

Joseph Robineau de Villebon, "Villebon's Last Journal sent to Count Pontchartrain, Fort St. John, October 27, 1699", in John Clarence Webster, ed. *Acadia at the end of the seventeenth century; letters, journals and memoirs of Joseph Robineau de Villebon, commandant in Acadia, 1690-1700, and other contemporary documents* (Saint John N.B., 1934), p. 120-127.

Sir,

I received from M. de Fontenu, Commissary of the Marine, who arrived here on Sept. 16th on the King's transport ship the *Avenant*, the letter with which Your Excellency honoured me. The Company's vessel the *Dragon* only arrived here on the 5th of that month, having been obliged to put into Placentia, and the long stay which the *Avenant* was also forced to make there for the purpose of remasting, has prevented the execution of Count Pontchartrain's orders to send the lumber by three vessels, as we had hoped to do this year.

M. de Fontenu has been to Port Royal to inspect the forests, and, on his return, he went up the St. John River to establish the wood-cutters. I believe it will be necessary to send soldiers to help them to haul the timber, and I should have gone there, but M. de Fontenu decided that it would be advisable to save expense by waiting until spring, and I shall see to it when the ice melts. It appears to me, Sir, that if we continue lumbering operations with such a large number of wood-cutters as have been sent out this year, it will be a great expense to His Majesty. A master mast-maker and one or two ship-carpenters to pass on the quality of the wood, would suffice, for plenty of men suitable for this work can be found in this country, and even the soldiers would be glad of such employment with a prospect of earning something.

It would be better, Sir, another year, not to send biscuits as rations for the carpenters; flour would be more convenient; only a few hundred weight need be forwarded to where they are camped, and brandy instead of wine would please them better. M. de Fontenu, during his short stay here has learned whatever is necessary to develop the timber industry, and to keep down expenses: he will give you, Sir, explanations and very accurate information. I am certain that the settlers will not fail to undertake this work when they know that vessels will surely come for the timber they have cut.

In your letter, Sir, you desired me to tell you all I have been able to learn about our frontier adjacent to the English. I have done myself the honour of writing to you on this subject by the returning *Nieuport*, because I wished to send you a thorough explanation. I have not been able to obtain more definite information than is contained in the statements of Srs. D'Entremont and Bourgeois, which I have the honour of forwarding to you. They are in accordance with all I have heard during the thirteen years of my residence in the country. I do not see how the English can have claims beyond the St. George River, unless they wish to contest the Kennebec River, upon which from time immemorial have lived Indians who have always recognized the King, and regarded the Governor General of Canada as their father, and who have had missionaries to instruct them. The Indians maintain that the English have not been able to occupy this river, which belongs to them as its first possessors, that the English settled there in spite of them and the wars which

resulted would be in progress still, notwithstanding the peace, had they not been checked by information that His Majesty wished them to cease all acts of hostility. The reply to this from Boston is that they occupied this river only after the chiefs of the Indians who lived there had been paid for it; but the tribe as a whole will not concede that any of their people had a right to surrender their lands without the consent of all. There is no record, Sir, in the registry of Port Royal relating to the boundaries. The English took the precaution of removing everything while they were in control there. If a few old commissions of those who formerly commanded here could be found in the possession of the Government, some light might be thrown on the subject. Though I have not heard that the people of Boston wish to reestablish Pernaquid immediately, I know very well that it is their intention to do so after the boundary has been determined. I learned only last August that Lord Bellomont was to go to Kennebec to summon the Indians to discuss the matter. I wrote to the Jesuit fathers, who have a mission there, to warn all the Chiefs to bold no parley with him : they were to say that if he has anything to propose it should be addressed to me , and I would tell them what to do. Since then no news has come from Kennebec .

I had the honour, Sir, of reporting to Count Pontchartrain, when M. Courbon St. Leger returned , the manner in which the English are acting in connection with the fishing, and I shall await such orders in regard to the matter as you may be pleased to send me. You will see by a Memoir, which I have the honour of addressing to you, the reasons which have occurred to me for not excluding them abruptly from this privilege, and , if it meets with your approval. His Majesty , through the Colony, will derive his own advantage therefrom.

