

A PEI History Trivia

Top Ten



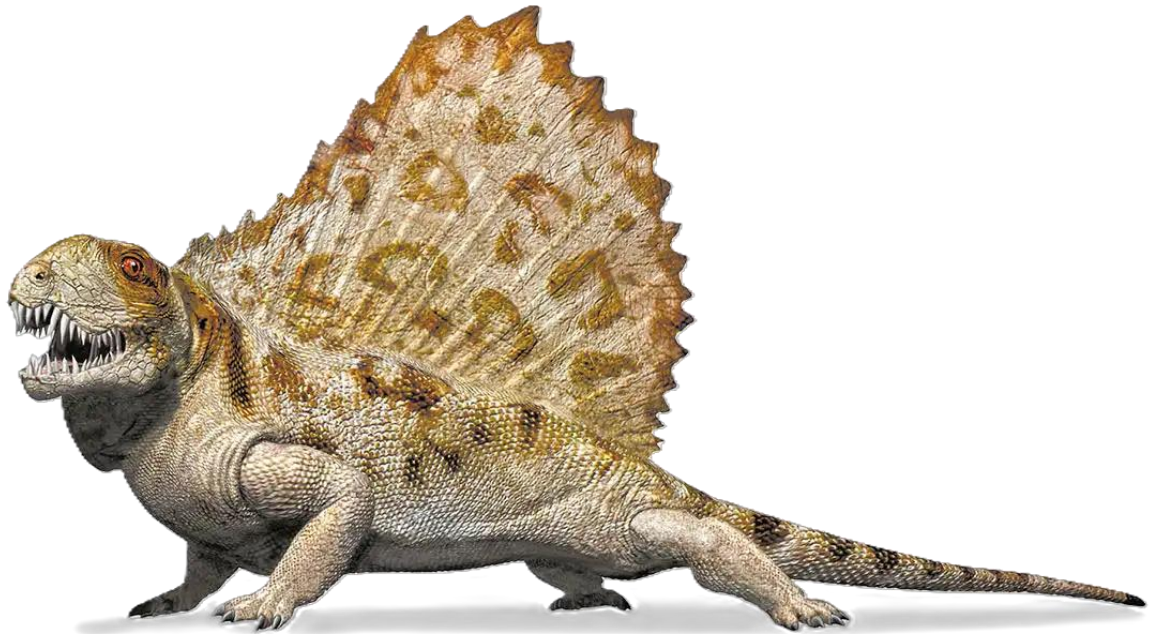
Edward MacDonald

TIAPEI

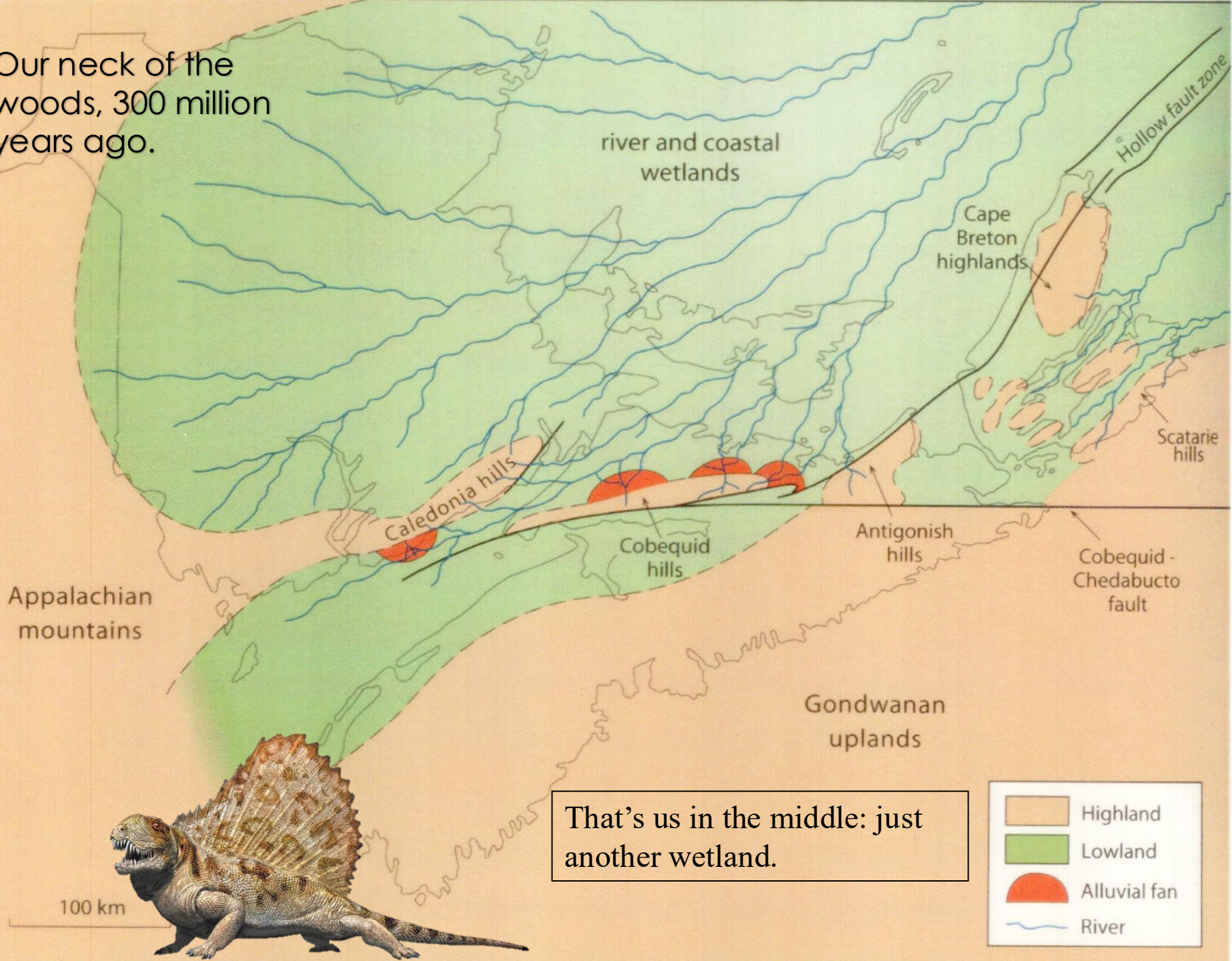
April 2026



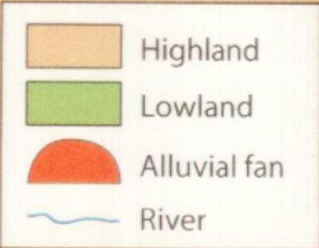
No. 10:
Fossil
Hotbed



Our neck of the woods, 300 million years ago.



That's us in the middle: just another wetland.





Discovered in 1845 in a French River well, the 270 million-year-old fossil snout was dubbed *bathygnathus borealis*. Today, it is recognized as a species of dimetrodon called *Dimetrodon borealis*.

When it comes to fossils, we're suddenly gaining a reputation!





In 2013 Bathy even got its own coin..

<http://www.thecoinshoppe.ca/2013-canadian-dinosaurs-bathygnathus-borealis-fine-silver-coin/>



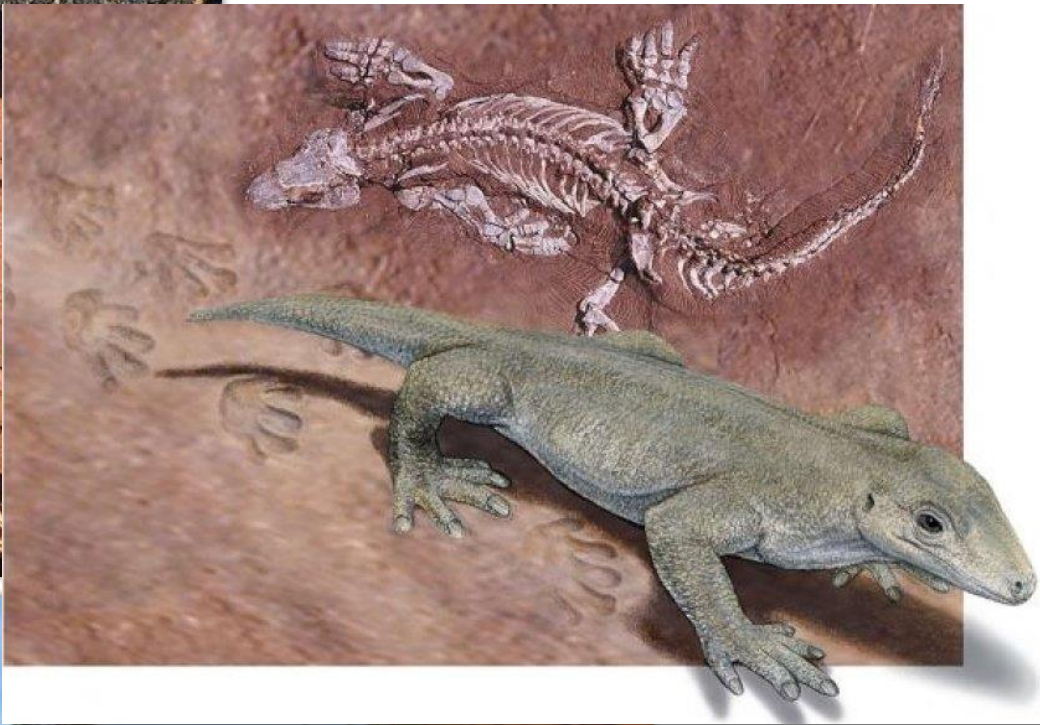


Dimetrodon footprint found by Laura MacNeill at Cavendish.

(right) Fossil of amphibian footprints, found near Cumberland and donated to the PEIMHF in 2020. (CBC)



An approximately 300-million-year-old fossil with the impression of nine footprints, each footprint with four or five visible toes. This trackway was found at Cumberland Beach in 2019. It is unlike any other trackways yet identified and might be a new amphibian species! Photographer Meg Preston



Fossil footprints
from the
Permian period,
found at
Halliday's Wharf,
near Belfast.
(No, it's not just
a raccoon. It's . .
. It's . . .
Ichniotherium!)



Another trackway found near Eldon, belonging to a large - bodied herbivore.

According to the Royal Ontario Museum, these are possibly the largest Permian footprints yet found.

Reptile fossil found on shores of Egmont Bay in the mid-1990s by Michael Arsenault. The original fossil is approximately nine inches in length. The fossil was acquired by the Royal Ontario Museum, which named the specimen in Michael's honour.



Photo courtesy of Betty Sheen.

Michael Arsenault and *Erpetonyx arsenaultorum*, a new species of small reptile. Like most PEI fossils, it's about 300 million years old.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/fossil-found-by-p-e-i-boy-fills-gap-in-reptile-evolution-1.2899592>





A fossil reptile foot, discovered on an Island beach by Anne MacFadyen in 2024. (CBC)



A fossil seed fern,
discovered after Hurricane
Fiona in 2023. (City News,
Halifax)

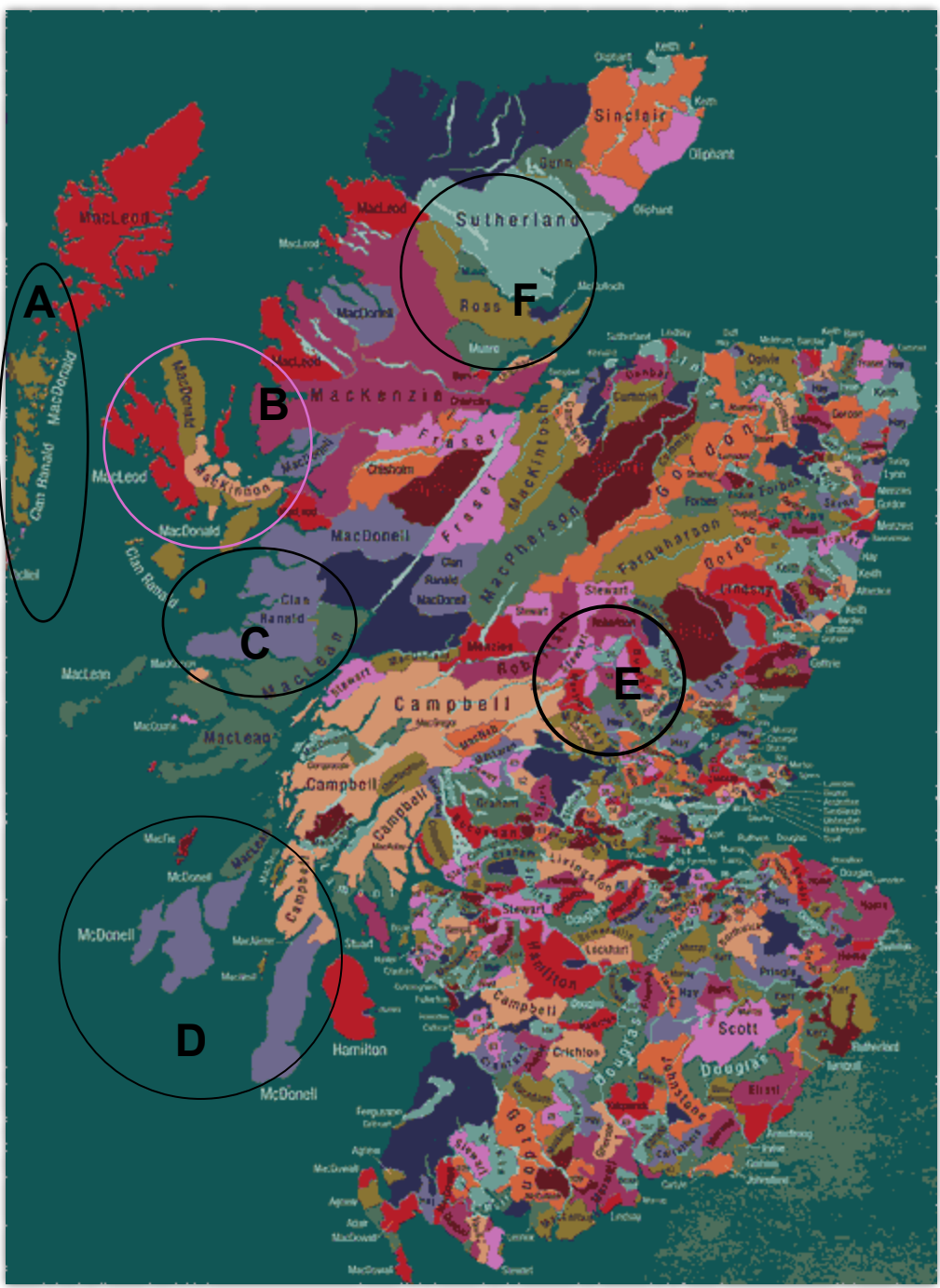


No. 9:
Prince Edward
Island's
Celtic Colours

Although the Highland Clearances aren't a myth, it is a myth that most Highland emigrants to PEI were cleared off their farms.



