

# VESBARRES, Wm. F.

Birth & Death Dates	Legal Training	Parental Occupation <small>Father &amp; Father-in-law</small>	COMMENTS / DETAILS / STORIES	
1800-1885	Unknown In L.M. Wilkins' office	F-in-law was Thos. Cutler, Judge <del>of Probate</del>	<p><del>Canadian</del> of J.F.W. Desbarres, (1721-1824) who had a long career as army officer, surveyor, colonel, military engineer, &amp; Col. colonel in NS, Quebec, England, etc. See Deb extract in Desbarres file.</p> <p>Urban of CBretton (1784-?) &amp; PEI (1809-12) <span style="float: right;">illegitimate love</span></p> <p>Great stuff re JFW's private life in Kernaghan articles.</p>	
Birthplace	Bar Membership	Familial Connections		
Elysian Fields, Comfeld Co.	N.S. - 1821 IS+	None		
Primary Education	Prior Political / Public Experience			
Nova Scotia Halifax Grammar School	<p>MHA Guysboro 1836-48 Sol Gen 1848 briefly Reformer</p>			
Secondary Education	Appt / Death / Resign.		Prior Judicial Experience	
Unknown None	<p>A - 1848 R - 1881</p>		<p>None Probate Judge Sydney Co, 1830-42 " " Guysboro Co, 1842-48</p>	

Much written about his father, J.F.W. Desbarres.  
See - DCB

- R. J. Morgan, 'Desbarres (the Founder)', NSHR, 5, 2 (1985), pp 5-17
- S. B. MacPhee, 'Desbarres and His Contemporaries as Mapmakers', NSHR, 5, 2 (1985), pp 15-27.
- D. B. Foster, 'Desbarres, (the Town Planner)', NSHR, 5, 2 (1985), pp 29-39
- L. D. Kernaghan, 'A most eccentric genius: The Private Life of J.F.W. Desbarres', NSHR, 5, 2 (1985), pp. 41-59
- L. D. Kernaghan, 'A Man and his Mistress: J.F.W. Desbarres and Mary Cannon', Acadiensis, 11, 1 (1981), pp. 23-42

J.E. Belleveau, 'A Man, his Mistress, and a Famous New Brunswick Court Case', Atlantic Advocate, 69 (1978), pp. 29-43

- Green = NS MCA's.

Desbarres Papers, MG 1, vols. 1725, 2384 and 2629;

S. Leblance, 'J.F.W. Desbarres', Unpublished MS., MG 100, vol. 134, #s 21-23;

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had guests or not. His remarkable rise was accompanied by a gradual anglicizing of the family. Several of his children married into the English-speaking Quebec bourgeoisie. Louise-Sophie married Frederic Horatio Fisher, a doctor from London, Hélène and Sophie married the Quebec merchants George and Henry Pemberton. Charlotte-Louise became the wife of Dr Charles-Norbert PERRAULT, Joseph-François Perreault's son.

On 23 April 1828, at the age of 63, Desbarats passed away at his home in Petite-Rivière-Saint-Charles. The funeral service was conducted by Joseph Signay\*, the coadjutor bishop, in the cathedral of Notre-Dame at Quebec. The cortège then crossed the St Lawrence and wended its way to Frampton Township by roads difficult at that season. In keeping with his last wishes he was buried in the local chapel, for which he had donated land in 1825. Although his family showed some reluctance, his remains were transferred from the chapel to the new parish church of Saint-Edouard around 1870. As founder and benefactor Desbarats was long remembered by the early settlers in Frampton; his son Édouard-Olivier was to continue developing the land there. The Desbarats name also became established in the difficult and precarious fields of printing and publishing. One after another through the 19th century, his son, grandson, and great-grandson — George-Paschal\*, George-Édouard\*, and William-Amable — headed the family printing firm. They carried on its work with distinction and were often innovators in the field.