As there have been changes this year among the missionaries of Acadia, I believe, Monseigneur, that things will run more smoothly. Mgr. de Quebec, who has no suitable persons available to fill the vacant missions of Acadia, has transferred the French Mission at Minas and that of the Micmacs, which M. de Thury desired to establish, to gentlemen of the Foreign Missions, and two priests arrived two days ago to fill these posts. M. Maudoux, of whom I complained last year, is joining this Indian Mission . I am assured that his conduct will be different ; the Bishop of Quebec has written to him forcefully about his duty , which may, perhaps, put an end to the intriguing and scheming which he has kept up since last year.

I have given the Sr. de Neuville the order of Count Pontchartrain to return to France to explain his conduct and especially the dissipation into which it was reported he had fallen. I scarcely dare, Sir, to speak in his favour because it touches me too closely, but if Your Excellency were willing to get information about him from all who have come to this country during the past year, I believe that he might have the good fortune to dispel the bad impression which has been given to your Excellency. He has been with me for nine years and has always served with great diligence. I do not deny that he has committed some youthful excesses, but, Sir, these have not been habitual.

With regard to the permanent cures, about whom I wrote to Count Pontchartrain last year, I told him that the Missions of Port Royal and Minas

were worth at least 1500 livres net in tithes, but I included both in this valuation. That of Port Royal is worth somewhat less than that of Minas, but with the additional 100 crowns which His Majesty contributes to each mission, a priest can live very well, besides which there are special fees and masses. I shall not fail during the coming year to find out myself what each inhabitant pays in these two districts and at Beaubassin, and I shall send you, Sir, an exact statement certified by the principal residents of each place.

It is to be hoped that the Bishop of Quebec will entrust this Province to the Heads of the Foreign Missions so that they may provide priests. It is certain that there would be no lack of them, because, Sir, he wrote to me this year, proposing that the Recollets should establish a convent at Port Royal. This does not seem to me to be suitable in a country which is just beginning to develop, for the Good Fathers could neither settle, nor exist here, without being a heavy burden on the people. Indeed, the latter do not favour the plan ; it is, moreover, their custom, practised in this land as in all other places where they are to be found, to take not only what they need for themselves, but to send back to the parent house as much as they can spare of alms and supplies and this can only be done at the expense of the settlers.

Of the five priests whom the Bishop of Quebec is required to maintain here, one is at Pentagoet, a young priest who does not yet say mass ; Port Royal is supposed to be served by a Recollet; Minas by an ecclesiastic of the Foreign Missions, who arrived in this country a month ago. The Micmac Mission will have M. Maudoux, about whom I have had the honour to tell you. There will be no priest at Beaubassin, although this seigniory is important enough to merit one. For three years there has been no missionary at this fort, yet the Recollet fathers do not fail to collect every year 300 livres and 400 livres for two missionaries of their order, where there is only one for the Indians. I humbly beg you, Sir, to give the order that the fort is to be provided for, and to consider my request, made last year to Count Pontchartrain, that a chaplain be sent here from France. There are excellent Irish ecclesiastics, and it would be advantageous to have here one of that nationality, because the Irish Catholics in Boston, who are not very well treated there, would more readily come to us if they knew that there was here a priest of their own race.

Concerning the permits to trade at Port Royal which, during the first year of peace, the Sr. le Borgne took upon himself to issue to the English upon payment to him of fifty livres per ship, and about which I have written to Count Pontchartrain, it was absolutely contrary to the King's command. I do not believe that he has any right to call himself Seigneur of Port Royal and I submit my reasons based on what I learned from the oldest residents of that place. The late M. d' Aulnay obtained an extensive grant from the Crown to which was attached the title of Governor-General. This territory commenced in the direction of Cape Breton at Green Island, and extended to Minas Bay, a distance of about 180 leagues along the Coast. The conditions imposed by the Government had only been partially carried out, as may be seen from the contract for the concession. The aforesaid M. d' Aulnay, to meet its necessary expenses, formed an association with M. le Borgne, a merchant of La Rochelle, the grandfather of those who are now in this Country, in order that he might obtain each year whatever he required. D'Aulnay having died