Thomas Faed, *The Last of the Clan* (1865)



A valiant attempt to chart – and freeze in time – traditional clan territories in Scotland along with major Lowland estates.
http://www.mooseman.de/pics/maps/map_scotland_clans.gif

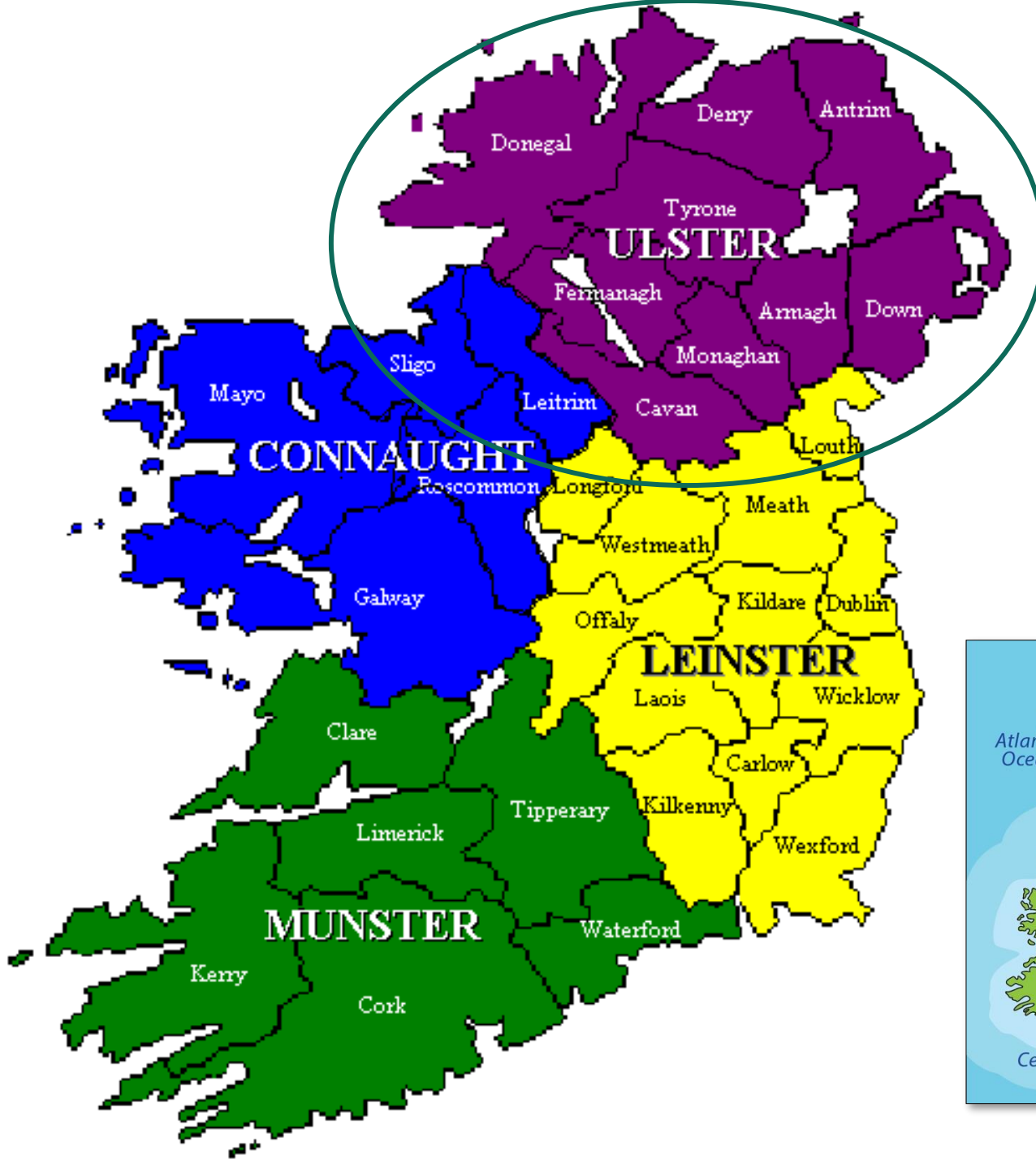
The principal sources of Scottish immigration to PEI are circled:

- A: **Clanranald MacDonald estates on South Uist** (mostly Catholic)
- B. **Skye and adjacent mainland** (mostly Protestant)
- C. **Clanranald MacDonald estates in Western Highlands, especially Moidart** (mostly Catholic)
- D. **Campbell estates in Argyll, especially. Mull, Kintyre, Colonsay, and Coll** (mostly Protestant)
- E. **Perthshire** (mostly Protestant)
- F. **Ross-shire** (mostly Protestant)

And virtually all of the Irish immigrants to PEI were here before the Great Famine struck in 1845—51.



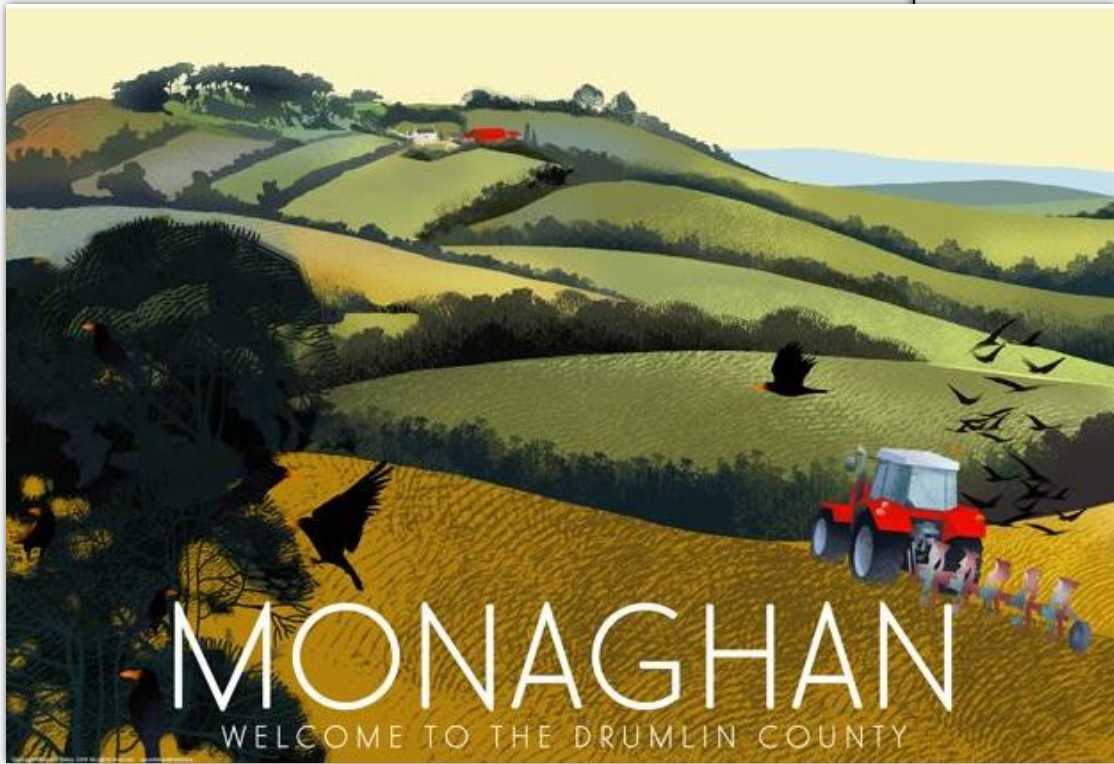
Erskine Nicol, *An Evicted Family* (1853)



After 1830, the pivot of Irish emigration switched to the northeastern province of Ulster.



And within Ulster, the greatest single source of Irish immigration to PEI originated in County Monaghan.



By 1855, end of major immigration era:

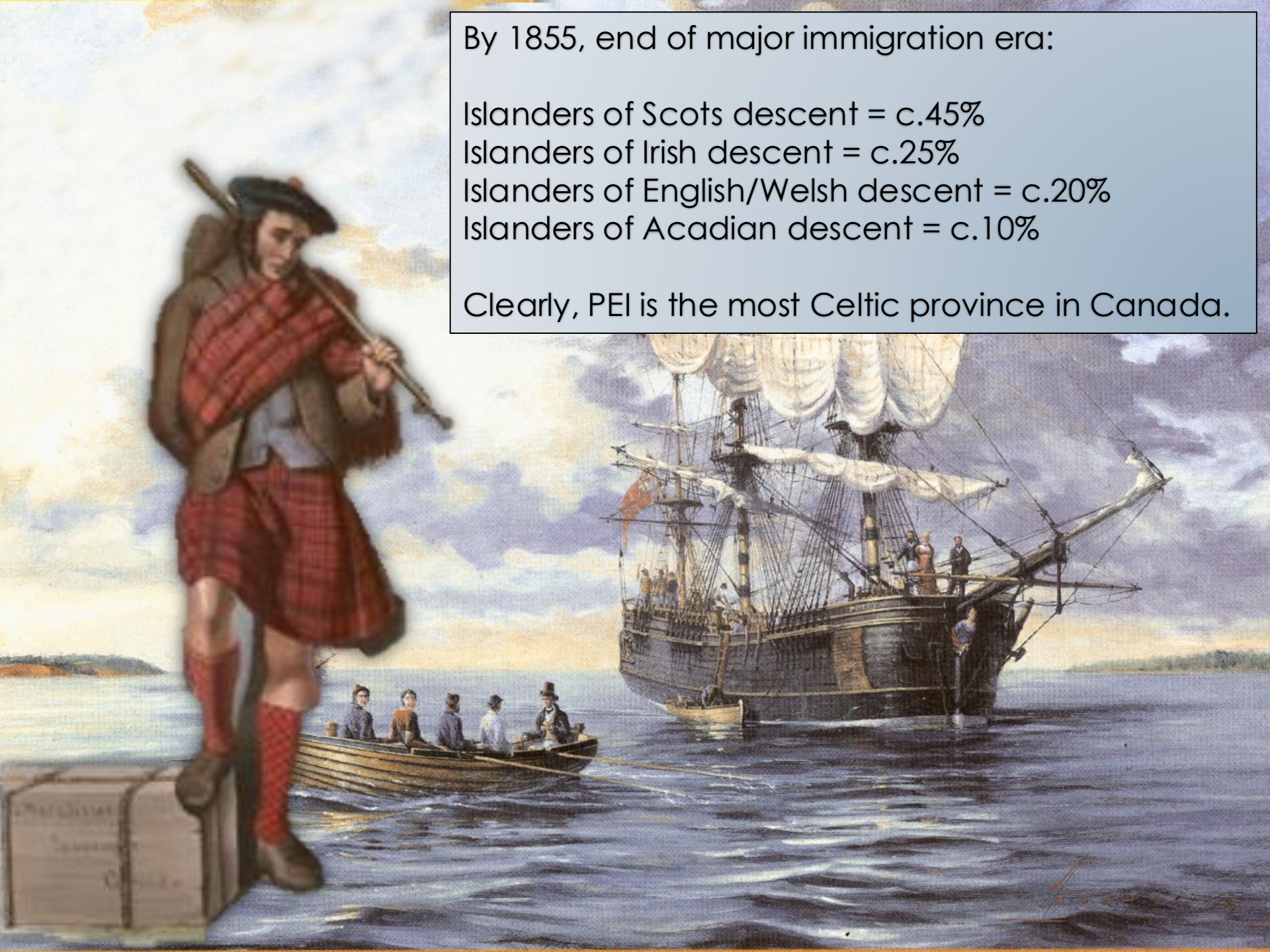
Islanders of Scots descent = c.45%

Islanders of Irish descent = c.25%

Islanders of English/Welsh descent = c.20%

Islanders of Acadian descent = c.10%

Clearly, PEI is the most Celtic province in Canada.





No. 8: The Yankee Gale, 3—5 October 1851

“The afternoon was warm and still, the sky was heavily clouded, but yet no indication of the approaching tempest was apparent, excepting a lurid brassy appearance to the north and nor’west about sunset: in the West Indies, the sure harbinger of a hurricane.”

“The Storm,” *The Islander*, 17 October 1851



“On the night of Friday last, and throughout the whole of Saturday and the following night, we were visited with a gale of unusual violence, from the E.N.E., and violent storm of rain, almost unparalleled in the history of this Island; from the loss of ships accompanying it, and altogether so far as loss of life which has taken place.”

Haszard's Gazette, 7 October 1851

“Some of the [American] Captains say, that they have been thirty years at sea, and never experienced such a gale before.”

Islander, 10 October 1851



Engraving by Steve Clement, 1995.

The Scope of the Disaster

Official Totals: 74 vessels and c.150 deaths

Possible Totals: c110 vessels and perhaps
200+ deaths





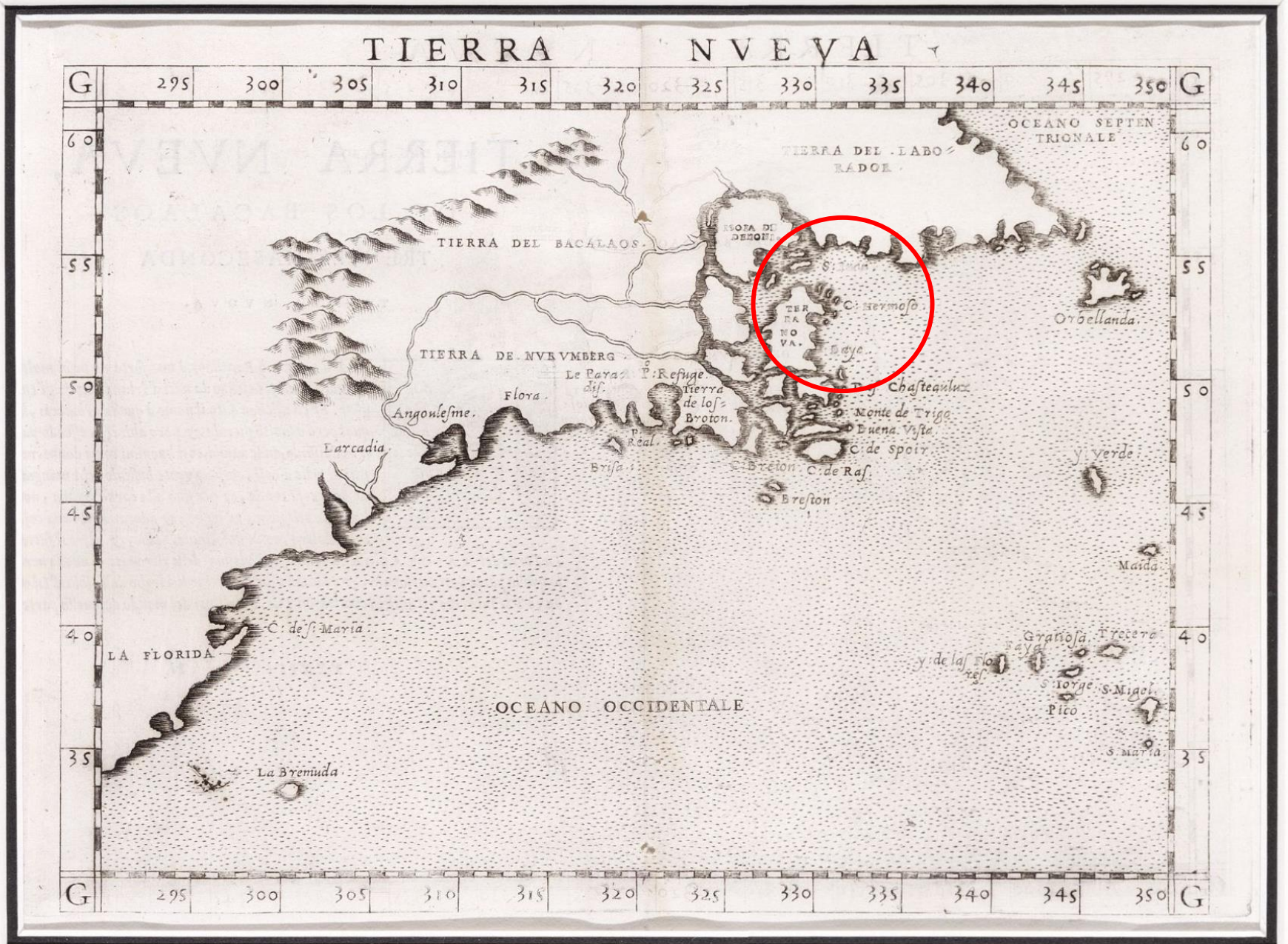
No. 7: The Naming of Prince Edward Island