JEAN-MARIE LEBEL in collaboration with  
AILEEN DESBARATS

ANQ-MBF. CN1-5, 30 janv., 25 avril, 18 juin 1788; 28 mars, 24 avril 1794. ANQ-Q. CE1-1, 24 sept. 1798; CN1-16, 28 mai 1819; CN1-26, 29 avril, 26 sept. 1809; CN1-116, 9 janv. 1818, 15, 19 févr., 21 sept. 1821; 19 avril, 13 août, 6 sept., 11, 15 oct. 1822; 3, 21 févr., 9, 20 mai 1823; 26 sept. 1824; CN1-178, 27 févr. 1796; 26 avril 1797; 2 janv., 21 mars, 17, 22 sept., 5 déc. 1798; 24 janv., 30 mai 1800; 16 mars 1801; 2 févr., 2 mars, 2 avril, 3 mai 1802; 22 juin, 27 sept. 1803; 27 févr. 1805; 15 juill. 1809; 18 mai 1810; 22 févr., 7 mai 1811; 3 sept. 1814; 9 mai 1815; CN1-208, 7, 16 oct., 25 nov. 1820; 29 mai 1821; 13 août 1822; 20 mai, 3, 7, 13 oct. 1823; 5 août 1824; 10 juin, 16 sept. 1826; 1<sup>er</sup> oct. 1828; CN1-230, 30 avril 1794; 7 juin 1800; 6 juin 1801; 8 juill. 1802; 28 mai, 13 sept. 1806; 19 mars, 24 nov., 30 déc. 1807; 24 oct. 1808; 25 janv., 10 mars, 14 avril, 21 mai, 5, 22, 25 juin, 5 juill., 7 nov. 1810; 27 mai, 7 juill. 1812; 25 mai 1814; 6 déc. 1815; 19, 21 août, 6, 14 oct., 24 nov. 1817; 9 févr. 1818; 16, 24 juill., 30 oct. 1819; 9 août 1820; 4 mai 1821; 31 mai 1822; 26 mai, 10 juin 1824; CN1-253, 20 févr. 1812; 5 déc. 1823; 23 juill., 11 déc. 1824; 8 déc. 1826; CN1-262, 23 mai 1798, 16 nov. 1799, 7 juin 1800; CN1-284, 10 janv. 1794, 25 nov. 1819; ZQ6-45, 26 avril 1828. Arch. de la ville de Québec, Juges de paix, procès-verbaux des sessions spéciales relatives aux chemins

et ponts, 1816–28. PAC. MG 24, B1, 1: 182–87; 2: 106–7; RG 68, General index, 1651–1841.

"Cahier des témoignages de liberté au mariage commencé le 15 avril 1757." ANQ Rapport, 1951–53, 115. "Les dénombrements de Québec" (Plessis). ANQ Rapport, 1948–49: 155, 213. "Recensement des habitants de la ville et gouvernement des Trois-Rivières tel qu'il a été pris au mois de septembre mil sept cent soixante." ANQ Rapport, 1946–47: 8. *Quebec Gazette*, 10 April 1800; 20, 29 May 1802; 3 April 1806; 27 April 1815. *Quebec Mercury*, 26 April 1798. Beaulieu et Hamelin, *La presse québécoise*, 1: 19, 23. Hare et Wallot, *Les imprimés dans le Bas-Canada. Le Jeune, Dictionnaire*, 1: 499–500. *Officers of British forces in Canada* (Irving), 143. *Quebec almanac*, 1796–1828. P.-G. Roy, *Fils de Québec*, 2: 130–32. Tremaine, *Biblio. of Canadian imprints*, 525, 528–29, 634, 664. Christina Cameron et Jean Trudel, *Québec au temps de James Patterson Cockburn* (Québec, 1976). Louis Lacaze, *Les imprimeurs et les libraires en Béarn (1552–1883)* (Pau, France, 1884). Yvan Lamonde et al., *L'imprimé au Québec, aspects historiques (18<sup>e</sup>–20<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Québec, 1983), 98–99, 109–10, 276, 285. J.-E. Roy, *Hist. de Lauzon*, 4: 70–71; 5: 86–87. Henri Tétu, *Histoire des familles Tétu, Bonenfant, Dionne et Perrault* (Québec, 1898), 523–24. Claude Galameau, "Les métiers du livre à Québec (1764–1859)." *Cahiers des Dix*, 43 (1983): 149–50, 159–60. Eugène Rouillard, "Les chefs de canton." *BRH*, 2 (1896): 183–85.

