

John Bradstreet at Louisbourg: Emergence or Re-emergence?

W. G. Godfrey

Volume 4, numéro 1, autumn 1974

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad4_1art05

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Godfrey, W. G. (1974). John Bradstreet at Louisbourg: Emergence or Re-emergence? *Acadiensis*, 4(1), 100–120.

W. G. GODFREY

John Bradstreet at Louisbourg: Emergence or Re-emergence?

Agathe Campbell's determined crusade in the 1730's to secure compensation from the British government for the Nova Scotia lands, which she claimed as a part of her La Tour inheritance, is reasonably well known.¹ Not so well known are the Nova Scotian activities of two of the children of her first marriage to Lieutenant Edward Bradstreet, John and Simon Bradstreet.² John, in particular, was to emerge as a key figure in the 1745 Louisbourg campaign and then went on to an active career in the British army which, in 1772, earned him the rank of major general. But the "enigmatic"³ John Bradstreet, originally baptized as Jean Baptiste and born at Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, on December 21, 1714, did not appear out of nowhere and burst suddenly upon the Louisbourg scene. Both he and his brother Simon had used their mother's agent in England, King Gould, to secure commissions in their father's old regiment, which was stationed in Nova Scotia, and they performed their military duties at Canso in the late 1730's and early 1740's. At first glance service in the Canso garrison of Richard Phillipps' 40th Regiment might not seem the most advantageous way to build a successful military career. Yet both Simon and John Bradstreet, each in a quite different fashion, were to reap considerable benefit from the years spent at this declining fishing village. These early years of the 1740's were to bring Simon the financial resources and loyalty of "friends at home," which combined to achieve his

1 See for example C.J. D'Entremont, "Agathe De Saint-Etienne De La Tour," in D.M. Hayne and A. Vachon, eds., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, 1969), II, pp. 590-591. See also Beamish Murdoch, *A History of Nova Scotia or Acadie* (Halifax, 1865), I, pp. 477, 489 and 495; W.P. Bell, *The "Foreign Protestants" and the Settlement of Nova Scotia* (Toronto, 1961), pp. 69, 71-73, 80-82; J.B. Brebner, *New England's Outpost* (New York, 1927), pp. 151-152; A.H. Clark, *Acadia: The Geography of Early Nova Scotia to 1760* (Madison, 1968), p. 119.

2 For discussion of Agathe Campbell's marriage to Edward Bradstreet and an unravelling of the Nova Scotian Bradstreets, see Chapter I of this writer's "John Bradstreet: An Irregular Regular, 1714-1774" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 1974).

3 J.S. McLennan, "Review of *Louisbourg Journals, 1745*," *Canadian Historical Review*, XIV (1933), p. 206.

rapid rise in the British army.⁴ These were also profitable years for John, in monetary terms but his indiscretions and failure to appreciate and utilize properly his old world "friends" prevented him from achieving higher military rank. However, where influential words were lacking, dramatic actions might be substituted. The years at Canso provided John with a knowledge of "fortress Louisbourg" which could prove of immense value in the event of a French-English war. This expertise, and the military accomplishments it facilitated, were to be the key to his fame and fortune.

In the mid-1730's great importance was attached to the revenues produced by the booming fishery in the Canso area. In addition Canso was thought to be "the key to this part of North America,"⁵ functioning as a barrier to French ambitions in Nova Scotia. Within a few years, however, it became clear that both the economic and military positions of Canso were on the verge of total deterioration. Captain Peter Warren, in 1739, described "the English Fishery at Canceaux" as "much decayed, in proportion to the improvement and increase of the French Fishery within these Ten Years past." Warren felt the vastly expanded French fishery was causing the shrinkage of the undefended, and thus easily intimidated English fishery.⁶ There were, of course, many other factors involved in the wastage of the Canso fishery: the poor quality of the fish, the migratory habits of the cod, the change caused by direct operations from New England ports such as Marblehead and Gloucester. In addition, a report on the fishery in 1741 pointed out that "Before the Warr with Spain, the Fish was generally carried to the Different parts of that Kingdom. . .," but with this market closed off only the West Indies and New England were left open for the sale of the fish.⁷ Loss of this important market must have been a damaging blow to the Canso fishery.

In terms of defences, Canso had never been fortified properly. Lieutenant Governor Armstrong urged the construction of adequate fortifications in 1735,⁸ but no action was taken. Four years later, Peter Warren described the "*Garrison at Canseaux* if it can be called so" as "in a *most miserable condition*, not One Gun Mounted, nor a Barrack fit for a soldier to live in, there are now there Four Companies of Thirty Men each."⁹ In addition to the 120

4 For an example of Gould's concern, see King Gould to Simon Bradstreet, 20 March 1740/41, Tredegar Park Collection [hereafter TPC], Mss. 286, p. 278, National Library of Wales.

5 Armstrong to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 8 December 1735, in Great Britain, Public Record Office, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* [hereafter CSP], Vol. XLII 1735-1736 (London, 1953), p. 133.

6 "A State of the French Fishery at Cape Britoon in June 1739", by Peter Warren, 9 July 1739, CO 217, Reel B-1024, Vol. 8, p. 49, Public Archives of Canada [hereafter PAC], MG 11.

7 "Queries and Answers relating to the Trade and Fishery at Canso, and parts adjacent in Nova Scotia," enclosed in Burrish to Hill, 24 November 1741, N.S. A., Vol. 25, p. 146, PAC, MG 11.

8 Armstrong to Council of Trade and Plantations, 27 September 1735, CSP, Vol. XLII, p. 65.

9 "A State of the French Fishery at Cape Britoon in June 1739", by Peter Warren, 9 July 1739, CO 217, Reel B-1024, Vol. 8, p. 49, PAC, MG 11.

soldiers, some of whom had their families with them at Canso, there were a handful of families who resided there permanently. In 1739 it was estimated that there were nine or ten such families,¹⁰ while in 1741 there were “at present but four Familys in Canso besides the Troops.”¹¹ This population was swollen during the summer fishing season when the New Englanders arrived. In 1742, for example, there were 25 sloops and schooners, all from New England, involved in the Canso fishery. These boats were manned by a total of 119 men.¹²

Despite the small population, the shrinking fishery, and the miserable state of the troops, there were a variety of profitable enterprises possible at Canso. As early as 1734 there was evidence of at least two such operations. It was reported that residents did not want for taverns since “there are five or six in Canso, four of which are kept by the four serjeants of the companies”¹³ Moreover, when the naval captain assigned the task of reporting on Canso’s fishery and trade pressed the commander of the troops stationed there concerning another activity, the answer received was so defensive as to raise the possibility, and probability, of another more illicit operation. Captain Cotterell asked Captain Aldridge, future father-in-law of John Bradstreet, about trading activities of the officers under his command. Aldridge replied brusquely “that he did not know that any Captn. of a ship of warr had any business with the officers there, if at home they had suspition of their trading why did not their commanding officers send them orders as they thought proper on that occasion.”¹⁴ Apparently trade and the Canso garrison’s needs were sufficiently lucrative to provoke evasive responses from those stationed at the post.

