

[Page 25 - The Early History of St. Ann's \(Englishtown\)](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 41](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1986/1/1

course all traces of it were obliterated by the building of Fort Dauphin on the same site. When his fort was well on the way to completion, Captain Daniel left it in charge of his lieutenant, Gaulde or Claude of Beauvais, with a garrison of 40 men, including two Jesuit Fathers, and started for France on the 5th of November. This brings us to the second statement on the Memorial Tablet: It was THE SITE OF AN EARLY JESUIT MISSION. One Jesuit Father, Bartholomew Vimont, came with Daniel and was the very first known missionary that landed on what is now Cape Breton. He had been Rector of the Jesuit College at Vannes. A companion was brought to him in a very tragical manner. The same storm that had thrown Daniel's ship on this shore had, a few days before, thrown on the rocks of Canso another ship on which was another Jesuit Father, Father Noyrot, who had with him three other members of his order, and many passengers, all bound to Quebec. They were shipwrecked on August 24th at nine o'clock in the evening. Two fathers were drowned and two saved--Father Lallemant, the Superior of the Canadian Missions, and Father de Vieux-pont. This one asked his Superior the permission to spend the winter with some Indians whom they had met. One of them informed them that Daniel was building a fort twenty-five leagues from the place of shipwreck and offered to take the Father there in his canoe. The offer was accepted and they left Canso on the 6th of October, Father Lallemant returned to France with some Basque fishermen. We may imagine how great was the joy of Father Vimont to receive a companion so unexpectedly in so remote a place. It was those two fathers who gave the place the name of St. Anne's--not surely to imitate St. Anne de Beaupre, which was not established until twenty-nine years later, nor St. Anne d'Auray in Brittany, whose sanctuary was just opened the year previous, but undoubtedly in pursuance of a recommendation of the pious Queen Anne of Austria, mother of Louis XIV, This was the very first church named thus and dedicated to that glorious saint in North America. There were two or three St. Anne's in South and Central America and one in Mexico, but none at all in North America before this St. Anne's in Cape Breton. There are now thirty-seven churches in Canada and twenty-eight in the United States which followed this one and are named after the saint. During the first winter both missionaries had much to do. The dreadful disease of scurvy made its appearance and Father Vimont had a hard task to attend the sick, watch the dying, bury the dead. Twelve men died during the winter and are buried somewhere here under our feet, which makes the place more pathetic, not to say more sacred. Father de Vieuxpont spent the winter in the woods, as he had wished, with the Indians, who became so fond of him that they readily brought to him their children to be baptized, and invited him to their camps. These were the same class of missionaries that their brethren of Nova Scotia had seen and heard and loved at Port Royal in 1611. Their mission there had been short, being destroyed by Argall in 1613; but it was long enough to win to themselves the heart of this interesting tribe, who readily called their teaching the "Doctrine of the Black Robes"--"Magtaoegenagaoei"--and call it thus still. After

the Jesuit Fathers there came to Port Royal, now Annapolis, Franciscan Fathers, then Capuchin Fathers in 1632, another branch of the same order, to which your humble speaker has the honor to belong. These had a house at St. Peter's and may have come here occasionally after the departure of the Jesuit Fathers. Naming what first struck their sight, the simple children of the forest called their teaching the "Doctrine of the Bare Feet"--"Sesagi-geoi"--and still use the same word. Of course they knew it was the Doctrine of Christ, the Christian Doctrine--"Alasotmam-geoi"--but delivered unto them by those two classes of their pioneer missionaries. Two or three events of the first year of St. Anne's Mission, as told by the pious Malapart, a companion of the Captain, may prove of interest. He thought they were due to the merits of the missionaries, and

The Special Places Protection Act (1980) forbids the excavation, removal or disturbance of artifacts and specimens from archaeological, historical and paleontological sites, including those beneath water, by anyone unless they have received prior written permission.

Items such as stone tools, fossils, shards of pottery and any other remains of settlement and evidence of prehistoric life help to tell the undocumented story of life in the province. Help us protect the past for the future.

For further information contact:

Nova Scotia Department of * Education Nova Scotia Museum Complex Nova Scotia Museum 1 1747 Summer Street 1 Halifax, Nova Scotia 1 B3H 3A6 1