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ing all persons to dig or carry away any coals from the Isle of Breton." A detach-
ment was accordingly sent down to Cow Bay early in the spring, where 500
chaldrons of coal, dug by trespassers during the previous winter, ready for
shipment, were seized and sent to Halifax for the use of the troops. Both the
garrison and town of Halifax were about this time chiefly supplied with coal from a
mine recently opened at Spanish River (Sydney), which was worked by soldiers,
but when the troubles began in the British Provinces (now the United States), and a
large force was collected there, the troops consumed so much coal that the town
suffered greatly from the scarcity of fuel. In this difficulty the House of Assembly, in
1775, petitioned the king for leave to dig coals in Cape Breton, but apparently
without success. In 1777 forty men of Colonel Legge's regiment were employed in
digging coals at the Spanish River mines. During the American revolutionary
war, it was found necessary to send ships of war to convoy the vessels employed in
carrying coal from Spanish River to Halifax for the use of the garrison. On July 21,
1781, sixteen vessels employed in this service, accompanied by a transport
having a party of the 70th Regiment on board, going to work at the mines,
convoyed by the Charlestown frigate, of twenty-eight guns, the sloops Allegiance
and Vulture, of sixteen guns each and the cutter Little Jack, of six guns, had
nearly reached their destination, when they were discovered and chased by two
French frigates, the L'Astree and L'Hermione, of forty-four guns each. A Ski
Keppoch 'I... Mountain N 2 MILES FROM TRANS CANADA HIGHWAY DON'T MISS
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p.m., which continued until dark, when the French frigates drew off, taking with
them the Little Jack. Owing to the skilful management of Captain Evans, of the
Charlestown, who was unfortunately killed, the transport and colliers got safely into
Spanish River. The frigate and sloops, being greatly crippled in the action, bore up
for Halifax. So far, the reader will observe, nothing like a regular mine had been
opened in Cape Breton. Nor is this to be wondered at, seeing that the Government
persisted in the absurd policy of refusing to grant leases to parties who, with fair
encouragement, would have worked the mines efficiently, and sought for
markets in the neighbouring colonies. Even when the Government undertook the
working of the mines, no regular system was pursued. Having obtained all that
was easily accessible from the face of the cliff at one place, instead of driving a
level further into the seam, it was abandoned, and work commenced at another.
That the contraband traders should have followed this system is not surprising, as
their works were at any time liable to be taken possession of by the Government.
Consequently, when they had exhausted any particular seam, and could not pursue
it further without some labour, they removed to another, where the coal could be



literally shovelled from the outcrop into their boats. Under such circumstances, the reader will not be surprised to learn that, after the island had been twenty-two years in the undisturbed possession of Great Britain, and surrounded by colonies requiring large supplies of fuel, the quantity raised in any single year, as far as we can learn, never exceeded 3,000 chaldrons. This is a slightly edited chapter from Richard Brown's *The Coal Fields and Coal Trade of the Island of Cape Breton*, 1871. Brown is also the author of *A History of the Island of Cape Breton*, 1869.

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