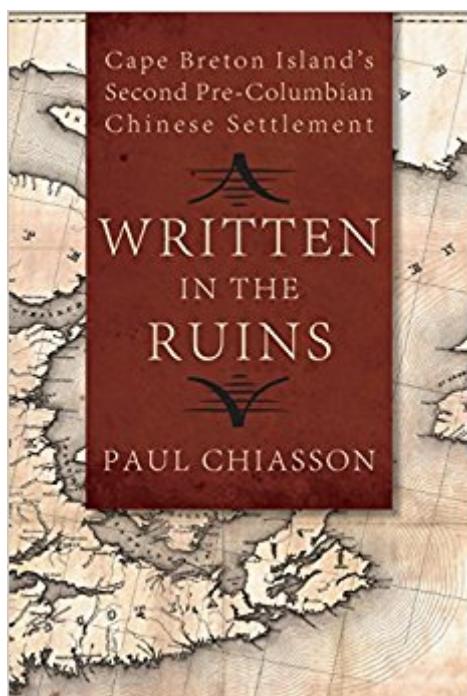


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# Written In The Ruins: Cape Breton Island's Second Pre-Columbian Chinese Settlement



## Synopsis

2017 Robbie Robertson Dartmouth Book Award • Shortlisted Paul Chiasson reveals the possibility that early Chinese settlers landed in Cape Breton long before Europeans. From the very beginning of the European Age of Discovery, Cape Breton was considered unusual. The history of the area even includes early references to the island having once been the land of the Chinese. In 1497, at least a century before any attempt at European settlement in the region, the explorer John Cabot had referred to Cape Breton as the “island of Seven Cities.” The indigenous people of the region, the Mi’kmaq, were the only aboriginal people of North America who had a written language when Europeans first arrived. This writing, clothing, and customs also suggested an early Chinese presence. In *Written in the Ruins*, Chiasson investigates the ruins at St. Peters in the southern part of the island, where evidence brought to light supports a theory that could answer all the questions raised by the island’s curious, unresolved history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Paul Chiasson is the author of *The Island of Seven Cities: Where the Chinese Settled When They Discovered America*, a book that explores the possibility that early Chinese explorers settled in the Cape Dauphin area of Cape Breton years before Columbus made his famous voyage. He lives in Toronto.

I admire Chiasson’s writing and find his take on these ruins very convincing. I had never heard of the idea that Chinese settled Cape Breton and Nova Scotia before the Europeans did. I think he has

done a very thorough analysis of this subject and is willing to go in courageous new directions in Canadian history. Of course he finds a lot of opposition, this always happens when controversial new evidence emerges. He sticks to the facts he has come upon and doesn't expand on all the possibilities these new developments imply. I wish he did a little more of that. This book focuses on one little town and the ruins he comes across are not remarkably interesting, certainly not something like Stonehenge, but the fact that he proves they are pre-European is the fascinating part. My only problem with the book is he is making a whole book out of a somewhat dry story about this one little area. To accomplish this he brings in other controversies about who else may have appeared in Nova Scotia and how early. His attention to details, while demonstrating thorough research can be a little more than I really desire to read about. I certainly hope Mr. Chiasson writes more books about this subject, I believe there are many more ruins to find and the implications of his writing will upset the whole colonial settlement applecart in eastern Canada.

"Written in the Ruins" is a valuable, must-read follow-up to Paul Chiasson's earlier book, "The Island of Seven Cities". The earlier book argues that a large site on Cape Breton was built by Chinese explorers before Columbus. "Written in the Ruins" interprets a second site of ruins on Cape Breton Island. The second book updates the reader about the controversial first site and interprets the ruins (and stories) about a second site on Cape Breton. I am impressed by the diverse historical sources brought to light by Mr. Chiasson, sources that provide striking clues that Cape Breton is indeed "different" enough to warrant thorough archaeological exploration. I am also impressed by his thorough review of criticisms that have been offered to the first book (see also three short youtube videos that address these effectively). Chiasson has helped open the door to an expanded history of North America; I look forward to learning that someone has walked through that door by scientifically excavating parts of the two sites.

After having read and thoroughly enjoyed Chiasson's first book, *The Island of Seven Cities*, I looked forward to finding out more about his theory that the Chinese possibly settled in Canada before Columbus set sail for America. I was not let down. *Written in the Ruins* provides tales of explorers, maps, legends and archeology. Chiasson resurrects the stories of people from the distant past and explains their influence in shaping history that most of us never question. Chiasson offers compelling and detailed research. He raises questions without demanding that the reader agree with his theory. Rather, the reader is encouraged to synthesize the evidence and draw our own conclusions. In the end I was left with no doubt that a Chinese fleet came to Cape Breton, Nova

Scotia and settled the island well before any European set foot on North American soil. Written in the Ruins is a wonderful read for anyone. It will be of particular interest to those who are intrigued by world history, how that history gets told and what is left unsaid until someone like Chiasson bravely steps forward.

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