in debt to le Borgne for a considerable amount , an arrangement was made between him and the heirs of the aforesaid d'Aulnay, by which the latter consented to indemnify him for the advances he had made, by surrendering to him for nine years all the territory which d' Aulnay had possessed, on condition that he would make no further claim against d' Aulnay 's heirs. This agreement was ratified by both parties and was indeed, approved by the Government which is sent out a Commissioner to establish le Borgne in the enjoyment of the concessions for the aforesaid period of nine years. This adjustment having been made, the English came to Port Royal and took the fort and all the moveable property ; le Borgne claimed to have been disturbed in his occupancy of the country, and was no longer willing, so it is said, to keep the agreement. Acadia having been restored by the Treaty of Breda in exchange for half of the Island of St . Christopher, the aforesaid M . le Borgne, or his heirs, entered into and enjoyed all the advantages which they chose to obtain from the possession of the late Sr. d'Aulnay 's concession until the year 1686 when the King sent out a Governor. I have heard from the old settlers that the late M. le Borgne, deceased six years since, had taken from the registry office all documents which might be detrimental to him, but if the contract to which I have referred is not to be found, it is certain that M. d' Aulnay was committed by his grant to many conditions which were not fulfilled, and that M. le Borgne, entering upon his rights by this transaction, has in no way carried out the obligation to improve and develop the country. It seems to me, therefore, that the claims of both sides are very weak, and that it would be to the advantage of the service to cancel all these old concessions and to issue new ones of moderate extent. This would do much for the settlement of the country, because where there are several private owners, each one will make an effort to improve the land assigned to him; it should in itself attract good men to Acadia.

The 450 livres worth of presents for the Indians were this year well chosen. Subject to our approval, this will, henceforth, be the only item of expense in connection with the Indians. As instructed by Count Pontchartrain, I shall give the Micmac Nation the presents which they did not receive last year, and I shall send them word to come to get them in the spring, because the season is too far advanced to assemble them this autumn.

The *Avenant* came so late that I was unable, Sir, to send you a new census of the people of this Colony. I shall not fail next year to tell you, as you request, the number of Indians able to bear arms and the number of young men among them.

You will have been informed, Sir, that the fishermen sent last year by the Gentlemen of the Company to establish a fishing industry, deserted Chebucto, where they were stationed , and have gone to Boston, taking a bark belonging to the Company, and almost all the supplies intended for a year's fishing . There remain only five Frenchmen and three Irishmen ; the latter are

at Port Razoir, where they are to fish; the Frenchmen went back by the *Nieuport*. Having learned last autumn of this desertion I wrote in the spring to M. Bellomont, Governor of Boston, demanding these men as thieves. and claiming all the articles they had stolen. He replied that he would inquire into

the matter so that I might obtain justice, but, as these fishermen are all Huguenots, they will not lack protection. It would, Sir, be dangerous if many such should come to this country to settle. Seven others who had deserted from a fishing vessel of La Rochelle which was at Cape Breton, were caught by the *Dragon* and brought here. M. de Fontenu took five on the *Avenant* and two remained on the other vessel.

It will be necessary, Sir, to recruit next year, in order to bring the two companies up to full strength. There are at present only 77 men in all ; several of the soldiers, who have been here seven years. would be very suitable as settlers. I believe, Sir, that no less than 40 men will be needed, and if some artisans could be included among the recruits, it would contribute greatly to the development of this country.

The project of M. de Thury to gather the Micmacs of the Eastern Coast into a settlement has been retarded by his death. M. Maudoux, who is to take his place, will find it difficult to make it a success, for he has no knowledge of their language. Moreover, I believe it will be impossible to assemble the people of this nation in one place, as was proposed, because they are all separated into a number of families under a Chief whom they recognize. Their lands are distributed along the coast and they could not possibly subsist, for the work they might do on the land would be negligible. Moreover, it is their habit, one of which will never be broken, to indulge in continuous feasting so long as they have food ; this frequently reduces them to a state of great misery.

M. de Fontenu has had the equipment which was sent out for the mission placed in the King 's store here, and I shall deliver it to the Indian missionaries according to agreement. Preparations for the settlement are to be made and I shall have the honour of reporting to you next year whether there is any reason to hope for a favorable development.

Since spring, Sir, I have not been able to get much work done on the fort. The garrison, as I had the honour to report to Count Pontchartrain by M. de Courbon St . Leger, has been without bread. I could not finish the fort, nor perfect it by setting up the outer palisade. A portion of the palisade has been brought here, and the remainder is within reach; this will be the first work undertaken in the spring. I forwarded the plan to Count Pontchartrain . M . de Gabaret, who made it, did not have time to make a duplicate, which I should have had the honour of sending you. Inasmuch as Count Pontchartrain tells me this fort will not be maintained after the one at Port Royal is completed, I believe, Sir, that with your approval. it will not be necessary, to raise the demi-lune. This will reduce the expense, and, with the palisade, the fort will be strong enough for the short period it will be in use.

