals; for that was our chief banquet, at which the ruler of the feast or chief butler, whom the savages call Atoctegic, having had everything prepared by the cook, marched in, napkin on shoulder, wand of office in hand, and around his neck the collar of the Order, which was worth more than four crowns; after him all the members of the Order, carrying each a dish. The same was repeated at dessert, though not always with so much pomp. And at night, before giving thanks to God, he handed over to his successor in the charge the collar of the Order, with a cup of wine, and they drank to each other.”

The construction of the room follows contemporary French practice. The massive posts and beams and the knee braces have wane edges giving the appearance of having been hewn out of round timbers in the old manner. The oak steps and landing to the cannon platform have hand-moulded newel posts and balusters of contemporary design. The fireplace is modelled on that of a large contemporary French farmhouse.

**The Artisans’ Quarters.**—The West building as a whole is indicated on the Champlain picture plan as the artisans’ lodgings or quarters. The ground floor was probably originally divided into two rooms, each having a fireplace about the middle of the west wall. The community room at the south end would be used for dining purposes and the room at the north end as the artisans’ living quarters.

But a place had to be allocated for a chapel, and the supposition is that a small area was partitioned off later for the chapel at the north end of the West building, the partition being set under the main beam at the north side of the fireplace. This accounts for the fireplace in the artisans’ quarters being in the corner of the room, which is contrary to French practice.

**The Artisans' Dormitory.**—This room, which is 21 feet by 66 feet in size, formed the sleeping quarters of the workmen and craftsmen of the settlement. The roof framing is the massive coupled-truss Normandy type of the period. The eleven trusses are spaced at about 5-foot 6-inch centres and all members are mortised and tenoned and pinned together, no nails or spikes being used. There are no rafters as in modern construction for the under roof planking spans between the trusses. The overlapped boarding runs from eaves to ridge and is attached to the purlins.

**The Chapel.**—There is no evidence that a chapel was ever built, but such rooms as were available at the time were used for holding religious services. It is here placed in the artisans' building in accordance with reasonable probability and to commemorate the fact that the missionaries held religious services at the Habitation.

**The Priests' Dwelling.**—There is no documentary evidence of the position of the priests' quarters, but it is assumed to have been one of the north line of dwellings.

**Gentlemen's Dwellings.**—Each building has an entrance from the courtyard, a fireplace, and a mullion window with transom lights. The doors, made of wide pine boards with battens and braces, are hand planed and painted blue as this was one of the most prevalent colours in contemporary Normandy farm buildings.

Among the people who lodged in these dwellings the following are named in historical references: Charles de Biencourt; Foulgère de Vitre; Master Jaques, the Miner; Robert du Pont; Marc Lescarbot; Ship-master Champdore; Surgeon Stephen; and Apothecary Hébert.

Marc Lescarbot, advocate in the Parliament of Paris, historian and poet, arrived at Port Royal in July, 1606. Here he wrote a play or masque "The Theatre of Neptune", which was staged on the waters opposite the fort on November 14, 1606, the first drama performed on the continent north of the Spanish Settlements. Here also he wrote a book of verse "The Muses of New France" and his diary and notes for the "History of New France", which were published in Paris in 1609.

**The Governor's House.**—De Monts did not occupy the Governor's dwelling here, for having seen the new settlement nearly completed, he left the finishing of the buildings in charge of Pont-Gravé and returned to France. Pont-Gravé, also referred to as the Sieur du Pont and François Gravé, had been Captain of one of de Mont's vessels and he accompanied Champlain on many of his exploratory voyages. He was commander of the fort during the winter of 1605-6 and returned to France in August, 1606, about the time that de Poutrincourt took up residence in the Governor's house.

Samuel de Champlain, the great French explorer who occupied this house with Pont-Gravé, is the most famous member of the colony. He was a captain in the French Navy as well as Geographer Royal. Born in Brouage, Normandy, he died in Quebec in 1636. In this dwelling he prepared the first detailed charts and maps of the Atlantic coastline and here, also, he doubtless wrote the notes for his "Voyages 1613".

Champlain records that the house was built of fair sawn timber by good workmen who built steadily and vigorously, and Lescarbot refers to the building as made of well-finished carpentry. The floors and interior wall siding of the ground floor are of oak. The siding is moulded in the manner of that of some of the earliest French houses in Quebec. The staircase is of birch with hand-moulded newel caps and pendants. The fireplace mantel shelf and over-mantel are of characteristic period design, handmade with pinned joints. The shields portray the arms of the

two governors of Port Royal, the *Sieur de Monts* on the left, the *Sieur de Poutrincourt* on the right, and between them the Arms of France.

The roof of the Governor's house (exposed to view in the attic) is constructed with main trusses supporting purlins and rafters, in which respect it differs from the roof construction of the other buildings designed to carry lapped roof boarding. The slopes of the roof are covered with hand-split pine shingles, which might well have been used as a substitute for earthenware tiles covering a building of this character in Normandy.

**The Storehouse.**—Champlain records that "On the eastern side is a Storehouse of the full width (of the courtyard) with a very fine cellar some five to six feet high". The storehouse is of framed construction, with posts, beams with knee braces, and roof trusses of contemporary French type.

**The Cellar.**—The position of the cellar was identified by the archaeological survey of the site. It was found to be about a toise (6 feet 3 inches) wide, three toises long, and of the depth (5 feet to 6 feet) stated by Champlain.

**The Trading Room.**—There is no evidence of the position of the trading room, but the south end of the storehouse would be the logical place, close to the Entrance Gateway where Indians could conveniently bring their wares to trade, and connecting directly with the storehouse by a doorway behind the counter. In this connection, Lescarbot records as follows: "When winter came the savages of the country assembled at Port Royal from far and near to barter what they had with the French, some bringing beaver and other skins . . . and also moose skins, of which excellent buff jackets may be made, others bringing fresh meat, of which they made many a banquet."

**The Guard Room.**—Champlain's picture plan shows a lean-to roofed building at the south end of the storehouse opening on to the palisade. This is assumed to be a guard room or sentry shelter.

**The Palisade.**—The palisade is evidently incorrectly portrayed on Champlain's picture plan, for it would be useless for defensive purposes as shown. Champlain's text reads: "At one corner . . . is a platform . . . and at the other corner towards the east is a palisade fashioned like a platform". A firing platform as constructed around three of the inner sides of the palisade upon which musketeers could stand to fire between alternately pointed poles and thus enfilade the east and south fronts of the Habitation is probably the logical solution.

**The Well.**—(*Vide* Jesuit Relations, Thwaites Ed. Vol. II, p. 165)—"as the spring was some little distance from there, they dug a well in the fort and found the water very good." The site of this well was identified by an exploratory survey when disturbed soil was discovered with surface field stones down to a depth of eighteen feet, at which depth a good supply of water was encountered. The well was rebuilt with field stones and the oak shingled cover, with the windlass and bucket, all made by hand, are of contemporary Normandy type. This is the first well recorded to have been dug by Europeans on this continent, north of the Gulf of Mexico.

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Ottawa, Canada





**Port Royal Habitation, Annapolis Basin**

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