

**A SHORT HISTORY OF ANNAPOLIS
ROYAL, THE PORT ROYAL OF THE
FRENCH, FROM ITS SETTLEMENT IN
1604 TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE
BRITISH TROOPS IN 1854, PP. 2-119**

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July 1751.1

A SHORT HISTORY

—OF—

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL

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*PORT ROYAL OF THE FRENCH, FROM ITS SETTLEMENT
IN 1604 TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE
BRITISH TROOPS IN 1654*

BY

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the mountain side. The limpid wave washes a shore of surpassing richness, protected by the sheltering dyke. This is the approach to Evangeline's Land, the home of story. This is the proper entrance to the garden of the province, the apple orchard of the world. Come in early June, when the richly-laden air is redolent of perfume, when the fertile valley throughout its entire length of one hundred miles, is coloured with the bloom of apple, plum and cherry; or, come again in autumn, when boughs are bending to their mother earth, heavy with magnificent clusters of fruitage, and deny who can that this is a land of generous promise. Remain till winter winds are cold, and frosts are keen; then, witness the splendour of our setting suns, as, merging into a thousand glories, they sink with lingering twilight into the golden west, and you will say that Italy can scarce surpass our skies.

The tourist will find much of interest on the shores of the fair Basin of Annapolis. The rivers that empty into it are well stocked with salmon and trout; the Basin itself and the bay beyond abound with sea-fish. The forests that stretch away toward the interior are the home of moose and caribou, partridge and woodcock are found in season. If he is fond of boating, a hundred trim craft are at his disposal, with unrivalled facilities for testing their qualities. The tide that comes bursting in from the Bay of Fundy, with its forty feet of rise, brings water pure and invigorating for a saline bath. If he wishes to linger where nature has not yet been improved out of recognition, he can find no more congenial resort than among the villages of this quiet region.

At the extreme west of the sheet of water called The Basin, on the right and near at hand as we pass through the Gap, lies the trim town of Digby. This possesses many attractions as a summer resort. The hot air is tempered by the sea breeze that finds its way from the Bay of Fundy. In front and stretching

away in the dim distance lies the land-locked haven of Port Royal. Beautiful drives abound in the neighbourhood, and unsurpassed facilities for sea bathing. The trip from Digby up the Basin is delightful. The water is, in fact, an inland sea sixteen miles long, triangular in shape, narrowing from a width of six miles in the west to one half at the extreme east, where the Annapolis River enters it through a narrow channel. On the north runs the unbroken ridge of the North Mountain, with a narrow belt of level or gently sloping land along the shore at its foot. On the south the land is undulating, gradually rising into ridges known as the South Mountain, which, at a distance, runs parallel with the North, and continuing east forms the southern boundary of the well-known valleys of Annapolis and Cornwallis. Three miles above Digby, the southern hills are pierced by the Bear River, on whose banks, four miles inland, nestles the charming village of the same name. This region is famous for its cherries, and is the Mecca of many a pilgrim when that delicious fruit is in season. Five miles beyond, the Moose River is reached, at whose mouth lies the picturesque village of Clementsport, with the beautiful valley of Clements Vale. A mile or two further on, Goat Island stretches across the Basin, leaving a narrow channel on each side for our passage. This island separates the broader Basin proper from the narrow portion above, which may be termed the estuary of the Annapolis River. Fertile farms, with comfortable homesteads, lie along both shores as we have advanced. The main channel passes to the north of Goat Island and approaches very near the shore.

At this stage passengers will be eagerly on the watch to catch the first sight of the roofs of old Annapolis Royal, the former capital of Nova Scotia, with the green slopes of its dismantled fortifications; for, we infer, the intelligent traveller has some knowledge of its history. Before the earliest English landed at Jamestown, in Virginia, the French had settled

on the shores of Annapolis Basin ; we are therefore in the vicinity of the earliest settlement made north of Florida. While here skirting the northern shore, and awaiting the first sight of the historic town, take a careful survey of the land opposite the island, where the strait is narrowest ; for exactly on this spot did the hardy Frenchmen first pitch their tents in August, 1605. Here, protected from the fierce north winds by the sheltering mountain, they built their dwellings, surrounded them with a fortification, and amid many privations and much uncertainty, began the heroic work of laying the foundation of French dominion in America. The domicile of this people gave character to the history of the locality for one hundred and fifty years. This land of hill and dale attracts us not alone for its surpassing beauty, but for its thousand memories. A knowledge of its romantic history invests the seemingly ordinary object with a halo of interest.

Yonder, now, may be seen the clustering homes of Annapolis Royal ; but the student of history sees more than houses. In imagination there lies the scene of a century and a half of bitter conflict. There is, first, the clearing among the scattered oaks on the peninsula, where the settlers sowed their seed, six miles away from their habitations : next, a few low dwellings ; then, a fort with its waving Fleur-de-lis ; again, the hostile approach, a hasty summoning for defence, the murderous strife, repeated through the years. Such is the story of the quiet old town that slumbers beneath its leafy shade.