Epekwitk

(Charlottetown Airport)



"Made On Mi'kma'ki" Craft Team: Koady Sock, Tee Sock and Morgan Varis

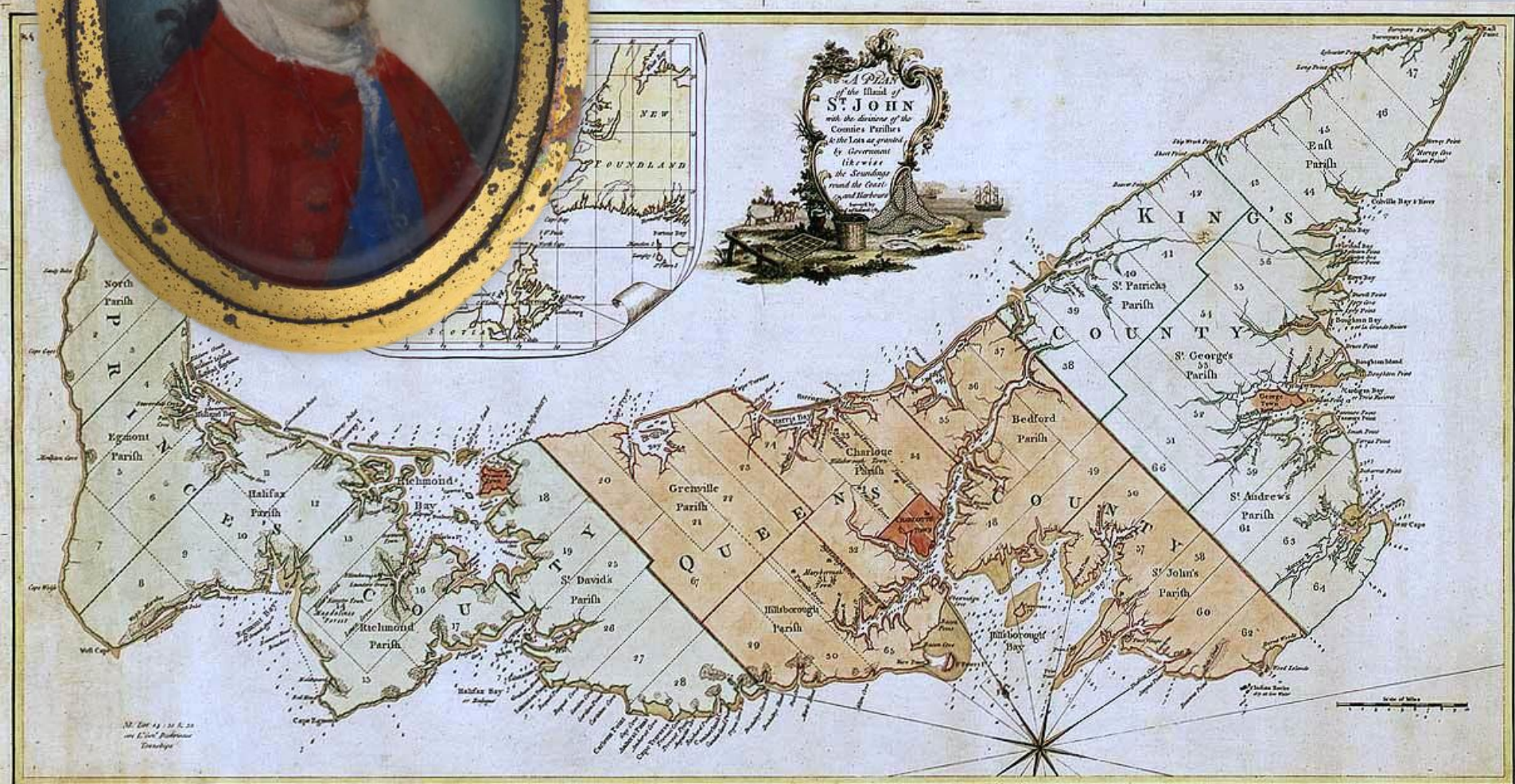


One of the earliest appearances of an island called "Île-Saint-Jean": the Ruscelli map of 1561.

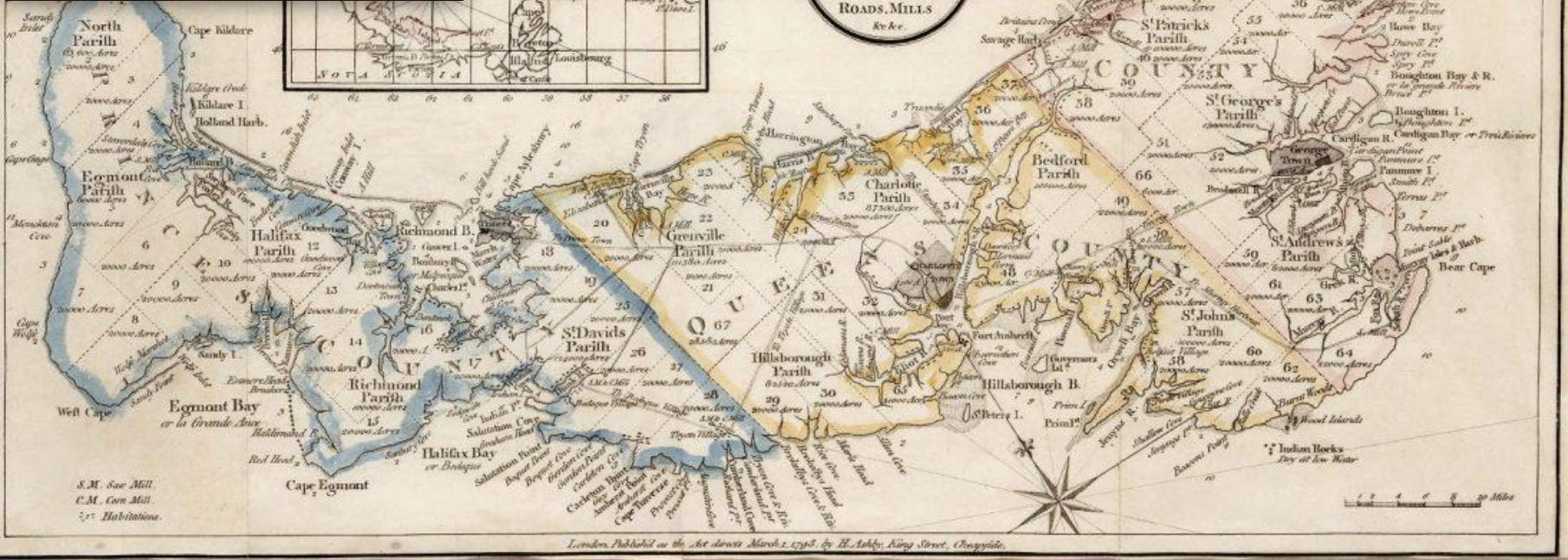
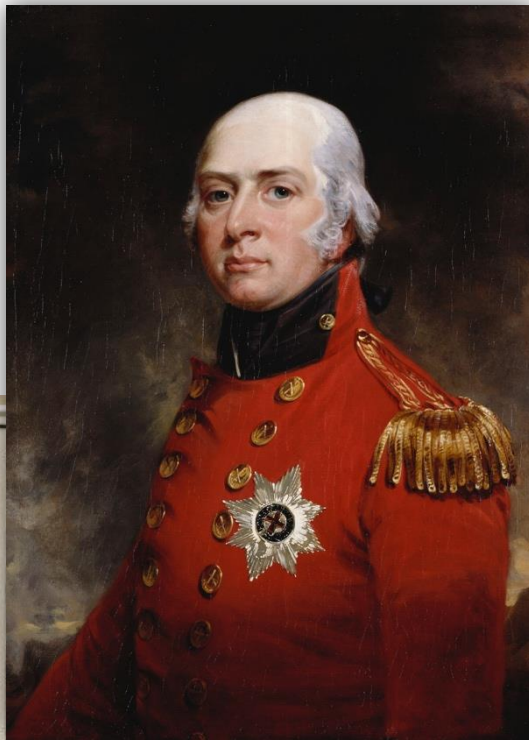


Only on Samuel de Champlain's third map of New France, created in 1632, did he manage to match the name "Île-Saint-Jean" with the location and shape of our island.

The Island's first governor, Donegal-born Walter Patterson tried to re-name St. John's Island "New Ireland" in 1781. The British Government would have none of it.



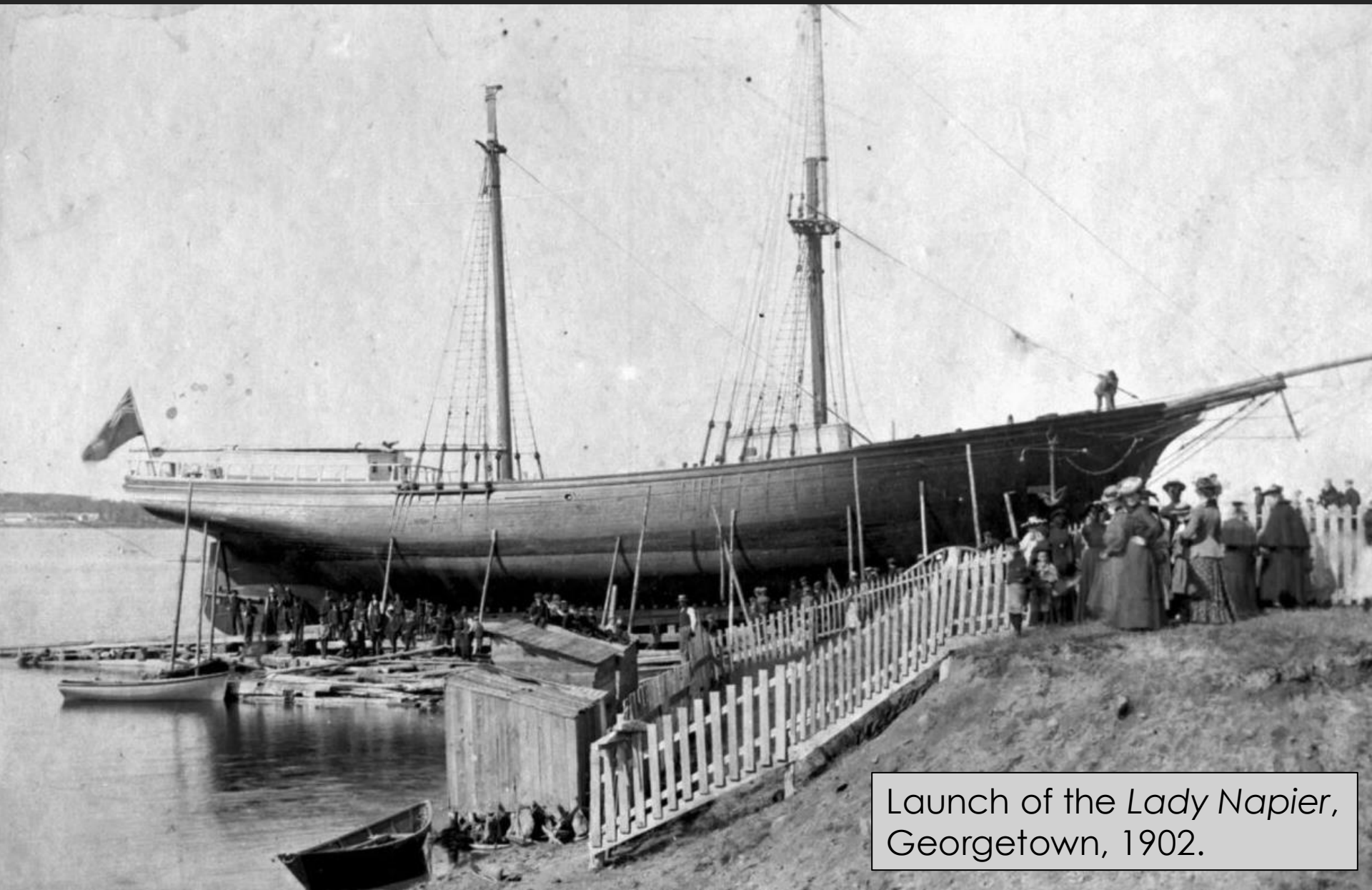
Finally, in 1799 a new piece of legislation, re-naming the colony for George III's son, Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, was given Royal Assent. Edward had never been any closer than Halifax, but at least he knew we existed. And what else is her known for?





That's right, he was Queen Victoria's father.

No. 6: The Hidden History of Shipbuilding



Launch of the *Lady Napier*,
Georgetown, 1902.

Shipbuilding on PEI

- 1796-1820 262 vessels, average 11 per year
- 1821-1834 549 vessels, average 36 per year
- 1835-1844 627 vessels, average 57 per year
- 1845-1859 1,337 vessels, average 85 per year
- 1860-1868 854 vessels, average 95 per year
- 1869-1880 661 vessels, average 55 per year

Total

4,290 in c.176 identified shipyards



Island Shipbuilding in Context

- ✧ In the 1860s, the British Merchant Marine was the biggest in the world.
- ✧ In a typical year, shipyards in the UK added 150,000 tons of new shipping to this fleet.
- ✧ At the same time, shipyards in the Maritimes added 100,000 tons to this fleet.
- ✧ Of these 100,000 tons, 35,000 would come from shipyards on Prince Edward Island.
- ✧ Over the course of our wooden shipbuilding history, it is claimed that we built more vessels *per capita* than any other place in the British Empire outside of the UK itself.



