

Cheminements

# Conférences

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Department of Anthropology, University of Maine

**FROM PENTAGOET TO THE OLD CANADA ROAD:  
Finding and Delimiting Habitations of Downeast Maine**

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# FROM PENTAGOET TO THE OLD CANADA ROAD:

## FINDING AND DELIMITING HABITATIONS OF DOWNEAST MAINE<sup>1</sup>

Alaric FAULKNER

### Abstract

Recent GIS representations of site distributions in “Downeast Maine” are refining our models for understanding settlement of the region. Unlike “Southern” Maine, “Downeast” Maine was not generally populated in “town sites” as they are understood. Comprising over four-fifths of Maine’s coast, this region was a buffer zone between major French and English habitations — commercial and quasi-military outposts devoted to extracting such natural resources as fur, fish and timber. It also controlled valuable shortcuts over water and land between New England and Quebec: corridors strategic both in war and peace, whether to carry military supplies, the post, or immigrant workers. Consequently, the region presents a variety of sites from substantial stone masonry forts to ephemeral sill-on-ground constructions that defy discovery by conventional means. Here we consider a selection of such sites of 17<sup>th</sup> century to early 19<sup>th</sup> century date, and how they have been “re-discovered” using a combination of cartographic sources, surveyors’ records, remote sensing, and meticulous excavation strategies.

### Introduction

In preparation for a recent symposium on discovering “lost towns,” which focused on new methodologies used to analyze colonial town plans around the Chesapeake, I was invited to broaden the discussion by giving a perspective from the area of my own research: the New England-Acadian borderlands of mid-coastal Maine. But during most of the colonial era, this region was not settled in town sites as they are generally understood. Establishments did not generally develop into neighborhoods linked together by streets, nor did they show great differentiation within the pattern of settlement; the challenge became to explain why this was so.

This request coincided with work I had recently begun in bringing the Maine Historic Archaeological Sites Inventory up to date. Specifically, at the behest of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, I had expanded this relational database to allow for the digital analysis of site distributions through “GISs,” or “Geographic Information Systems.” The preliminary results of these efforts, summarized here, are also relevant to the production of an interdisciplinary, Historical Atlas of Maine that is currently being planned by a team of my colleagues. The result is a new, albeit simplistic, model for understanding historic European settlement of “downeast Maine.” Discussion covers why actual colonial “towns” in the region are rare, what kinds of sites exist instead, and how we have identified and come to know about them.

Maine was a place of great activity during the age of exploration and early settlement, and because Maine remains less developed than, say, the remnants of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, these early sites are less likely to have been consumed by urban-suburban sprawl. Though it was further from the Old World than were the Maritime Provinces of Canada, Maine’s proximity to its motherlands was clearly one of its attractions. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Maine served as both a stepping stone for the English to their southern colonies and as a toehold for the French in securing control of Canadian commerce and coastal resources. Many of these early sites have been identified and are in various stages of research.

### Geography

Today we often speak of “Two Maines:” Southern Maine, and “The Other Maine,” a distinction often made in economic and political contexts, with not-so-subtle reference to “haves” and “have-nots” (Figure 1). Along the coast, “The Other Maine” is

Figure 1



The "Two Maines," an economic and political distinction dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

commonly referred to as "Downeast Maine," a term from the days of sail meaning "downwind to the east." The distinction, if not the term, goes back at least to early European settlement, and it is a partition that was all but pre-determined by Maine's geological makeup and geographic setting. In effect, these were the two divisions pertinent to 17<sup>th</sup>-century settlement, which was largely confined to the coast and the estuaries of the major rivers. But "The Other Maine" also includes northern and northwestern counties, which gain importance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the expansion of agricultural settlement and overland communications to Quebec, including construction of the Canada Road.

### Southern Maine

Southern Maine extends from the Piscataqua River past the Saco River drainage on up to Casco Bay, near the modern cities of Portland and Yarmouth (Figure 2). Here communities developed that were at least partially agricultural, resembling those of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Indeed, throughout its colonial history, English Maine was comprised of but a single organized political unit, eventually named "York County." There was York, and there were the Eastern Lands, and *terra incognita*. By the final quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, all the former English "Province of Maine" had become absorbed by Massachusetts, not to emerge again as Maine until statehood in 1820. Thus, for purposes of discussion, Southern Maine can be thought of as an extension of Massachusetts, albeit physically separated from the latter by a scant twenty miles of coastline belonging to New Hampshire, the former "Mason Patent" (Figure 3).

The littoral of this part of Maine from Kittery to Old Orchard Beach, is made up of sandy coves interrupted by the estuaries of the Piscataqua, the York, the Saco, and some lesser rivers. Communities were semi-nucleated, although often spread out in ribbon development along these river systems. As the focus of population, this region has produced the highest concentration of 17<sup>th</sup> century sites, indicated in Figure 4 by shading density. Several of these became true colonial towns, and have been the object of rigorous archaeological and historical scrutiny by many of my colleagues, especially Emerson W. Baker and Richard M. Candee.<sup>2</sup>

In this discussion, on the other hand, we examine the zone to the north and east, which encompasses roughly the remaining four-fifths of coastal Maine. Here the concept "Downeast" gradually changes from a direction into a loosely defined region. For convenience, we may consider the region as beginning where the Androscoggin and Kennebec rivers join in modern Brunswick and Bath, forming Merymeeting Bay, and then continuing northeastward along the coast. This begins as a submerged riverine coastline, something like the fjords of Norway. Here the coast affords much more linear edge, and major navigable waterways — the Kennebec, Penobscot, and Machias Rivers — penetrate deep into the interior.

Figure 2



The littoral of Southern Maine, a succession of beaches and sandy coves punctuated by small rivers and streams, well suited for 17<sup>th</sup>-century agriculture.

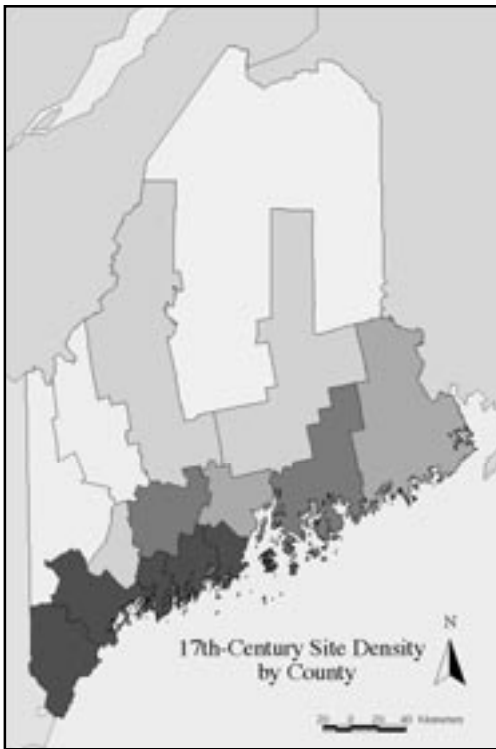
We could call this area "cross-grained Maine," not so much for the disposition of its inhabitants as for its geomorphology (Figure 5). Here the tilted and folded lamina of the underlying bedrock create deep furrows running generally north northeast-south southwest, controlling the orientation of the principal river systems. Yet this alignment runs nearly at right angles to the prevailing trend of glacial

Figure 3



Tracing detail of "Map of The Province of Mayne," c. 1653, showing ribbon development along the principal rivers. After Map 93, Baxter Rare Maps Collection, Maine State Archives; original in the British Library.

Figure 4



Distribution of 17<sup>th</sup>-century sites by county indicated by shading density. Known sites are clearly concentrated in southern Maine, and secondarily in coastal Downeast Maine.