At this time, thoughts of providing the isolated garrisons of Nova Scotia “with Necessarys” were very much on the mind of King Gould, agent of the 40th Regiment in London. In 1734 and 1735 he was trying to work out a provisioning scheme with Samuel Cottnam and William Shirreff, residents of Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. In a long letter, written in June of 1735, he thanked them “for your Interesting yourselves in my Proposal of Supplying the Garrisons with Necessarys” and outlined his plan. Gould proposed that “every Gentleman” wanting supplies should let him know this year what he wanted for the following year. Gould would then “Consider where and in what Country those goods can be bought Cheapest” and purchase them himself. To ship them to Nova Scotia, he continued:

10 “Letter from Captn Temple West . . . inclosing his Answer to ye Heads of Enquiry (sent him in April last) concerning the Fishery at Canceau for this year 1739”, *ibid.*, p. 54.

11 “Queries and Answers relating to the Trade and Fishery at Canso” enclosed in Burrish to Hill, 24 November 1741, N.S. A, Vol. 25, p. 145, PAC, MG 11.

12 “State of the Cod Fishery at Canso for the Year 1742”, in Burrish to Hill, 22 December 1742, *ibid.*, p. 259.

13 Cotterell to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 23 April 1734, CSP, Vol. XLI, p. 396.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 397.

We know that there are men of War sent every Year to Canso, and perhaps the next Year I may desire my Friend who is a Member of Parliament to ask for that Station, which he wou'd do purely to Serve me, and my Brother may be his Lieutenant; But besides if this Don't take, We shall be able by Cloathing & Recruits, which will be wanting every year, to make a Cargo for a Small Vessell Directly to Annapolis, and if I find this Scheme upon a Tryal of a Year or Two turn out to advantage, I wou'd have a vessell of my own, which I wou'd keep on purpose for this Service, and to take in a Loading of Fish at Canso for the Streights or other Parts where I can always by Merchants here who have Obligations to me, have the Preference of a Loading of Merchandize Directly to London.

To complete the scheme an agent was required in Boston since there were "some Commoditys which perhaps are to be had nowhere so Cheap as at N:E".¹⁵ Two years later an arrangement was worked out with Christopher Kilby, a Boston merchant, whereby the "Gentlemen of Nova Scotia" were to be supplied "with such Necessarys as they may want from thence."¹⁶

While the trade does not appear to have developed into a lucrative enough proposition to justify Gould's arranging a vessel solely concerned with it, it must have turned a reasonable profit since his letter-books reveal a continuing involvement and interest until the early 1740's. At Annapolis Royal, Shirreff emerged with the major responsibility for handling Gould's goods. Canso was a problem, however, because of the short sojourn of many officers there. Taking advantage of his friendship with the former Canso commandant, Captain Christopher Aldridge, who was then in England, Gould wrote in March of 1737/38 to Aldridge's son, Lieutenant Christopher Aldridge, at Canso, asking him to oversee goods which were soon to arrive. Gould explained that ". . . yr. Father giving me Encouragement, I have taken the Liberty to Consign those goods to you, and desire you will dispose of them to ye best Advantage for my Interest and be pleas'd to Charge Commission for yr. trouble, and make me as quick remittances as you can."¹⁷ This was only a temporary arrangement and Gould seemed quite relieved when Simon Bradstreet, a person far better known to him, took up his Canso posting in the spring of 1739.

Over the next few years Gould repeatedly expressed his enthusiastic appreciation for Simon Bradstreet's careful handling of the wine, linens and other goods consigned to him.¹⁸ His letters to Simon invariably included this sort

15 King Gould to William Shirreff and Samuel Cottnam, 1 June 1735, TPC, Mss. 285, p. 61. See also King Gould to Cottnam, 8 August 1734, *ibid.*, p. 42.

16 King Gould to Christopher Kilby, 6 April 1737, *ibid.*, p. 89.

17 King Gould to Lieutenant Aldridge, 4 March 1737/38, *ibid.*, Mss. 284, p. 252. See also King Gould to William Shirreff, 4 March 1737/38, *ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

18 King Gould to Simon Bradstreet, 15 March 1739/40, 20 March 1740/41, 15 March 1741/42, *ibid.*, Mss. 284, p. 229; Mss. 286, p. 278 and Mss. 287, p. 68.

of comment: "As to the Sale of the Wines and all of the other Matters You have done for me I am very well Satisfied that thou art a very honest fellow; And one of the best the Country Affords."¹⁹ Naturally, these same letters stressed that Gould missed no opportunity of getting Simon "preferr'd." Personal advice was also directed to Simon. Gould counselled: "Pray be a good Oeconomist and get out of Debt as soon as you can, and be sure not to Marry in the Country if you are that way Dispos'd We can get you a Girl here with some Crop and I'm sure You'll meet with none there."²⁰ By the time he left Canso to return to England in the fall of 1742, Simon probably had accumulated a store of "obligations" as well as a reasonable financial state, both of which could now be drawn upon. He had served Gould well and Gould would now serve him.

In the same period Gould's correspondence with Simon's younger brother, John, who was also at Canso, has a quite different tone. While Simon appears to have confined himself to marketing Gould's goods within Nova Scotia, John was very much involved in the illegal New England trade with Louisbourg and was developing business connections in New England rather than Old England. As a result, the ties between Gould and himself were weakened considerably. John relied on Gould to collect his pay and subsistence allowance and sort out his credits or debts with other officers serving in Nova Scotia, and that was the extent of their business dealings. Even in performing these limited tasks there was a noticeably unco-operative and critical attitude revealed in some of Gould's comments. Gould was disturbed by a letter received from John concerning "the Payment of a Fire and Candle Bill drawn by Captain Mitford in your favour from the 25th of August 1742." He felt the request was "not altogether so reasonable, as I might expect from you" since the fire and candle payment would not be received from the War Office until Christmas of 1743. If in the interval, it was now March of 1741/42, Philipps should die, Gould ran the risk of losing "every farthing of it, for another Agent wou'd be appointed and receive the Money . . ." Despite his reservations, in this instance Gould agreed to accept the bill.²¹ On another occasion, however, he was even more scathing in his criticism and refused outright Bradstreet's bill. This second incident concerned money owed Bradstreet by Lieutenant William Strahorn of Canso. Strahorn was in debt to Bradstreet and arranged that his subsistence pay and any favourable balance in his account should be paid to Bradstreet by Gould.²² This agreement was made in October of 1741 but by the following spring Strahorn had died.

19 King Gould to Simon Bradstreet, 20 March 1740/41, *ibid.*, Mss. 286, p. 278.

20 *Ibid.*

21 King Gould to John Bradstreet, 15 March 1741/42, *ibid.*, Mss. 287, pp. 67-68.

22 William Strahorn to King Gould, 25 October 1741, *ibid.*, 128/400.

Bradstreet then drew up a bill "upon the Pay and Arrears of Lieutenant Strahorn in favour of Francis Borland." A very upset Gould declined to honour it explaining: ". . . I am Surprized at your Request, for you must know or might have been inform'd if you had asked the Question, that what is due to a Deceased person cannot be legally paid without an Administration." Gould concluded the letter with two further interesting remarks. Firstly, since Simon was coming to England in the fall of 1742 he would do nothing about seeking letters of administration concerning Strahorn's pay until the elder brother arrived and advised "what will be proper to be done." Secondly, in answer to anxiety expressed by Bradstreet, Gould assured him: "As To your preferment you need not be under any Apprehension of any Injustice being done you by Sir Your most humble Servant."²³ Clearly Gould continued to regard Simon as very much the senior Bradstreet in all matters. In addition, John's apprehensions concerning his chance of promotion by means of Gould's influence were probably quite valid. Somehow he had drifted away from his English contact and would suffer for it.

