

## Friends and Enemies in the Atlantic Northeast, 1744-1763

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On maps of colonial North America, the lines of demarcation, typically showing the territorial claims of Britain, France and Spain, appear straightforward and absolute. They mask however, two important considerations. Firstly, they greatly exaggerate the amount of territory that Europeans actually controlled; most of the demarcated lands remained the territory of its aboriginal inhabitants. An extreme example of this was seen in Nova Scotia in December, 1757. A large British patrol left Fort Anne at Annapolis Royal, heading up the Annapolis River. At approximately nineteen miles from the fort, the patrol passed beyond the first-hand geographical knowledge of any of its members. Although comprised mainly of members of a recently arrived British regiment, the patrol had come from a fort which had been in continuous British possession since 1710. Secondly, the demarcation lines were not impermeable. A veritable spider’s web of economic, cultural, ethnic, religious, personal and family relationships crisscrossed the borders. Some years ago, historian Jean Daigle characterized the complex relationships between Acadians and New Englanders during this period as “our friends, the enemy.” This concept retains applicability for the complex relationships between the region’s imperial and aboriginal inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The incident which opens this paragraph is recorded in John Knox, *An historical journal of the campaigns in North America for the years 1757, 1758, 1759 and 1760*, ed. Arthur G. Doughty, Vol. I (Toronto, 1914), pp. 115-127. “Our friends, the enemy,” Jean Daigle, *Nos amis les ennemis: relations commerciales de l’Acadie avec le Massachusetts, 1670-1711*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maine, 1975.

Trade was perhaps the most important driver for creating relationships. Just as trade created far-reaching ties between Europeans and Native peoples, so trade between empires also fostered all manners of links. As a case in point, one need only consider the trade between New England and the French colony of Ile Royale. The French established this colony, which encompassed the territories of (to use their modern English names) Cape Breton Island, Prince Edward Island, and the Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, to bolster their position in what is now Atlantic Canada following the loss of their territorial claims in Acadia and Newfoundland by the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. The colony's economy centered not only on the production of dried salt cod for export but also on its position as a trade entrepôt for the French Atlantic Northeast. The initial French establishment at Louisbourg, the colony's capital to be, began in September 1713 and the first New England vessels arrived to trade the following spring. Trade with New England remained an important aspect of Louisbourg's economic life through the three decades leading to the War of the Austrian Succession and then again during the short interval of peace between the colony's return to French control by the 1748 Treaty of Aix-la Chapelle and the 1755 resumption of hostilities in what would become the Seven Years War.

Efforts to diversify the new colony's economy enjoyed only marginal success, and demand for imports remained high throughout the colony's existence. Many imports were not easily or cheaply obtained from Louisbourg's "within-Empire" trading partners of France, Canada, and the French West Indies. Louisbourg officials responded by creating exceptions to mercantilist policies to regularly allow New England imports such as building supplies and foodstuffs. As return cargoes often consisted of rum, molasses and sugar, which were regulated commodities in the British empire, particularly after the Molasses Act of 1733, trading took place in Louisbourg rather than

Boston. The nature of eighteenth-century trade necessitated close ties and trust between merchants, agents, and trading partners abroad. Many of New England's most prominent merchants, including Peter Faneuil, William Pepperrell, and Charles Apthorp, had trading associations with Louisbourg merchants. Even Royal Navy captain Peter Warren, who later commanded the British naval squadron attacking Louisbourg in 1745, speculated in a trading venture to that port in 1737. It was definitely a situation where friends, or at least business associates, might one day find themselves enemies.

The complexity of these relationships is best revealed in individual case studies, such as that of John Bradstreet. Born in 1716 at Annapolis Royal, Bradstreet's father was a British officer, while his mother came from a prominent Acadian family, the de la Tours. Like his father, Bradstreet joined Philipps's Regiment, then in long-term garrison in Nova Scotia, and he subsequently became an officer at Canso. There he engaged in trade with Louisbourg, leading the regimental agent to advise him to curtail his activities lest he come unfavourably to the King's attention. In the spring of 1744 following Canso's capture, Lieutenant Bradstreet and the other garrison members and residents were taken prisoner to Louisbourg. Benefiting from his former business connections and close family ties to several Louisbourg officers, he acted as an intermediary between the French governor at Louisbourg, Jean-Baptiste-Louis Le Prévost Duquesnel, and William Shirley, royal governor of Massachusetts. After his release through a prisoner exchange, Bradstreet became a leading proponent of a New England expedition to capture Louisbourg, and even angled for the position of its commander-in-chief. Commissioned as a lieutenant-colonel in one of the Massachusetts regiments, Bradstreet's prominence resulted in French protests over the breaking of his parole. Bradstreet went on to a successful career in the British army during the Seven Years War,

although one that was marked with some controversy and personal disappointment.