Figure 5



Detail of the Downeast Maine coast between Harpswell and St. George, showing the prevailing northeast-southwest orientation of navigable rivers.

expansion which generally progressed northwest-southeast, as is apparent from the orientation of the chains of glacial lakes above the fall line, interconnected by small streams (Figure 6). This phenomenon can be observed on the micro-scale as well, as is apparent from the chatter marks that run across the grain of the bedrock. A fine example appears on a rock inscription site in Cushing, Maine, shown in Figure 7.

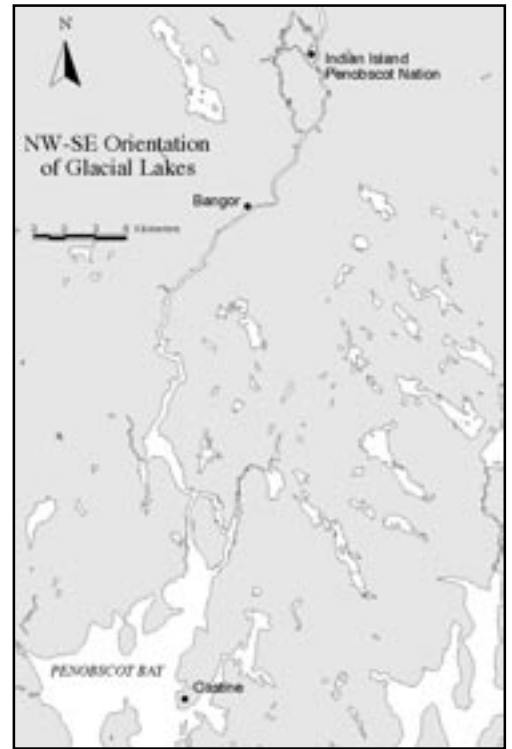
On the larger scale, this had a great effect on communications in Maine. Early Europeans were confined largely to navigable waterways, penetrating via the major river systems from the southwest to northeast as far as the head of tide. For the most part, first European settlement was confined within these limits, and seldom extended much above the four meter contour line. I first noted this phenomenon in our 1979-80 excavations of Damariscove Island, a 17<sup>th</sup> century cod fishing station off Boothbay, Maine, when studying the distribution of clay tobacco pipe fragments.<sup>3</sup> There, the pipes with the largest hole diameters, diagnostic of 17<sup>th</sup>-century settlement, were right down at the water's edge near the fishing stages. The smaller bore sizes that characterize late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century pipes were concentrated just a few meters away, but at higher elevations where the later fishing and farming community was centered. These initial results have been observed repeatedly at other sites over the past two decades. It turns out that during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans were more intent on defending their portable wealth — ships and cargo — rather than their real estate.

Figure 7



Site of a rock inscription "CxBX 4004" in Cushing, Maine, perhaps referring to the Irish Bishop Ussher's 1654 calculation for the date of the creation. Note the glacial chattermarks running "cross-grained" to the laminar structure of the bedrock.

Figure 6



A section of the downeast interior, showing the predominantly northwest-southeast orientation of chains of glacial lakes.

But to travel from one drainage to another required passage by canoe along the glacial lakes and streams of Maine's upland, with frequent portages. Natural as this was for the aboriginal population, it meant for Europeans that unless you were willing to "go native," traveling by canoe, bateau, or the equivalent, you really couldn't "get thay-uh from hee-uh," as Maine humorists are wont to say.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, it can be argued that the success of the French in controlling Acadia, despite being vastly outnumbered by their New England neighbors, stems from their early adaptability in travel. There is no question, for example, that the 17<sup>th</sup>-century French entrepreneur, Baron Jean Vincent de St. Castin owed more of his success in trade and politics to his mobility than his nobility, being able to negotiate handily the complex interior waterways from the Penobscot River to Quebec.<sup>5</sup>

Due largely to these physiographic limitations, settlement in downeast Maine developed differently from that to the southwest. Initially both Maines comprised a “cosmopolitan frontier”<sup>6</sup> and served as subsidiaries in relation to their respective progenitors. But the settlement of Southern Maine was destined to become part of the Massachusetts agricultural establishment, and by the English Civil War it became more “insular” and independent in economic orientation. By contrast Downeast Maine, whether under French or English control, continued with its “cosmopolitan” strategy. This is not to deny the existence of small communities, such as the English settlement at Pemaquid, Maine, but even in this case Pemaquid was essentially a “company town” during its early history. Settlements remained satellites of England, New England, France, or New France that existed almost solely to provide raw materials to feed their parent communities’ demand.

Downeast Maine was the playground of highly competitive French and English entrepreneurs — royal patentees who managed their holdings as personal property. Often these were minor nobles like Charles de Menou d’Aulnay, Sieur de Charnissay, founder of Fort Pentagoët in Castine, Maine,<sup>7</sup> or had pretensions to nobility, like d’Aulnay’s arch rival, Charles de la Tour, whose principal establishment was at the mouth of the Saint John River.<sup>8</sup> Their ventures were largely all-male enterprises manned by “engagés,” or indentured servants. Generally these were businesses involving some combination of fishing, fur trading, lumbering, mining, or some other extractive industry, and were involved in agriculture only to a degree necessary to help them approach self-sufficiency and thereby improve profitability. Their rivalries and alliances, moreover, knew no political bounds; a compatriot could be a bitter rival, while an outlander could be a favored trading partner.

### Acadia versus New England

This commonality of economic orientation notwithstanding, the most significant division of the downeast coast was that between New England and Acadia (Figure 8). French and English claims shifted back and forth throughout the colonial period, and it is impossible to fix precisely even at any one time. For our purposes, we can use the St. George River as the separation along the coast. Beyond this boundary, the littoral turns more rugged, becoming

the “rockbound coast” of downeast Maine. The modern town names “Rockland,” “Rockport,” and “Stonington,” all derived from later use as granite and limestone quarries, testify to this change in topography. Still further downeast, the coast becomes gentler, eventually even offering low salt marshes, although none to equal the agricultural potential of Acadian settlement to the southeast across the Bay of Fundy in what is now Nova Scotia.

Whereas in downeast Maine the English often organized themselves loosely in company hamlets like Pemaquid, the French entrepreneurs opted to work in diminished numbers from within stout fortifications. It was a distinction Governor Bradford of Plymouth recognized when he observed:

*“To the Great danger of the English, who lye open and unfortified... [the French lie] closed up in their forts, well fortified, and live upon trade in good security.”*<sup>9</sup>

A prolonged period of Indian wars and hostilities with the French between 1676 and 1725 effectively shut down English expansion downeast, with the result that development of true towns in these areas was relatively late in the colonial period. Indeed, English settlement of Penobscot Bay, just half way up the coast, did not begin until 1759.

Downeast Maine, then, simply is not a prime study area for colonial towns. True, downeast establishments were the products of complex societies, and waterways analogous to “streets” or “highways” tied components together. Yet actual roadways were non-existent, and the threads that connected these satellites to their parent communities were long and loosely bound.