Because of the limited amount of evidence available it is difficult to explain the gap which was opening between John Bradstreet and King Gould. It might have been a natural result of Gould's tendency to regard Simon's advancement as his primary concern. No doubt the ill-considered and risky bills submitted by John also helped to sour the relationship. But on one of the few occasions when Gould wrote to Bradstreet in a very personal vein, there is a clue concerning what might have been the root cause of the disenchantment. Rumours of John Bradstreet's involvement in illicit trading activities had been carried across the Atlantic and caused Gould to write:

. . . I cannot conclude this Letter without giving you my thoughts upon your being Engag'd in Trade; as it may at one time or other be of Dangerous Consequence to you, and very probably by some ill natur'd person, be a complaint against you: several complaints of this kind have lately been made of Officers in the Army, as well as those in the Navy, which has been mentioned in Parliament and not long since: an Officer who was Tryed here upon several Articles Exhibited against him; and it appearing upon the Tryal that he had been concerned in Trade, altho' it was not one of the Articles Alledged against him; The King taking notice of it in the Proceedings; Order'd him to be Suspended, Declaring his mind that he should look upon every Officer engag'd in Trade as a Pedlar . . . What I mentioned above about Trade, keep to your self and don't think that I have any other meaning then Guarding you against those who don't wish you well. And as soon as you can Conveniently wind up your Bottom Knock off.²⁴

23 King Gould to John Bradstreet, 10 August 1742, *ibid.*, Mss. 287, p. 124.

24 King Gould to John Bradstreet, 15 March 1741/42, *ibid.*, p. 68.

Several points should be made about this letter. Apparently Gould did not regard the activities of Simon Bradstreet as trading ventures, but merely as the sale of his products for cash or credit. He seemed to view this as a legitimate enterprise. Furthermore, one would have to surmise that Simon did not become involved in the illegitimate activity of trading since no such warning was penned for his benefit. It appears that John alone of the two brothers was involved in "trade." Moreover, when Gould spoke of "trade" to an officer stationed at Canso, Nova Scotia, it can be assumed almost automatically that he was referring to the trade with the fortress in the French colony of Isle Royale, Louisbourg. The nature of the trade and the participants in it must be carefully established because historians, such as Guy Frégault and J.S. McLennan, have been unaware that the Canso base was used by more than one Bradstreet for more than one purpose. Both these scholars employ the same French sources in discussing the Louisbourg trade of the early 1740's. Since these sources only mention a Bradstreet, albeit misspelled, who was a British officer at Canso without specifying any first name, they do the same. Thus, they consider the trade but can only say it was conducted by an officer named Bradstreet.²⁵ This could have been either Simon or John, but Gould's letter and the implications it contains can be used to establish John Bradstreet as the Louisbourg trader. Further evidence for awarding this dubious distinction to John, rather than Simon, can be found in the Louisbourg officials' discussion of their English contact at Canso in 1743, after Simon left and John remained. In addition, Simon's obvious lack of first-hand knowledge concerning Louisbourg was to be demonstrated in 1744.

It is not surprising that documentation concerning this New England trade with Louisbourg is far from plentiful. For the British subjects involved in it there were considerable profits to be gained, but there were also the risks of confiscation by over-zealous British naval officers or, worse yet, damaged reputations if full disclosure of the extent of the trade and the names of participants should leak out. On the other hand, because this trade was essential to Isle Royale the French were reasonably open about its existence. The colonial authorities, both at home and in Louisbourg, even were willing to give official approval to the importation of certain products.²⁶ Nevertheless, despite their acknowledgement of the trade it is too much to expect that the French records would list every trading transaction with New England and the name of every visiting trader. Thus, there is only one detailed description of a trading visit by Bradstreet, in 1741, although the tone of the report on his activities leaves the impression that he was well known at Louisbourg, possibly because of numerous unrecorded visits. Bradstreet, at least initially,

25 See Guy Frégault, *François Bigot: Administrateur Français* (Montreal, 1948), I, p. 143 and J.S. McLennan, *Louisbourg from its Foundation to its Fall* (London, 1918), p. 103.

26 See Frégault, I, p. 95.

was in good company in taking advantage of this profitable enterprise. In 1737, for example, that respected British naval officer, Peter Warren, arranged with Peter Faneuil, successful Boston merchant, to ship a cargo of foodstuffs to Louisbourg.²⁷ Two years later Nova Scotia's lieutenant governor, Armstrong, sent a schooner loaded with flour to Louisbourg. Along with it came a letter asking the Isle Royale authorities "de permettre la vente de ces farines pour payer des provisions dont it avoit besoin."²⁸ Where Bradstreet perhaps overstepped the line was in the extent and the timing of his trade.

In October of 1741 Du Quesnel, governor of Isle Royale, reported the arrival from Canso of "le Sieur Brastrit," whom he described as a relative "de plusieurs officiers icy." These undoubtedly were La Tours related to his mother. Du Quesnel continued that he made the visitor very welcome and, with the agreement of Bigot, gave permission to Bradstreet "de vendre la goelette dans laquelle il est venu" This money was then used to purchase rum and molasses and "d'affreter un batteau pour emporter a Canceau avec luy les effets qu'il a achetés."²⁹ Du Quesnel estimated that in total Bradstreet spent over two thousand crowns.³⁰ The following year this entire transaction with "Sr: Brastrie officer de la garrison de Canceau . . ." was approved of by Maurepas.³¹ Admittedly, mention of the relatives and the warm welcome is not clear evidence establishing that Bradstreet was well known at Louisbourg and a frequent visitor. Yet, when coupled with Gould's letter, written in winter a few months later, perhaps it is a useful hint. Surely Gould would not write Bradstreet such a lengthy warning purely on the basis of one visit to Louisbourg. There must have been other equally elaborate trading visits which explain Gould's sermon and Du Quesnel's report.

Furthermore, the elaborate scale of Bradstreet's operation at Louisbourg is rather obvious. Selling a boat and returning laden with goods from the French fortress was no minor trading venture. It was business on a large scale and revealed that Bradstreet's finances had advanced considerably beyond the level normally associated with a lowly ensign in the British army. Equally obvious were the excellent contacts he enjoyed through relatives. Perhaps also there were individuals at Louisbourg who regarded Bradstreet as an excellent contact with the New England market. In June of 1742 Bigot found provisions running low at Louisbourg and made arrangements for an English vessel to sail to New England to purchase supplies. This effort

27 Julian Gwyn, "Money Lending in New England: The Case of Admiral Sir Peter Warren And His Heirs 1739-1805," *New England Quarterly*, XLIV (1971), p. 120.