**DESBARRES, JOSEPH FREDERICK WALLET** (baptized **Joseph-Frédéric Vallet Des Barres**), army officer, military engineer, surveyor, colonizer, and colonial administrator; b. November 1721, either in Basel, Switzerland, or in Paris, eldest of three children of Joseph-Léonard Vallet Des Barres and Anne-Catherine Cuvier; with Mary CANNON he had six children and with Martha Williams eleven; d. 27 Oct. 1824 in Halifax.

The many fields of interest of Joseph Frederick Wallet DesBarres have made him a unique figure in the early history of the Maritimes, and the length and vigour of his career still elicit admiration. A member of a Huguenot family that originated in the Montbéliard region of France, DesBarres received his initial schooling at Basel, where he obtained a thorough grounding in science and mathematics. In 1752 or 1753, under the patronage of the Duke of Cumberland, he entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich (London), England, and there immersed himself in the study of fortifications, surveying, and drafting. DesBarres broke his ties with Europe in 1756 when he left for North America to begin a military career as a lieutenant with the Royal Americans (62nd, later 60th, Foot). Within two years he was serving as an assistant engineer at the siege of Louisbourg, Île Royale (Cape Breton Island). His ability there impressed his superiors, and he was commissioned to prepare a chart of the St Lawrence River, which was used by James Wolfe\*. His success led to further surveys in the Quebec area while he was

participating in the campaigns of 1759 and 1760 as an assistant engineer, followed in 1761 by work on the Halifax defences under the supervision of John Henry Bastide\*. The next year DesBarres acted as an assistant engineer at the recapture of St John's [see Charles-Henri-Louis d'Arcais\* de Ternay], and after the French surrender carried out surveying tasks in Newfoundland in conjunction with James Cook\*.

In October 1762 Commodore Richard Spry arrived in Halifax to become commander of the Royal Navy in North America. Soon afterwards he suggested to the Admiralty that a coastal survey of Nova Scotia would aid in settlement and improve "the safety of Navigation," and he recommended DesBarres, who had volunteered his services for the task. A year later, Spry's successor, Rear-Admiral Lord Colvill\*, brought instructions from the Admiralty to have DesBarres make "accurate Surveys and Charts of the Coast and Harbours of Nova Scotia." This project was one of several approved about this time by the Board of Trade and by the Admiralty for the survey of parts of Britain's North American possessions, and it reflected the bias of its sponsor: whereas the board's main interest was in land surveys, the Admiralty was most concerned with sea-coasts and harbours. In part because of this divergence of interests, DesBarres was to have only limited contact with Samuel Johannes Holland\*, who in 1764 began a survey of the northern colonies for the Board of Trade. DesBarres was undoubtedly happy with this arrangement since he resented Holland, perhaps because of the latter's seniority and better connections; indeed, he may have suggested the Nova Scotia survey to Spry in order to avoid working under Holland. DesBarres's tendency to think of new projects is illustrated by his suggestion at this time for the establishment of a corps of pioneers which would construct roads in Nova Scotia.

By May 1764 DesBarres had commenced the survey, which gave full rein to his surveying and artistic genius. Previous maps of inshore waters had been poor, inadequate in scale and unreliable in detail. Thanks to his painstaking methods, however, DesBarres was able to refine existing techniques of surveying and adapt others. Each summer he worked with a staff of assistants, usually numbering about 7, some 20 to 30 labourers, and small vessels detached from the naval establishment. During the winter he prepared rough drafts of the maps. The tortuous nature of the shore line was a major problem; DesBarres commented, "There is scarcely any known Shore so much intersected with Bays, Harbours and Creeks as this is, and the Offing of it is so full of Islands, Rocks and Shoals as are almost innumerable." In addition, conditions were sometimes harsh and occasionally dangerous — in 1767 he narrowly escaped drowning when landing on Sable Island.

Other problems were administrative in nature. In

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1766 DesBarres and Colvill had a disagreement about the scope of the survey, Colvill believing that only the Atlantic coastline should be charted and DesBarres holding out for the entire coast followed by a review of all work undertaken before it was incorporated in "an accurate and perfect Map." DesBarres apparently carried his point with the Admiralty, but that body was not as accommodating about expenses. Initially only the cost of hiring a vessel was allowed, there were disputes over the wages of the labourers, and DesBarres's own expenditures were not fully reimbursed. Nevertheless, the survey continued steadily until its completion in 1773.