Brig – 2 masts, both square-rig

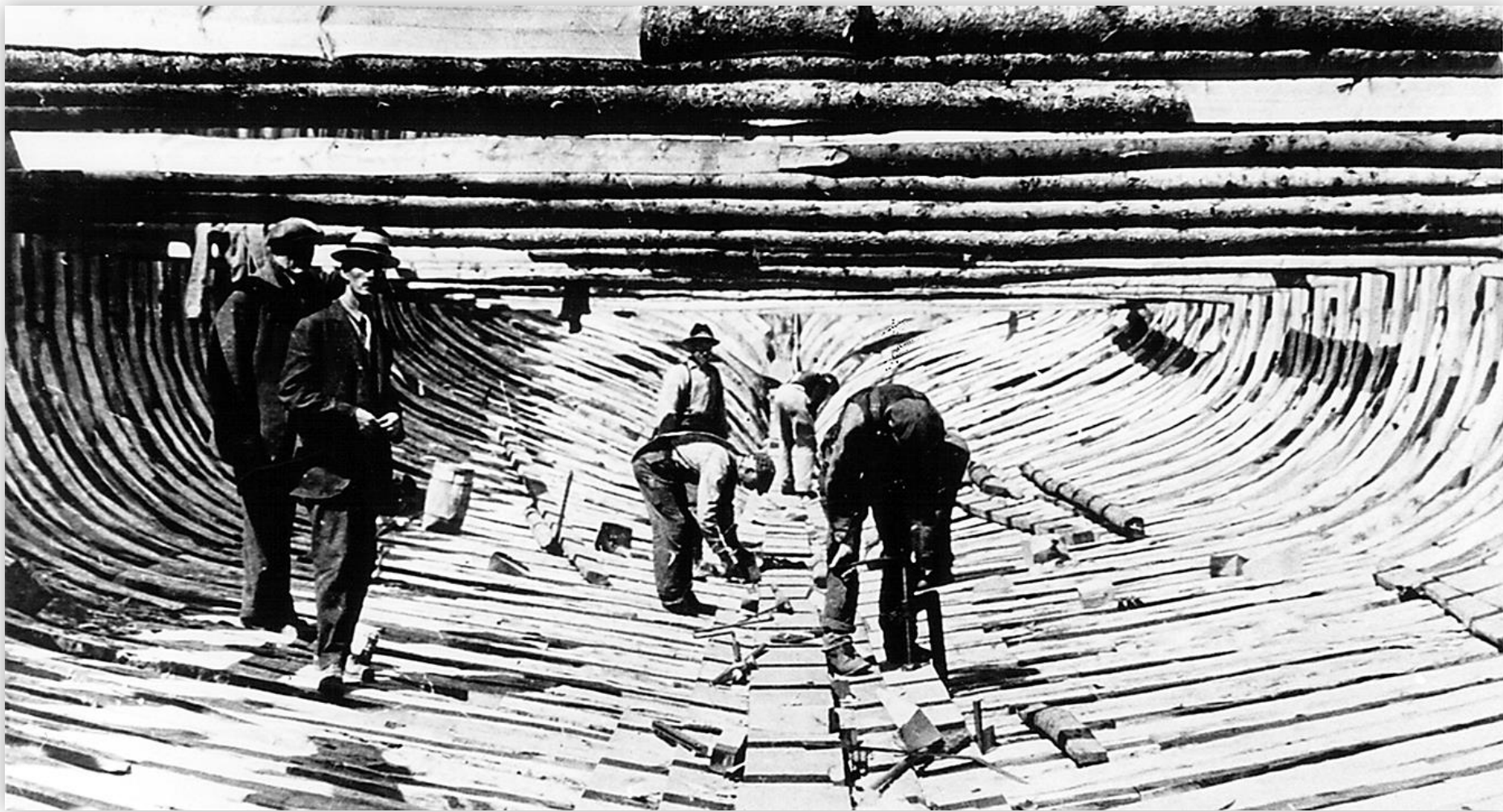


Brigantine – 2 masts: fore square rig; mizzen fore-and-aft

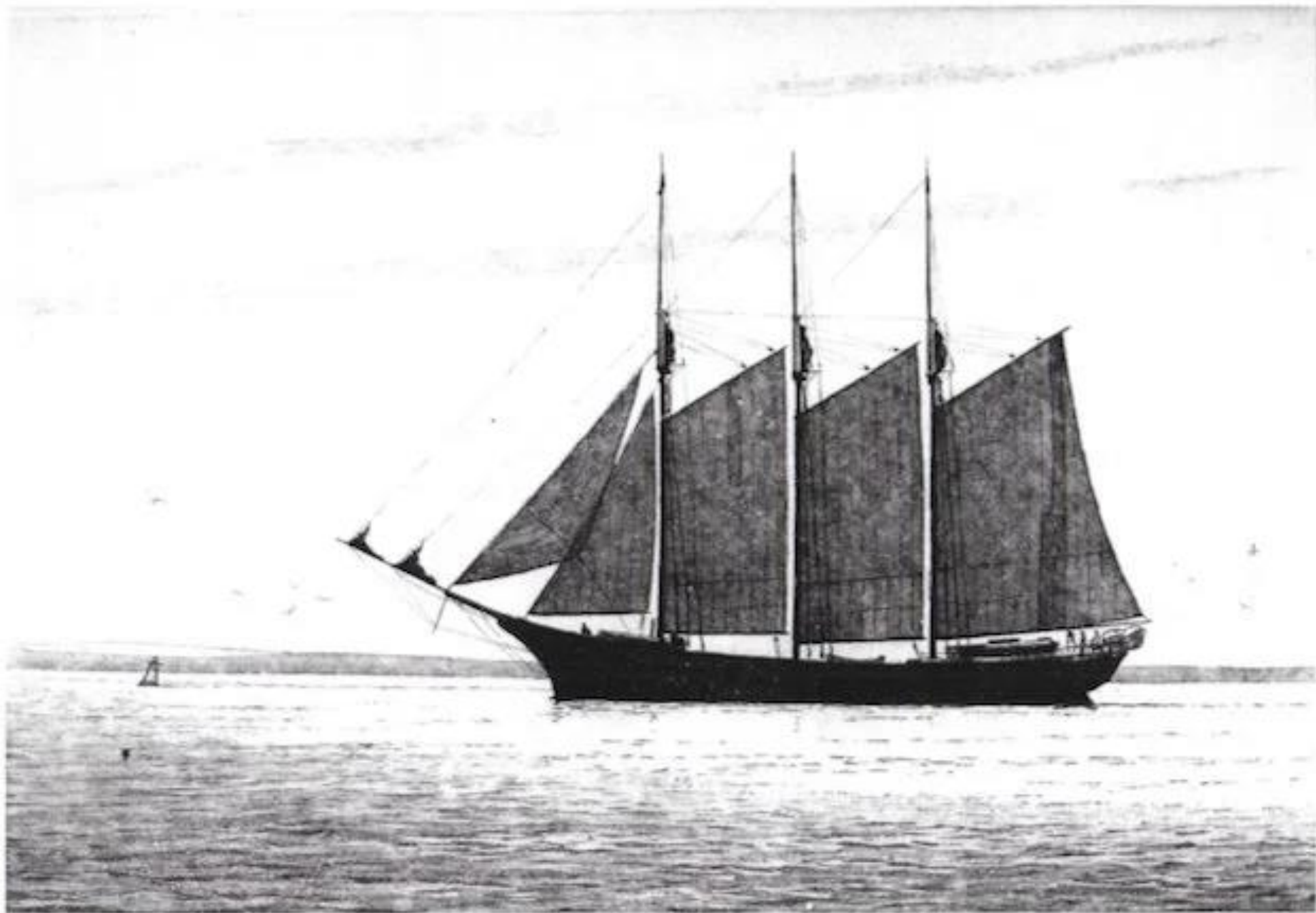




James C. Pope's *Undine*, built in Summerside in 1864.



A photo showing the construction in Cardigan of the *Victory Chimes*, one of the last large wooden sailing vessels built on PEI, in 1918. The owner, Cardigan merchant John A. Macdonald is the man in the straw boater at left.



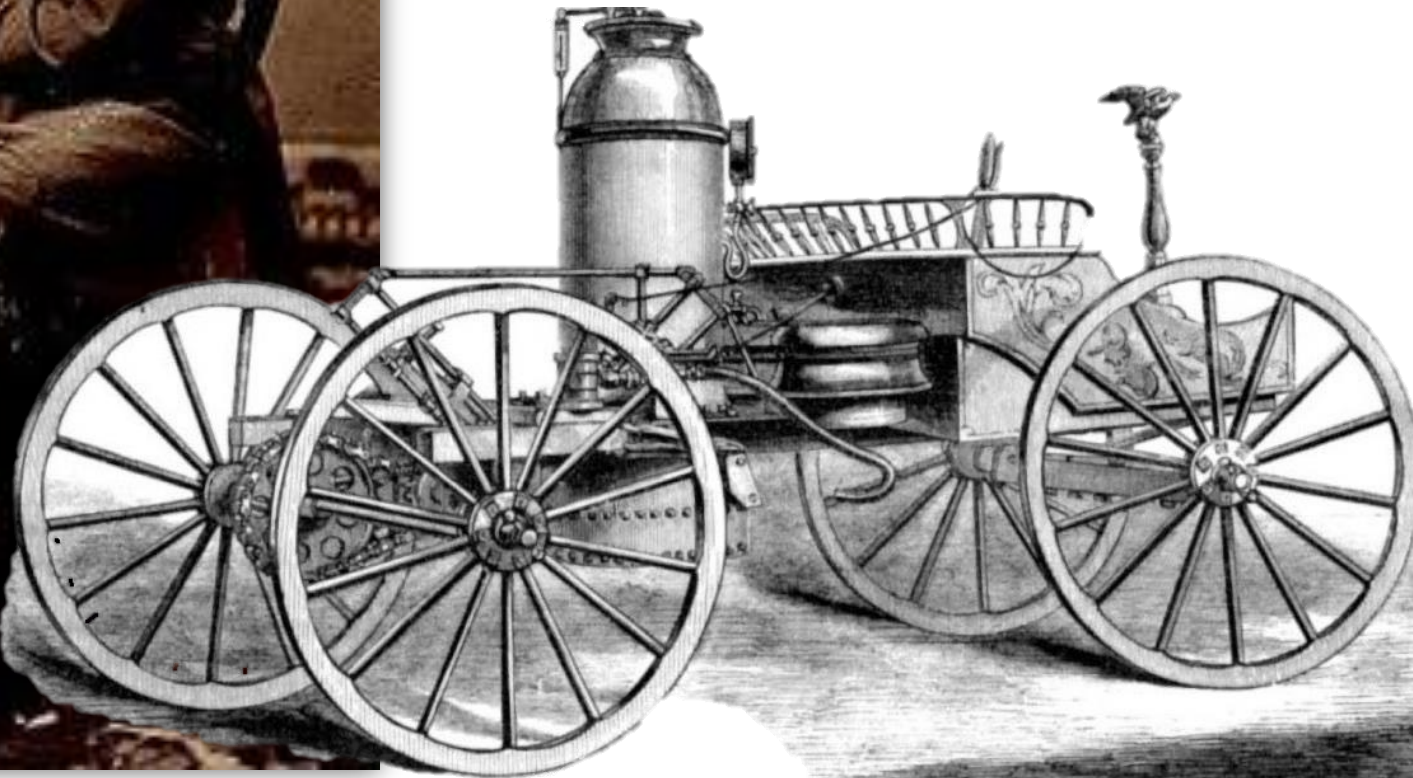
Steve Clements' 1986 engraving of the *Victory Chimes*.

No. 5: The Great Automobile Ban





Father Belcourt and his car. Tradition dates his epic drive to a single exhibition – which ended in an accident -- in 1866, but Rudy Croken's research suggests it was trotted out on special occasions for a number of years.



The only automobile in the province in 1900 was this steam-powered vehicle, owned by a Charlottetown syndicate, who offered excursions for 10 cents a fare.



Curious onlookers inspect a MacKay roadster, manufactured in Nova Scotia just before World War I by the MacKay brothers, former carriage builders from Souris. Dan MacKay is behind the wheel (left) and engineer Archie Pelton the passenger. (PARO)



No. 4. The Privateers' Raid on Charlottetown, November 1775



“A letter of mark came from the King. . . American commander,” General George Washington.

The Privateers, from Marblehead, Massachusetts:

- Captain Nicholas Broughton aboard the armed schooner *Hancock*
- Commodore John Selman on the armed schooner *Franklin* (aka *Lynch*).

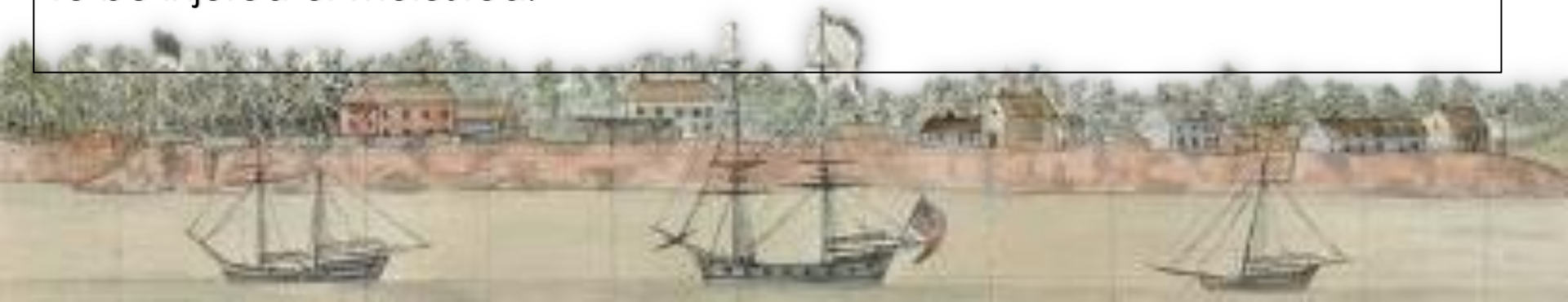
The Mission:

- seize two British ships bearing armaments and ammunition *en route* from Britain to Quebec -- and any other military transports they came upon.

The Reward:

- 1/3rd the value of any prize taken

“Should you meet with any vessel, the property of the inhabitants of Canada, not employed in any respect in the service of the ministerial army you are to treat such vessel with all kindness, and by no means suffer them to be injured or molested.”



There are no images of either of the American privateers, but they would have looked something like this schooner. They never actually made it to the Gulf of St. Lawrence – but they found Charlottetown undefended.