28 Forant and Bigot to Maurepas, 9 November 1739, Series C¹B, Vol. 21, pp. 18-19, PAC, MG 1.

29 Du Quesnel to Maurepas, 19 October 1741, *ibid.*, Vol. 23, p. 64.

30 See *ibid.* Du Quesnel said: ". . . il a laissé icy plus de deux mil escus en argent." McLennan, p. 103, translated this into two thousand crowns.

31 Maurepas to Du Quesnel, 6 June 1742, Archives des Colonies, Series B, Vol. 74, part 3, pp. 559-560, PAC, MG 1.

involved co-operation with a Canso contact since Bigot mentioned the individual entrusted with this task “. . . a associé a son voyage un anglais de cancau moyennant quoi j’espere qu’il ne sera pas confisqué”³² Both J.S. McLennan and Guy Frégault surmise the Canso connection to be Bradstreet,³³ and this seems a reasonable assumption. Again in August of 1743 when Louisbourg supplies were in a depleted state, Bigot dispatched Du Vivier to Canso “pour engager quelques anglais conus a partir pour baston” and mentioned an officer at Canso with whom various arrangements concerning provisions were usually made.³⁴ Once more, there is a good possibility that this was John Bradstreet.

It is rather ironic that as late as 1743 goods still were moving through Canso to Louisbourg since within a few short months, in May of 1744, Canso was to be the first target hit and captured by the Louisbourg French. This time factor should be considered carefully because it ties in with the indiscretion of John Bradstreet. To be involved in the Louisbourg trade in the late 1730’s was not nearly as risky as it had become by 1742 and 1743. The early 1740’s were the correct time, as King Gould had put it, to “. . . wind up your Bottom” and Knock Off”. In view of the deteriorating relations between England and France it was simply not the proper time to trade with someone against whom you soon would be warring. In the eyes of the Old World it was a time to clamp down on clandestine trade, not expand it. Thus, the continued linkage of Bradstreet with this sort of activity could only hurt him. It seems at best indiscreet, at worst foolhardy, for him to have allowed any hint to surface concerning his continuing involvement. But Bradstreet was in a real sense a citizen of two worlds. What looked like an indiscretion in old England, and severely undermined any chance of promotion in the British army, was still an acceptable practice in New England and continued to be a profitable undertaking despite the risks involved. As the two mother countries moved towards hostilities, instead of the number of New England ships trading at Louisbourg declining, it actually was increasing. While 49 ships arrived at Louisbourg in 1739 from New England and Acadia there were 67 in 1742 and in 1743 this number increased to 78.³⁵ Bradstreet might have been out of touch with British feelings concerning the Louisbourg trade, but this was because he was too much attuned to New England aspirations and actions in relation to dealings with the French. Of course there were individuals and groups in New England who already regarded Louisbourg as a menace, but if war broke out between England and France and Louisbourg was revealed or portrayed as a serious threat to New England, Bradstreet could adjust quickly to this change by turning his knowledge of the

32 Bigot to Maurepas, 18 June 1742, *ibid.*, Series C¹¹B, Vol. 24, p. 90.

33 McLennan, p. 103 and Frégault, I, p. 143.

34 Bigot to Maurepas, 12 August 1743, Series C¹¹B, Vol. 25, pp. 112-113, PAC, MG 1.

35 See chart “Shipping of L’Ile Royale” in McLennan, p. 382.

fortress acquired during the trading visits into a vital asset to be used against the French. Indeed, he might use the emerging New England antagonism towards Louisbourg to bolster his position in the colonies and to restore his credibility and reputation in the mother country.

As the winter of 1743/44 set in, the Canso post, at which Bradstreet was still stationed, remained as vulnerable to military attack as Peter Warren had found it in 1739. It still had “no Guns mounted no Batterys no Caste no Shot no Barracks.”³⁶ The four companies stationed there were under strength, numbering only eighty-seven “poorly armed and badly trained” soldiers.³⁷ When the element of surprise is added to the garrison’s ill-prepared condition, since word of a state of war between Britain and France had not even reached Canso, it is easy to understand how the French attack on this post, in May of 1744, resulted in its quick surrender. Among the officers and men captured by the French force was Ensign John Bradstreet. But even as the articles of capitulation were being drawn up the position of Bradstreet as no ordinary English officer was emerging. His schooner had been captured and in the capitulation terms it was immediately pressed into service. The residents of Canso were promised that “tout ce qui luy appartiendra et a lad Garnizon leur restra il sera charge dans la goelette du Sr. Jean Brastreck . . .” and transported to Louisbourg.³⁸ It was the first of a series of tasks assigned Bradstreet and his schooner which transformed the next few months from a captivity to a business-as-usual situation, at least for him if not for his captured colleagues.

In June, 1744, a shortage of food caused the Louisbourg officials to put out feelers to Governor William Shirley about an exchange of prisoners. Such an arrangement would remove the burden of feeding the Canso captives, among whom were included wives and children as well as soldiers, and strengthen Louisbourg since French troops imprisoned in Massachusetts would be gained in return. John Bradstreet was to sail to Boston and deliver Governor Du Quesnel’s letter suggesting such an exchange. In addition, Bradstreet was instructed by his fellow officers to inform Major Christopher Aldridge, who was once more the Canso commandant although absent at the time of its capture, of the “State and Condition of the men that remains here” In the event of Aldridge’s absence Bradstreet was to acquaint Governor Shirley with their food needs, which was their major problem.³⁹

36 Captain Robert Young to the Board of Trade, 6 December 1743, N.S. A, Vol. 26, p. 54, PAC, MG 11.

37 G.A. Rawlyk, *Yankees at Louisbourg* (Orono, Maine, 1967), p. 5. The background of the Canso attack as well as the entire Louisbourg campaign are given detailed attention in Rawlyk’s study.

38 “Copie des articles de Capitulation accordée par M. Duchambon a M. Patrick Heron” Series C¹¹B, Vol 25, p. 45, PAC, MG 1.

39 Patrick Heron, Thomas Prendergast, Christopher Aldridge Jr., Samuel Cottnam to Ensign John Bradstreet, 19 June 1744, N.S. A, Vol. 26, p. 101, PAC, MG 11.