The many see only the fleeting present, but the favoured few are permitted to catch glimpses of the life of long ago. Strange faces pass before the vision while sitting by the fire-side in evening meditation. Figures in curious and antique garb move indistinct in the twilight. Shadowy visitors of proud and courtly mien pace our streets, mingle in our transactions and claim residence among us. They are the ghosts

of the memorable past who refuse to leave their earthly haunts. Men may come and men may go, with all the bustling changes of civilization ; but these abide forever.

The town of Annapolis lies six miles above Goat Island on a narrow peninsula one mile long, formed by a small stream called Allen's Creek, running from the south, and a bend in the main river, which here, before narrowing to its issue into the Basin, makes a wide detour. Extensive intervals border both rivers. At the angle formed by the creek and the main stream lie the fortifications, covering an area of fully thirty acres. These are in a fine state of preservation, still showing the original lines, and presenting a formidable appearance. This fort was built after plans drawn by Vauban, the great French engineer, and consists of four bastions with connecting curtains to form the main defence. Outside these walls lie three ravelins. The ditch is now altogether dry, but in the early part of the eighteenth century had running through its centre a wet ditch protected by a palisade. Above this rose the walls of bastion and curtain to the height of thirty feet, faced with timber hewn in adjacent forests. On the parapet above lay logs, secured by pins, ready to be set rolling down upon the heads of assailants. The embankments appear difficult of ascent even now, after a century's rains have beaten upon them. What must have been their appearance to the venturesome storming party that had succeeded in passing the defences of the ravelins and wet ditch, and at last were beneath them, ready for the final assault ? The quadrilateral within bastions and curtains at one time contained many large buildings, but all, with one exception, have disappeared. The antiquated structure with immense chimneys that occupies the eastern side of the square was, in former days, the residence of his Britannic Majesty's officers stationed at Annapolis Royal. A long building, constructed, like the officers' quarters, of brick with a covering of wood, stood on the south, at right angles

to the quarters. This was destroyed by fire in 1831, to the consternation of the garrison and inhabitants, as the magazine in the immediate vicinity held at that time one hundred and fifty barrels of gunpowder. Another long building, with many peaks on its leaded roof, occupied the side next the river, but was removed in the first part of this century. A three storey brick building with hip roof, which was used as barracks for troops, stood on the west near the sally-port. This building, which appears in some prints of the fort, was torn down in 1853. In the northern bastion, next the town, stood the block-house, a structure of English oak, which commanded the bridge over the moat and the common approach. This was torn down in 1881, much to the chagrin of the town people. A few articles of furniture, or walking sticks, dear to the hearts of their possessors, are all that remain of its timbers. Near the gateway leading to the town stood a long, low range of buildings, used as gun sheds by the English. These were burned quite recently. In the ravelin that protects the west bastion are to be seen the remains of furnaces where shot were heated to be used against attacking ships, as well as the pits where they were stored. There are two wells, one within the curtain, the other in the south ravelin. The old French wharf is still visible (*vide* plan), and a little from it is the dilapidated structure of the "Queen's Wharf," the inner portion of which was built by English soldiers after Nicholson's capture, but was extended for commercial purposes in recent years.

The first fort on this spot was probably constructed by Sieur D'Aunay in the year 1643. This was enlarged and improved by his successors, Brouillan and Subercase. Hostile attacks on Port Royal number about a score, of which three occurred before the erection of works on this site. The present fort has suffered ten regular sieges and was three times captured, while, time and again, it has anxiously awaited the

attack that threatened but never began. Its capture by Nicholson, in 1710, finally established British ascendancy. In 1896, a grant of money was made by the Dominion Government to restore the masonry of these fortifications, which was rapidly falling into decay. Much was done in that year, and a promise is given of an additional grant the present year, 1897, sufficient to complete the restoration. The most extensive repairs were put upon the prison in the west bastion, which has now resumed somewhat of its original appearance. The brick work of the old sally-port was strengthened and freshly banked. The old magazine in the south bastion, built by Subercase, in 1708, of stone brought from France by Brouillon, in 1702, requires much yet to be done before it is in a satisfactory condition.

The old French town lay up river from the fort, on what are now St. George and St. Anthony streets, with scattered dwellings along the road leading to L'Equille, where, again, there must have been quite a settlement in the neighbourhood of their mills. In the early days of the colony, the scattered settlers probably met for worship with the soldiery within the fortifications. When their numbers increased, a separate chapel was demanded; but where it was located, or whether more than one were built remains in doubt, as our knowledge is dependent on fragmentary traditions. We gather from Murdoch's history that the people had no church at the time of March's attack, in 1707, but met in the house of M. de Villieu, which stood near the fort. After that building was burned, the inhabitants worshipped with the soldiers in the garrison chapel. Four years previously, Governor Brouillon had been taking active measures to erect a commodious church, towards which eight hundred livres were subscribed in Port Royal, while King Louis XIV. himself donated a sum equivalent to four hundred dollars. The unsettled state of affairs in the colony, owing to the war with Great Britain, prevented the construc-