The life of Joannis-Galand d'Olobaratz provides a French example of the complexities of individual relationships during this period. D'Olobaratz arrived in Boston in early July 1744, as the captain of a captured Louisbourg privateer. After describing the capture, a Boston paper noted that d'Olobaratz was "a Gentleman well known in Town, and has a Son at School about six miles off."<sup>2</sup> It further reported that he had "been kind and serviceable to the English on many Occasions at Louisbourg," and concluded by remarking that he was now being "civilly [sic] treated himself." During his detention, d'Olobaratz spent almost a week visiting Newport, Rhode Island, where he studied the port's defences. He also gathered information on the harbour defences of Boston and Philadelphia. On his return to Boston, d'Olobaratz applied to join the town's Masonic lodge. In the face of his impending return to Louisbourg as part of a prisoner exchange, d'Olobaratz's initiation into the fraternity was hurried through, likely because the Bostonians believed having a brother Mason on the French side would secure better treatment should one of them in future be detained at Louisbourg. After his return to Louisbourg in the fall of 1744, d'Olobaratz wrote a proposal for sea attacks on British colonial ports in the Atlantic Northeast. Later that fall, he sailed as part of a large convoy from Louisbourg to France and so missed the New England attack on his home town. Like many Louisbourgeois, he came back to the town after its return to France by the 1748 Aix-La-Chapelle treaty, but then stayed in France permanently after the town's second capture in 1758.

The French taking of a British ship bound from Dublin to Philadelphia in late July 1744 reveals links of another kind. Taken to Louisbourg, the prisoners from the ship included a number

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<sup>2</sup> *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 29 June 1744

of Irish women emigrating to North America as indentured servants. The women almost certainly shared religious ties with their Catholic captors and indeed, one Irish couple married in Louisbourg that year. The bonds however, did not prove strong enough to keep the women in Louisbourg, and most if not all of the women went to Boston as part of a prisoner exchange that fall. Hearing that the women were subsequently threatened with having to fulfil their original indentures, Governor Duquesnel intervened on their behalf. Governor Shirley agreed with his arguments and extended protection to the women, threatening the vessel's captain with legal action if he continued his harassment.

In 1745, the besieging of Louisbourg by a joint force of New England provincial troops and Royal Navy warships imperiled Cape Breton's Mi'kmaq population as well as its French colonial inhabitants. Chief Jeannot Peguidalouet spearheaded the resistance of the island's Mi'kmaq, and honoured longstanding ties with the French, by co-operating with the town's defenders. The town's surrender to the Anglo-American forces and the subsequent break of old relationships caused disruption for the island's Mi'kmaq. Peguidalouet and many of his people wintered at Quebec in 1745/6, returning to Cape Breton in 1746/7 before continuing on to Newfoundland, only to return briefly to Quebec in 1748. After re-establishing his band in Cape Breton, Peguidalouet was wounded during Louisbourg's second siege and, after making peace with with British in 1759 and 1760, he and many of his people overwintered in Newfoundland during the 1760s.

As indicated by Peguidalouet's experiences, the Seven Years War and subsequent peace brought large changes to what is now Atlantic Canada. Following the massive 1755 deportation of Acadian inhabitants from Nova Scotia's Bay of Fundy region by British and Massachusetts provincial forces, further British actions removed remaining French and Acadian populations from

Cape Breton Island, Prince Edward Island, the Saint John River Valley, New Brunswick's north shore, the Gaspé Peninsula, and parts of Newfoundland. Under the terms of the 1763 Paris treaty bringing peace to North America, France obtained Saint-Pierre and Miquelon as its sole American possessions north of the Caribbean (the islands are still French territory today) and retained shore fishing rights in parts of Newfoundland until 1904. In 1763, the British put Cape Breton under the Nova Scotia government and enacted measures which discouraged its further colonization until Cape Breton was again established as a separate colony following the American Revolution. The position of Halifax (founded in 1749 on the Nova Scotian mainland) as Britain's major regional naval and military base made Louisbourg redundant in the British imperial system, and the former French port quickly faded from prominence in the Atlantic Northeast. In Prince Edward Island, the peace brought the establishment of a system of absentee landlords that persisted 1875. Finally, the contemporary legal meanings of the "Peace and Friendship" treaties signed in the early 1760s between the British and the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet remain an open question. These eighteenth-century accords have attracted renewed attention from Native activists, and their full implications for present-day territorial titles and resource rights in Canada's Maritime Provinces have yet to be determined.