After returning to England in 1774, DesBarres toiled for some years to produce his charts and views in a finished form. They were eventually incorporated in *The Atlantic Neptune*, a large collection of charts and views produced by DesBarres. The *Neptune* was published by him on behalf of the Admiralty, and appeared between 1774 and 1784. It consists of four series of charts covering Nova Scotia, New England, the Gulf of St Lawrence including Cape Breton and St John's (Prince Edward) Island, and the coast south of New York, accompanied by "various views of the North American coast." Although DesBarres was indebted to Holland and his assistants for many surveys, a fact which he acknowledged, his own contribution is not negligible. Moreover, it is in their artistic quality that the charts and views especially shine, since their accuracy is combined with an aesthetic character that places DesBarres among the more notable of the century's minor artists. The *Neptune* does contain some inaccuracies, but these are probably accounted for by the fact that DesBarres had rushed production in response to the mounting pressure for publication, unrest in the Thirteen Colonies having created a demand for accurate naval charts. Nevertheless, DesBarres's charts served as standard guides for navigation until the work of Henry Wolsey Bayfield\* and Peter Frederick Shortland\* well into the 19th century.

While in Nova Scotia, DesBarres became convinced of the great potential of the Maritime colonies for settlement. He began to obtain land by grant or purchase, and eventually came to own property in the Tatamagouche region, Falmouth Township, and Cumberland County in Nova Scotia, as well as tracts between the Memramcook and Petitcodiac rivers in present-day New Brunswick. DesBarres's acquisitions, which made him one of the greatest landowners in the Maritime colonies, were procured relatively cheaply, partly because he was friendly with Nova Scotian officials. The Tatamagouche grant, for example, came to him as the result of an association with Michael Francklin\*, Richard Bulkeley\*, Joseph Goreham\*, and others. In addition, DesBarres looked after the interests of other Nova Scotian landowners

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such as Frederick Haldimand\*. DesBarres's dream was that rents would provide money for his chart-making activities, which were always in need of support. Some time before 1768 he built a headquarters in Falmouth Township known as Castle Frederick, and there worked on the surveys during the winters. When he returned to England he left his mistress Mary Cannon, whom he had met in 1764, in charge of the Castle and his estates. On her appointment as his agent in 1776 she was given power of attorney in land transactions, and was to consult him only for final decisions.

DesBarres began submitting bills for the *Neptune* in 1775, but the Admiralty decided that, given the high costs, parliamentary approval would be needed before payment could be made. This decision initiated proceedings that dragged on until 1794 and were never satisfactory to DesBarres. The confusion in his records – the result of an unusual arrangement whereby he was permitted to receive the profits from the sale of charts while working for the crown – makes them almost impossible to interpret. But in October 1782 the Admiralty reported favourably on his requests for compensation, thus vindicating his honesty and confirming the value of the *Neptune*.

Deeply involved with the war in North America and its aftermath, the government did not act on DesBarres's case immediately. However, the need to establish refuges for the loyalists came to DesBarres's assistance, since in May 1784 it was decided that Cape Breton would be separated from Nova Scotia and made an independent colony for that purpose. One of the few persons with an intimate knowledge of the island, DesBarres had been consulted when discussions about its future were under way, and he had been enthusiastic, claiming that the fisheries could be developed as they had been under French rule and that the coal mines could pay for the operation of the government. He was quick to make a case for his appointment as lieutenant governor in partial compensation for the 20 years spent on surveys and the *Neptune*, which he claimed had cost him money and military promotion (he had become a captain only in 1775). Thanks in part to his knowledge of the island, he received the appointment, his commission being dated 9 Aug. 1786. Governor John Parr of Nova Scotia was surprised to receive such a request directly with London.

The new colony was not a particularly appealing place. Since its separation from the mainland in 1763, Cape Breton had remained largely deserted because of indifference to Halifax and the unwillingness of the British government to fund the settlement of the island. The home government had not even completed the home requisitioning of the population in the 1760s, and the result had been a sparse and scattered settlement, mostly in the coastal areas. The island was not only a

During 1783, however, Abraham Cornelius Cuyler\*, a former mayor of Albany, N.Y., had begun to plan for the immigration of loyalists from Quebec, and 140 arrived in October 1784 at Louisbourg and St Peter's. DesBarres had also been gathering settlers, mostly poor Englishmen and disbanded soldiers, and 129 persons landed from the *Blenheim* at Spanish Bay (Sydney Harbour) one month later. DesBarres's settlers were joined by some of Cuyler's group, and the lieutenant governor himself arrived at Spanish Bay on 7 Jan. 1785; by spring the colony's capital, named for the home secretary, Lord Sydney, had been founded. DesBarres laid out the town along typically Georgian lines, intending that it should have the advantage of controlled development. The proposal was unusual for its time, and a later commentator has claimed that, had it been fully carried through, it would have resulted in "the only imaginative planned project in 18th century Nova Scotia."

