Arts and Ideas

Louisbourg fortress is a Nova Scotia treasure

The Fortress of Louisbourg, not far from Sydney, Cape Breton, is one of the most amazing treasures of the province of Nova Scotia. The site has such an overwhelmingly authentic air, it is easy to forget that before 1960 nothing but a few crumbling foundation walls were left of this 18th century town.

Louisbourg was started in 1713 as a replacement for the lost French outposts in Newfoundland and the Bay of Fundy. The site was chosen because it had a fine harbor that rarely froze over in winter, along this particular stretch of coast plenty of codfish populated the sea, and, since there would be future wars between France and England, this site looked as if it could easily be defended.

Within a few years Louisbourg developed into a very important harbor for ships from every port in France, as well as from New England, Acadia, Quebec, and the Caribbean.

Dried cod was what the ships took away with them, and in exchange they brought to Louisbourg everything the colonists wore and used. With more and more fishing ports being settled all around Cape Breton (which the French called "Ile Royale"), Louisbourg became a colonial capital with governors appointed and supervised by Versailles.

Louisbourg prospered for 30 years, and had, by 1740 grown to about 2,000 inhabitants, not to mention the garrison inside the Citadel, which numbered about

In the war between Britain and

France that started in 1744, Louisbourg was attacked by the English and conquered in 1745. Four thousand New England soldiers landed near Louisbourg on May 11, 1745 and the Royal Navy blockaded the harbour. After 46 days of siege the fortress capitulated.

All the time of the property o

All the inhabitants were exiled to France, and Louisbourg became a British garrison town. Four years later, with the truce that ended the war, France regained the Ile Royale and the exiles returned.

For nine further, years, Louisbourg sparkled in the reflected glory of the court of Versailles. It shone brightly, like a star in the last moments of it's existence. In 1758 it was attacked again. On June 8, 1758, the British army got ashore at Kennington Cove and closed it on the fortress from the rear, where the terrain was swampy and, because of that, only weakly defended by one cannon. The siege lasted to late in July, when the fortress capitulated. That was the end of Louisbourg.

In 1760 the British government gave the orders for the razing of Louisbourg.

The town became a ghostly site, visited only by impoverished peasants and fishermen in search of building material. A later Louisbourg that came into existence across the water a few miles from the old site, was erected from the pitiful remains of the former.

Slowly, almost all the traces of old Louisbourg vanished. By 1960 only the occasional shallow cellar pit amidst the weeds was what John Sommer

ldeas and The Arts

was left of the once so mightly fortress.

In that year the respective governments of Nova Scotia and Canada decided to rebuild a part of the fortress and town of Louisbourg as a make-work project, and also to create a historical monument of singular beauty, on that would attract scholars and tourists from all

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over the world. Detailed plans of the old Louisbourg were discovered in Paris archives and with these as a guide, the modern architects and craftsmen went to work. It was a stupendous task and the outcome can not be praised enough.

We had been to Louisbourg in years past, but we went there again, on a grey, misty day about a month ago.

From the administration building of the Louisbourg National Historic Park, visitors are taken in buses to a spot not very far from the main gate of the resurrected town. Halfway to our destination the fog closed in behind us, hiding behind a grey vapor the world we had come from.

When the bus came to a halt we had arrived in another century. Emerging from the mist ahead of us, Louisbourg seemed to be one of those drowned towns in fairy

tales, that come to the surface for one day only every 100 years.

Louisbourg and the people the administration has put into authentic costumes and uniforms, and trained to personify actual individuals who once lived in those walls, seemed to be alive in a way that touched the heart.

A magician had waved his hand, and for a few hours the doomed people of long ago went on living as if no assault of their town had ever taken place.

They played music and worked in their gardens; they prepared a meal and carried their children in their arms; they stood on guard and made love in their huge, high four-poster beds, unaware of any future perils.

We, like them, will one day be only a footnote to history. Will our town look as fine to the people of the 21st century, as Louisbourg looks to us?



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Amnesty International holds monthly meeting

NSURANCE

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By JIM BROUGHTON Herald Special

Canadians have no doubt been awestruck by the extent of changes going on within the Communist World in the past several weeks. A failed coup attempt, the assertion of the democratic principle, the dismantling of the Unilateral Communist Party and the KGB: all of these monumental changes bode well for the Human Rights scene in East Europe's future.

Unfortunately, not all countries in the World are going in this direction according to the 1991 annual report of Amnesty International. Prisoners of conscience, jailed solely for the

peaceful exercise of their basic human rights, were held in some 80 countries. Torture or ill treatment of prisoners were reported in more than 100 countries. People "disappeared" or were held in secret detention in more than 25 countries.

The local Amnesty International group will holds its monthly meeting, Tuesday, September 10th at St. Francis School library. Newcomers are most welcome and are invited to come early at 7:00 p.m. for a brief orientation to the group. The regular meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. Also, look for the Amnesty International booth at the Georgetown Fall Fair.

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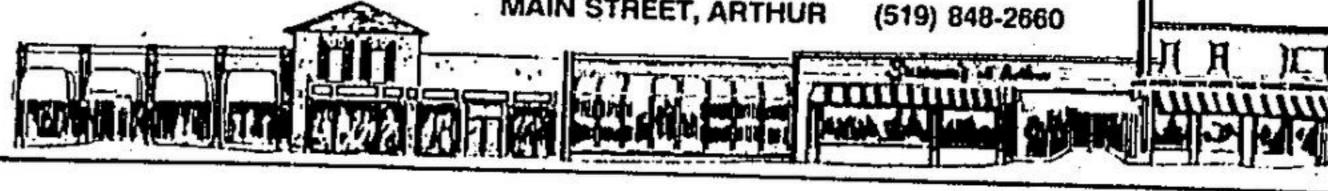
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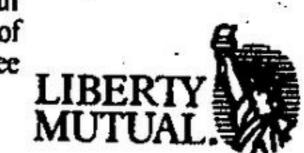
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