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FACTSHEET - SOCIAL CLASSES AT PORT-ROYAL

A wide cross section of French society was present at Port-Royal. There were several upper class gentlemen present at different times such as the acting governor, Sieur de Poutrincourt and his son, Charles de Biencourt; the explorer, Samuel de Champlain; the apothecary (pharmacist), Louis Hébert; the surgeon, DesChamps; the ship pilot, Pierre Champdoré; the captain of the guard, Sieur de Boulay and the lawyer, Marc Lescarbot. These were gentlemen who oversaw the administration, the commerce and the well-being of the colony as well as the voyages of exploration undertaken by the expedition.

A larger part of the inhabitants were very skilled artisans. Carpenters, joiners, sawyers, stone cutters, masons, blacksmiths, locksmiths and tailors were numbered among these craftsmen. These men were paid very good salaries to come from France and work at Port-Royal. They signed one-year contracts and received half their money before leaving France. They received the other half upon their return. The artisans were hired to build and maintain the site. There were also a few servants present at the Habitation.

Several clergy were also present at Port-Royal. As part of the group, there was both a Catholic priest and a Protestant minister in 1605. Although there had been wars between the Catholics and the Protestants in France during the previous century, this was a period of apparent peace between the two groups. Pierre Dugua de Mons, the leader of the expedition, was a Huguenot (French Protestant). There were both Catholics and Protestants in the group.

The first recorded baptisms at Port-Royal were on June 24, 1610 when father Jéssé Flêché, a Catholic priest, baptised the Mi'kmaq Chief Membertou and several members of his family. The first Jesuit priests to come to Canada, father Pierre Biard and father Énémond Massé, arrived at Port-Royal in 1611.

In their first winter in Acadia (St. Croix Island) in 1604, seventy nine men wintered there. The following year at Port-Royal there were forty five. The population was not always the same. The dream had been to get established and to start a whole village;



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but this goal was not realized at this early stage. The artisans tended to sign only one-year contracts and then return to France. Although there was a social class structure at Port-Royal, it was not quite as formal as it was in France and there was more contact between the various groups because they were dependent on each other for survival.



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