But while DesBarres shone as a planner, he failed in human relations. More accustomed to military discipline than to the compromise needed in civilian government, he rashly tried to impose his will on others and earned their enmity and opposition. The chief source of controversy was the shortage of supplies. It soon became evident that, thanks to a lack of planning in Halifax and Britain, there were inadequate provisions to support the settlers and garrison of Sydney. Moreover, when government supplies became available, they were allotted only to the troops and loyalists. The settlers sponsored by DesBarres were thus placed in an unenviable position. DesBarres claimed that as lieutenant governor he alone had the right to distribute these supplies, but Lieutenant-Colonel John Yorke, the garrison commander, insisted that he had been ordered to take charge of them. The acrimonious debate between the two men lasted from late 1785 well into the spring of 1786, and was accompanied by several confrontations between DesBarres's supporters and the troops. The tiny society of Sydney was divided by the dispute, which slackened to some extent when DesBarres obtained control over some supplies by seizing those he found in a ship wrecked off Antigonish. Yorke had been willing to distribute supplies to the non-loyalist settlers, but DesBarres's refusal to compromise about control drove him to ally himself with members of the Executive Council who had already begun to rebel against DesBarres's strict control, notably Cuyler and Antoine General David Mathews\*. Cuyler, Mathews, and others sent petitions to the British government condemning the conduct of DesBarres and his supporters, such as Chief Justice Richard Gibbons\* and demanding his recall.

Unfortunately for DesBarres, by the time the petitions reached London in the late summer of 1786, his position was less than secure. In April 1786

Sydney had reprimanded him for attempting to promote one of his favourite schemes, the establishment of a whale fishery, by encouraging whalers from Nantucket Island and Martha's Vineyard, Mass., to settle in Cape Breton. Sydney had reproved Parr for the same activity. He was also disturbed by DesBarres's failure to wait for instructions before entering into agreements with whalers, and his expenditure of money without prior approval on such items as barracks. The arrival of the petitions and supporting letters from Parr apparently decided Sydney to recall DesBarres to explain his conduct. In spite of DesBarres's sending Gibbons to London to present his case, Sydney ordered him to Britain in November 1786. Just under a year later DesBarres handed over power to his successor, William Macarwick\*, and left Cape Breton.

There were several reasons for DesBarres's failure. Cape Breton had a low priority with British officials and there was no patience with disputes in a minor colony. Moreover, a conservative Home Department showed no imagination about cooperation in the implementation of DesBarres's far-reaching schemes. Then too, ambitious loyalists such as Cuyler and Mathews were unwilling to submit to DesBarres's control, and were prepared to use their influence in Britain. And lastly, Nova Scotian officials resented losing Cape Breton and were jealous of a contender for government support; they would hinder the development of the colony as much as possible.

DesBarres's career in Cape Breton complicated his claims for compensation even more, since he had been compelled to purchase £3,000 worth of supplies. To pay the bills, he had to pledge *Neptune* plates and mortgage some of his estates. For the next several years DesBarres's confusing financial records were examined, while he demanded every penny he felt was owed him in numerous lengthy petitions which reveal the singularity of purpose that characterized his whole life. The government agreed to pay him only the £43,000 that formed his total claim, but most of the amount was still outstanding when in 1793 his friend William Windham became secretary at war. Although several of the *Neptune* claims were accepted, apparently because the plates were considered to be DesBarres's private property, therefore profitable to him, most were not. In addition, his expenses arising from Cape Breton were denied, and he was even granted half the salary of lieutenant governor from 1787 to 1793.