The Prisoners:

- Phillips Callbeck: Attorney-General and Administrator of the colony
- Thomas Wright: Surveyor-General of the Colony, judge, and member of Council

Seized in Canso

- David Higgins: proprietor, merchant, naval officer, member of Council
- Rev. Theophilus Desbrisay, Anglican chaplain (quickly released)
- J.R. Spence (released with family almost immediately)

The Plunder:

- Food stores
- Furnishings and bed linen
- Tableware
- Liquor





While the privateers' human plunder was quickly returned, the material booty was not.

Just in case: this is what the colony's great silver seal looked like.





IN AMERICA

SIGILLUM

MINTAE

PARVA SUB INGENTI

PARVA SUB INGENTI



No. 3: Silver Foxes +
Skunks and Raccoons

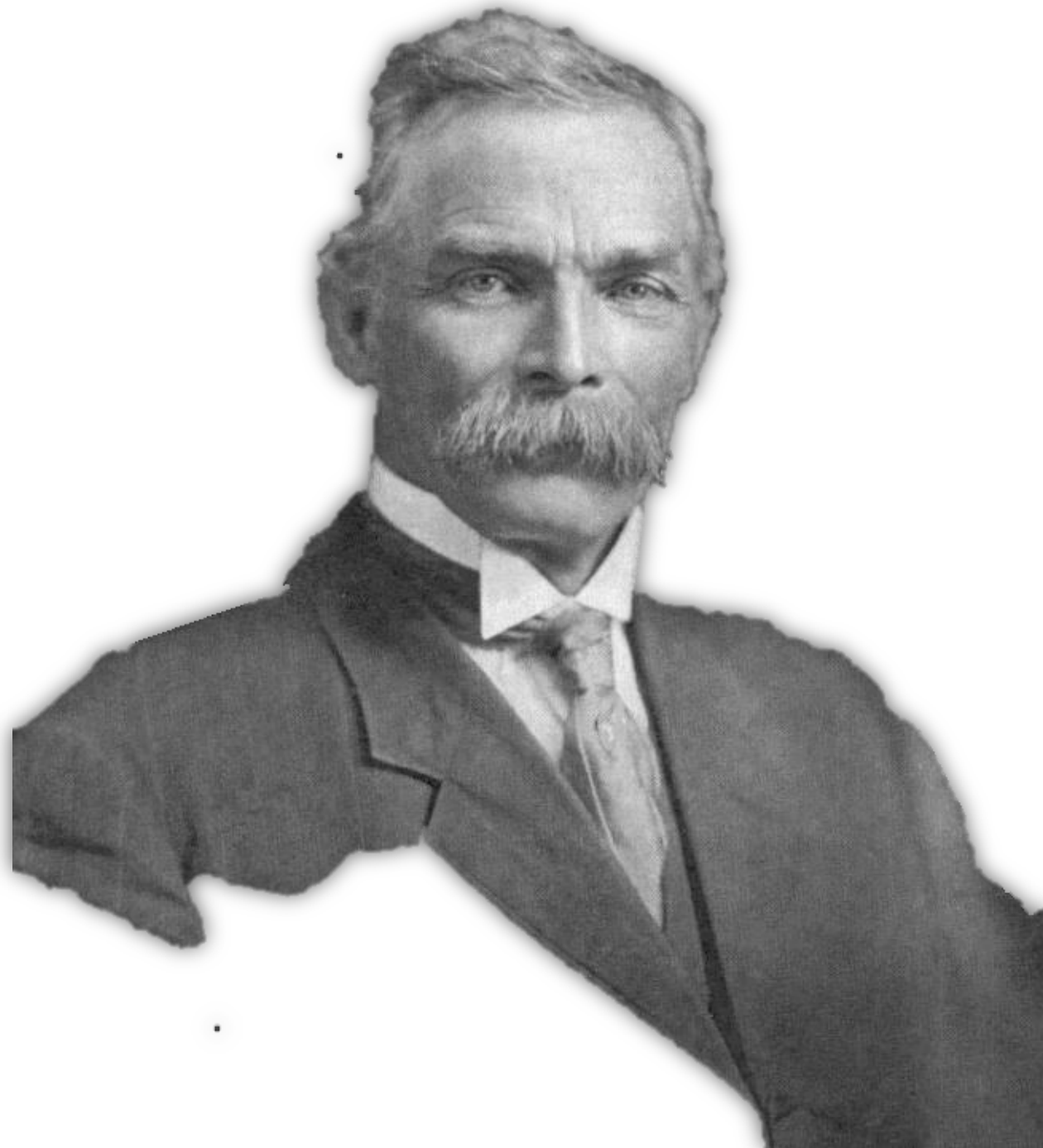


The Black Fox is actually not a separate species, but a mutation of the common red fox. But the silver guard hairs on black fox fur gave it a luxuriant sheen that put it at the apex of high fashion in the late 1800s.





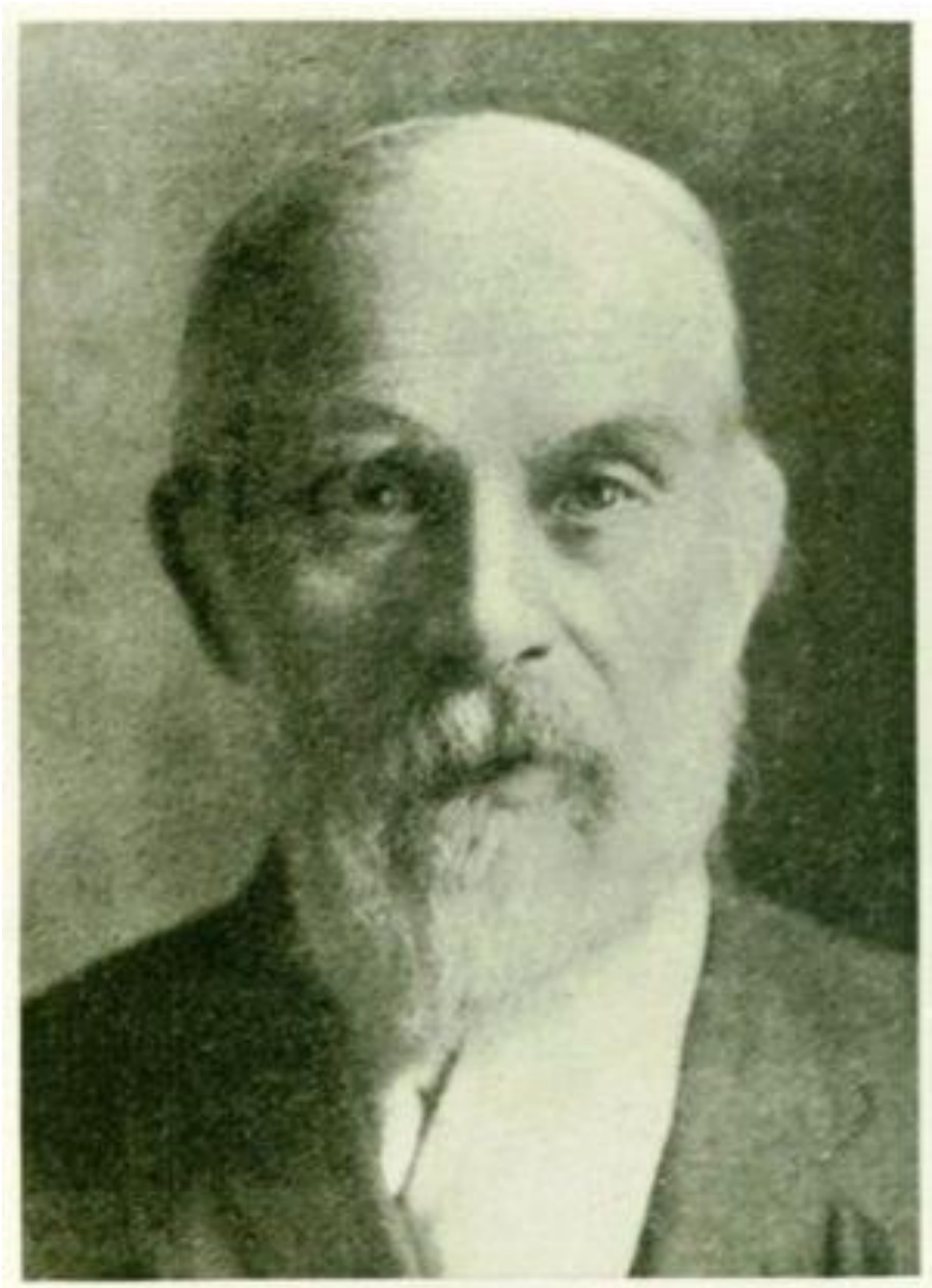
Fox fur fashions.



Charles Dalton, the “Fox King.” Together with Robert Oulton, he pioneered the domestic breeding of silver foxes. Selective breeding techniques then ensured a steady supply of high-quality silver fox pelts for the luxury markets of Europe (and the United States). As the business face of the partnership, Dalton garnered much of the publicity when the fox industry broke open.[PARO]



Originally from New Brunswick, Robert T. Oulton experimented with fox breeding at his farm on Oulton's Island, near Alberton. If Dalton contributed an excellent head for business, handling the marketing of the pelts, Oulton is credited with the stock-raising expertise that produced a reliable supply of high-quality pelts.



The “Big Six” Combine

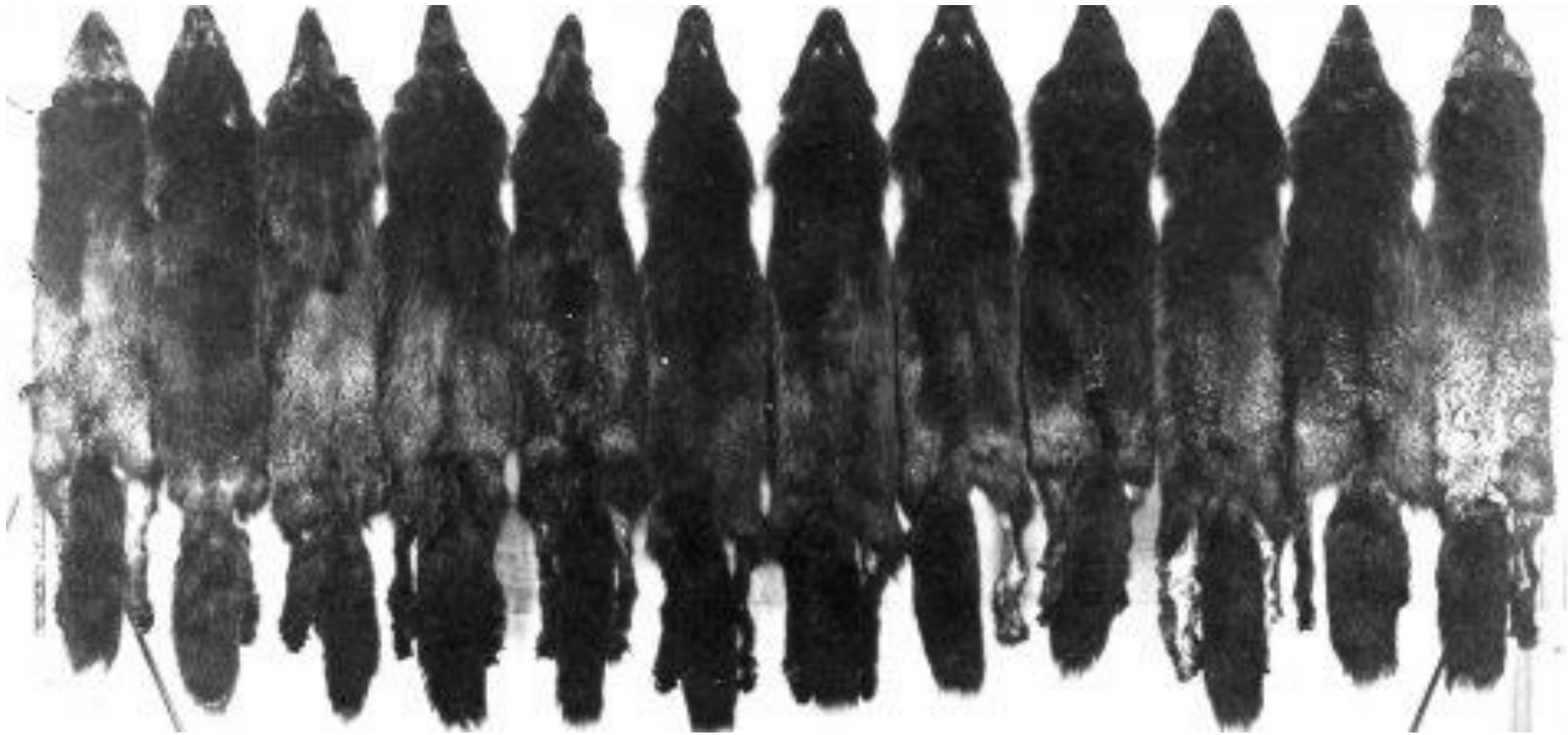
- Charles Dalton & Robert T. Oulton
 - Captain James Gordon (retired sea captain)
 - James Tuplin (carriage maker)
 - B. I. & Silas Rayner of Kildare
- Each had worked to develop their own breeding stock.
 - To maintain a monopoly on the supply of domesticated black fox pelts, they agreed around the turn of the century not to sell any live breeding stock outside of their group.



