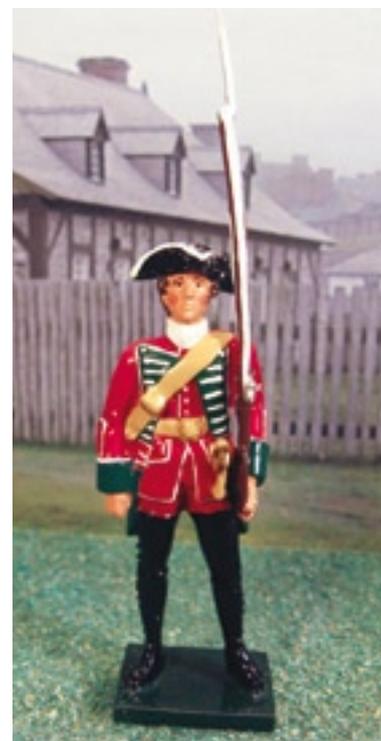


The Fortress of Louisbourg
(courtesy of Parks Canada)



45th Regiment Centre Company Private

Louisbourg 1758

James H. Hillestad, Member No. 6, chronicles the capture of France's strategic fortress.

The French and Indian War in North America began in 1754 and ended with the surrender of the French in Montreal in 1760.

In the September 2008 issue of *The Standard*, the focus was the Ohio River valley campaign of 1755, which ended with the disastrous defeat of General Braddock at the hands of the French and their Indian allies at the battle of the Monongahela outside Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburgh).

In 1757, the British redirected their strategy to attack the French

fortress of Louisbourg and, in turn, Quebec, the heart of New France. Success depended on the Royal Navy controlling the waters surrounding Cape Breton. The French Navy, however, continued to dominate, and the proposed attack was called off.

In 1758, Major General James Abercromby assumed overall command of the British forces in North America, and plans were made to renew the effort. British forces were gathered at Halifax, Nova Scotia, under the command of Major General Jeffrey Amherst.

This time, the Royal Navy

enjoyed overwhelming superiority – with over 40 warships to deal with 10 ships of the French navy.

As for land forces, the British fielded 12,000 regulars, plus 500 rangers, along with 122 artillery pieces.

The British infantry was organized into regiments, which in almost all cases were composed of single battalions. Each battalion (about 1,000 men) was divided into ten companies – one of elite Grenadiers who wore pointed mitre caps and nine 'center' companies referred to as 'hat men' because they wore tricorne hats. Pioneers were attached to the battalions to clear the way of obstacles and prepare the siege works.

The French numbered about 3,900 men, commanded by the governor of Cape Breton Island, Chevalier de Drucours.

Drucours' wife secured a place in history for her part in the fortress's defense. Madame Drucours fired three cannons every day to encourage the French artillerymen. General Amherst was so impressed with her bravery during



45th Regiment Grenadier Company Private

Map courtesy of Simon & Schuster



the siege that he sent her a gift of pineapples from the West Indies (a rare delicacy in those days). She in turn presented him with a basket of wine and went on to fire her three cannons every day!

The battle for the strongest fortress in North America commenced on June 8. The main assault was led by Brigadier James Wolfe, who landed his division in Freshwater Cove in a pounding

surf and under fire from French small arms and artillery. Relentlessly, the British pushed forward and surrounded the fortress by land and sea. The French garrison surrendered on July 26. The British counted 527 casualties, the French 405. The way to Quebec City via the St. Lawrence River was now open. It was Wolfe who ▶



Officer 45th Regiment, the new Club Exclusive version



45th Regiment Command Set #1



45th Regiment Command Set #2



Officer 45th Regiment

◀ orchestrated the successful assault the following summer, but he lost his life to gunshot wounds in the effort.

The British viewed with distrust the French civilian inhabitants (Acadians) of Cape Breton, and forcibly removed 8,000 men, women, and children, and shipped

them back to France. The story of the Acadians was later made famous in Longfellow's poem "Evangeline." ■

Note: *Fortress Louisbourg has been restored and is now a major tourist attraction. For information, visit <http://www.louisbourg.ca/fort/>*

45TH REGIMENT

The 45th Regiment of Foot was formed in 1741 by Colonel Daniel Houghton. As a result of the Cardwell Reforms in 1881 it took on the county name Nottinghamshire. In 1902, it was officially renamed the Sherwood Foresters.

The regiment, with 956 officers and enlisted men, played a prominent role at the Battle of Louisbourg. In recognition of this, they were awarded their first battle honour. They went on to fight in the Peninsular War from 1808 to 1814, where they earned the nickname 'The Old Stubborns' for their bravery at the battle of Talavera.

The Sherwood Foresters claim descent from Robin Hood and his merry men!



Regimental side drum of the Sherwood Foresters, author's collection.

SUGGESTED READING

Marston, Daniel, *The French-Indian War*
Chartrand, René, *Louisbourg 1758*

Parkman, Francis, *Montcalm and Wolfe*

Schwartz, Seymour, *The French and Indian War*

Jim Hillestad operates under the name "The Toy Soldier Museum." His museum, containing more than 35,000 figures and a large collection of militaria, is located in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania.

For directions and hours, call him at 570 629-7227, or visit his new website at www.the-toy-soldier.com.