DesBarres was 72 in 1794 and the settlement of his claims should have spelled the happy end of a long career. It did not, he was not recognized that his errors in Cape Breton had not been great enough to deny him another colonial appointment. He remained in England pressing his case and was not satisfied until May 1804, when at the age of 81 he was appointed

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lieutenant governor of Prince Edward Island, to succeed Edmund Fanning\*.

During Fanning's tenure the absentee landlords, who owned most of the land on the Island, had become suspicious of certain developments, notably the movement for escheat for non-fulfilment of obligations. Since the landlords feared that they had not exercised great influence on the administration of the Island, DesBarres was instructed by the British government to investigate the situation and make reforms, especially in the judicial system, which had been the subject of complaints from several quarters. DesBarres experienced great difficulty in reaching the Island, and it was not until July 1805 that he arrived in Charlottetown. He brought with him his tendency to propose imaginative plans but, tutored by the Cape Breton experience, showed greater tact and willingness to compromise.

DesBarres was concerned to discover the state of the Island's economy, and by the end of 1805 he had forwarded to London both a census and a detailed account of the crops and livestock in the colony. The relatively backward condition of the Island prompted him to attempt changes, and he planned to create a more prosperous future by erecting public buildings and improving communications. To accomplish his aims, he adapted the militia organization to fulfil the statute labour laws; by 1810 new roads were being opened and public buildings planned [see John Plaw\*]. DesBarres also devoted much time to questions of defence, organizing the militia on a proper basis and trying to interest both local and British politicians in improving the Island's military position.

At the same time, the lieutenant governor was involved with a complex political situation. On his arrival DesBarres had found that Fanning's supporters dominated the public scene, and he was therefore obliged to win the confidence of the few unaligned residents. Fanny Buxton (Palmer), for instance, Palmer's opponent in the Council and a local member of minor positions, raised suspicions among the Fanningites, or "old party," as they were known, about his influence with DesBarres. Palmer was already in ill favour with them, and he became even more so in 1806 when he and some others founded the Loyal Electors, a society which opposed the "old party" and aimed at control of the House of Assembly.

The Loyal Electors and the "old party" maintained a strained relationship during the following years, one marked by increasing hostility on both sides. In 1810 matters came to a head when Governor General Peter Bagenal\* died. DesBarres, who had hitherto been successful in staying out of political quarrels, recommended Palmer for the position, but the prospectors, led by Lord Selkirk (Douglas\*), distrusted Palmer and succeeded the following year in his nomination and appointment. Charles Stewart\* appointed in 1812 also fell

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accusations were made that a secret committee had been formed to control the Loyal Electors. Members of the society refuted the charge in affidavits to DesBarres which were highly critical of Stewart, Chief Justice Cæsar COLCLOUGH, and two other judges. When the judges learned of the attacks they demanded and obtained permission from DesBarres to examine the affidavits, which they then used to start legal proceedings against some of the Loyal Electors.

After a fiercely contested assembly election in 1812 the Loyal Electors increased their representation. When the "old party" supporters boycotted the house in September, a rump composed mainly of Loyal Electors requested from DesBarres an explanation of his role in the affidavits affair. The lieutenant governor denied that he had authorized the use of the affidavits for legal proceedings, and the assembly thereupon condemned the judges' actions. Shortly thereafter DesBarres took the opportunity to suspend Colclough, with whom he had been on bad terms for some time.

But these events had been overtaken by others in Britain. The proprietors, alerted to the controversy by Colclough and others, had attacked DesBarres for being under the domination of Palmer and had attacked the Loyal Electors as sympathetic to the Americans. Lord Bathurst, the colonial secretary, was sympathetic to their arguments and in August 1812 recalled DesBarres; Palmer was stripped of his public offices. DesBarres was almost certainly not as heavily influenced by Palmer as was alleged, since he was perceptive and headstrong enough not to be led by advisers. It seems likely that the Colonial Office, quite apart from the proprietors' lobbying, felt that in wartime a younger, more militarily active man was needed to replace one of 89.

After his supersession DesBarres left Prince Edward Island for Amherst, N.S., where he lived until he moved to Halifax in 1817. His vitality was far from exhausted, for he continued trying to prod the British government into paying more of his claims, and spent a great deal of time on his land problems. It is reputed that he celebrated his hundredth birthday by dancing on a table top in Halifax. There he died one month short of 103 and was buried beside Martha Williams.