Early Fox Farming Statistics

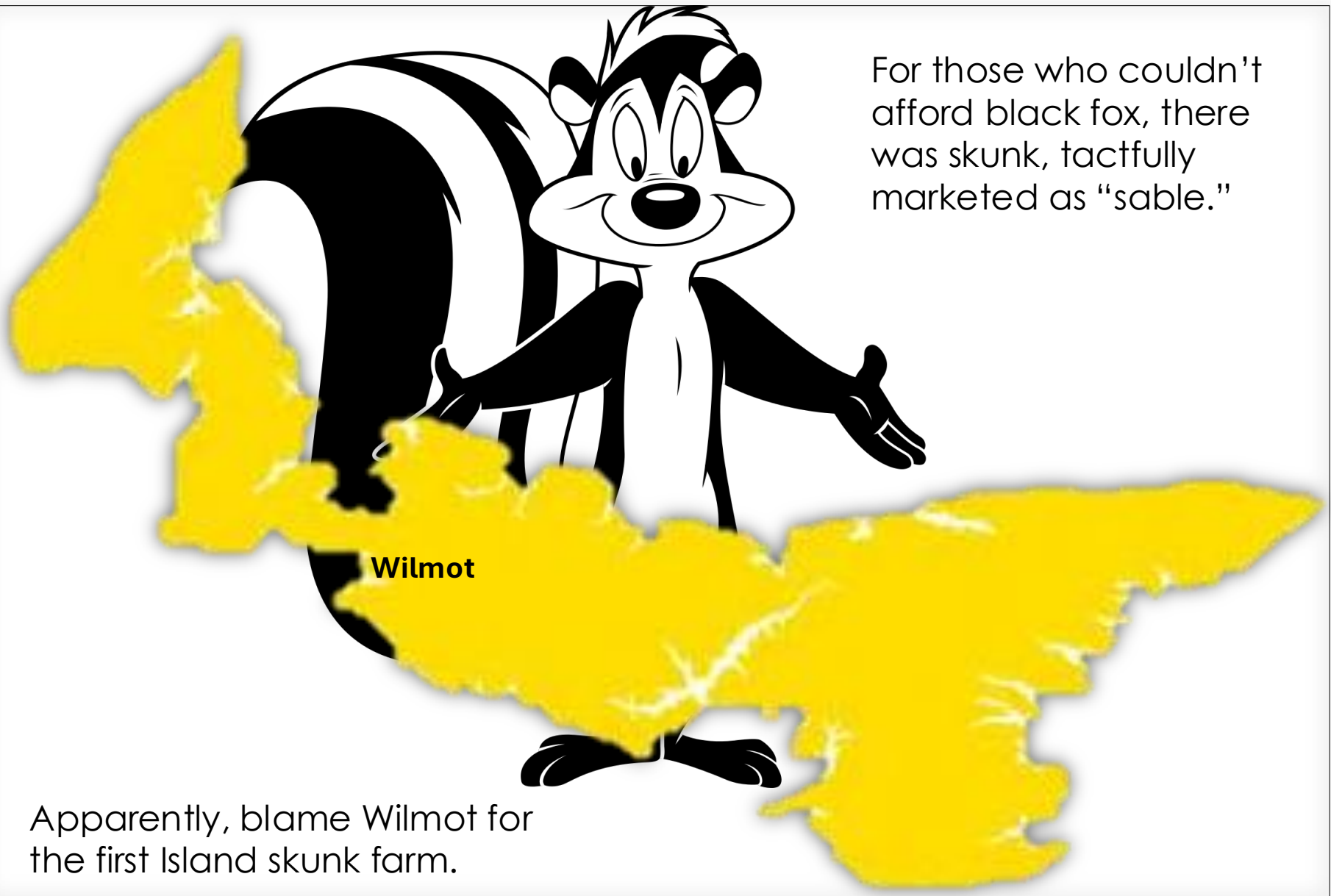
- 1900: A single Dalton/Oulton pelt sold for \$1,807.00
- 1901, the *Canada Year Book* officially put the value of furs on Prince Edward Island at \$517.
- 1910: Dalton and Oulton market 25 silver fox pelts, in London for \$34,649.
 - that year the average monthly wage for a farm labourer was \$26.60 (i.e. \$320/yr)
- August 1914, 312 fox ranches, with 4,587 foxes, and industry valued at \$26 million (notionally).
- 1914: a single, proven breeder could fetch as high as \$20,000
- 1924: Benjamin Raynor sold a prize pair of breeding stock for \$32,500.





The shipment shown here averaged over \$500 per pelt.






For those who couldn't afford black fox, there was skunk, tactfully marketed as "sable."

Wilmot

Apparently, blame Wilmot for the first Island skunk farm.



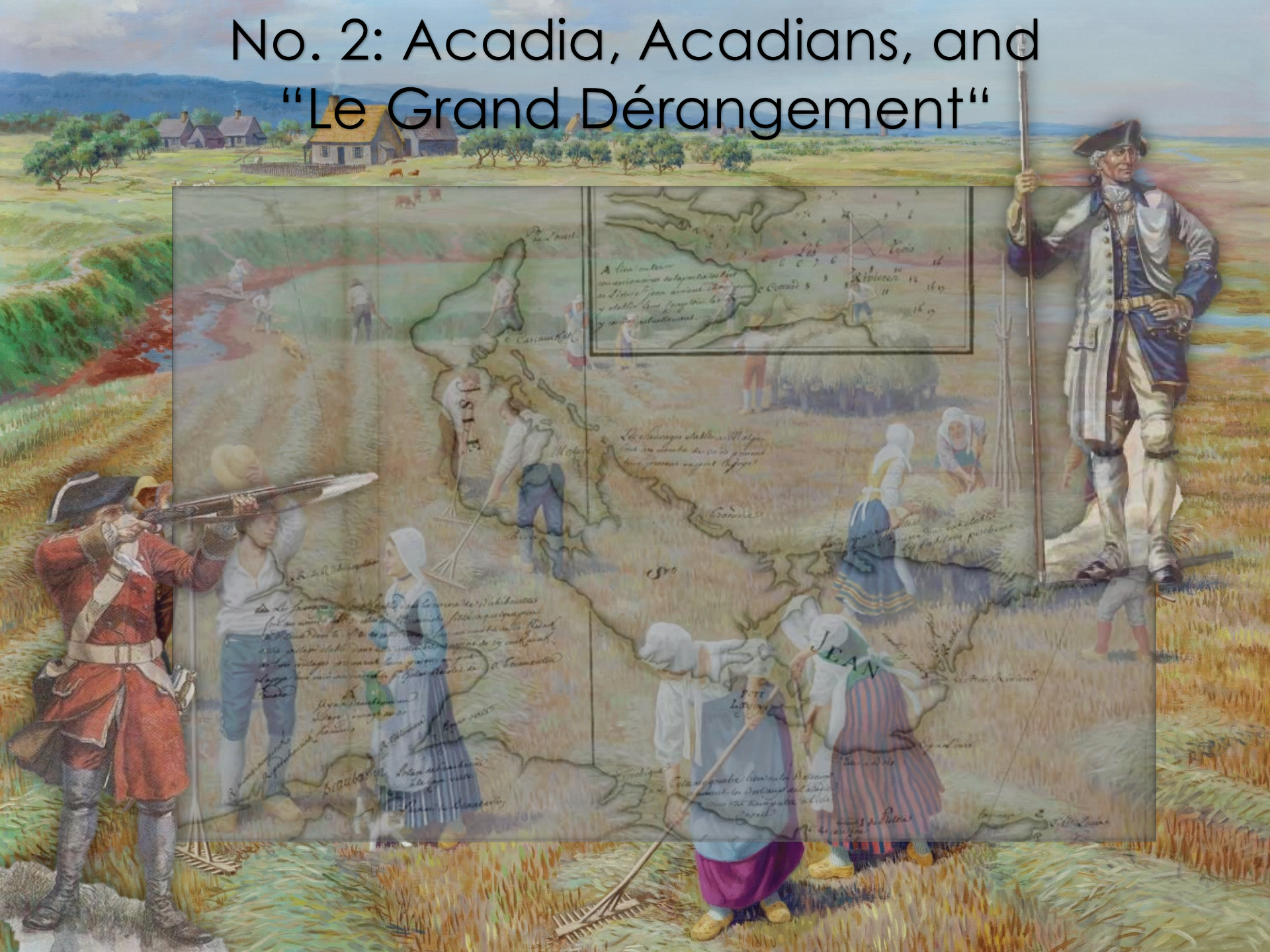
Fur ranchers selectively bred the white stripe out of the skunks' fur. (This is not a reference to "Seven Nation Army.")

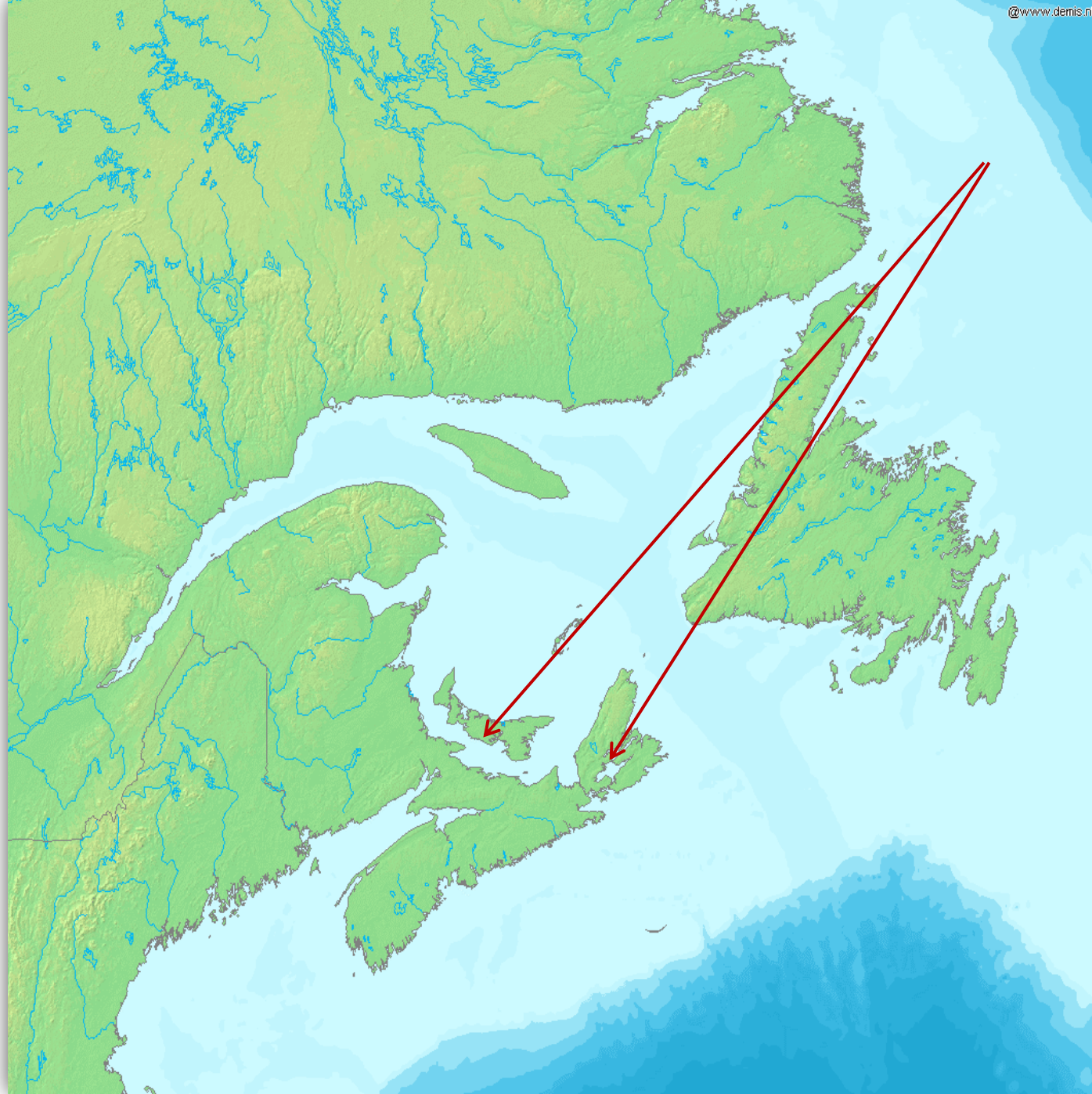
A raccoon is standing on a yellow map of Prince Edward Island. A speech bubble above the raccoon contains the text: "Could you direct me to the nearest McDonald's, please?".

Could you direct
me to the nearest
McDonald's,
please?

Raccoon also was a non-native,
imported to PEI by fur ranchers,
then released into the wild when
markets collapsed.

No. 2: Acadia, Acadians, and “Le Grand Dérangement”





Although first “discovered” by Jacques Cartier in 1534, our island was pretty much ignored for the next 200 years. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 left France with only two possessions in what is now Atlantic Canada: Île Royale and Île Saint-Jean.

ÎLE ST. JEAN

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

1735

● = 100 PERSONS • = 5 PERSONS

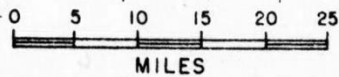
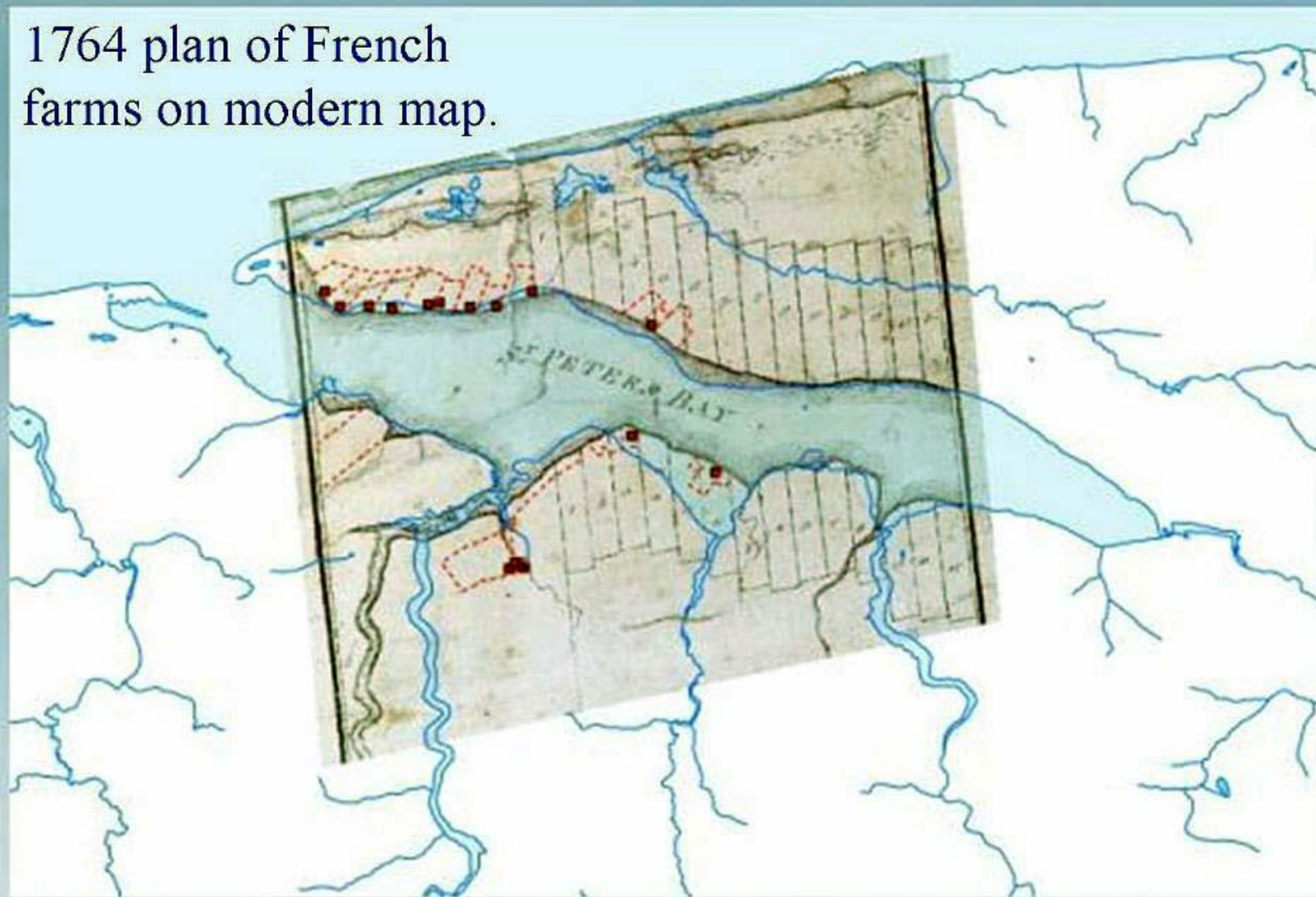


FIG. 14

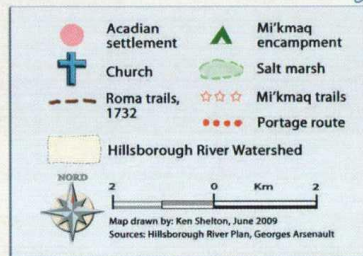
In 1735 the permanent European population was only 563, with 60% living around the fishing entrepot at Havre St. Pierre.

