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Mathieu Da Costa

Admittedly little is known about Mathieu Da Costa. From the few records that remain, historians conclude he was a free man who earned a living as an interpreter for Europeans who were trading with Indigenous people in the New World or the America's as they are known today. Believed to be of African or even Euro-African

descent, his connection to Canada and Nova Scotia came in the year 1608, when Da Costa signed a contract to work for French fur trader, explorer, and governor of Acadia, Pierre Dugua de Mons, and visited the coast of Atlantic Canada, making Mathieu Da Costa the first person of African descent for whom we have a name and know something about, to explore the area of what is now Nova Scotia.

It is known that contract with Dugua de Mons lasted some three years and it is assumed that Da Costa accompanied Dugua de Mons and Samuel de Champlain on one or more of their voyages to Acadia (made up of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) and the St. Lawrence River area. The

last information of Da Costa comes from a prison record in Le Havre, France, in December 1609. The record does not indicate why he was there but there were references to "insolences" suggesting that Da Costa had an independent spirit and spoke his mind.



While the full story of Mathieu Da Costa may never be known, interest in his life and in his unique connection with Nova Scotia can be found throughout the province. Today you can find Mathieu Da Costa's legacy at The Port-Royal National Historic Site in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. This historic site celebrates his role as an interpreter between Indigenous peoples and the French explorers.

In addition, a plaque honoring him has been placed on the Mathieu Da Costa African Heritage Trail, a series of monuments erected and unveiled in 2005 to highlight the history of African Nova Scotians in the Annapolis Valley.