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Lewis Parker: A Work in Progress Lewis Parker does not think of himself so much as an artist but as an illustrator-- and in most cases, an illustrator for books that have yet to be written. This is especially true in the case of the recent series of paintings he is working on for the University College of Cape Breton, dealing with the history of Cape Breton Island. He sees each painting as being capable, for instance, of breaking up into illustrations throughout a chapter. Each mural holds up as a unit as well. And these particular murals have become collaborative affairs--not only between Parker and his sources (mostly amateur and academic historians and archeologists), but between a number of painters. There has been an ongoing relationship with John Gillis and Terry MacDonald, who have both contributed to the murals. And Terry has stayed on the project, painting--both with Lewis Parker at his side and on his own, when Parker winters in Ontario. One day, when we were visiting their studio in the Lyceum, Sydney, John Gillis brought a sketch toward the mural of Mabou Harbour, and the ideas went back and forth as to relative importance of various events, should they be brought to this side of the river or placed in the background. The search for sources leads Parker to mourn that during the Bicentennial he missed seeing descendants of DesBarres, founder of Sydney in 1784. Their faces would have been useful in coming up with an acceptable portrait of the young DesBarres. Terry MacDonald: "That's what I did in New Waterford. One of the mayors had never had his photograph taken--one of the early mayors. He never liked to have his photograph taken. So I went up to his son's place and sketched his son as a younger man, and then his son told me what changes to make to make it look like his father. And the only picture they have now is the sketch I did of the man. It's hanging in the town hall in Waterford. Mayor Ling." In the end, there are personal and artistic decisions--but not until sources of fact are just about exhausted. Parker keeps files on each mural. If he wants a barn-raising, he'll have several examples from paintings, sketches, old photos, and printed descriptions. Sometimes he strikes a bonanza: for the mural on Isle Madame, he was able to locate a painting of Charles Robin, Jersey merchant and founder of the business that still bears his name, an important influence on the formation of the Cape Breton economy. There is no guessing as to what Charles Robin looked like, and Parker is grate-