1764 plan of French
farms on modern map.

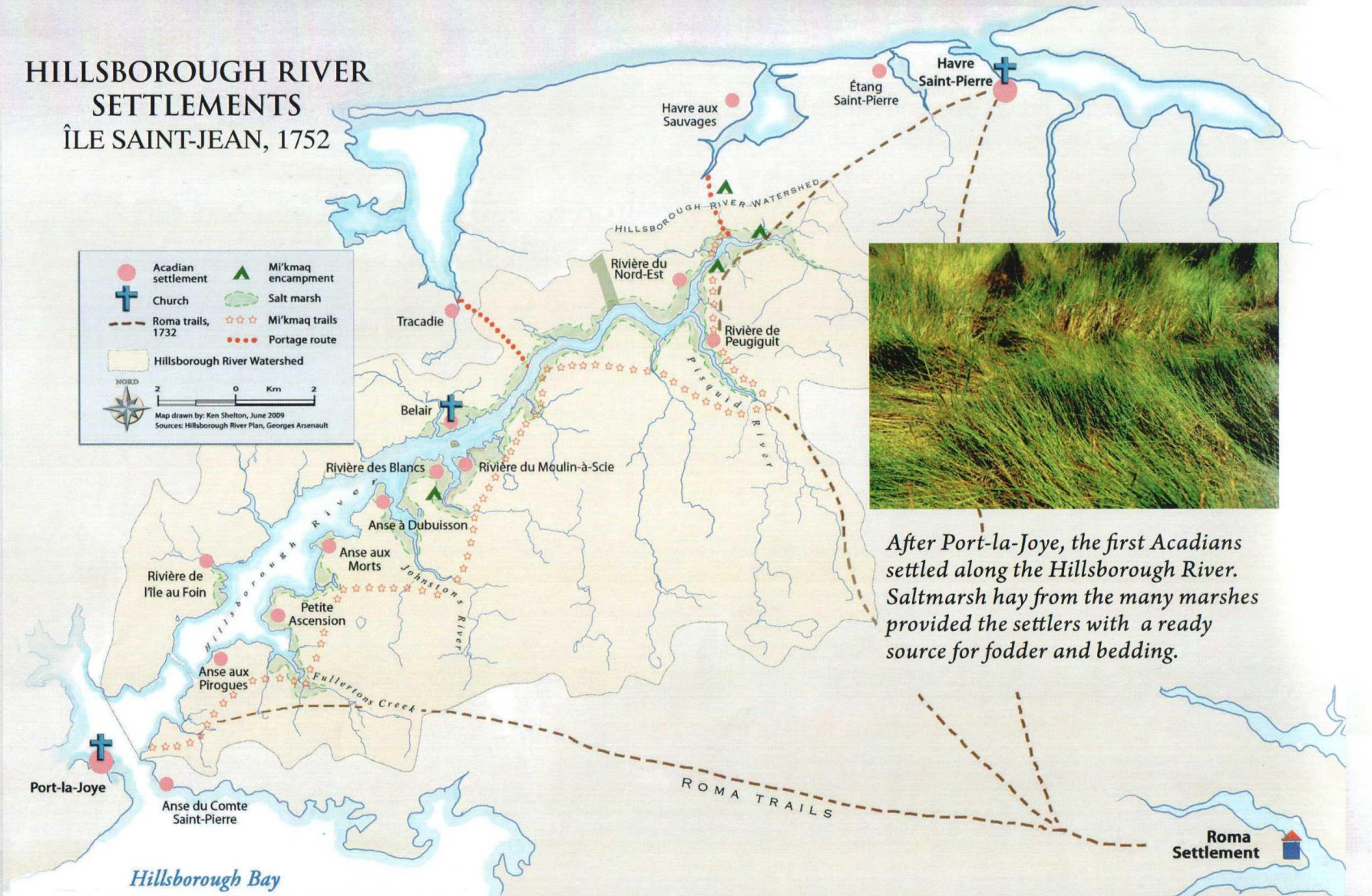


HILLSBOROUGH RIVER SETTLEMENTS

ÎLE SAINT-JEAN, 1752

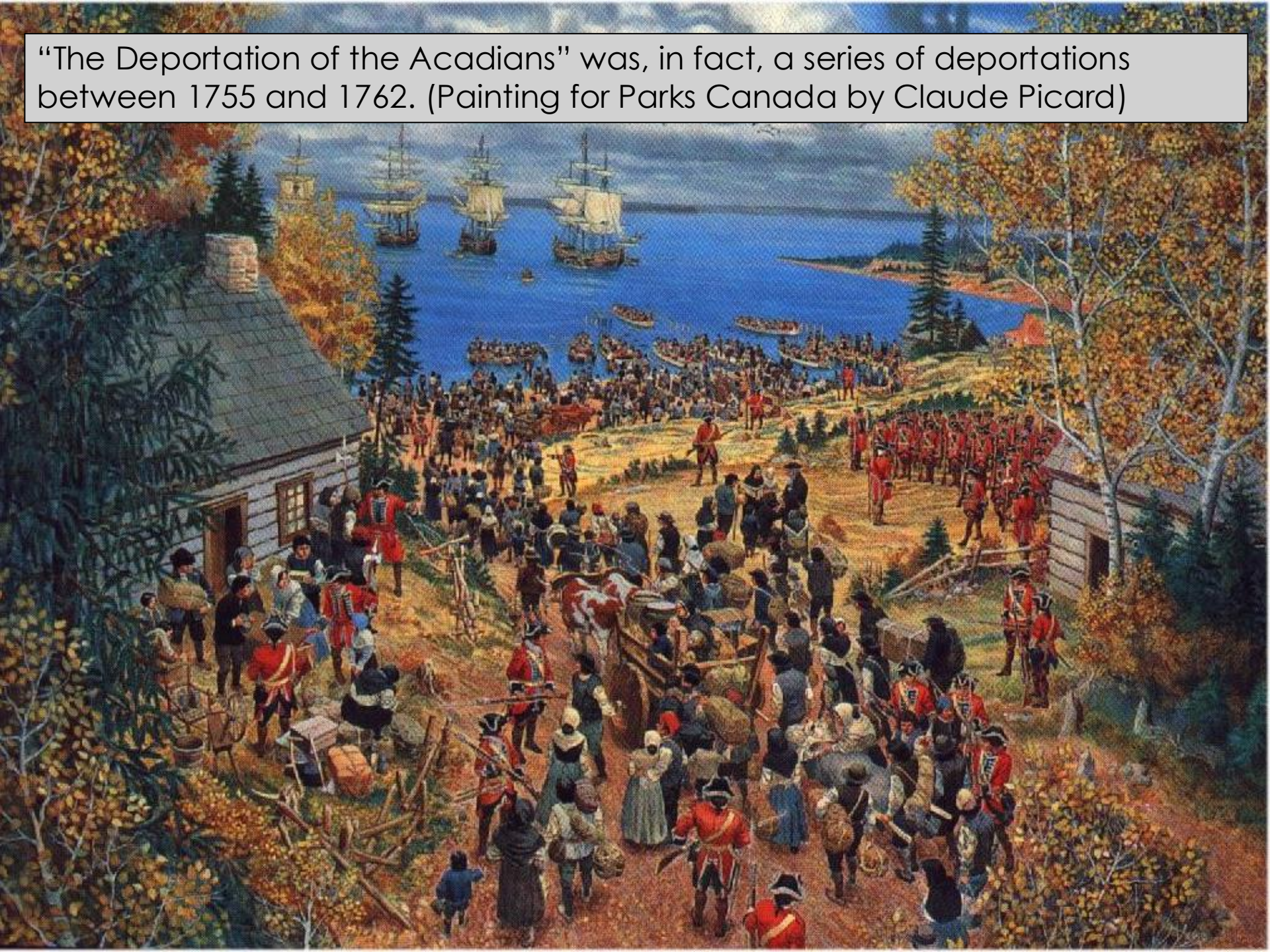


After Port-la-Joye, the first Acadians settled along the Hillsborough River. Saltmarsh hay from the many marshes provided the settlers with a ready source for fodder and bedding.

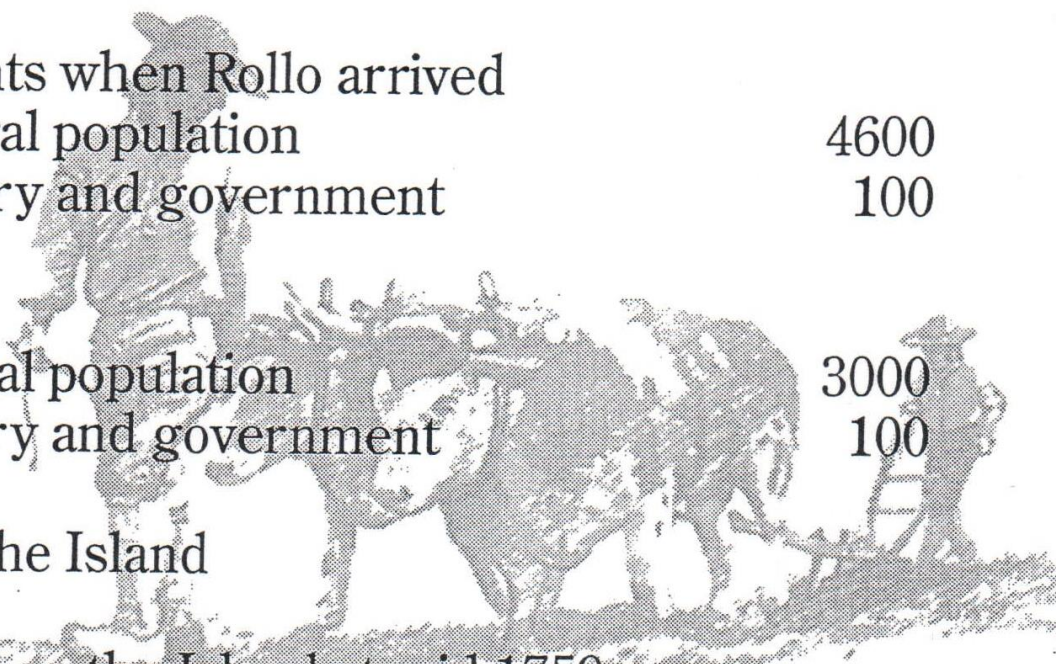


The heart of the French Regime on Ile Saint-Jean lay along the Riviere du Nord-Est (i.e. Hillsborough River).

“The Deportation of the Acadians” was, in fact, a series of deportations between 1755 and 1762. (Painting for Parks Canada by Claude Picard)



ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF DEPORTEES AND FUGITIVES



Number of residents when Rollo arrived		4700
General population	4600	
Military and government	100	
Number deported		3100
General population	3000	
Military and government	100	
Number who fled the Island		1400-1500
Number remaining on the Island at mid-1759		100-200

A table from Earle Lockerby's *Island Magazine* article. His more recent estimate puts the population closer to 4,500 inhabitants.

ESTIMATE OF DEATHS ABOARD SHIP OF DEPORTEES FROM Île ST.-JEAN

Transport	Initial Complement of Passengers From Île St.-Jean	Death by Disease and Illness	Death by Drowning	Total Deaths at Sea
<i>Duke William</i>	400	100	296	396
<i>Violet</i>	360	90	270	360
<i>Ruby</i>	310	77	113	190
<i>Supply</i>	165	25	-	25
<i>John and Samuel</i>	1020	342	-	342
<i>Mathias</i>				
<i>Patience</i>				
<i>Restoration</i>				
<i>Yarmouth</i>				
<i>Tamerlane</i>	60	6	-	6
<i>Mary</i>	560	255	-	255
Other Transports	225	75	-	75
	—	—	—	—
	3100	970	679	1649

Note: This compilation does not allow for the possibility that one of the "Other Transports" was wrecked on the coast of Spain with the loss of life by drowning. The *Mary* referred to above is the transport which received passengers from Île St.- Jean at Louisbourg.



Hit and Myth re the Island Deportation

- There was only one Deportation, in 1755
- The Acadians were all deported to Louisiana
- The Acadians on today's PEI are descendants of a handful of people that escaped deportation by hiding in the woods in Malpeque
- The Acadians' farms and crops were destroyed here
- The Acadians were treated with unusual cruelty in the manner of their deportation (as opposed to the act of deportation)

No. 1: The Cradle of Confederation



NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.

At the Lot Corner of Queen and Fitzroy Streets,

On TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY, the 30th and 31st August, and THURSDAY and FRIDAY, the 1st and 2nd Sept.

SLAYMAKER & NICHOLS' OLYMPIC CIRCUS

Under the Management of
GOODWIN & WILDER.



The most beautiful Equestriennes,
The most accomplished Riders,
The most daring Acrobats,
The finest Stud of Horses,
The most learned Dogs and
The most Comical Monkeys.

In proof of which Messrs. Goodwin & Wilder point with just pride to the following array of names, which include the moiety of this Artistic Company.

W. W. Nichols,
the Great Principal Trick Rider

Mr. J. M. Cook,
the European Jester and Python Equitrian, from Cook's Hippodrome, 14th Street, N. Y.

M'lle Caroline,
the Accomplished Mistress de Chien, from Asson's Fountains Garden, New York.

M'lle Elizabeth,
Premier Equestrienne, whose Classic Scenes de Cirque fully entitled her name d'artiste of La Riens D'Arena.

Miss Frank Nixon,
the Exquisite Dancer, in her Gracful and Sweet Polkas and Charming Acts.

Mr. John Allen,
the Celebrated Nestor of the Circus, and Wit Extraordinary.

Mr. J. Burt,
the American Humoral and World's own Clown.

Mons. Ferdinand,
the Sensational and Historic Equestrian.

And last though not least,

The Snow Brothers
Benjamin,
William, and

Accommodations were at a premium for the Fathers. The Slaymaker and Nichols' Olympic Circus was in town! It was the first to visit the colony in two decades. The monkeys were especially saucy, but the main attraction was the trick horses.



