

The Siege of Fort Beauséjour  
by Chris M. Hand

Notes

Early Conflict in Nova Scotia 1604-1749.

By the end of the 1600's the area was decidedly French.

1713	Treaty of Utrecht After nearly 25 years of continuous war, France ceded Acadia to Britain. French and English disagreed over what actually made up Acadia.
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The British claimed all of Acadia, the current province of New Brunswick and parts of the current state of Maine.

The French conceded Nova Scotia proper but refused to concede what is now New Brunswick and northern Maine, as well as modern Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton. They also chose to limit British ownership along the Chignecto Isthmus and also harboured ambitions to win back the peninsula and most of the Acadian settlers who, after 1713, became subjects of the British Crown.

The defacto frontier lay along the Chignecto Isthmus which separates the Bay of Fundy from the Northumberland Strait on the north. Without the Isthmus and the river system to the west, France's greatest colony along the St. Lawrence River would be completely cut off from November to April. Chignecto was the halfway house between Quebec and Louisbourg.

1721	Paul Mascarene, British governor of Nova Scotia, suggested that a small fort could be built on the neck with a garrison of 150 men.  a) one at the ridge of land at the Acadian town of Beaubassin (now Fort Lawrence) or b) one more west on the more prominent Beauséjour ridge.  This never happened because British were busy fighting Mi'kmaq who were incited and abetted by the French.
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1737	Abbé Jean-Louis Le Loutre comes to Nova Scotia with British permission as a missionary to minister to the Acadians and the Natives at Shubenacadie under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht. In
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	exchange, he promises to keep peace and to keep the people faithful to the British crown. Instead, he proved a loyal and zealous advocate for France, encouraging the Mi'kmaq to attack the English and offering one hundred livres bounty for each English scalp.
1744	War of Austrian Succession (called King George's War) Beaubassin became the staging point for French raids against British Nova Scotia.
1746	Chevalier Pierre La Corne, French commander, conducted several expeditions against the British, using French forces and native allies. Recommended that Beauséjour ridge was a suitable place for a fort. Possible the French were already using it as it was a safe distance from the Acadian inhabitants at Beaubassin.  Beaubassin under British rule and Acadians feared reprisals.
1748	Fort Beauséjour was one of several French forts erected in North America after 1748.
1748	<b>Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle</b>  Ended War of Austrian Succession. French lost a key part of the North American empire when the governor of Massachusetts, William Shirley, captured the fortress at Louisbourg in 1745. To French this meant abandoning Quebec.  Louisbourg was exchanged for conquests in the Netherlands and the Indian city of Madras.
1749	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Louisbourg was rebuilt</li> <li>. Fort Niagara established at western end of Lake Ontario</li> <li>. Fort Duquesne constructed near Pittsburgh</li> <li>. Fort Rouille, now Toronto, built 1750</li> <li>. French rebuilt fort at mouth of St. John River</li> <li>. also reoccupied the old fort at Nerepis, further up St. John River.</li> <li>. French wanted to occupy Isthmus of Chignecto</li> <li>. Fort Beauséjour erected</li> </ul>
1749	British responded by establishing a new capital and naval base at Halifax. This worried French who wanted to reconquer Nova Scotia. Edward Cornwallis, new governor of Nova Scotia, believed the Indian

	<p>war was nothing more than French action without a formal declaration. Worried about unsettled and ill-defended boundaries between French and British Acadia.</p> <p>Later that year when French learned that British were preparing to settle the Chignecto area, the French sent troops to Beauséjour (west side of Missaguash River (2,500 troops).</p>
<p>1750</p>	<p>French fort started to take shape.</p> <p>La Corne assisted by an engineer from Quebec, Le Sieur De Lery.</p> <p>French and English built forts simultaneously on the Missaguash River.</p> <p>On May 1<sup>st</sup> 1750 Lawrence sailed into Cumberland Basin with 400 men to secure Fort Beausejour. Discovered that the French already occupied it and prepared to defend it. Did not have sufficient force to contend with La Corne. He moved further up the Basin to the east side of the Missaguash River near the settlement of Chignecto.</p> <p>French and Natives emptied the village and forced Acadians to abandon their village and move to Fort Beauséjour. Burned all the buildings. Abbé Le Loutre ordered 121 buildings to be destroyed that afternoon. Lawrence forced to abandon and return to Halifax.</p> <p>French had successfully reinforced their claim that everything west of Missaguash River was French territory.</p> <p>Lawrence returned in September with a larger force and erected a fort. He brought nearly 700 troops. Beside the ruins of the Acadian town, the English built Fort Lawrence. A cairn now marks the site.</p> <p>Fort Beauséjour made of earth and reinforced with timbers and palisades and multiple layers of packed sod and turf (as opposed to stone). Not designed to withstand a formal siege. It had a compliment of 24 cannons.</p> <p>Fort Beauséjour was central to two satellite forts. The first was Fort Menagoueche at the mouth of the St. John River. The second fort was on the north side of the isthmus at Baie Verte, near the mouth of the Gaspereau River and was called Fort Gaspereau. (Winslow took over this fort in 1755).</p>

