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ly to the west of the great interior salt? water "lake" in the present counties of Victoria and Inverness, and well removed ??from the fishing coves and harbours. The eastern and southern margins that were the only areas known to all but a handful of the thousands of fishermen, sailors, and officials who had contact with the island were notably rocky, swampy, and lake- strewn, with only scattered patches of thin acidic soils. Other problems arose from the French di? etary preference for wheaten bread. Ignor? ance of, or failure to make use of, pota? toes for which the climate was admirably suited was a curious disability shared with Acadia, Isle St.-Jean, and the St. Lawrence valley. In addition, even if not ideal for such purposes, the climate would nevertheless have permitted the raising of oats, barley, and many grasses and clovers to provide pasture and hay. Given adequate food and winter housing (the latter less of a problem in Cape Breton than in Acadia or Canada) cattle, sheep, and swine could have been reared quite successfully. But the persistent abortive attempts to grow the preferred dietary staples of wheat and peas, and the failure to develop an ade? quate source of winter-keeping fodder (the wild coast-marsh hay was limited in amount and nutritive value) created a negative assessment of the farming potential. CAPE BRETON AS AN ENTREPOT OF THE FRENCH COMMERCIAL EMPIRE Harold Innis long ago pointed out that one of the greatest weaknesses of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as compared with Britain at the same time, was her failure to develop a co-ordinated system of exploiting western-hemisphere geographical diversity. The key elements in such an integrated commercial network, as developed by the British, were a pro? ductive mid-latitude agricultural area, a maritime cod-fishery realm, and extensive tropical sugar plantations with a concom? itant "triangle" of trade involving the mother country. The failure lay not only in the slow agricultural development of Canada but, perhaps rather more, in the problem of developing and maintaining sailing-ship connections which had to cope with the closed season in the St. Lawrence River from November to May, the hurricane season in the West Indies in the late sum? mer and early autumn when sailing condi? tions were best to the north, and the cal? endars of the fishery on the one hand and the canefields on the other. Cape Breton at the heart of the triangle was magnifi? cently situated to provide rest, refresh? ment, warehousing, and exchange facili? ties • in brief, to be the central cog in a machine that never could function properly. To the degree that it did play its des? tined role it was, ironically, as a trad? ing entrepot that tied the British and French systems together, in the creation of a technically illegal triangular trade between New England, the French West In? dies, and old France itself • to the detri? ment perhaps of Britain, the British West Indies, and New France. Indeed, it may be that it was the role that New Englanders played in this international game of dodg? ing through the loopholes of the competing mercantilist systems that most affected Cape Breton and contributed most to the very slight, peripheral occupation and ex? ploitation of the island by the French. To



Cape Breton's relationships with New England, then, we now may turn.

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