

**LOUISBOURG IN 1745: THE
ANONYMOUS, LETTRE D'UN HABITANT
DE LOUISBOURG (CAPE BRETON).
CONTAINING A NARRATIVE BY AN EYE-
WITNESS OF THE SIEGE IN 1745 (PP.1-71)**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649342198

Louisbourg in 1745: The Anonymous, Lettre D'un Habitant de Louisbourg (Cape Breton).
Containing a narrative by an eye-witness of the siege in 1745 (pp.1-71) by George M. Wrong

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

GEORGE M. WRONG

**LOUISBOURG IN 1745: THE
ANONYMOUS, LETTRE D'UN HABITANT
DE LOUISBOURG (CAPE BRETON).
CONTAINING A NARRATIVE BY AN EYE-
WITNESS OF THE SIEGE IN 1745 (PP.1-71)**

Edition limited to 100 copies for the United States

LOUISBOURG IN 1745

69374

THE ANONYMOUS

LETTRE D'UN HABITANT DE LOUISBOURG

(CAPE BRETON)

Containing a narrative by an eye-witness of the siege in 1745

EDITED WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

BY

GEORGE M. WRONG, M. A.

Professor of History in the University of Toronto



NEW AMSTERDAM BOOK COMPANY
156 FIFTH AVENUE: NEW YORK
WILLIAM BRIGGS: TORONTO

1897

INTRODUCTION

②29 107 23

The siege and capture of Louisbourg in Cape Breton in 1745 by New England militia, supported by a British fleet, was the first important event in America in the renewed war between Great Britain and France after the long peace which Walpole had succeeded in maintaining. On May 13/24, 1744,¹ the French seized the fishing station of Canso, opposite to Cape Breton on the Nova Scotian coast, and this was the first intimation which the English colonies received that war had broken out. They were greatly stirred by the news. French privateers soon made their commerce unsafe, and the bold plan was conceived of sending a militia force in the early spring of 1745 to attack the French fortress of Louisbourg.

Louisbourg was regarded as the strongest strategic point which France possessed in America. When forced to yield Newfoundland to Great Britain in 1713, the French had retained the two islands, Cape Breton (Isle Royale), and Prince Edward (Isle St. Jean), to serve the double purpose of providing a refuge for the French inhabitants forced to leave Newfoundland, and of securing to France the possibility of erecting a strong military and naval post in the North Atlantic, which should command the approaches to the St. Lawrence and Canada, still held by her, and serve also as a protection to French commerce in more southern seas. After much deliberation the stronghold had been erected near the south-eastern extremity of the Island of Cape Breton. The situation had many advantages. There was a good harbour, easily defended, and the fortress, now only a ruin, was built on a peninsula difficult of access from the landward side. Louisbourg cost the French Court enormous sums. It lodged in 1745 between three and four thousand

¹ *Collection de Manuscrits III: 201* (Quebec, 1894).

people. The British held the mainland (called by them Nova Scotia, by the French, Acadia) lying across the Strait of Canso, and it was almost inevitable that this proximity should result in conflict. The English colonies had been very nervous when they saw France menacing them from Louisbourg, and the proposal to attack the place appealed to a strong instinct of self-preservation.

The present narrative is the only unofficial account of the siege, from the French standpoint, that we possess.* The writer is unknown to us. Although the structure and the language of the Letter alike show that he was not a literary man, his style is often striking and vigorous. He was at Louisbourg throughout the siege and, when the fortress fell, he was among those sent to France by the victorious British. Shortly after his arrival he completed this Letter, and it was soon published, no doubt in France, either by himself or by the friend who is nominally responsible for printing it. The statement on the title-page that the book was printed "À Québec, Chez Guillaume le Sincère" is entirely misleading. No books, or even newspapers, were printed at Quebec until after