The Snow Brothers Benjamin, William, and Henry,

the Hyper Excellent Acrobats, with their world-wide celebrated

TROUPE OF ACTING DOGS

And MONKEYS,

Whose performance exceeds in interest and novelty anything of the kind ever seen in America.

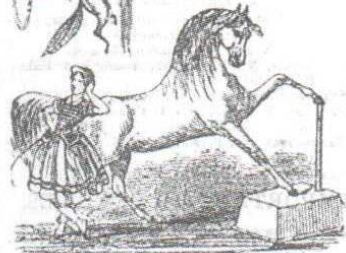
The Learned Trick Horse, PEGASSUS.

The Wonderful Pony WONDER

And Mrs. J. M. Nixon's Wonderful Performing Horse,

GEN. SCOTT.

The music under the direction of PROFESSOR J. SULLOWAY, from the Academy of Music, London.



The Manager takes pleasure in announcing the engagement of

MR. MAURICE SANDS,
the celebrated Trick Rider from the Circo de HAVANA, Cuba; also the

KREMLIN MARABOUTS,
or the Arab Nomads of the Desert, who will appear every afternoon.

Every night will be produced under the direction of Mr. JAMES COON, from Astley's, London, the English Historical Equestrian Drama of DICK TURPIN, or the Highwayman's Ride to York, and the Death of Honny Black Bess.

Tickets 1s 6d; Reserved Seats 3s. In order to save time and trouble, please bring the exact change. August 22, 1864.

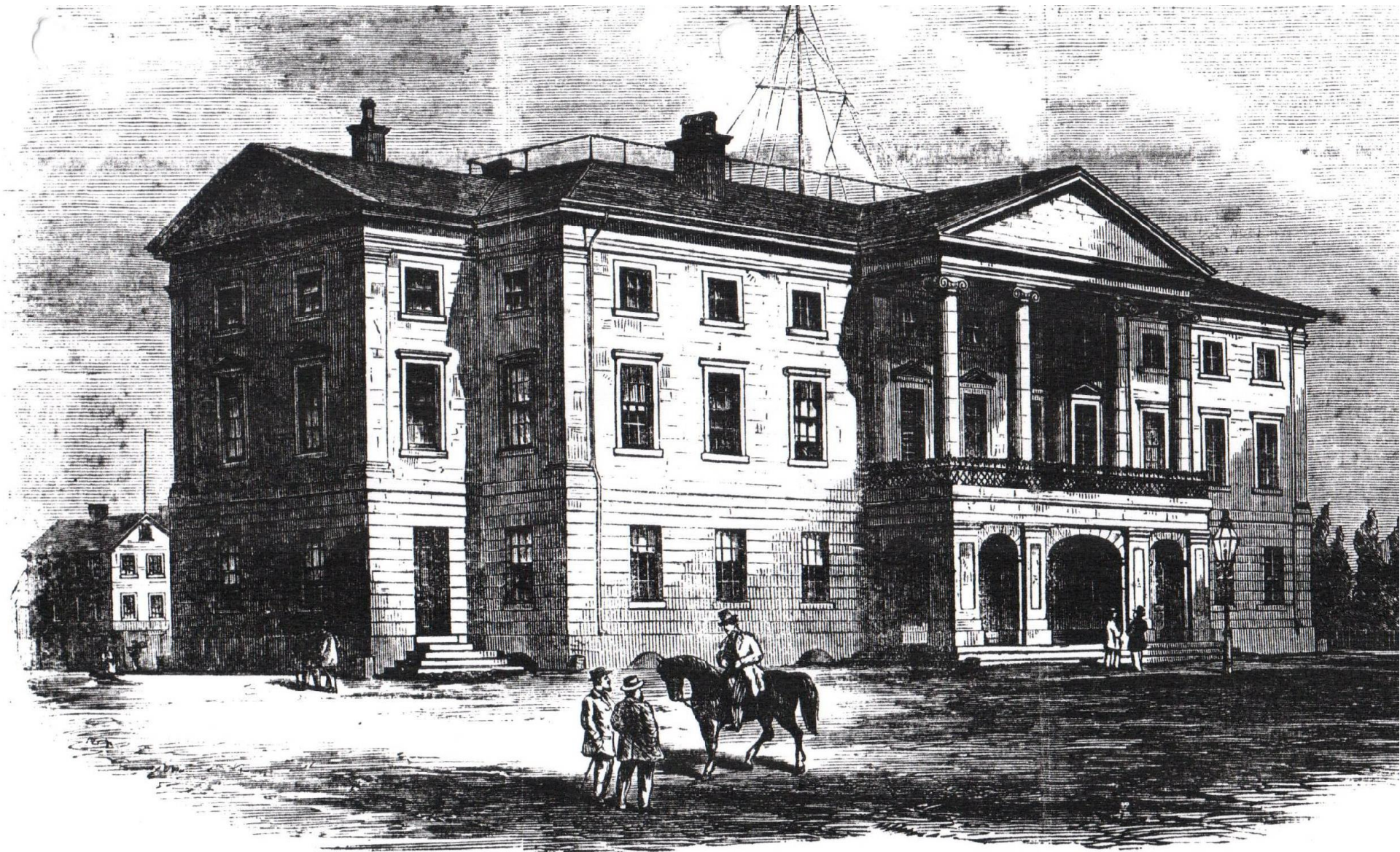
CHEAP EXCURSION TRIPS To Charlottetown.

OLYMPIC CIRCUS!

PARTIES desirous of seeing the Circus during its stay in CHARLOTTETOWN, on Thursday the 30th, Wednesday the 31st of August, Thursday the 1st, and Friday the 2d of September are informed that EXCURSION TRIPS from Shediac, Summerside, Brule and Pictou will be run during the above days.

Fare—Going and returning, for one Gentleman 6s; Lady and Gent. 10s; Three of one family 12s; Children half price. By order.

F. W. HALES, Sec'y. Ch'town, Aug. 22, 1864. all p

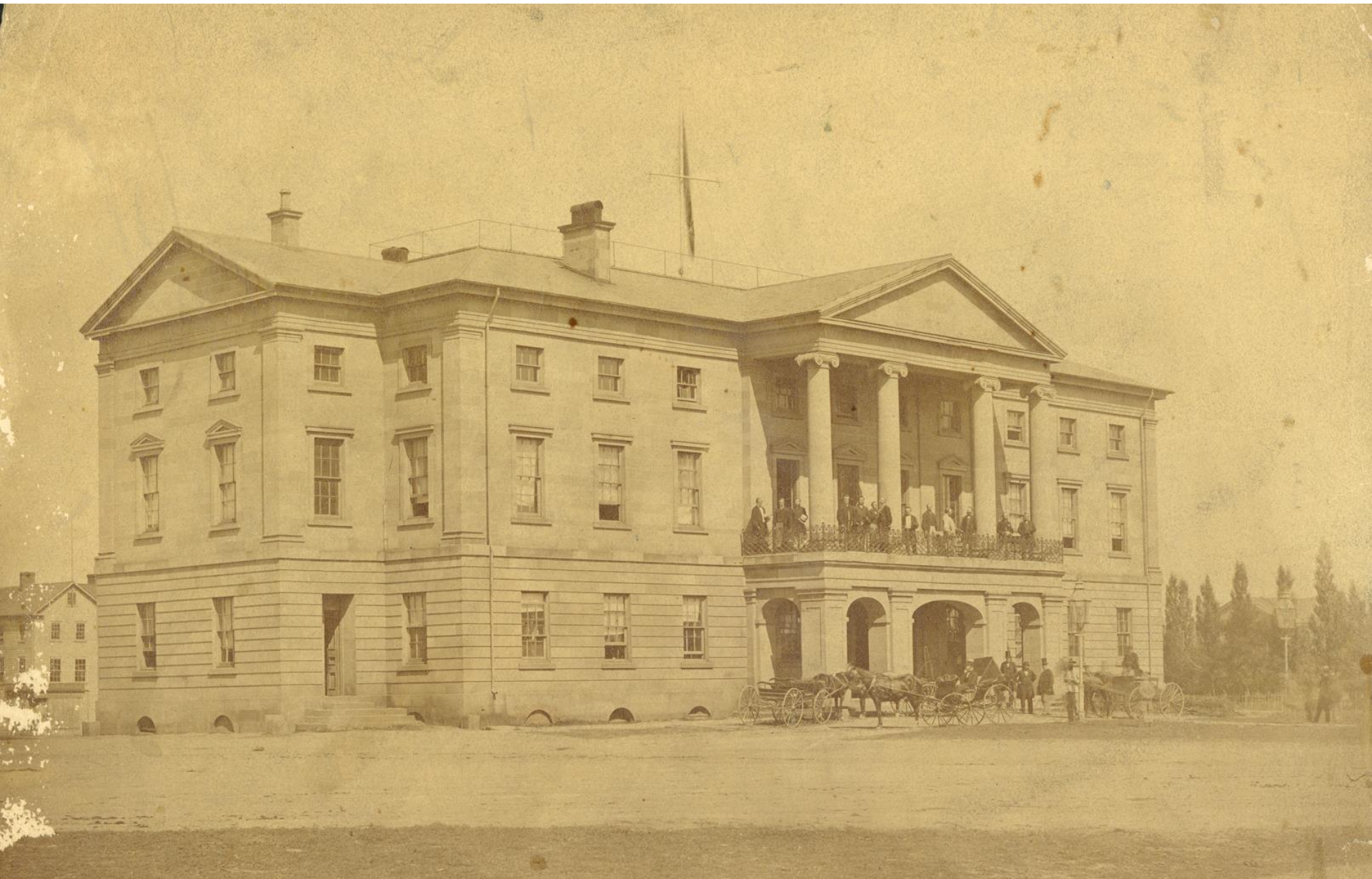


The Colonial Building as it appeared in the *Illustrated London News* at the time of the Charlottetown Conference in 1864. It was here that the delegates, agreed in principle to a confederation of colonies – *if satisfactory terms could be reached*. This was a watershed moment on the road to Confederation.



MUSÉE MCCORD MUSEUM


Thomas Heath Haviland Jr., at the Charlottetown Conference's closing banquet, September 1864: "Never was such an important meeting as this held before in the history of British North America and it may be said that here, in little Prince Edward Island, was that union formed which has produced one of the greatest nations on the face of God's earth."



Province House c. 1865. By the time this picture was taken, Prince Edward Island had decisively rejected Confederation . . .

<http://www.peildo.ca/fedora/repository/leg:25358>

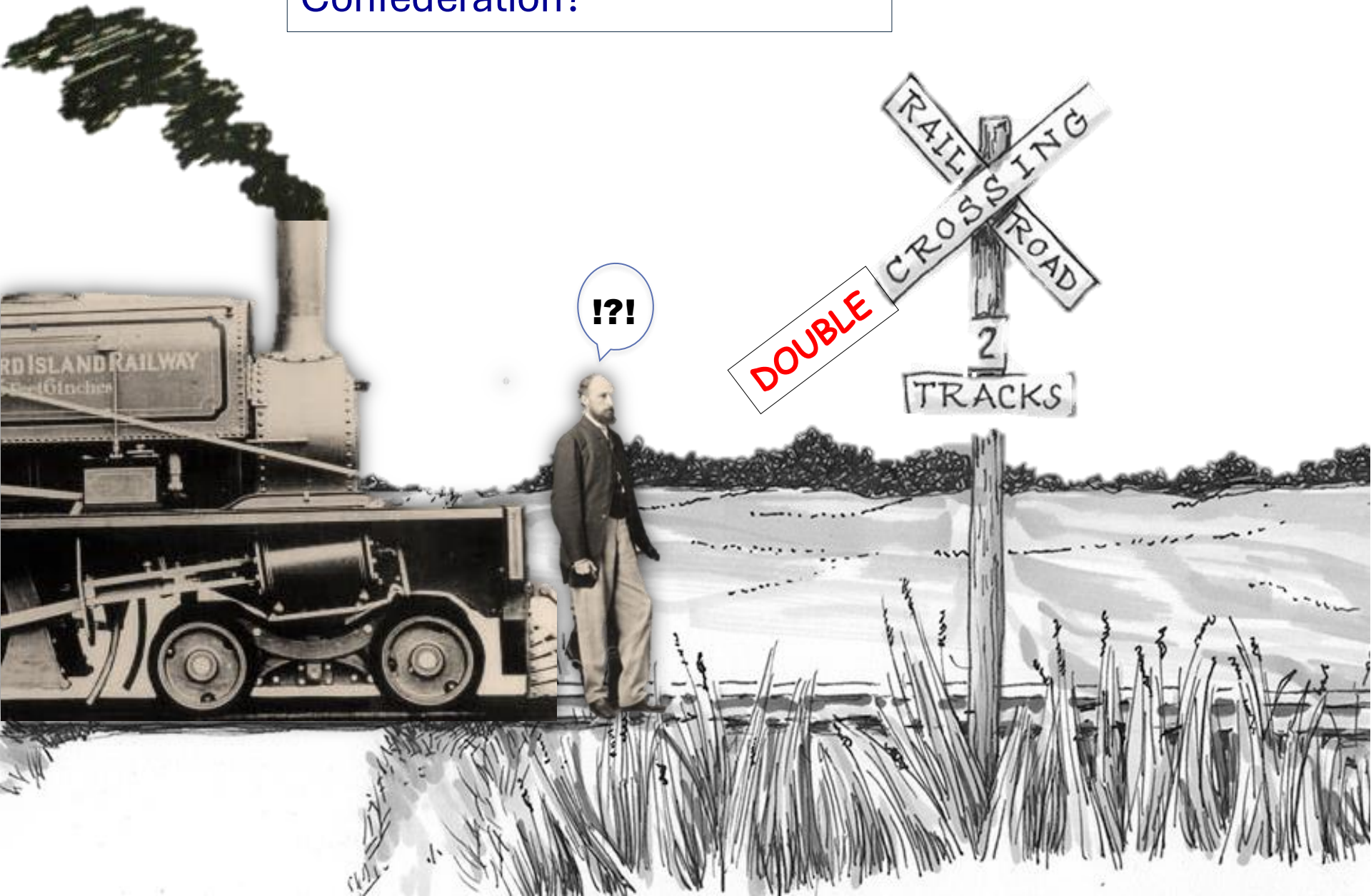
... and that fact would come back to haunt our claim to be Cradle of Confederation.



I think Confederation
is a stupid idea! And
99 of 100 Islanders
agree with me!

I miss the
circus. They
had
monkeys!

Were we railroaded into
Confederation?



Oddities and Ironies

- ✿ That the momentous conference in 1864 was actually called to discuss Maritime Union, not Confederation
- ✿ That, of course, the first visiting circus in two decades got more public attention than the conference
- ✿ That the “Cradle of Confederation” was adamantly opposed to it almost until the moment we joined
- ✿ That the principal reason we joined was financial; we built a railway that we couldn't afford – except that we genuinely thought we could!
- ✿ That the premier who led us into Confederation was the same premier who introduced a resolution in 1866 vowing that there would NEVER be terms that would convince us to join the union.