Along with Bradstreet's schooner went another boat under a flag of truce, manned by "five Men-prisoners" and carrying some of the wives and Children captured at Canso. Entrusted to Bradstreet's care were "Major Aldridge's Wife and family, and fourteen lame incurable Soldiers of the Canso Companies"40

Both boats arrived safely at Boston by July 6, but it was to be roughly a month and a half before Bradstreet completed his assignment and left Boston to return to Louisbourg. The delay was caused by Governor Shirley's suspicions about which side really would benefit from an exchange of prisoners as well as his reluctance to meet the request of the captured Canso officers to arrange provisions for themselves, the troops, and their families at Louisbourg. The latter was resolved by mid-July since on the 17th the Massachusetts Council approved a list of provisions which were to be purchased and transported to Louisbourg by John Bradstreet. However, these were intended only "for the Subsistence of the English officers and their families"41 No supplies were arranged for the remainder of the troops because Shirley felt it to be "an unprecedented and dangerous thing to supply 'em with provisions in the Enemy's Country where there is a scarcity of Provisions for the support of the Inhabitants & what would probably prevent their being releas'd before the Term of their Capitulation was expir'd."⁴² The governor was also very suspicious of the suggested prisoner exchange. While he wanted to secure the release of the English troops at Louisbourg so that they could serve at Annapolis Royal,⁴³ he did not want to waste his French prisoners on an exchange which might secure only aged and infirm soldiers, and women and children. He therefore spelled out in detail to Du Quesnel the types of exchanges he could accept. To begin with he made it clear that the "invalid Soldiers and five old Cripples . . ." the Isle Royale governor had already sent could not be exchanged for "an equal Number of able bodied Men taken upon our Coasts in the Actual Commission of Hostilities, who are Prisoners for the whole Continuance of the War." Likewise no exchange should be expected for the women and children who, in any case, "would have been a Charge and Inconvenience to you." What Shirley proposed was that the ninety French prisoners of war he possessed be exchanged for all the Canso officers, men, and other English prisoners. Admitting that "you have a greater Number of English Prisoners than I have of French," Shirley promised to make good the difference as soon as more French captives were brought in or secured from Rhode Island. He then went on to discuss variations of this

40 William Shirley to the Duke of Newcastle, 7 July 1744, in C.H. Lincoln, ed., *Correspondence of William Shirley* (New York, 1912), I, p. 132.

41 "An Account of Provisions Mr. Bradstreet desires for the Officers and Families that were taken at Canso," N.S. A, Vol. 26, pp. 122-123, PAC, MG 11.

42 William Shirley to Lords of Trade, 25 July 1744, Lincoln, I, p. 136.

43 *Ibid.*

plan but in all cases it was made clear he was willing to give up his prisoners only for the able-bodied Canso officers and men.⁴⁴

Should Du Quesnel agree with Shirley's proposals, he was to send word "by Mr. Bradstreet's Schooner or any other Vessel that you shall choose."⁴⁵ But for Bradstreet to return with Du Quesnel's comments he first had to get back to Louisbourg, and this posed a bit of a problem because of Shirley's hard-nosed bargaining over prisoners. Bradstreet had expected that French prisoners exchanged for the English he had brought from Louisbourg "would be able to carry the Vessel back again . . .,"⁴⁶ but Shirley felt compelled to give up only three of his French prisoners,⁴⁷ whom he probably regarded as the exchange for the five able-bodied men who had manned the boat accompanying Bradstreet under a flag of truce. As a result Bradstreet found himself "without Sailors sufficient to Navegate the Vessel back againe . . ." and requested permission "to ship two hands on board said Vessel as English Marinours."⁴⁸ The New England delays were not repeated at Isle Royale. A little over a month later, on September 21, there arrived at Boston the Canso officers and men, "with other prisoners of War to the amount of 340 from Louisbourg in Three Flaggs of Truce . . ."⁴⁹ The problem of provisions must have dictated Du Quesnel's speedy acquiescence with the terms of exchange offered by Shirley. But, while the French governor's quick answer limited Bradstreet's Louisbourg stay on this occasion to only a matter of a few weeks and Bradstreet had passed more of his "Louisbourg captivity" on the high seas and at Boston than at Louisbourg, he was very aware of conditions in the French fortress at this time. When this awareness was linked with his knowledge of Isle Royale accumulated over the years during his several visits,⁵⁰ it converted him from a message bearer to a knowledgeable adviser of the Massachusetts governor, William Shirley.

44 Shirley to Du Quesnel, 26 July 1744, Vol. 12, Document #24, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [hereafter PANS].

45 *Ibid.*

46 John Bradstreet to Shirley, 14 August 1744, Baxter Papers, *Documentary History of the State of Maine* (Portland, Maine, 1908), XI, p. 300.

47 The three were Mr. Castaine, Mr. Calvary and Mr. Jean Boutier. See Shirley to Du Quesnel, 26 July 1744, Vol. 12, Document #24, PANS.

48 Bradstreet to Shirley, 14 August 1744, Baxter Papers, *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, XI, p. 300.

49 Shirley to Lords of Admiralty, 22 September 1744, Adm. 1, Reel B-2987, Vol. 3817, n.p., PAC, MG 12, A.

50 As might be expected in later years Bradstreet was silent about his trading ventures at Louisbourg. In 1757 when he was called before a Council-of-War which wanted to explore his knowledge of the fortress, he stated only that prior to 1745 "he was at Louisbourg in 1736, 1738" and "in 1744." See "At a Council on War held at Head Quarters in the Town of Halifax in Nova Scotia on Saturday the 23rd of July 1757," WO 34/101, p. 99, University of Michigan, Graduate Library, British Manuscript Project, Reel 1429.

The very day the returned prisoners reached Boston, two of them provided Shirley with a written report concerning activities at Louisbourg. Lieutenant George Ryal, who ironically had been left at Canso with a sloop in the summer of 1743 to cut off the illegal trade,⁵¹ and Ensign John Bradstreet, former participant in said trade, gave an account of a fleet recently arrived at Louisbourg which included a number of East India merchant ships and other well-armed vessels.⁵² Naturally the presence of such French naval strength at Louisbourg was quite alarming to Shirley. It meant that the remaining British post in Nova Scotia, Annapolis Royal, was in a precarious position; it easily could be bottled up and captured by such a fleet, and, even worse, Boston and New England shipping could be threatened and harassed. Shirley had the consolation of knowing that the fleet was to depart for France in October or November, but it was clear that, if Louisbourg continued to be used by the French as a powerful naval centre, it was a serious threat to the New England colonies. The immediate response by the Massachusetts governor was to make every effort to guarantee that Annapolis would not fall. But obviously the best protection for Annapolis, and indeed for all New England, was the capture of Louisbourg.⁵³

Shirley passed this "Intelligence" concerning Louisbourg on to the Lords of the Admiralty, describing Bradstreet and Ryal as "both Competent Judges in the Matters contain'd in their inclosed Information."⁵⁴ One of these "Competent Judges," John Bradstreet, was quick to detect the drift of Shirley's mind as well as New England's increasing apprehension about Louisbourg. In December 1744, if Bradstreet's own journal of the Louisbourg campaign can be trusted, he had drafted and presented to Shirley a plan for an attack on the French stronghold.⁵⁵ The general proposal for an attack on Louisbourg had been in the air for a number of years, but considerable credit for the specific proposal brought forward at this time must be given to Bradstreet. Even allowing for the tendency of Bradstreet to exaggerate his role and contribution in his own statements, it is clear from the comments of William Pepperrell,⁵⁶ eventual land commander of the expedition, Peter

51 Shirley to Lords of Admiralty, 22 September 1744, Adm. 1, Reel B-2987, Vol. 3817, n.p., PAC, MG 12, A.

52 John Bradstreet and George Ryal to Shirley, 21 September 1744, *ibid.* See also G.A. Wood, *William Shirley Governor of Massachusetts, 1741-1756* (New York, 1920), I, pp. 232-233.

