

Fort Beauharnois¹

Nell Mabey

*IN FRANCE, the fifteenth Louis; upon the British throne
The second George; and in this, our country, yet unknown,
Sixty years — precisely sixty years, by way
Of Lexington and Concord, to Constitution Day. . . .*

*Figures sharply etched against the sun-drenched sand,
Against September's evening glow, the swaggering band,
Explorers, trappers, French and Sioux, divinely led,
Relives its moment; there's a clanking of swords, the tread
Of marching feet — or is it only the waves that swoop,
Advancing, retreating, smartly, briskly, like an ordered troop
Of white-horsed cavalry rounding the point? Is it a dream?
But no! On they come! Two black-robed priests — one catches the
gleam
Of their crosses. That tall, slim fellow, stepping jauntily,
Is Dumain, the captain; that other, Campeau, the blacksmith, he
Of the Vulcan shoulders . . . epic pageant passing by
To the sound of the wind and the waves and a sandpiper's shrilling
cry . . .
A three-fold requiem. . . .*

*We saunter down to the brink
Of the lake, stand watching. Splash! Above the fading pink
Of the water, a leaping bass describes a silver arc;
The light upon the point is like a glowworm's spark.*

¹Fort Beauharnois, on the Minnesota shore of Lake Pepin near Frontenac, was founded on September 17, 1727, by a party of French adventurers under the Sieur de la Perrière. For a full account of this early French post in the Minnesota country, see Louise Phelps Kellogg, "Fort Beauharnois," in *Minnesota History*, 8:232-246 (September, 1927). *Ed.*



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).