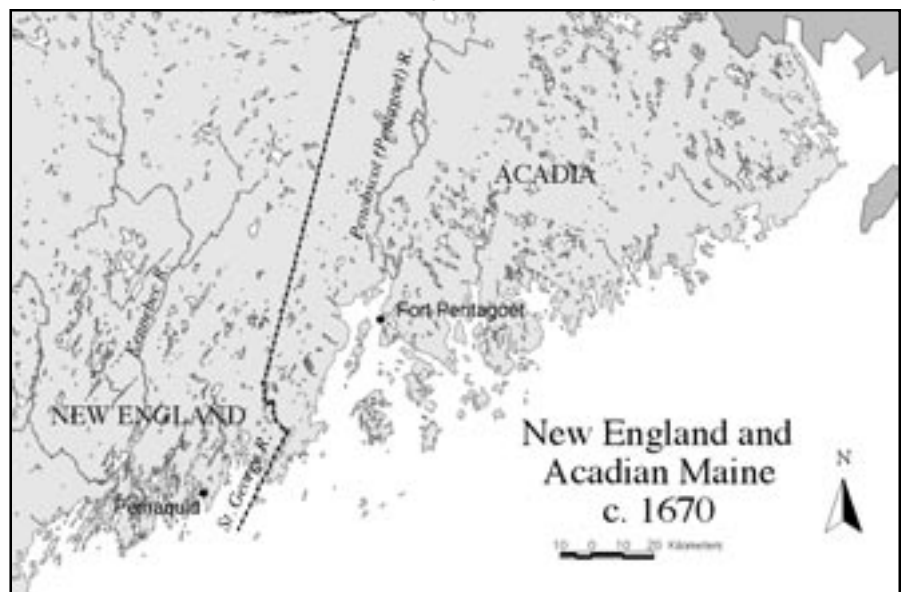
### Finding sites “downeast”

While a few of our “known” sites have been found as the result of purposive archaeological survey, the majority has not. Understanding how the current database of colonial sites had been assembled is critical to the continued development of this settlement model. The quality, form and quantity of information on particular habitations is extremely variable, depending on how these sites have come to our attention, their research potential, and the degree to which that potential has been realized.

Some sites, precisely identified in contemporary literature, have been easily located. Many others we have had to hunt for. Indeed, a majority of sites whose existence can be “inferred from the literature,” has never been located. In many cases written documentation is supplemented or complemented by oral tradition. While more often than not this information has proved to be at least partially correct, there are cases in which local tradition has completely misidentified a site, contributing a degree of misinformation to our database.

In contrast, those sites that have been discovered primarily from field research may or may not show up in contemporary literature. Furthermore, the quantity and quality of information available from them archaeologically can be quite variable. A site may be highly “visible,” consisting of substantial, obvious remains, or it may consist of mere traces or even isolated artifact finds. A site with considerable remains may be “focused,” its organization and layout well preserved, or it may be widely scattered by natural or human agencies such as erosion or agriculture.

Figure 8



Effective boundary between New England and Acadian Maine at the St. George River, c. 1635 to 1654.



The current state of the sites database may be appreciated by characterizing briefly a small sample of French and English sites from Downeast Maine: Fort Pentagoet, The Popham Colony, St. Castin's Habitation, The Richard Foxwell Trading House, and Eaton's Cellar.

### Fort Pentagoet

Fort Pentagoet was constructed by Charles d'Aulnay in 1635 on the Penobscot River at a site formerly occupied by the Penobscot Trading House, a venture of the Plymouth Colony. Three years earlier, this land had been ceded to the French as a condition of the Treaty of St. Germaine-en-Laye. Although nominally in control of the English between 1654 and 1670, Fort Pentagoet was the principal French outpost in Acadian Maine until Dutch privateers destroyed it in 1674.

This establishment is a fine example of a site whose location was well known through literature and oral history. The location of Pentagoet was never "lost," though over time its historical identity became substantially garbled, as is reflected in the historic marker composed by shoe salesman and amateur historian Charles W. Noyes in 1910 (Figure 9). Noyes's published plan and reconstruction, like his sign, was grotesquely oversized and bore little resemblance to the actual footprint of the fort, and for that reason it is not reproduced here.<sup>10</sup>

Built of massive stone construction in slate, the palisades of Fort Pentagoet still stood out "like the roots of ancient molars" for rusticators to plunder in the 1870s. But by 1980, when archaeological investigation began, it was thought to have entirely eroded away; in fact, it had merely been hidden beneath tons of fill imported to level out the rear lawn of the Catholic church that now stands nearby.

Pentagoet proved to be one of those nearly ideal sites of both high focus and high visibility, preserved almost intact beneath its own rubble and subsequent fill; only the outermost seaward defenses had been washed away.<sup>11</sup> The site was relatively easy to take apart. Figure 10 shows, for example, the hearth of the barracks of the final phase of Pentagoet overlaying the partition of an earlier workshop and smithy.

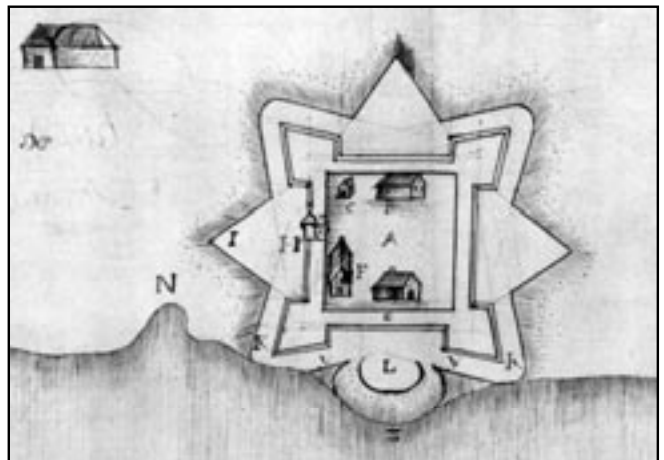
Plans and accompanying descriptions dating to the return of the fort to the French from the English in 1670 and its subsequent repair in 1671 provided a framework, albeit a deceptive one, to guide excavation.<sup>12</sup> Particularly interesting was a plan sent by de Talon, the "Intendant" for New France, to Colbert, dated November 10, 1670 (Figure 11). This plan and accompanying descriptions, as it turns out, exaggerated by an average of 40 percent the linear dimensions of the fortifications and the compound they enclosed, effectively doubling the area covered by the actual fort. One must bear in mind the reason for which the plan was made. In this case it was not a plan for construction, but rather an image de Talon wished to convey to the King of the significance of his holdings.

Figure 10



Excavations at Fort Pentagoet in 1983, exposing a well-built stone building complex that served variously as a Barracks, Workshop, Smithy and Officers' Quarters.

Figure 11



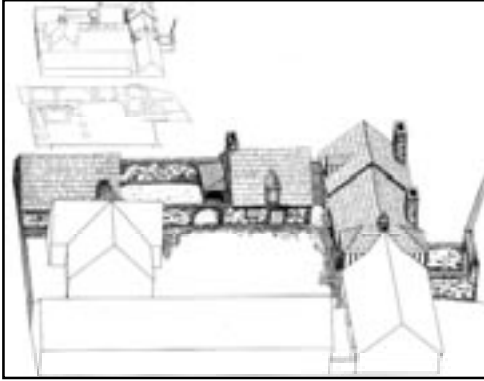
Plan and description of Pentagoet from M. de Talon to Colbert, November 10, 1670, *Archives Nationales*, Paris. The original survives without its key, but accompanying descriptions permit us to make the following identifications: A, parade ground; B, two story magazine with a cellar; C, guard house; D, a chapel over the fort's entrance; H, small redoubt in front of the fort; F, dwelling; G, house for workmen and soldiers (formerly a smithy and workshop); X, shed for livestock.

Figure 9



Historical marker composed by Charles W. Noyes for Fort Pentagoet in 1910, which still stands on the site without revision. The text is rife with errors, greatly exaggerating the fort's duration and its political and economic significance.

Figure 12



Reconstruction of Fort Pentagoet as it existed c. 1654, based on archaeological and historical data.

These dimensions were taken literally in the earlier Noyes reconstruction, which added enhancements of its own. However, over four years of excavation, we were able to put his earlier interpretation on a reduced and more sobering scale (Figure 12). Our various graphic interpretations, though incomplete, give a true sense of the compact space within which an enclave of two dozen employees defended the Penobscot River and traded at pike's length with the local Abenaki.

