

## FORTRESS OF LOUISBOURG NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

The collecting of antiques and reproduction for the furnishings programme at the Fortress of Louisbourg began in earnest seven years after reconstruction started. Since the first shipment of antiques arrived from France in 1968, the collection has grown to a total of over 6,000 individual pieces. Most were purchased in France through the efforts of Jean Palardy; others were bought locally or donated by individuals. Styles of furniture, tableware, and other artifacts range in age from Louis XIII of the mid seventeenth century to early Louis XV of the 1730s and 1740s. The basic guideline for early purchases was the group of period inventories for buildings reconstructed on the site. Some of these inventories — for example that of Governor Duquesnel, dated 1744 — provide complete details of individual items. Researchers have attempted to follow these inventories closely in furnishing such buildings as the King's Bastion Barracks, the Engineer's House, the DeGannes House, and the Grandchamp properties.

The collection is not one of upper class, eighteenth-century furnishings in the style of Versailles. Louisbourg is a living, outdoor museum which attempts to present to the visitor a cross-section of an historical community. Pieces of high style are not numerous, but among them are outstanding examples of superior design and craftsmanship. A very fine Cresson-style sofa (fig. 1) is located in the governor's apartments. Somewhat later in style are a bombé chest of drawers and a black lacquered desk on display in the governor's salon. The chest's curved front and sides and its fine, decorative scrollwork typify the later Régence style. The desk is of fruitwood with a slant-front lid covering rows of pigeonholes used for classifying and storing documents. The black lacquer finish was commonly used on finer eighteenth-century furniture. Both pieces have retained their original brass hardware. Around them are an arrangement of light, elegant, white- and gold-painted Louis XV chairs and above the ensemble hangs a large, elaborate, Louis XV chandelier with its original crystals.



Fig. 1. Sofa (length 193.8cm, width 105cm, height 65cm), carved fruitwood with cut silk velvet upholstery. This is an excellent Régence piece which, while retaining some of the understructure common in earlier styles, has much of the elegant, curved appearance so characteristic of later Louis XV pieces. Cat. no. BL.68.1.439. (Photo: Fortress of Louisbourg, uncatalogued.)

The collection also contains a few items which could have belonged to the original residents. An armoire (fig. 2) in the King's Bastion Barracks was discovered in the 1920s in the old town of Louisbourg by Senator J. MacLennan, a notable early historian of Louisbourg. Its construction is typical of simple French pieces of the early eighteenth century and the family who owned it believed that it was originally from Louisbourg. A bonne femme armchair with ladder back and straw seat, of similar vintage, was found in Arichat on Isle Madame, Cape Breton. These were part of the MacLennan collection which was started in the 1920s by Senator MacLennan and his daughter Catherine. The MacLennans were instrumental in setting up the early museum on

the fortress site. Their collection of original and reproduction furnishings, tools, weapons, and prints were the first contact that many Cape Bretoners had with the eighteenth-century French community and did much to develop local awareness of the significance of this site. The MacLennan collection, still held in Louisbourg, and the museum building which formerly housed it make a fascinating study in themselves.



Fig. 2. Armoire (height 190cm, width 144cm, depth 61cm), spruce. Uncatalogued. (Photo: Fortress of Louisbourg, uncatalogued.)

The greater portion of the furnishings collection, however, is French provincial or traditional. The styles are not always recognizable as Louis XIII or Louis XV though certain elements of these styles can be found. These comprise the major groups of household items: sturdy kitchen tables with deep storage drawers, large pine armoires with a variety of panel decoration, and straight ladder-back chairs with straw seats. Together with a wide range of iron utensils for cooking and lighting, tools for the trades represented among Louisbourg's inhabitants, coarse earthenware and faïence for table use, and

pewter both culinary and decorative, they complete the presentation of Louisbourg's houses as they would have appeared in the 1740s. Not all are antique. Where gaps have occurred in the availability of appropriate antiques research has enabled the reproduction of furnishings by skilled local craftsmen. The number of reproductions, all of which are marked as such, will continue to grow over the coming years as research based on documentary sources, the artifact collection, and iconographic materials is concentrated on the furnishings programme.

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#### NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MAN: HISTORY DIVISION

Approximately 1,500 pieces of furniture are among the holdings of the History Division of the National Museum of Man. The primary objective in the development of the collection is to trace and illustrate the history of furniture used in Canada, from the late eighteenth century to the present, through the acquisition of representative examples. This objective is in keeping with the mandate of the division to collect objects reflecting the social, economic, and material history of the non-indigenous peoples of Canada. In order to establish a sound basis for future research, an artifact's history of use or manufacture is a primary consideration in its acquisition.

The furniture collection consists of material from a wide range of socio-economic levels and covers all regions of the country. The products of both the craft and industrial eras are well represented. Where possible, tools and patterns and copies of original photographs and documents having a bearing upon the furniture collected are also acquired. The Baker collection, described elsewhere in this issue, is a good example of one such acquisition. Geographically the collection is uneven in its representation. The division has strong collections of furniture from central Canada. Ontario holdings are