



DRESS-MAKING LOUISBOURG STYLE

As workmen reconstruct the fortifications and buildings of eighteenth-century Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, a team of skilled sempstresses are recreating the fabrics and fashions once worn by its inhabitants.

Costume designer Robert Doyle, formerly with the Neptune Theatre in Halifax, was commissioned to set up shop at Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park and train Florence MacIntyre and her staff in the art of recreating eighteenth-century dress. The garments, both civilian and military, will cover the social scene from the practical rough woollens of the scullery-maid to the elegant silk brocades and velvets in the lady's wardrobe.

Last summer, six "hostesses" in the governor's chateau and a number of female park guides donned the old-style garments.

Only fragments of information have survived to indicate what was worn at Louisbourg. However, the few pieces of cloth archeologists have unearthed illustrate the fabrics and type of weave that may have characterized local dress-plain (as opposed to twill) weave, silk velvet, wool velvet, and fine woollen stockings.

The historical researchers at Louisbourg have produced a more detailed picture by combining inventory accounts of the original garments with descriptions of the buttons, buckles and other perishables

recovered from the ruins. Additional research was also carried out by Mr. Doyle in European archives and museum collections.

SPECIAL LOOM

The costume workshop, tucked away in the third-floor attic of the governor's chateau, houses a special loom designed by Doyle, incorporating features of a modern Swedish loom and an eighteenth-century French one. This machine, constructed at the park, can produce simple woollen cloth as well as complex 16-harness linen. Silk ribbon is woven on a small frame loom, also constructed at Louisbourg.

The sounds of sewing machines are conspicuously absent as hand-finishing, quilting and embroidery are carried out on delicate lawn and fine silks, wool and linen materials.

Meticulous attention has been paid to historical detail. Ladies' linen caps made in the Louisbourg workshop are adorned with original eighteenth-century French lace. Shoes, wigs, buckles, and buttons, which cannot be manufactured at the park, have been produced by London and New York firms that specialize in historical reproductions.

Jim How, head of interpretation at the national historic park, promises that the garments will form a superb and unique collection. He points out that the