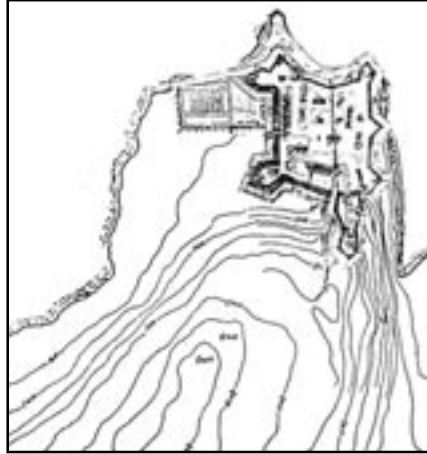
### The Popham Colony

Some sites, though well known in document and plan, have not been so easy to identify in the field. A classic example is Fort St. George, on the Kennebec River, not to be confused with several other sites in Maine bearing the same name. This site, which we can refer to as the "Popham Colony," dates to the period of exploration and first settlement, and is the sister site to Jamestown, Virginia, constructed in the same year, 1607. The Popham Colony, however, was chartered for "Northern Virginia" and was a West Country rather than a London enterprise. Its great significance lies in the fact that it is a time capsule of 1607 to 1608, after which it was abandoned, whereas Jamestown struggled on. Also, unlike Jamestown, there is a detailed plan of the original settlement to act as a guide for excavation.

On the basis of this plan, drawn by one John Hunt in October of 1607, this site could reasonably be placed at Sabino Head in Phippsburg (Figure 13). But test excavations conducted for the Maine Bureau of Parks in the early '60s by amateur Wendell Hadlock were inconclusive. Hadlock was looking for massive stone foundations, rather than more ephemeral post-in-ground construction. The actual living surface, moreover, had been significantly degraded on the northern seaward end by erosion, construction of Fort Baldwin (1905), and plowing.

Fortunately, Dr. Jeffrey Brain of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem Massachusetts has revisited this archaeological "lost cause" over the last few

Figure 13



John Hunt map superimposed on a contour map of Sabino Head prepared by the US Army Corps of Engineers in 1847. Illustration courtesy of Dr. Jeffrey Brain.

years. His initial tests in 1994 first convinced him that like Pentagoet, Fort St. George was far smaller than Hunt had mapped it. Fortunately, in 1997 he had second thoughts, and decided to take the Hunt map literally (Figure 14). Working from a single post hole uncovered in 1995, he calculated the size and orientation of the principal storehouse and proceeded to find the footprint of the east side of this long, multiple bay structure precisely where Hunt had shown it (Figure 15). In contrast to the Pentagoet example, Hunt's map proved to be a precise plan for construction, apparently drawn by a talented engineer using the conventions of his time. It should be noted that prior to excavation, the general consensus of researchers was the reverse. The De Talon plan of Pentagoet seemed to be the more realistic and reliable, whereas the Hunt Plan, drawn just a few weeks after the arrival of the Popham Colony, appeared to be pure fantasy!<sup>13</sup>

Figure 14



The John Hunt plan of October, 8 1607, with inset showing the Storehouse enlarged and rotated 180 degrees. Original in the Simancas Archives in Spain; copy courtesy of Dr. Jeffrey Brain.

Wood from the substantial square posts of this earthfast structure still survives, and it is apparent that more intact remains, complete with flooring, are preserved beneath the site's small parking lot. This small-scale excavation project is on-going, and is expected to continue for at least a few more seasons.

### St. Castin's Habitation

Commonly we are faced with sites known to have existed but we do not know precisely where they were located. St. Castin's Habitation, the successor to Fort Pentagoet in controlling Acadian Maine, was such a case. When the search for the habitation began in 1982, the only published map showing its location was an excellent chart of the "Harbor of Pentagoet" drawn by French cartographer Pasquine on an expedition to Acadia in 1688.<sup>14</sup> This, and several other maps of the Acadian coast, were apparently produced in response to increased tensions between England and France, and in particular between New England and Acadia. Indeed, this same year Edmond Andros, governor of the "Dominion of New England," personally ransacked St. Castin's Habitation. Clearly Pasquine's principal charge was mapping for the king of France those regions of Acadia in need of fortification.

Unfortunately, the published version of Pasquine's map was printed in black and white. The ambiguous label placement and dark markings had researchers looking on the east side of the Bagaduce River for the site. In 1985, we tracked down the original in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris<sup>15</sup> and found that the location of St. Castin's Habitation, like that for the ruins of Fort Pentagoet, was clearly marked in red. The site was actually situated on the west side of the Bagaduce; the dark marks we had noticed on the other side of the river were merely symbols for trees.

Figure 15



The structural remains of the site, which we had already located but not verified, were ephemeral. Had we not used the most careful excavation techniques — digging with trowel and dustpan and water sifting the backdirt through window screening — it is likely that the footprint of the site would have been missed altogether (Figure 16). By carefully charting the distributions of structural material versus stored trade items and various activities, we were able to piece together a rough footprint of the habitation and identify the function of most of its components (Figure 17). Without the Pasquine map, moreover, it would have been easy to mis-identify this key French outpost as an English site, for unlike the case at Fort Pentagoet, most of St. Castin's material items came via New England trade or pillage, rather than via French channels.

In the end, like other researchers who lacked the benefit of archaeological data we found that, we had been misled by the documentary record in our initial assessment of the site. Following contemporary census data<sup>16</sup>, which merged the aboriginal populations of the Pentagoet region with its European population, we had hoped to find that St. Castin's Habitation was a trading post at the heart of an Abenaki village, raising the prospect of a *bona fide* intercultural community study. Unfortunately, the two settlements proved to be widely separated.

### The Long Search for the Foxwell Trading House

A related search for the Foxwell Trading House shows the complex problems that are involved in resolving three kinds of source materials: written records (primarily cartography in this case), oral history, and archaeological excavation. This example involves at least three sites known from the literature representing two different periods, all of which were initially incorrectly located on the ground.

During the spring of 1985, Gretchen and Alaric Faulkner made an extensive examination of the cartographic resources of the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Archives Nationales which, at that time, were both located in Paris. Three of the maps found in the Bibliothèque Nationale covered the region from "Cape Pemaquid" to the St. George River, comprising the southwestern limit of Acadian expansion.<sup>17</sup>

The earliest chart titled "Map of the River St. George with soundings..." (Figure 18) was clearly intended to be used for navigation. It appears to have been executed by a ship's captain, perhaps at the return of Acadia to French control in 1670. Its legend is particularly informative, as it mentions two English settlements:

Excavators use poles to show a line of six postholes of the east wall of the storehouse, September 1997. Inset shows post in situ.

*G. Place where there was formerly an English House [east side of Pleasant Point; where an ell-shaped building plan is clearly indicated in outline].<sup>18</sup>*

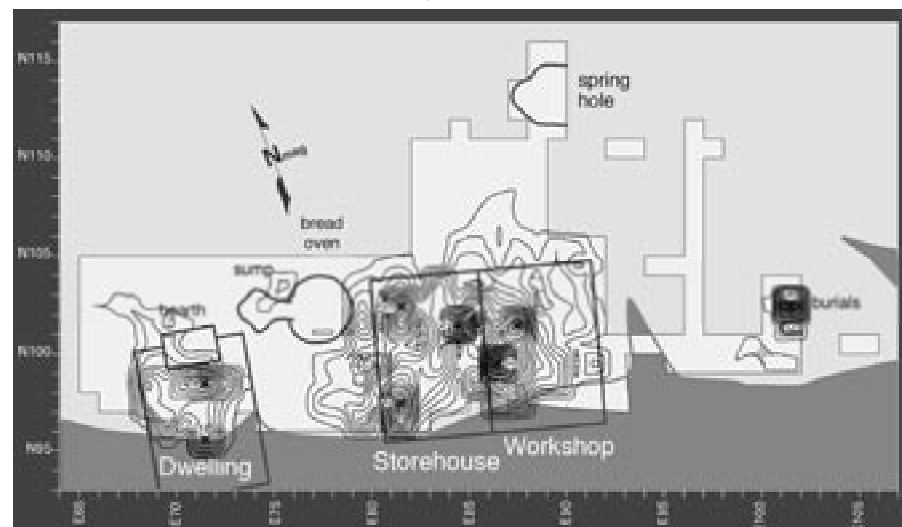
*H. Where there is the most suitable location to fortify because it easy from there to hinder vessels from entering since it commands the three passages from the north coast and there has also been an English house there. [Caldwell Island; the house is not indicated separately]*

It is the placement of the first English house that is of particular interest, because the same location is identified on two later maps where it was apparently used to establish French claim to the territory. These later maps are alternate versions of the same cartographic effort, apparently drafted for different purposes. Judging from the military subject matter, the style of cartography, their placement in the Paris records together with known works, and other internal evidence, these are surely the works of French cartographer Pasquine, the same cartographer who charted the harbor at Pentagoet. Here too, his mission was apparently to map those regions of Acadia in need of fortification.