53 See Rawlyk, pp. 26-30 and Wood, I, pp. 232-236.

54 Shirley to Lords of Admiralty, 22 September 1744, Adm. 1, Reel B-2987, Vol. 3817, n.p., PAC, MG 12, A.

55 "Colonel John Bradstreet's Journal," in L.E. DeForest, ed., *Louisbourg Journals 1745* (New York, 1932), p. 171.

56 William Pepperrell to the Duke of Newcastle, 19 June 1745, Vol. 19, n.p., PANS.

Warren,⁵⁷ naval commander, and William Shirley,⁵⁸ the power behind the entire campaign, that Bradstreet was an enthusiastic, influential, and possibly the first advocate of the attack.

While there is clear evidence of Bradstreet being an early advocate of the attack, his sole authorship of the master plan for the assault is less certain. A plan was passed on to the Massachusetts General Court by Governor Shirley in January, 1744/45, of which William Vaughan claimed to be the author.⁵⁹ But G.A. Wood feels the plan "was perhaps suggested chiefly by Bradstreet".⁶⁰ while G.A. Rawlyk raises the possibility that "the plan placed in Shirley's hands by Vaughan was originally drafted by Bradstreet and then revised by Vaughan."⁶¹ Given the fact that Vaughan had never visited Louisbourg but only talked with the former prisoners and other visitors,⁶² it is highly probable that Bradstreet's intimate knowledge, whether passed on to Vaughan orally or in a written form, provided the core of the plan around which Vaughan could build the final presentation. In any case the initial scheme was not accepted by the General Court. It was only after petitions and pressure that the Court reconsidered the plan, which had now evolved into a more detailed proposal. A Committee of the General Court, originally established to consider the scheme, heard testimony from Bradstreet and others concerning the feasibility of the attack and finally passed a resolution approving it. Careful political manoeuvring by Vaughan and Shirley had brought some members of the General Court around to support the project and on January 25, 1744/45, this body approved the Committee's resolution by a one vote margin.⁶³

Organization of the expedition commenced immediately and naturally the choice of a commanding officer was a high priority. As an ensign in the British army, barely turned thirty years of age, it might be assumed that John Bradstreet was foolishly vain to have any pretensions concerning that particular appointment. Yet Bradstreet maintained in his journal,⁶⁴ and even as late as eleven years after the Louisbourg action,⁶⁵ that Shirley offered him the command. But Shirley was "addicted to cajolery" since he extended the same offer to Benning Wentworth, lieutenant governor of New Hampshire,

57 Peter Warren to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 June 1745, *ibid.*

58 "Abstract of a Letter from Gov. Shirley to his Grace the Duke of New Castle — Louisbourg 1745-", in "Colonel Bradstreet's Journal," p. 177.

59 Wood, I, p. 247.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 246.

61 Rawlyk, p. 34.

62 Wood, I, p. 246.

63 See Rawlyk, pp. 33-40, for a detailed examination of the plan and its approval.

64 "Colonel John Bradstreet's Journal," p. 171.

65 Memorial of John Bradstreet to Lord Loudoun, [September 1756], Loudoun Papers, LO 5183, Huntington Library.

paign were contributions of the highest order, he was to discover that suspicions of his non-New England background and jealousy caused by his driving ambition were to arouse a mixture of critical comments and generous acknowledgements concerning his performance.

At the end of March, 1744/45, the expedition sailed from New England for the Canso rendezvous, where most of April was to be spent. At Canso the New Englanders were joined by a squadron of the British navy under the command of Peter Warren. At this point Bradstreet was functioning as one of Pepperrell's key officers, since the Massachusetts commander explained to the newly arrived Warren that ". . . Col. Bradstreet, will communicate to you the plan of the operation proposed, and deliver you a plan of this place."⁷³ As might be expected, duties as a liaison officer, however vital, were not the only chores the impetuous Bradstreet wanted to be assigned.

After the successful landing in Gabarus Bay, the first important target was the Grand Battery. Bradstreet was to lead a force of 500 men against it but "the French thought proper to save me that Trouble, by deserting it . . ."⁷⁴ Already, in the planning of this attack, bitterness towards Bradstreet had emerged. A combination of fears for the safety of a company of his New Hampshiremen, who were supposed to serve in the assault, as well as a hatred for Bradstreet,⁷⁵ caused Captain Thomas Waldron to label the plan "a Mad Headlong Ignorant Scheem . . ."⁷⁶

The French abandonment of the Grand Battery deprived Bradstreet of immediate glory, or possible embarrassment if the New Hampshire company had refused to serve under him, but it also revealed his vital contribution to the planning of the entire expedition. He had noted that the Grand Battery was in an exposed position because of an over-looking high hill, which might cause the French to desert it "immediately on the approach of an Enemy by Land, to avoid being taken."⁷⁷ Should this occur, Bradstreet planned to turn the battery's guns against Louisbourg itself. To accomplish this, special shot would be needed, since the Grand Battery cannons were forty-two pounders while the expedition's largest siege cannon were only twenty-two pounders.⁷⁸ In addition, workmen were required to drill out the captured cannon since undoubtedly the French would spike them. Owing to his advice both needs had been foreseen and provided for, Bradstreet claimed, before the expedition left Boston.⁷⁹ On the morning of May 2 the Grand Battery

73 William Pepperrell to Commodore Warren, 23 April 1745, *MHS Collections*, First Series, Vol. I, pl. 21.

74 "Colonel John Bradstreet's Journal," p. 174.

75 Fairchild, p. 176.

76 As quoted in Rawlyk, p. 80.

77 "Colonel John Bradstreet's Journal," p. 172.

78 Rawlyk p. 90

79 "Colonel John Bradstreet's Journal," p. 174.

and Peter Warren.⁶⁶ By this gesture he hoped to win their interest and support but in the case of Bradstreet the manoeuvre almost backfired. When Shirley withdrew the offer, explaining to Bradstreet that William Pepperrell was to command since “the men Cou’d not be rais’d but under the Command of a Native of New England,”⁶⁷ Bradstreet was ready to wash his hands of the entire expedition. Although he was commissioned as second colonel and captain of the second company of the First Massachusetts Regiment in February of 1744/45,⁶⁸ Bradstreet had not as yet decided to join the assault. When the Massachusetts Council heard of his reluctance they passed a unanimous motion, on March 14, 1744/45, “that his Excellency, be desir’d to offer him all Suitable Encouragement for his engaging therein.”⁶⁹ According to Bradstreet’s journal the concession Shirley made was that “Sir William Pepperrell should be advis’d by me, well knowing how impossible it was to Succeed under the Conduct of People Ignorant of the least Military Branch necessary in such an undertaking”⁷⁰ By 1756 this concession had been expanded into a requirement that “the Sole direction of the Expedition should be in your Memorialest.”⁷¹