1752	Peregrine Thomas Hopson, Governor of Nova Scotia. Tells England that something has to be done about the French, Acadians, and Natives in Beaubassin region.
1753	Charles Lawrence becomes governor of Nova Scotia. Took steps to curtail French activities in his province.
1754	<p>Vergor took command of Fort Beauséjour. Found the fort poorly built.</p> <p>English felt something had to be done about this fort.</p> <p>Lawrence ordered the commandant of Fort Lawrence to prevent anyone from supplying the French garrison at Beauséjour with provisions.</p> <p>British were correct about French intentions. Acadians were victimized. Those who refused to move to the west of the Missaguash were attacked by Natives and denied ministry of the priests. The organiser of this campaign was Le Loutre.</p> <p>When British landed at Beaubassin in 1750, it was Le Loutre who ordered the town burned and the residents driven to the French side of the Missaguash River.</p> <p>Louisbourg dependent upon New England grain. Lawrence blocked this.</p>
Sept. 1754	<p>Lawrence issued a proclamation forbidding the exportation of corn from the province. Wanted to prevent the supply of corn to Indians in Beaubassin area.</p> <p>Immediate effect: French could not support their garrisons, but also the Acadian refugees from Beaubassin who had crowded into the settlements west of the Missaguash.</p> <p>Acadians wanted to return to English side. Some ran away to Nova Scotia and took oath of allegiance, but most did not.</p>
Late 1754	British find out that France intended to reinforce its North American garrisons and intensify the frontier war. British intercepted a letter from Gov. of Quebec to Le Loutre dated November 9, 1754 outlining these plans.

	<p>By 1754 the French were also raiding Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York.</p> <p>On the day Lawrence received this letter, two British soldiers were scalped near Fort Lawrence. British decide it is time for action.</p>
Plan of Attack	<p>General Edward Braddock would lead main attack at Fort Duquesne in Ohio basin.</p> <p>Second attack would be Lake Champlain valley.</p> <p>Third attack would be French forts in Acadia, using local forces in Nova Scotia and Massachusetts.</p>
Nov. 5, 1754	<p>Lawrence writes to Governor Shirley to propose the attack. To coordinate plans, Lawrence sent one of his senior colonels to Boston - Robert Monckton. 1754 to 1755 Monckton busy making preparations.</p> <p>English needed 1,000 New England troops. Chose Winslow to raise the troops. Winslow (52 at the time) raised 2,000 troops. Early April divided men into two battalions. Second battalion headed by Lieutenant-Colonel George Scott, officer from Monckton's regiment.</p> <p>John Rous was in charge of naval part of the expedition.</p>
May 19, 1755	Expedition left Boston.

One of the great tragedies for the French in Acadia was that their fate rested in the hands of the Marquis Louis Du Pont Duchambon de Vergor, son of Louis Du Pont Duchambon, commander of Louisbourg who surrendered the fortress to New Englanders in 1745.

Aug. 18, 1754	Vergor took command of Fort Beauséjour.
June 2, 1755	<p>Vergor scrambled as Colonels Monckton, Winslow and Scott held council at the entrance to Cumberland Basin.</p> <p>Watching the basin from Fort Beauséjour was Jacau de Fiedmont, an honest Canadian gunner. He left a wonderful account of the siege.</p> <p>37 and 40 vessels of all types filled the Basin. English reported 34 vessels.</p>

	<p>French hoped the English would have problems landing on shore. French could only watch as British landed on the east side of the Missaguash River.</p> <p>Vergor called an immediate council of war.</p>
June 4, 1755	<p>Over 300 Acadians reluctantly responded to help the French. Some families hid in the woods.</p> <p>Troops and stores were brought ashore at Fort Lawrence. While this was going on, the remainder of the British troops conducted drills and manoeuvres outside their fort in full view of the French. This was done for two reasons: to drill the Provincials from Boston and to intimidate the French.</p> <p>3,000 men in a column almost 3 kilometres long marched toward Beauséjour in ranks.</p> <p>It took the British almost 4 hours to march the six kilometres along the old French road from Fort Lawrence to the bridge at Pont à Buot.</p> <p>Fiedmont believed that the French and their allies fought poorly at Pont à Buot and missed a golden opportunity to stop the British.</p>
June 8, 1755	<p>French observed British moving under cover towards the high ground of Butte à Charles. French sallied from Beauséjour in an attempt to dislodge the British: the first battle. Butte à Charles was Achilles heel of Fort Beauséjour. Once the British gained control, the rest was easier.</p>
June 12, 1755	<p>Battle of Butte à Charles - short, cautious and a British victory.</p>
June 13, 1755	<p>The first British shells burst inside Fort Beauséjour.</p>
June 16, 1755	<p>Vergor agreed to surrender and seek the most honourable terms he could.</p> <p>Term No. 10 - The Acadians shall not be molested for having taken arms for they were forced to do so under pain of death, and no injury shall be done them.</p> <p>One of Monckton's Five Terms:</p>

	<p>Term No. 4 - The Acadians, inasmuch as they were forced to take up arms under pain of death, shall be pardoned for the part they have taken.</p> <p>Possession of Beauséjour took place around dusk. The Acadians and Le Loutre had slipped out before the British arrived. British found Beauséjour in horrible shape.</p> <p>Monckton renamed Beauséjour Fort Cumberland.</p> <p>Monckton sent Winslow with a detachment of 250 men to take Fort Gaspereau. Took hold of fort and renamed it Fort Monckton.</p>
June 23, 1755	<p>Transports arrive from Halifax in Cumberland Basin to take Beauséjour's French garrison to Louisbourg.</p> <p>The siege lasted 15 days. On the British side, twenty men were killed and twenty wounded.</p> <p>This siege had direct economic impact on France's ability to provision its remaining garrisons in New France, particularly Fortress Louisbourg.</p>
Fall of 1755	<p>Abbé Le Loutre captured by the British while en route to France and spent the next 8 years imprisoned on the Isle of Jersey.</p>
1757	<p>Vergor tried in Quebec City for the weak defence of his fort. He was acquitted and reassigned to Louisbourg, which fell to General Wolfe's assault in 1758.</p> <p>Winslow retired from the army to live in Massachusetts.</p>
1759	<p>Wolfe's army surprised the guard and scaled the cliffs which led to the battle of the Plains of Abraham. Vergor stationed in Quebec. French lost battle.</p>
1761	<p>Vergor retired to France.</p>