The legend of Pasquine's "Map of the River St. George and Vicinity and a Part of the Coast" bears the critical entry:

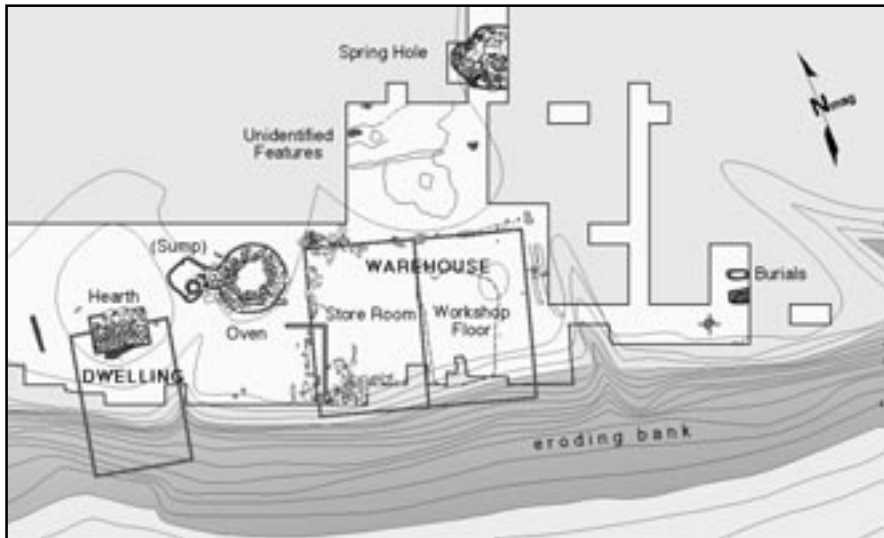
*E. Cleared land where Mr. d'Aulnay had formerly had a house built. [East side of Pleasant Point]<sup>19</sup>*

Figure 16



Distribution of had-forged nails at St. Castin's Habitation. In a similar fashion, a myriad other structural materials, stored goods and waste products from activities was plotted, helping to delimit the structures and determine their use.

Figure 17



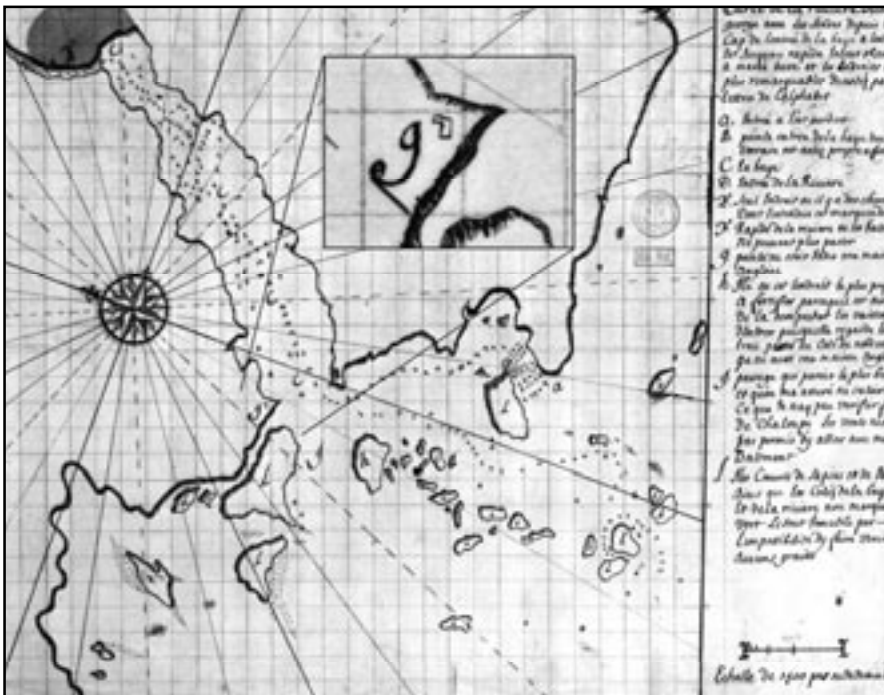
Plan of footprint of St. Castin's Habitation deduced from excavated features and artifact distributions.

The alternate map is less specific on this point, noting only "cleared land where there used to be a house." Locating this "house," which must have been an outpost for trade built between d'Aulnay's arrival in 1635 and his death in 1650, was of particular interest, as it was directly related to the occupation of Fort Pentagoet.

In 1997, we were reasonably confident that the "Place where there was formerly an English House," and the "Cleared land where Mr d'Aulnay had formerly had a house built" referred to the same location. The former we linked to trader Richard Foxwell, who apparently bought the land of "Saquid" from the Massachusetts government on April 15, 1633.

We thought we had narrowed down the search to a parcel on Pleasant Point in Cushing, Maine (Figure 19). This promontory remains cleared today as it has probably been since pre-Columbian times, and at its tip rises two or three meters above the surrounding landscape. The aspect is strikingly similar to that of Fort Pentagoet in Castine. Here, in the summers of 1997 and 1998 we put in multiple rows of segmented 1m by 2m trenches, but found no concentration of 17th-century materials; we noted in the site records that "clearly excavations were not quite in the right place, but probably were not far away."

Figure 18



"Carte de la riviere Saint George..." c. 1670. Item G indicates "Pointe ou etoit Jadis une maison Angloise," i.e. "Place where there was formerly an English House." This el-shaped structure is now known to be the Richard Foxwell Trading House of 1633, taken over by Charles d'Aulnay in 1636.

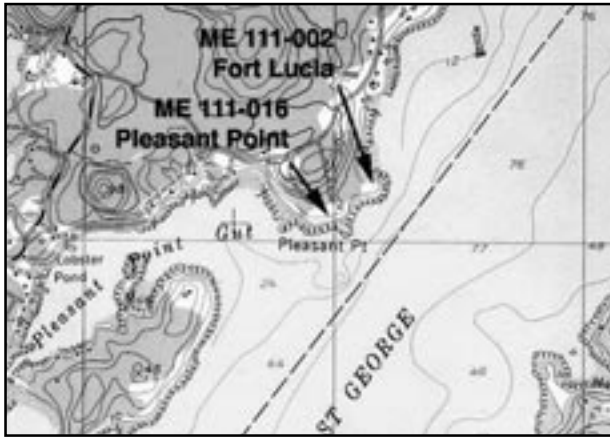
We were close, but not quite on target. Our discovery of the Foxwell Trading House ultimately came as the result of our search for a much later site, Fort Lucia, or "Fort Lucy," as it is locally known. This site is described in Dunnack's *Maine Forts* where it supposedly protected this stretch of the St. George River beginning in 1745.<sup>20</sup> Local tradition places the fort near Pleasant Point at a strategic location known locally as "Burying Ground Point." The adjacent burial ground is clearly the oldest set of marked graves in the St. George River valley. One of the earliest headstones in the adjacent burial ground is that of Captain Thomas Henderson, progenitor of the fort, and dated 1755.