Regardless of which of these descriptions presents the totally accurate picture of Bradstreet’s position, it is clear that he joined the expedition in a key advisory capacity. But was the offer of such a position all the inducement required? Perhaps he was demanding and receiving a higher price for his services. As the expedition progressed Shirley wrote to Pepperrell concerning Bradstreet’s contribution: “I wish you would be as strong and particular in your next to me in favour of him as you can with justice.”⁷² What Shirley would do with favourable comments concerning Bradstreet is fairly obvious. These were to be passed on to the home authorities and could be of major importance in Bradstreet’s preferment as a British officer. Thus, while Bradstreet accepted the loss of the original rank promised him by Shirley and joined the expedition, in return he expected Shirley to be lavish in praise of his deeds. By means of the Louisbourg expedition Bradstreet hoped to arrange a well-orchestrated chorus of praise carefully directed at the ears of British officialdom. But although several of his actions during the cam-

66 Byron Fairchild, *Messrs. William Pepperrell: Merchants at Piscataqua* (Ithaca, New York, 1954), p. 174.

67 Memorial of John Bradstreet to Lord Loudoun, [September 1756], LoudounPapers, LO 5183.

68 “A Register Of all the Commissions in the Army under Command of the Hon. General Pepperrell, in the Expedition against Cape Breton, 1745,” *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register and Antiquarian Journal*, Vol. XXIV (Boston, 1870), p. 368.

69 “Colonel John Bradstreet’s Journal,” p. 177.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

71 Memorial of John Bradstreet to Lord Loudoun, [September 1756], Loudoun Papers, LO 5183.

72 Shirley to Pepperrell, 22 May 1745, Massachusetts Historical Society [hereafter MHS] *Collections*, Sixth Series, Vol. X, p. 207.

was discovered to be abandoned and it was immediately occupied by a small force under William Vaughan.⁸⁰ The same day Bradstreet arrived on the scene and found his plan eminently feasible. He put in an immediate request to Pepperrell for the men and materials to get the cannon in shape to fire upon Louisbourg. It was his hope that "We may have four 42 pounder ready to play on the town by to-morrow by 12 O'clock . . ." ⁸¹ and, indeed, the next day, according to a Louisbourg inhabitant, "the enemy greeted us with our own cannon . . ." ⁸² It was a master stroke and considerably buoyed the spirits of the attacking New Englanders.

As these guns opened fire on Louisbourg, Pepperrell held an important Council-of-War,⁸³ from which Bradstreet as well as Samuel Waldo, second in command of the expedition, were excused because of their involvement at the Grand Battery. Pepperrell raised the question of whether at this time the Louisbourg commander should be offered the opportunity to capitulate. The council was obviously reluctant to accept such a suggestion, as were the two major absentees. Samuel Waldo and Bradstreet felt "that the Govr. of Louisbourg would give a very ready answer to a summons for surrender by hanging up the messenger thereof, unless we had made a more formidable genl appearance than we have been yet able to make."⁸⁴ Waldo reported: "Colo. Broadstreet desires me to tell yr Honr that it will be of the utmost ill consequence to ye expedition to take the least step towards a parly with the enemy untill we have gott our whole artillery in the best order to play on them . . ." ⁸⁵ Bradstreet and Waldo made clear that they felt an encirclement of Louisbourg by carefully placed batteries and a damaging bombardment were necessary before initiation of negotiations or the launching of any all-out assault. This suggestion did not deviate from the basic strategy outlined in Bradstreet's journal and it was for the most part the very approach that Pepperrell chose to take in directing the siege of Louisbourg. This is important to note for two reasons. In his journal, written several years after the Louisbourg action, Bradstreet carefully linked the strategy behind the fall of Louisbourg with his suggested plan to make it appear that his strategic thinking was the root cause of the success. For the historian to make such a claim purely on the basis of his journal is very risky since, writing after the event and with the advantage of hindsight, he merely could have taken every successful manoeuvre and portrayed it as his own brilliant suggestion.

80 See William Vaughan to William Pepperrell, 2 May 1745, MHS *Collections*, Sixth Series, Vol. X, p. 138.

81 John Bradstreet to William Pepperrell, 2 May 1745, *ibid.*

82 G.M. Wrong, ed., *Louisbourg In 1745: The Anonymous "lettre D'un Habitant De Louisbourg"* (Toronto, 1897), p. 41.

83 See Rawlyk, pp. 102-103.

84 Waldo to Pepperrell, 3 May 1745, MHS *Collections*, Sixth Series, Vol. X, pp. 141-142.

85 Waldo to Pepperrell, 3 May 1745, *ibid.*, p. 144.

However, the letters of Waldo containing as they do both his and Bradstreet's thoughts concerning the way in which the siege should be conducted, and written while the action was in progress, provide clear evidence that both men made a solid contribution to the successful strategy behind the Louisbourg victory.

A second important point concerning the strategy advocated by Waldo and Bradstreet is that they also recommended "that an attack against the Island Battery . . . had best to [be] deferrd . . ."⁸⁶ In other words, their policy of cautious encirclement and bombardment largely ignored the Island Battery and focused on the exertion of far heavier pressure from the land side and land forces than from the sea side and naval forces. On May 10 the several times aborted assault on the Island Battery was to be attempted with Pepperrell's approval. Bradstreet has "us'd all the Means in my power to desswade them from it [the attack],"⁸⁷ and he went even further than verbal persuasion, since at the last moment he intervened and ordered the assembled volunteers to disperse. While his action might have been caused by his being perceptive enough to realize the costly toll in casualties such an attack would take, more likely it was the result of his strong commitment to a strategy which rendered such an attack unnecessary. It appears totally unlikely that his actions were taken because he was a sympathizer with the French cause.

Nevertheless, the latter explanation was the one which swept through the camp. The rumour spread through the ranks of a traitor within the New England force, who was frustrating the effort against Louisbourg. The finger of guilt was pointed at Bradstreet since he had thwarted the attack on the Island Battery. Further spice was added by reports that he had been seen entering and leaving Louisbourg.⁸⁸ By the day following Bradstreet's unfortunate intervention, the stories reached Peter Warren prompting him to write Pepperrell: "For God's sake, Sir, put a stop to that disagreeable and ill-grounded suspicion that some unthinking people have pretended (for I can think it no other) to conceive of Collonel Broadstreet, it may otherwise be of fatal consequence to the expedition."⁸⁹ Pepperrell was already acting to investigate the rumours since at a Council-of-War, held the same day as Warren's letter, the matter was thoroughly discussed. At the meeting Bradstreet was completely exonerated and a Lieutenant Colonel Chandler, who "had been guilty of great imprudence in entertaining and reporting such surmizes with the least reasonable foundation therefor . . ." was forced to apologize. In clearing Bradstreet the council spoke of "his zeal for the success

86 *Ibid.*

87 "Colonel John Bradstreet's Journal," p. 175.

88 Rawlyk, p. 114.

89 Peter Warren to William Pepperrell, 11 May 1745, MHS *Collections*, Sixth Series, Vol. X, p. 162.

of the expedition” and “his active and prudent behavior on all occasions.”⁹⁰ These laudatory comments appear warranted both by his actual performance at Louisbourg and in view of the attempt he was making to rescue his career in the British army. He had to perform with zeal and vigour to offset the criticisms and suspicions arising from his pre-war activities which created such fertile ground for the anti-Bradstreet rumours to grow among the New Englanders. After all he did speak French, he was not a New Englander, he was known as a former trader with Louisbourg, and he did have relatives on the enemy side of the line. Bradstreet’s mysterious background when combined with one unfortunate action threatened to destroy all his plans and hopes.