Over many years his problems with his lands had grown more and more complicated, and they had become inextricably involved with his personal relationships. Mary Cannon had remained in charge of his estates and during his tenure in Cape Breton had sent timber and produce to Sydney. Their relationship deteriorated, however, after the arrival at Sydney late in 1785 of Martha Williams and two of her children by DesBarres. Williams, a native of Shrewsbury, England, is a shadowy figure. It is not known whether DesBarres had bothered to marry her before she arrived in North America, but thereafter he remained

loyal to her and severed personal connections with Cannon, who continued to defend his land titles in the courts against creditors and against tenants increasingly seeking to own their own property.

During the years in Cape Breton and England DesBarres had had scant time for his estates. In 1794, however, when prospects brightened for the settlement of the *Neptune* and Cape Breton claims, he had taken a renewed interest in the properties. Claiming that he could not obtain information on them from Cannon, he appointed Captain John MacDonald\* of Glenaladale as agent in her place. MacDonald discovered that Cannon had run up £4,000 worth of debts in DesBarres's name and feared that she would sue DesBarres for that amount; he also found out that she was having an affair with an Irish labourer at Castle Frederick DesBarres acted coolly, remaining in England and ignoring the estates, but not making any provision for Cannon and their children. By about 1800 one of their daughters, Amelia, had taken charge of the estates; like all his children she was loyal to him and tried to enforce payment of rents.

When DesBarres was appointed to Prince Edward Island in 1804, he replaced Amelia with a son-in-law, James Chalmers. However, Chalmers's heavy-handed approach to collecting rents drove some lessees to sell out and move. By this time DesBarres had lost contact with agricultural and settlement conditions on his estates, and no manager could satisfy his final visions of landed wealth. Believing that Cannon had "fraudulently and corruptly betrayed [his] trust and confidence" in her management of his land, in 1809 he went so far as to take her to the Court of Chancery in Halifax, but the case was still unresolved at his death, when it was presumably closed without any decision. Meanwhile he was unable to divest himself of his land since disputes with tenants over land values had prevented prices from being set on his holdings. His children by Martha Williams inherited the problem, eventually squabbling among themselves and gaining little. Cannon and her family were totally excluded from his estate.

The long career of Joseph Frederick Wallet DesBarres unfolded during the pioneer period of four Maritime colonies. There can be no dispute that his greatest contribution is the *Atlantic Neptune*, which stands as a landmark in Canadian cartographic achievement. His enthusiastic visions for Cape Breton were not realized and his impatience with government and opposition spelled failure to his efforts. In Prince Edward Island his administration was more successful and saw the formation of what has often been called the first political party in the colony. Difficulties over land resulted in a time-consuming waste of energy which soured his later years. DesBarres's private life was not altogether unusual in so far as colonial officials in the 18th century often had families on both sides of the

ocean. However, it must be said that in his treatment of Mary Cannon and her family he showed callousness, ingratitude, and suspicion.

For himself he demanded complete justice, and he showed "Ingenuity and Contrivance" in obtaining it during the years of subtle battles over his *Neptune* and Cape Breton claims. His personality "never demonstrated an abundance of the pleasing traits," according to a recent biographer, Geraint Nantglyn Davies Evans, and could hardly have been agreeable. Yet his enthusiasm and sheer breadth of vision appealed to women, politicians, and officials alike. These characteristics brought DesBarres his successes but the attention to detail he showed as an artist brought a certain pettiness to his personal affairs and led to his failures.

R. J. MORGAN

The collection of plates which constitutes *The Atlantic Neptune*, published for the use of the Royal Navy of Great Britain was printed in London at various times between 1774 and 1784. The work is sometimes described as appearing in four editions, dated 1777, 1780, 1781, and 1784, but these dates apply only to the four versions of the main title page and not to the rest of the contents, which bear various dates and differ so widely from copy to copy that no two known sets are alike, and no definitive list of the variant plates is available despite considerable bibliographical investigation. The complexities of this publication are discussed at greater length in Evans's biography (cited below) and in Robert Lingel's article, "The *Atlantic Neptune*," New York Public Library, *Bull.*, 40 (1936): 571-603. A facsimile reprint of one of the copies bearing the 1780 title page has been published in four portfolios of unbound plates, Barre, Mass., 1966-68.