The supposed location of Fort Lucy was indicated by a depression about five meters square, which had since been filled with gravel and overgrown with beach roses to become all but obliterated. As the site was closely confined between the cemetery and the shore, we expected to find a very small 18th-century fortification, perhaps merely a small blockhouse. Indeed, after examining the collections of shoe buckles, buttons, and other items of dress found by amateurs who had scoured this point using metal detectors, we had no reason to expect anything but 18th-century and later materials on this location.

Because this site was within 250 meters of our "major" test effort on Pleasant Point, we began to clear and test at the supposed "Fort Lucy" at the same time. Within an hour of clearing and excavation, however, it was clear that we were working in the rubble of a 17th-century structure (Figure 20). We came down almost immediately on the stone chimney rubble and hearth of the Foxwell Trading House, littered with fireplace hardware, North Devon Gravel-free fish pots, clay pipes from the west of England and many other items which could date no later than the 1640s. Here was an English habitation that exactly met the specifications of time and location of the Richard Foxwell House.

In retrospect, it seems we had mis-interpreted the older French navigation map;<sup>21</sup> what we had mistaken for the cleared land of Pleasant Point was actually the area of shoals around Burying Ground Point. Subsequent documentary research has revealed that Foxwell acquired this site at Saquid in 1633, coming here from Dorchester, Massachusetts where he had recently arrived as an emigrant from England. The site apparently came into d'Aulnay's hands in 1636, the year after he took over the Plymouth Colony trading post on the Penobscot River and built Fort Pentagoet there. The delay was

Figure 19



Erroneous placements of the 17th-century "Foxwell Trading House" (Pleasant Point) and 18<sup>th</sup>-Century "Fort Lucia," based on historic cartography and oral history, 1997. Excavations in 1998 revealed that the Foxwell Trading House was actually located at the supposed Fort Lucia site.

occasioned by the famous hurricane of August of 1635.<sup>22</sup> A number of English ships had come to the St. George River to replace their spars, and d'Aulnay was apparently reluctant to challenge this force.<sup>23</sup>

Currently we are in the midst of excavating the main section of this post-in-ground house, a structure that contains an unusually large cellar about 3.5m square. The gap between what we now know and what we thought we knew widens daily. There is, at this point, no evidence whatever for subsequent French occupation; French habitation should be represented in this period by large quantities of the same kinds of French items as we found at Fort Pentagoet, such as green-glazed Saintonge pottery. It is clear that the French drove Foxwell away, but it is doubtful that d'Aulnay ever "had a house built" here, or even occupied the existing premises. The legend on the redraft of Pasquine's map is most likely a ruse used later to support French land claims.

Figure 20



Hearth of the Foxwell Trading House, looking south. Inset shows a clay tobacco pipe from the west of England bearing the six dot "Mulberry" design, typical of the 1630s, recovered from within the chimney rubble.

As for the actual location of Fort Lucia, local historian Bradley Beckett has long believed that the site is on a less strategic location to the north of Burying Ground Point on an adjacent property. His judgement, made on the basis of his extensive deed research on the Henderson property, may well be accurate.

### Eaton's Cellar

Finally, we have found some sites that have no known primary documentation, and we are not quite sure what they are, who built them, or what era they date from. These are among the most fascinating, because they have the greatest potential for adding new information, not merely more data, to our understanding. A case in point is Eaton's Cellar in Cushing Maine, named for its chronicler, Emily Eaton, who mentioned the site while editing her father's local history in 1877. Following an account of rumors of Captain Kidd's treasure in the area, she refers to "the remains of an ancient excavation, for some unknown purpose." The ruins were located "in Cushing, about a half a mile north of the old stone garrison house of Burton, and on the farm of the late Jacob Robinson." She reported that the first Robinson settler of 1735 noticed

*ruins of what was presumed to be an underground house... about nine feet deep, and in one direction 30 feet wide at least, walled up with hewn timber, [apparently] covered over, level with the surface of the ground... There extended into the supposed house a thoroughfare, also walled with hewn timber, and covered high enough for a man to walk erect and wide enough to haul up a boat therein. The timber has decayed, but part of the excavation yet remains.<sup>24</sup>*

Upon reading this account in the summer of 1997, we calculated the site's position based on the landmarks given by Eaton and programmed our Global Positioning System receiver with this estimate. Within thirty minutes we were standing within the forgotten cellar, which remains today largely as Eaton had described it, a huge cellar complex measuring 8.2m by 15.5m (Figure 21). As it was the end of the season, we had only time to map and put in a small section across the underground entryway. Driven palings, fired daub, and various diagnostic artifacts recovered suggest 18th-century use of a 17th-century site.

This cellar seems far too large to have served as a basement or foundation for a dwelling. It would also appear to be a corporate or "company" endeavor, not the kind of structure a single homesteader would build. But there is good historical precedent for underground houses in colonial America for initial settlement; in this case, it may have served more than one pioneer family.

Various researchers, including Hugh Morrison, Abbot Lowell Cummings, and Ivor Noel Hume<sup>25</sup> have discovered an account by Cornelius Van Tienhoven, colonial secretary of New Netherlands, who wrote in 1650

*Those in New Netherland and especially in New England, who have no means to build farmhouses at first according to their wishes, dig a square pit in the ground, cellar fashion, six or seven feet deep, as long and as broad as they think proper; case the earth all round the wall with timber, which they line with the bark of trees or something to prevent the caving-in of the earth; floor this cellar with plank, and wainscot it overhead for a ceiling; raise a roof of spars clear up, and cover the spars with bark or green sods so that they can live dry and warm in these houses with their entire families for two, three, and four years, it being understood that partitions are run through these cellars, which are adapted to the size of the family.<sup>26</sup>*

Figure 21



A huge cellar complex of unknown colonial date, designated "Eaton's Cellar." A filled in "covered thoroughfare" leads to a cove close by, to the left. Inset shows a section across this "tunnel" or thoroughfare where the ends of stakes from an apparent wattle retaining wall were exposed.

Abbot Lowell Cummings goes on to quote one Edward Johnson, who observed that English newcomers

*Burrow themselves in the Earth for their first shelter under some Hill-side, casting the Earth aloft upon Timber; they make a smoaky fire against the Earth at the highest side, and... in these poore Wigwames they sing Psalmes, pray and praise their God, till they can provide them with houses.*<sup>27</sup>

Thus it is quite possible that this was an underground, multi-family dwelling with "partitions... run through these cellars." In this scenario, the structure would be associated with attempted English resettlement of the area prior to the 1730s, when the indigenous population fiercely resisted English occupation of the St. George.

This explanation fits well the construction techniques described for Eaton's cellar, but it does not insure that this site functioned primarily as a first-settlement underground dwelling. Although the popular inference that this structure was the location of Captain Kidd's treasure is probably off the mark, the dating and the general significance of the feature may well have been correctly placed. The fill from the excavation has been entirely removed, evidently to reduce the profile of the construction. The strategy appears to be grounded more in secrecy than in defense; the structure has the aspect of a hidden storage facility of some sort — perhaps a wintering-over place.

One interpretation along these lines is that this was a fisherman's or trader's cellar, such as that documented as "Watts his Cellar" in Newburyport,<sup>28</sup> or perhaps Walter Bagnall's cellar on Richmond's Island.<sup>29</sup> Indeed there is also the possibility that it could be associated with known pirates such as Dixie Bull, who was active in this region in the early 1620s, and pillaged nearby Pemaquid.<sup>30</sup>

Another possible association could be with the Frenchman Thomas Lefebre, a trader and an interpreter of the Abenaki Language. Lefebre is generally associated with occupation of this area c. 1700, and especially with a tidal mill on the Wessaweskeag River in South Thomaston. Lefebre would have had good reason to keep a low profile. His Indian claim to the land conflicted with one granted by Sachem Madockawando to Sir William Phipps in 1694; surely this was an obvious source of grievance between the Frenchman and the English Knight. A document of 1707 notes that ultimately "the English burned Lefebre's buildings, took his furniture, and carried him and his family to Boston as prisoners."<sup>31</sup>

The riddle of Eaton's Cellar is one that may not be solved in the near future. The landowners forbid outright any further excavation beyond what is necessary for mapping. Removal of vegetation threatens the view across to their neighbors, and

they are concerned that excavation might hasten the demise of the huge oak trees that grow in and about this site, several of which are at this moment toppling into the St. George River. Still, we are hopeful that further mapping and surface collection in and about this structure may allow us to identify the period and duration of its occupation, its function, and possibly the ethnic background of the Europeans who built and used it.