* Official reports were made by the French Governor Du Chambon, and by the Comptroller Bigot. The report of the former is printed in *Collection de Manuscrits* III: 237-257 (Quebec, 1884) and in Parkman, *Half Century of Conflict*, II: 299-320 (Boston, 1892). Some of the New England force kept diaries, which have been preserved. Copious bibliographies relating to the siege of Louisbourg in 1745 will be found in *The Narrative and Critical History of America*, edited by Justin Winsor, Vol. V., pp. 434-448 (Boston and New York, 1887), and in J. G. Bourinot's *Cape Breton* pp. 146-152 (Montreal, 1892). The notes in Parkman's *Half Century of Conflict* (II: 78-161) are a useful bibliographical guide. The *Report on Canadian Archives*, 1886, by Douglas Brymner, (Ottawa, 1887), contains a large map of Louisbourg from Gridley's plan, and the *Reports for 1887 and 1894* contain Calendars of many documents relating to the events of 1745 in Cape Breton. The recently discovered *Journal of Captain William Fote, Jr.*, (New York, 1896), is a highly interesting narrative of events in Nova Scotia contemporaneous with the siege of Louisbourg.

the British conquest (1763). The Letter is a strong indictment of French colonial policy, and the printer was anxious that his identity should be concealed. Perhaps the author was equally anxious to be unknown to the public, and the initials "B. L. N." appended to the Letter may be fictitious. On the other hand, the author may have been known to the Minister of Marine, Maurepas. Otherwise probably he would not have been at such pains to defend and flatter him (p. 71). The writer says that he had seen other French colonies and had noted evils there similar to those in Cape Breton. He was himself, apparently, a merchant and he condemns with much bitterness the small salaries paid by the French Court to those in its employ, and the consequent temptation to engage in trade which this involved. We know that in Canada the Governor, Intendant, and other officials frequently eked out their pay by commercial enterprises. They were, in consequence, too likely to make their mercantile undertakings and not the interests of France the paramount consideration. At Louisbourg the selfish conduct of the trading officers helped to cause a mutiny among the men, and one of the causes that contributed to the French failure was the consequent distrust, which the officers felt, of the regular troops under their command.

The present author writes of course from a French standpoint. He exaggerates the numbers on the British side, and also the friction between Warren the naval commander and Pepperrell the leader of the New England militia force. The British losses during the siege are also greatly overstated. Though he admires the English love of liberty, he is unable to understand the self-government of the colonies, which he regards as a fantastic feature of the English system. The commercial rivalry between the French and the English is much in his mind and he is conscious of France's decline as a naval power, the results of which became so conspicuous in

the course of this and succeeding wars with Great Britain. Unlike English writers of the period he gives the Indians a high character for unselfish devotion.

Printed copies of the Letter are extremely rare. There is one in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. Parkman was unable to find a copy in the British Museum or upon this side of the Atlantic, and had the Paris volume copied for his use in writing *A Half Century of Conflict*. He printed copious extracts from the letter in the appendix to this work, but necessarily omitted much that is of interest. An exemplar of the original edition is in the Library of Parliament at Ottawa, and Dr. J. G. Bourinot, Clerk of the House of Commons, also possesses a copy. The volume (4x6) contains eighty-one pages, and is printed in large, clear type, on thin, but good, paper. It has numerous typographical errors. The most obvious of these have been corrected in the present edition, but otherwise the original text has been exactly reproduced. The spelling and the use of accents are very capricious. An English translation has been added for the convenience of many interested in the sources of colonial history and yet without facility in reading French.

The Editor desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Reverend Abbé H. R. Casgrain, Professor of History in Laval University, Quebec, who has kindly furnished him with a copy of his MS. made from the original edition of the Letter in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris; to Professor Squair, of University College, Toronto, for suggestions and corrections in regard to the translation; to Dr. J. G. Bourinot for the use of his copy of the original edition to correct the proofs; and to the Honourable G. W. Ross, Minister of Education for the Province of Ontario, for provision for publication.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO,
May, 1897.

LETTER OF AN INHABITANT
OF
LOUISBOURG

CONTAINING A HISTORY
EXACT AND CIRCUMSTANTIAL OF THE TAKING OF
CAPE BRETON BY THE ENGLISH

Inscire quid est ?

QUEBEC

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM THE SINCERE AT THE SIGN OF TRUTH

MDCCLV

LETTRE D'UN HABITANT
DE
LOUISBOURG,

CONTENANT UNE RELATION
EXACTE ET CIRCONSTANCIÉE DE LA PRISE DE
L'ISLE-ROYALE, PAR LES ANGLAIS.

Inscire quid est ?

A QUEBEC,

CHEZ GUILLAUME LE SINCERE, À L'IMAGE DE LA VÉRITÉ.

M.DCC.XLV.