

Fortress Canada

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Canadians built a great many forts. Some were purely military—designed to provide protection from possible invaders from the south—and some were outposts of the fur traders. They apparently achieved their purposes for few were attacked successfully.

Louisbourg

Louisbourg was one that was.

With the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 France ceded most of its North American empire—Acadia (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and much of what is now the state of Maine), the Hudson's Bay trading area and Newfoundland—to the English.

It kept Quebec and, through the strenuous efforts of its negotiators, Cape Breton at the mouth of the St. Lawrence. The Cape gave it control of the river and a base to protect its fisheries and commerce with the west. It decided to do so on a grand scale. In 1719 it began to build a fortified naval station at Havre à l'Anglais on the southeast coast. It would spend thirty years and \$10 million doing it.

King Louis XV grew so annoyed at the staggering cost that he said he expected to look out the window one morning and see the towers of Louisbourg rising above the horizon.

The solid stone fortress began with a thirty-foot high masonry wall around fifty-seven acres. It bulged with strong points: the Dauphin Demi-Bastion on the harbour side, the King's Bastion, the Queen's Bastion and, butting up against the Atlantic, the Princess Demi-Bastion.

The King's Bastion, known as the Citadel, held the governor's apartments, a chapel, officers' rooms and quarters for the garrison.

There was a stone and timber town within the walls and beyond were the Island Battery (on

Battery Island); the Royal Battery on the mainland, a mile to the northeast; the circular battery at the Dauphin Bastion; and the Maurepas Bastion at the neck of Rochefort Point. There was an artillery work called the Pièce de la Grave near the quay. One hundred cannon, twenty-four and forty-two pounders, were trained on the harbour. By 1744 Louisbourg was pretty much completed and considered impregnable. It wasn't.

That was the year of King George's War, a branch of the War of the Austrian Succession. French privateers out of Louisbourg began to harass fishermen out of Massachusetts, off Sable Island and the Canso Banks. In May troops from the fortress captured the town of Canso and brought its small garrison to Louisbourg, a grievous mistake.

The garrison was released early the next year and when they came home they listed Louisbourg's weaknesses. It was overlooked by high hills on which cannon could be placed. The Royal Battery had two unrepaired breaches and the fortress did not have enough supplies and munitions to withstand a long siege. The French garrison was small and mutinous.

Governor Shirley of Massachusetts decided to attack. Two-and-a-half months later 4,000 men—fishermen, farmers, mechanics, merchants and frontiersmen, most from Massachusetts, the rest from Connecticut and New Hampshire—set sail in a motley fleet of ninety transports. They were escorted by five warships, including HMS *Superbe*,