### **Connections : Persistence of Communication Links**

Finally, while colonial downeast Maine lacked roads and streets and the horses to ride upon them, its communications routes were still of paramount importance. The strategic significance of the region was originally grounded in its waterways, which afforded links between parent communities and their outposts. These general ties persisted through time, even as water traffic gave way to rail and highway.

The route from the coast to Quebec can be considered a prime example. The English-controlled Kennebec and the French-controlled Penobscot Rivers offered similar access to the interior, and via portages could be linked through the higher ground to the Chaudiere drainage and thence to Quebec. Clearly the route had antecedents in waterways used aboriginally, connecting major drainages of Maine to the St. Lawrence River.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this connection had become of key interest to Europeans, as French and English competed for control of the northeast. The map in Figure 22 was charted in 1671 by Hector Andigné, Chevalier de Grandfontaine, then governor of Fort Pentagoet.<sup>32</sup> At Colbert's urging, he had chosen Pentagoet as the administrative center of Acadia in what is now Castine, Maine. Grandfontaine was a better explorer than he was a cartographer; by his depiction, the route to Quebec was straightforward and direct. To travel from Castine to the head of tide above Bangor would put one nearly halfway along the journey, when in fact it is less than one sixth of the distance. Access via the Kennebec is shown as equally direct, whereas any approach via the St. John River was clearly circuitous, skirting the northern margins of his chart.

This distortion may have been partially intentional, exaggerating the strategic advantages of his new capital. Colbert's interest was to provide an alternate route to Quebec during the six months of the year when the St. Lawrence was frozen, and questioned whether the Penobscot or the St. John River would provide the most convenient route. One may rightfully doubt the practicality of this and related interior routes (Figure 23), but English and French fought over these links right up through 1713 and beyond. The Kennebec alternative is well known as the route of Benedict Arnold's march to lay siege to Quebec in the fall of 1775; both river routes were used by the French and the British to send couriers between Quebec and parts south.

**Figure 22**

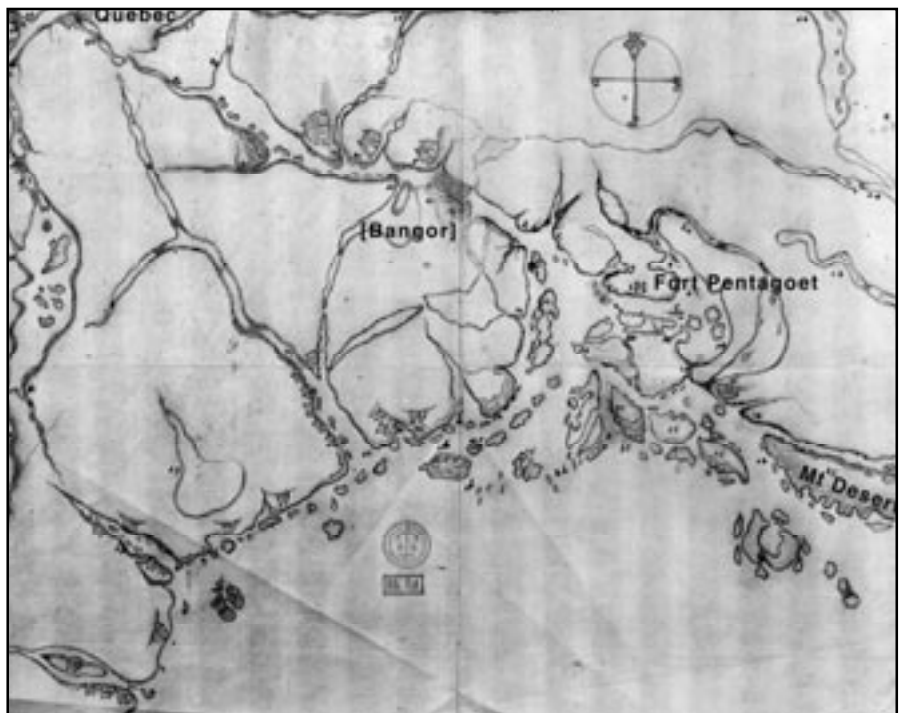
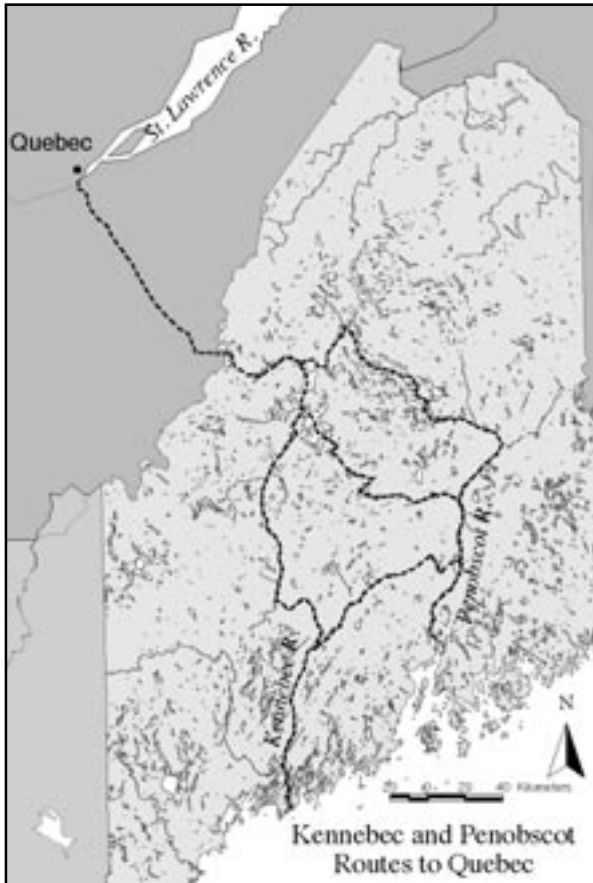


Chart of the "The River and Country of Pentagoet and Other Surrounding Places," charted in 1671 by the Chevalier de Grandfontaine, governor of Fort Pentagoet, to accompany a report to Colbert. This highly distorted map was originally drawn with south at the top, but has been inverted here for clarity.

Figure 23



Interior routes from the Downeast Maine coast to Quebec via the Penobscot and Kennebec waterways.

Laid out in 1817 following the same general line of communication, the Canada Road was an overland link connecting the Boston Post Road to the Canadian Chaudiere-Quebec road system, passing through the sparsely inhabited highlands of northwestern Maine. The function of this route has changed dramatically over the years with economic and political circumstances, but for a long time it was one of the main interior communications between the settlements of the St. Lawrence and those of New England.

The Old Canada Road was "rediscovered" in 1994 by graduate student Barry Rodrigue with my assistance. We re-plotted by computer the metes and bounds from various original surveyors' logbooks, printed them to scale on clear plastic overlays, and then resolved the data with control points on modern USGS topographic maps. We quickly learned that, though it parallels closely modern route 201, the Old Canada Road often follows routes now long abandoned or used only as snowmobile trails. To date, Barry has recorded more than 271 sites associated with this route, and has been able to reconstitute numerous communities, some abandoned as recently as the 1940s.

