THE HISTORY OF ACADIA,
FROM ITS FIRST DISCOVERY TO ITS SURRENDER TO ENGLAND
BY THE TREATY OF PARIS.

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CHAPTER IV.  

THE COLONY AT PORT ROYAL.

The place chosen for the residence of the colony at Port Royal was opposite Goat Island, on the north bank of the river of Port Royal,* distant about six miles from the present town of Annapolis. It was a position easily fortified, favorable for traffic with the savages, and beautiful by nature. The land around it, although somewhat stony, was strong and fertile, and the marsh lands, some distance away, were of inexhaustible richness. The climate, too, was milder than that of the greater portion of the peninsula, and well adapted to the cultivation of fruit. Timber of the best quality was abundant, and extensive fisheries were close by. Nothing, it would seem, was wanting that nature could bestow to make Port Royal a flourishing colony. The work of erecting buildings was rapidly advanced, dwellings and storehouses were built, and a small palisaded fort constructed. When this work was being carried on, De Monts sailed for France to provide for the provisioning of the colony, until crops could be raised, and to attend to his trading interests. He left Pontgravé as his lieutenant to govern the colony in his absence, and with him Champlain and Champdore, to assist in the general conduct of affairs, and take charge of any exploring expeditions that might be required. Pontgravé was an energetic and active man, zealous in the work of colonization, and equally zealous in the prosecution of trade. While he pushed forward the preparations necessary for the comfortable wintering of the colony, he did not neglect the commercial pursuits, without which the colony could not then subsist. The savages, among whom he was, were of the Souriquois or Micmac tribe, and well disposed towards the whites. For the purpose of deepening this attachment, and at the same time carrying on a profitable business, he commenced an active trade with them for the skins of moose, otter and beaver. After the winter had set in, this barter became very brisk, and the good disposition of the natives was to the advantage of the French in another way, for they brought them abundance of fresh meat, and enabled them to live through the cold season in comparative comfort. They were quite free from any serious epidemic, such as had proved so fatal at St. Croix, and only six died during the winter. Their supplies of breadstuffs were abundant, but the labor of grinding their grain by hand proved most irksome, and Lescarbot gravely states that he believed this had contributed to kill those who died. The Indians, although so liberal with their venison, refused to assist in this severe work, which was not surprising, considering how averse the savages were to labor of any description. A more probable cause of the mortality was the fact that they had neglected to drain their dwellings, which were consequently damp and uncomfortable.

In the Spring of 1606 Pontgravé made an attempt to find a warmer climate and a better place for his colony in a more southern latitude. He fitted out the barque which had been left with him, and set sail for Cape Cod; but his venture proved disastrous. Twice he was driven back to Port Royal by the violence of the tempest, and on the third essay was so unfortunate as to have his vessel injured on the rocks at the mouth of the port. This deterred him

*Now Annapolis River. It was named by the French the Dauphin, but popularly known and marked on their maps as the River of Port Royal.
from any further attempt, which, indeed, could only have been attended with greater disasters; such was the weakness of his vessel, and so great were the dangers of that tempestuous sea. Pontgravé then built another barque, or shallop, so that he would not be quite without means of transport in case of accident, or shortness of provisions. The result proved that he had been guided by a wise forethought.

The Spring advanced, and provisions began to grow scarce, but there was no sign of De Monts' arrival. Summer was ushered in, but still the expected supplies did not come, and Pontgravé, now really alarmed for the safety of De Monts, and apprehensive that the colony would soon be without food, determined to embark his people, and run along the coast as far as Canso, in the hope that he might fall in with some fishing vessel, by which their wants might be relieved, and in which they might obtain a passage to France. Having finally given up all hope of the arrival of the expected succor, Pontgravé set sail on the 25th July from Port Royal, leaving two men behind, who had volunteered to remain and take charge of the stores.

