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burg) area of the south coast west of Halifax, bore little fruit. Of all the possible sources of an agriculturally focused immigrant group which might have made permanent settlements, provided surpluses of food and timber, if not minerals, and left a clear and indelible imprint on the landscape of Cape Breton, none proved productive. THE PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURE IN CAPE BRETON The focus of attention on the fishery (by those not heavily committed to trade or to the problems of building and maintaining Louisbourg) proved a major deterrent to agriculture and to those few civilian settlers who, despite all the difficulties described above, did establish themselves along the eastern and southern coasts of the island. The timetable of agriculture and the fishery so overlapped that the most a fisherman could attempt was a garden patch, a little rough grazing for a cow and a few sheep, the care of a few swine or perhaps a horse, or the cutting of wild hay in the coastal marshes. Most of the necessary "farming" labour, moreover, was provided by the women and children. When the weather was fit for agricultural or clearing operations of any kind it generally was also fit for the fishery. Like the fur trade, the fishery provided both a more exciting and varied life than farming and a salable staple in constant demand. Even the fluctuations in the price of cod fish offered the exciting element of a gamble; there was always the chance of a "big" season and a subsequent winter of idleness and comparative affluence. If one compared Cape Breton Island as a whole with the St. Lawrence valley, Isle St.-Jean, the Fundy marshlands, or the Connecticut, Hudson, or lower Delaware valleys, its agricultural potential was comparatively low. Yet it had qualities of terrain and climate as favourable as the bulk of Nova Scotia's peninsula away from the Fundy slope or from the shores of Northumberland Strait, and, indeed, potentially as good farm land as much of the land in both Canada and New England that by the early eighteenth century was being settled and farmed. The evidence of the few serious attempts at agricultural settlement that were made • during the French regime along the Mira (a drainage of elongated lakes and streams inland from Louisbourg) and on Boularderie Island (flanked by the two channel entrances to the vast interior Bras-D'Or lake), or in the nineteenth century (with a technology essentially similar to that available before 1750), the rather remarkably successful Highland Scottish settlements on the island • suggest that the island could have supported many thousands of farming families and have established a solidly based agricultural settlement to feed the forests and supply the fishery. There are some other aspects of this agricultural failure or neglect that should be indicated. First of all, perhaps, is the fact that the best of such agricultural potential as the island did have lay most-

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