DesBarres is also the author of *Nautical remarks and observations on the coasts and harbours of Nova Scotia*... ([London?], 1778); *Surveys of North America*, entitled: *Atlantic Neptune*... (London, 1781), a partial catalogue and price list of the *Neptune* plates; *A statement submitted by Lieutenant Colonel DesBarres, for consideration, respecting his services... during the war of 1756... the utility of his surveys... of the coasts and harbours of North America*, intitled "The *Atlantic Neptune*"; - and his proceedings... as lieutenant governor... of Cape Breton (n.p., [1795]); and of *Letters to Lord \*\*\*\** on "A caveat against emigration to America...", which was published anonymously in London in 1804.

BL. Add. mss 21710, 21828, 37890 (copies at PAC). PAC, MG 11, [CO 217] Nova Scotia A, 106; Cape Breton A; [CO 220] Cape Breton B; MG 23, F1. [William Smith], *A caveat against emigration to America; with the state of the island of Cape Breton, from the year 1784 to the present year; and suggestions for the benefit of the British settlements in North America* (London, 1803). DNB, G. N. D. Evans, *Uncommon obdurate: the several public careers of J. F. W. DesBarres* (Toronto and Salem, Mass., 1969). R. J. Morgan, "Orphan outpost." J. C. Webster, *The life of Joseph Frederick Wallet Des Barres* (Shediac, N.B., 1933). Michael Hugo Brunt, "The origin of colonial settlements in the Maritimes," *Plan Canada* (Toronto), 1 (1959-60): 102-4. Lois Kernaghan, "A man and his mistress: J. F. W. Des-

Barres and Mary Cannon," *Acadiensis* (Fredericton), 11 (1981-82), no. 1: 23-42. R. [J.] Morgan, "Joseph Frederick Wallet DesBarres and the founding of Cape Breton colony," *Rev. de l'univ. d'Ottawa*, 39 (1969): 212-27. J. C. Webster, "Joseph Frederick Wallet Des Barres and *The Atlantic Neptune*," *RSC Trans.*, 3rd ser., 21 (1927), sect II, 21-40.

**DESBRISAY, THEOPHILUS.** Church of England clergyman, JP, office holder, and politician; b. 9 Oct. 1754 in Thurles (Republic of Ireland), son of Thomas Desbrisay\* and Ellen Landers (Landen); m. 1778 Margaret Stewart, daughter of Peter Stewart\*, and they had six sons and seven daughters; d. 14 March 1823 in Prince Edward Island.

Theophilus Desbrisay's appointment as governor's chaplain for St John's (Prince Edward) Island was obtained for him in 1774 by his father, the lieutenant governor. A student at Trinity College, Dublin, Theophilus was already in deacon's orders. He was ordained to the priesthood by the bishop of Waterford on 3 July 1775, although he was not yet of canonical age, and he then set out for Charlottetown. In the Strait of Canso the vessel on which he was a passenger was captured by American privateers who had just plundered Charlottetown. Following his release, he arrived late in the year at the capital only to discover that there were no funds for his support and the £3,000 allocated by the crown in 1772 for construction of a church, court-house, and jail had been appropriated by Governor Walter Patterson\* to pay government salaries.

Desbrisay found a berth on a man-of-war, which he served as chaplain for two years. In 1777 he was assured a stipend and he took up residence ashore. When the parish of Charlotte was created in 1781, Desbrisay became the first rector. Later he served as a justice of the peace and an overseer of roads. By 7 Oct. 1782 he had become a member of Council, but his resignation was accepted on 16 April 1784. Reappointed on 15 May 1787, he did not attend any meetings after 24 September, and it is possible that his disappearance from the record is connected with the reinstatement in October of Phillips Callbeck\*, Thomas Wright\*, and others, who had been suspended earlier in the year.

Desbrisay's ministry was complicated by his relationship through blood or marriage with many in his cure of souls. For example, he encountered both pastoral and familial difficulties when in the early 1780s Chief Justice Peter Stewart accused his wife, Mrs Desbrisay's stepmother, of having been "compromised" by Governor Patterson and expelled her from his bed and board.

From 1780 to 1801 Desbrisay made his home at Covehead, a rural retreat on the Island's north shore, saying that he considered Charlottetown "a wicked place" and himself "more retired and happy in the