In the meantime De Monts had been hastening to the relief of his colony. On his arrival in France his accounts of Acadia had been coldly received. The expense of the venture had been heavy and the returns small. Many of the merchants who belonged to the company were dissatisfied, and it appeared equally difficult to fit out ships for the relief of the colony or to get men to embark in them. In this juncture Poutrincourt nobly came to his aid. His presence in France at that time was of vital importance to his own interests in consequence of some lawsuits in which he was engaged; but notwithstanding this position of affairs he agreed to return to Acadia and assist De Monts in placing the colony on a permanent footing. Poutrincourt was now more resolute than ever to establish himself there with his family. He also persuaded Lescarbot, an advocate who resided in Paris, to accompany them. After many vexatious delays a vessel of one hundred and fifty tons, named the Jonas, was fitted out at Rochelle, and set sail for Acadia on the 11th May 1606. The voyage was long and tedious from adverse winds, and rendered still more so by visits which were made to various parts of the coast from Canso to Cape Sable. They passed Cape Sable on the 25th July, and reached Port Royal on the 27th with the flood tide, saluting the fort as they entered the basin. They were much surprised to discover that Pontgravé had departed, and that only two men had been left. It seems that they had sailed outside of Brier Island in coming up the bay, while Pontgravé had gone through the Petite passage between Long Island and the main, in consequence of which they had missed each other. Pontgravé, however, fell in with a shallop which had been left on the coast by De Monts, and was informed that the Jonas had arrived. With all haste he retraced his course and reached Port Royal on the 31st July, to the great delight of De Monts and his companions. The occasion was celebrated by a festival. Poutrincourt opened a hogshead of wine, and the night was spent in bacchanalian revelry.

Poutrincourt lost no time in commencing the cultivation of his territory. Although the season was well advanced, he sowed a variety of vegetables and grain, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing them start from the virgin soil. He would have been content to settle down and make Port Royal his permanent residence, but De Monts, who was about to return to France, besought him to make one effort more to find a place for the colony farther south. To do this it became necessary for him to give up the superin-
tendency of his agricultural operations, and the rest of the
summer was employed in a fruitless search. He left Port
Royal on the 28th August, accompanied by Champsore,
and on the same day the Jonas also put to sea with De
Monts and Pontgravé, who were returning to France.
Lescarbot, who was a valuable addition to the colony, was
left in charge of the establishment at Port Royal, and
directed to keep the colonists in order.
Poutrincourt’s voyage south began in the midst of
difficulty and ended in disaster. The elements were unpro-
pitious, and the barque in which he sailed was small and
leaky. They were twice forced back by stress of weather
before they reached St. Croix Island. There they found
the grain ripening, and gathered some of it, which they
sent back to Port Royal. They then proceeded south as
far as Cape Cod, where, from its more southern latitude,
they hoped to find a situation where the cold would be less
extreme than at Port Royal; but their barque became
entangled among the shoals, the rudder was broken, and
they were obliged to come to anchor three leagues from the
land. It took them fifteen days to make the necessary
repairs. While some of Poutrincourt’s men were ashore
they got into collision with the savages, in consequence of
some thefts of the latter which they resented. To prevent
further difficulty he ordered his men to go on board the
vessel, as from the hostile appearance of the savages, it was
evident that bloodshed could not otherwise be prevented.
Five of them who neglected to obey this wise order were
surprised, two of them killed on the spot and the others
wounded, two of them mortally. Poutrincourt immediately
went ashore with ten men and buried their dead comrades,
over whom they erected a cross, the savages in the mean-
while yelling in triumph at a safe distance. When they
returned to their vessel the brutal natives dug up the
bodies and tore down the cross, insulting the French by
shouts and gestures of defiance. The latter were then
unable to return to the shore in consequence of it being low
water, but when the tide served they replaced the cross
and bodies. After an unsuccessful attempt to pass beyond
the Cape, Poutrincourt was forced back to the same harbor
where his men had been killed, and while there, some of
the natives, who came down on pretence of trading, were
captured and put to death. Another attempt was made to
sail farther south, but they were again driven back, and—
the condition of his wounded men being extremely pre-
caurious—Poutrincourt bore up for Port Royal, which he
reached on the 14th November.
He was received with great joy by the colonists, who
had despaired of his safety. Lescarbot celebrated his re-
turn by a sort of triumph, crowning the gates of the fort
with laurel, over which was placed the arms of France.
Below were placed the arms of De Monts and of Poutrin-
court, also wreathed with laurel, and a song was composed
by Lescarbot in honor of the occasion. That indefatigable
and light-hearted Frenchman had not been idle during
Poutrincourt’s absence. With the assistance of Louis
Hebert, the apothecary, who had much experience in such
matters, he had superintended the preparation of ground
for gardens and fields. He also had a ditch dug round
the fort, which drained it completely and made it dry and
comfortable. He had the buildings more perfectly fitted
up by the carpenters; had roads cut through the woods to
various points, and charcoal burnt for the forge, which was
kept in active operation for the preparation of tools for the
workmen and laborers. And he had accomplished all this
without any great strain on the strength of the men, for