Pepperrell seemed to sense the grave danger to Bradstreet of the accusations and tried to offset them by expressions of confidence and praise. On the day after the council meeting he informed Warren: “I have resented and taken measures to suppress the surmizes that some silly persons had propagated of Col. Bradstreet’s behaviour wch am sensible was as ill grounded & prejudicial to our design here as it was injurious to him; hope shall hear no more of it.”⁹¹ Several weeks later he assured Governor Shirley of Bradstreet’s innocence and contribution:

. . . I have had abundant experience that the surmises some persons entertained of that gentleman were entirely groundless, and cruelly injurious to him. No person in the army could possibly have behaved with more zeal, activity and judgement in the measures taken for the accomplishment of our design, which added to his particular knowledge in the circumstances of this place, justly entitle him to the esteem and thanks of every well wisher to the success of the expedition.⁹²

Not only was Pepperrell willing to express in letters his respect for Bradstreet but at Louisbourg itself important tasks continued to be assigned the controversial officer. When arrangements were being finalized for the surrender of Louisbourg, it was Bradstreet whom Pepperrell entrusted with the honour of accepting the keys to the city.⁹³ But even as he enjoyed the glory of leading the New England troops into Louisbourg and receiving the keys, the unfortunate Bradstreet was ensnared in yet another controversy. The surrender of the keys to the New Englanders, rather than to an officer of His Majesty’s Navy, accentuated the rivalry between the representatives of the colonies and the mother country. Peter Warren had intended that one of his officers receive the keys but Pepperrell had outmanoeuvred him.⁹⁴

90 Council-of-War, 11 May 1745, *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

91 Pepperrell to Warren, 12 May 1745, *ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

92 Pepperrell to Shirley, 3 June 1745, *MHS Collections*, First Series, Vol. I, p. 40.

93 See Pepperrell to Du Chambon, 17 June 1745, Series F³, Archives Nationales, Vol. 50, Part 1, p. 322, PAC, MG 1.

94 Rawlyk, pp. 149-151.

Despite the actual course of events, stories circulated in New England that the keys had been delivered to Warren and that Pepperrell had not sufficiently exerted himself “for the honor of New England upon this occasion.” Furthermore, it was argued that one of Pepperrell’s own officers had aided in this loss of proper credit to New England’s sons. The hapless Bradstreet was the suspected man once more. In an unflattering climax to his Louisbourg service the feeling was being expressed in Boston “that affairs would have been managed full as well, if he had not been there, or less regard had been paid to him.”⁹⁵

Countering such uncharitable, and largely undeserved, rumours was the chorus of praise from the leading figures connected with the expedition. Bradstreet had cultivated William Pepperrell, William Shirley and Peter Warren very carefully and in the aftermath of victory their glowing words were designed to help achieve the prized higher rank he so eagerly sought in the British army. All three gentlemen were quick to supply the Duke of Newcastle with favourable comments on his behalf. Warren felt that Bradstreet “has been very active, and is deserving of His Majesty’s favour.”⁹⁶ Shirley and Pepperrell were both stronger in his support and more specific about the proper reward. Shirley spoke of “his Extraordinary Activity and good Conduct” during the siege and that, in general, Bradstreet had “in every thing Exerted himself for his Majestys Service.” He recommended the reward of “his good services . . . with his being Sir Williams [Pepperrell’s] Lieut. Colonel in the Regiment design’d to be Establish’d . . .”⁹⁷ Pepperrell expressed the hope that “his majesty would be graciously pleased to apoint Collo Bradstreet . . . who has distinguish’d himself upon all occasions to be my Lieut Collo . . .”⁹⁸ When these comments are linked with Bradstreet’s actual contributions to the Louisbourg victory, a solid case on his behalf emerges. He had brought word to Shirley of the weakened state of the garrison, fortifications, and general condition of Louisbourg. He had been an early advocate of the attack and helped in the formulation of the proposals submitted to the Massachusetts legislators. At Louisbourg he had contributed to the shaping of the basic strategy applied during the siege and demonstrated considerable foresight and ingenuity.

Bradstreet’s remarkable record of service was even further enhanced by his relative youthfulness at the time of the Louisbourg campaign. For a young man, barely thirty years of age, he seemed to move with uncanny ease into

95 Dr. Charles Chauncy to Pepperrell, 27 July 1745, *MHS Collections*, First Series, Vol. I, pp. 50-51.

96 Peter Warren to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 June 1745, Vol. 19, n.p., PANS.

97 “Abstract of a Letter from Gov. Shirley to his Grace the Duke of New Castle-Louisbourg 1745-”, in “Colonel John Bradstreet’s Journal,” p. 177.

98 Pepperrell to the Duke of Newcastle, 19 June 1745, Baxter Papers, *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, XI, p. 301; Pepperrell to Newcastle, 19 June 1745, Vol. 19, n.p., PANS.

the confidence of a colonial governor and a Massachusetts general while at the same time winning the respect of the English Admiral Warren. It was a masterful performance. Admittedly, his cocky attitude, confident expectations and suggestions, and impressive knowledge of Louisbourg's strengths and weaknesses worked to his disadvantage as well as to his advantage. To the rank and file of the New England force, who lacked the wider and more appreciative vision of their superiors, these same traits and knowledgeability spawned rumours, suspicions, and criticisms. But, on balance, Bradstreet had made a good impression and had made it, he hoped, where it counted most. The rather indiscrete young ensign trading out of Canso had been replaced by a shrewdly opportunistic officer fully able to handle the heady dealings with governors, admirals, and generals.

In summary, during the short time span of a few years John Bradstreet had moved from being an obscure ensign doing garrison duty at neglected Canso to being an important contributor to the Louisbourg triumph who could quite legitimately aspire to a lieutenant colonelship in the British army. The neglected fishing village seemed far behind him. And yet, in terms both of distance and time, Canso and his activities there were not that far removed. One of the basic reasons for his Louisbourg exertions had been to blot out his earlier indiscretions. Bradstreet hoped his colonial friends and deeds could overcome the old world disfavour and neglect he had encountered. Could he assume that this had been achieved when suspicions still were voiced even among his fellow colonials who should have been most aware of his zeal and contributions? Rewards for his Louisbourg endeavours were to come but they were not the prizes for which he had hoped.⁹⁹ His triumphant emergence at Louisbourg was viewed by some doubters as merely a re-emergence. It was a re-emergence which, in the minds of some of his detractors, was not yet far enough removed from the Canso years and Canso activities for Bradstreet's total vindication.

99 The expected lieutenant colonelship did not materialize. A major's rank apparently then was substituted as Bradstreet's reward but this too was lost when, by manipulations in England, Simon Bradstreet somehow gained the commission intended for his brother John. Finally, an appointment as lieutenant governor of St. John's, Newfoundland, was arranged for John Bradstreet. But to Bradstreet this was inadequate compensation and the entire episode left him a bitter man.