From the 3000 livres, Monseigneur, sent out this year for the fortifications, M . de Fontenu deducted 750, which were spent at Placentia, leaving 2250 livres, which Your Excellency might assign to Port Royal. for there are here sufficient funds to finish what remains to be done.

Having been unable to go to Port Royal. I cannot estimate how much timber can be supplied by each settler, nor how many days' work on the fortification, may be expected from them. It is certain that they will always do whatever the Government wishes, for they know their safety depends upon

it. Since His Majesty has decided to fortify Port Royal next year, it is most essential to dispatch a ship from France in February with the orders for this place as well as for Quebec ; because, if troops are to be sent out, many necessary preparations could be made, while waiting for the ships, which would advance the work greatly. The Sr. de la Ronde, who came on M. de Courbon's vessel knows the coast very well and would be suitable to send here, if Your Excellency thinks proper. I have the honour to submit Memoirs on the country :-- one on the condition of Port Royal, its situation, and the reasons for its fortification ; the second on the settlements and the harbors between Minas, at the head of the Bay of Fundy, as far as Cape Breton island ; the third on the settlements and harbors between Beaubassin and the Kennebec river ; and the last covers the fishing on the coasts of Acadia, and the manner in which it is carried on.

It appears to me, Sir, that we might derive from the fisheries of this country, cod, salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines, shad, gaspereau, sturgeon, bass, haddock, fish which are all suitable for salting, either for Europe or the Islands ; and the oils of fish and seal. We could also obtain here tar, coal, gypsum and marble. As for wheat, peas and meats there will, in future, be enough to supply a good portion of such things consumed in the country. With regard to timber, pine, fir and spruce are available for masts, and for building purposes, elm, beech, ash and oak.

I sent four settlers to the entrance of the Basin of Minas to take copper from a cliff where much might be found if it were worked, but they have sent me very little. You might, Sir, have this metal tested. There are, as well, some fragments of the rock, which will give an idea of the character of the mine. The expedition cost 46 livres for food and the day-labor of the men, who were detained there by bad weather for ten or twelve days. To determine whether this mine could be worked advantageously, it should be examined by someone who is competent to judge it.

At the end of August another pirate appeared on our coasts capturing near Cape Sable a ship bound for London from New York . I heard this news from seven or eight men of the crew of this vessel who had escaped in a long-boat and landed at Minas, where they made their declaration. The freebooter was designed for 46 cannon but had only 26 mounted. She was accompanied by a brigantine and a sloop, each with ten cannon. It is claimed that there are nearly 300 men in these three vessels, and they have taken or sunk several English vessels off the coast of New England. Prisoners reported that it was their intention to cruise in the St . Lawrence. They killed some cattle in passing Port Razoir , for which they paid ; they committed no depredations. It would be difficult, Sir, to protect ourselves following the damage such vessels could cause, unless His Majesty maintains here a coast-guard strong enough to attack them . I learned also from Indians who came from Cape Breton to Beaubassin a few days ago that this same pirate had taken one of our fishing vessels in Baleine Harbour . They gave details which convinced me they spoke the truth .

I send you, Sir, the evidence against the soldiers accused of desertion, of whom one has been condemned to the galleys. I have delivered them to M.

de Gabarel Lamote, commanding the *Avenant*, and I have written concerning them to M. Began, Intendant of Rochefort.

I received a letter which you, Sir, did me the honour to send by a vessel which arrived at Port Royal on the 14th of this month . It was forwarded to me by M . Diereville, whom I shall not fail to befriend, and I shall render him every service in my power. There are in this country very desirable plants of which the Indians make excellent use in their maladies.

You honour me, Sir, with the assurances of your protection. I beg you to consider that I have been engaged in the King's service for 29 years. It is ten years since Count Pontchartrain honoured me, by placing this country under my command. I defended it during the last war and, Sir, I venture to say, that no fort, since the settlement of Acadia, has been able to resist the invasions of the English. It was my good fortune to build on this river. and at no great expense to the King, one which repelled our neighbours when they came to attack us.

I shall do my best, Sir, to deserve hereafter by my continued services, the honour of your approbation,

Villebon