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Regarding the 1895 Monument

In the Spring 1983 edition of *Acadiensis*, A. J. B. Johnston takes up the subject of the history of the movement to preserve Louisbourg--and it's worth seeking out the entire article for this novel view of the life of the fortress area itself. He discusses both attempts and attitudes regarding preservation. Here we want to focus on one particular event. On page 31 there is a photo of the fortress area about 1936 showing, among other things, the tall monument erected in 1895 to commemorate the capture of the fortress by New Englanders in 1745. Johnston writes: "The only published call for a monument at Louisbourg appeared in *Picturesque Canada* (1882) in the entry on Cape Breton written by Rev. Robert Murray, editor of the *Presbyterian Witness*, and J. S. McLennan, a Montreal-born industrialist involved in the development of Cape Breton coal mines. In the section on Louisbourg, almost certainly written by McLennan, the author asked, 'Should not some memorial be raised which would show that Canadians... are still mindful of the great deeds done on Canadian soil? There could be no fitter site than...Louisbourg, where French and English dust commingles in peace.'... While there was considerable enthusiasm in Canada during the last quarter of the 19th century for raising monuments to the past, Louisbourg was not one of the sites selected." Perhaps the complex national background of Canada's dominant populations played a role in that neglect. Perhaps it was simply the remote location. In any case, "when Louisbourg did finally receive its first memorial it came not from Canada, or even from France or Great Britain, but from the United States"--from the Society of Colonial Wars, established "to perpetuate the memory of events from the pre-revolutionary period in American history. One of their first projects was to erect a suitable monument at Louisbourg to mark the 150th anniversary of the New Englanders' conquest of the French town in 1745. A monument was designed (a 26-foot column), a location selected (just outside the King's Bastion ruins) and a date set for the unveiling (17 June 1895). "As the details of the unveiling ceremony were being completed, word of the proposed commemoration reached unsympathetic ears in Atlantic Canada. Three French-language newspapers (*Evangeline*, *Courrier des Provinces Maritimes* and *Moniteur Acadien*), and one English Catholic weekly (*Antigonish Casket*) protested the idea of a group from a foreign country raising a monument on Canadian soil to what had been a Canadian defeat. They considered the project an 'aggressive demonstration' by a 'few Americans of the old school' that would be felt as an 'insult' by all French-Canadians. "Two weeks before the scheduled unveiling new protests were made, from a group not normally regarded as being sympathetic to the sentiments of French-Canadians: the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada. Meeting in Montreal, the association resolved that the monument 'will necessarily prove offensive to a great section of the Canadian people, and especially to the Acadians' and therefore should be reconsidered. "Notwithstanding the various complaints, the monument was unveiled as planned, and with



considerable government participation. Not only was it arranged to have two vessels anchored in the harbour for the occasion, identified as the HMS Canada and the 'Dominion cruiser' Curlew, but the memorial itself was unveiled by Lieutenant-Governor Sir Malachy Daly of Nova Scotia on behalf of the Governor-General of Canada, the Earl of Aberdeen. Aberdeen sent his regrets that he could not be there in person, as did United States President Grover Cleveland. Twenty-five hundred people attended the festivities, which included two hours of speeches by various Canadian and American dignitaries. Most of the speakers were clearly aware of the protests that had surfaced in the months leading up to the unveiling and did their best to answer charges that the monument celebrated the defeat of the French. Nearly every person who addressed the crowd referred at least once to the achievements and valour of France and French-Canadians. Such remarks seem to have been inserted largely to mollify possible critics, for speaker after speaker emphasized what was in reality the main theme of the occasion: the unity and greatness of the Anglo-Saxon race. Just as (31)