### Future Study

With the experience gained from studies like the foregoing, we are in a much better position to locate and examine the early settlement of Downeast Maine. Of known colonial sites, only a small sample has been studied and many geographic areas are under-represented. Among these are Native American and European sites of the riverine interior, which can shed light on the nature of inter-cultural contact. One particularly fruitful area of research may prove to be the study of the integration of Europeans, particularly missionaries, into Native American communities. This subject was recently taken up in Pamela Crane's M.A. thesis on the Missions at Norridgewock on the Kennebec River.<sup>33</sup> Looting, unfortunately, has heavily disturbed the principal site, but we are hopeful that Ms. Crane has paved the way for future work on other mission sites in the region.

Certainly over the last twenty years or so of modern historical and archaeological research, our understanding of the process of settlement of Downeast Maine has been substantially expanded. The coverage is by no means even, but the plan of settlement is now no longer just a reflection of the geographical distribution of a handful of practicing historical archaeologists. Many sites, once known only through written documentation, now have real locations, true footprints, and measured dimensions. Surely this provides an improved context for understanding the people who built and used them.

## Endnotes

1. A version of this paper was initially prepared in English for a symposium titled "Finding Lost Towns" at the annual meetings of the Society for Historical Archaeology, held in Atlanta, Georgia in January of 1998. The original paper sought to explain why we did not deal with "town site" problems in "downeast" Maine because of the nature of its settlement history. It went on to deal in geographical and historical terms with the types of colonial frontier sites that do confront us, and how we look for them. A revised version was presented in French at the Université Laval in the spring of 1998, emphasizing this latter subject. What appears here is a modification of that paper, re-translated into English, yet incorporating some of the detail of the original "Lost Towns" paper.
2. See, for example, Richard M. Candee, "First Period Architecture in Maine and New Hampshire: The evidence of Probate Inventories," in *Early American Probate Inventories. The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 1987*. Boston, Boston University, 1989.
3. Alaric Faulkner, "Archaeology of the Cod Fishery: Damariscove Island." *Historical Archaeology* (1985) vol. 19 n°. 2, pp. 57-86, especially pp. 76-82 and Figure 15.
4. With apologies to the memory of Marshall Dodge.
5. Manross, Brooke Ann, "'The Freedom of Commerce:' The History and Archaeology of Trade at St. Castin's Habitation 1670-1701." M.A. thesis in History, University of Maine, Orono, 1994.
6. This terminology I believe was introduced into Historical Archaeology by Kenneth Lewis in *The American Frontier: An Archaeological Study of Settlement Pattern and Process*. Academic Press, New York, 1984. His use of the terms "cosmopolitan" and "insular" in the description of frontiers, may not be congruent with geographers' use of these words, but has found a place in the archaeological literature.
7. Alaric Faulkner and Gretchen Faulkner, *The French at Pentagoet, 1635-1674: An Archaeological Portrait of the Acadian Frontier*. The New Brunswick Museum and The Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, 1987.
8. M. A. MacDonald, *Fortune and La Tour*. Methuen, Toronto, 1983.
9. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Samuel Morison edition. Alfred Knopf, New York, 1952, pp. 276-277.
10. Charles W. Noyes, "Plan of Fort Pentagoet, 1670-1907," published privately, 1907. An oblique reconstruction of the fort accompanies the plan.
11. Plan and description of Pentagoet from M. de Talon to Colbert, November 10. 1670, and pencil sketch of Pentagoet by Le Sieur de Grandfontaine, c. 1671, discovered in the Archives Nationales, Service Outre-Mer, Paris (as of 1985).
12. Faulkner, Alaric and Gretchen Faulkner, *The French at Pentagoet*, pp. 53-58.
13. Indeed, this is still the position taken by some historians and geographers unfamiliar with the recent archaeological work.
14. J. W. Olmstead, "The Voyage of Jean Richer to Acadia in 1670: A Study in the Relations of Science and Navigation Under Colbert," *American Philosophical Society*, vol. 104 (1960), p. 626.
15. Pasquine, "Carte du Havre de Paintagouet," c. 1688, Bibliothèque Nationales, Paris, Port 135, Div. 3, Pièce 5.
16. "General Census of Acadia by Gargas, 1687-1688," in William Morse, ed., *Acadiensia Nova*, Bernard Quaritch, (London, 1935), vol. 1, pp. 139-155.
17. Bibliothèque Nationale, n°. 2960, Port. 135, div. 3 pièce 8; Bibliothèque Nationale, n°. 9430, Port. 135, div. 3, pièce 9; n°. 9430, Port. 135, div. 3, pièce 10.
18. "Pointe ou etoit Jadis une maison Angloise."
19. "Defriché ou Mr D'aulnay avoit autrefois fait Construire Une Maison."
20. Dunnack, Henry E., *Maine Forts*, C. E. Nash, Augusta, Me., 1924, p. 235.
21. Bibliothèque Nationale, n°. 9430, Port. 135, div. 3, pièce 10.
22. This is event is best known as the hurricane that sank the *Angel Gabriel* at the English site at Pemaquid.
23. Wilbur D. Spencer *Pioneers on Maine Rivers*, pp. 360-362. Sullivan, James, *History of the District of Maine* [1795], Maine State Museum, 1970, Davis Memorial pp. 390-391. Noyes, Sybil, Charles Thornton Libby, and W. G. Davis, *Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire*, Genealogical Pub. Co., Baltimore, 1972, pp. 243-244.
24. Cyrus Eaton, *Annals of the town of Warren, in Knox Co., Maine, with the early history of St. George's, Broad Bay, & the neighboring settlements on the Waldo Patent*, Masters & Livermore, Hallowell, Me., 1877, p.32.
25. Abbott Lowell, Cummings, *The framed houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1979, p 19. Noel Hume, Ivor, *Martin's Hundred*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1982, p. 57. Morrison, Hugh, *Early American Architecture*, Oxford University Press, New York 1952, p. 9. Cummings lists as his source, E. B. O'Callaghan, ed. *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*. Albany New York, 1856-1883, Vol. 1, p. 368.
26. Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture*, Oxford University Press, New York 1952, p. 9.
27. Abbott Lowell, Cummings, *ibid.* p. 20. He lists as his source J. Franklin Hameson, ed., *Johnson's Wonder-working Providence 1628-1651*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1919, pp. 113-114.
28. Alaric Faulkner, et al., *Port and Market: Archaeology of the Central Waterfront Newburyport, Massachusetts*. Newburyport Press, Newburyport, Mass., 1978.
29. James Phinney Baxter ed. *The Trelawney Papers*, Documentary History of the State of Maine, vol. 3, Portland, 1884.
30. Wilbur D. Spencer, *ibid.* p. 360.
31. Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, *Indian Place Names of the Penobscot Valley and the Maine Coast*, University of Maine Press, Orono, 1978, pp. 80-81.
32. For a detailed key with some 73 points of interest see Alaric Faulkner and Gretchen Faulkner, *The French at Pentagoet*, pp. 26-27, 279-281.
33. Pamela B. Crane, "The Historical Archaeology of the Norridgewock Mission." M.A. Thesis in History and Historical Archaeology, University of Maine, December 1997.



## **Publications du Centre**

### ***Cheminements***

Mathieu, Jacques, Alain Laberge et Louis Michel, (dir.). *Espaces-temps familiaux au Canada aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*. Avec la participation de Jacinthe Ruel, Isabelle Rodrigue, Claire Gourdeau, Tommy Guénard. Sainte-Foy, CIEQ, 1995, 90 p.

Courville, S. et B. Osborne (dir.), *Histoire mythique et paysage symbolique, Mythical History and Symbolic Landscape, Actes des colloques de Québec et de Kingston*, Sainte-Foy, CIEQ, 1997, 113 p.

### ***Cheminements-Conférences***

Baker, Alan R.H., «*L'Union fait la force, aidons-nous les uns les autres*»: *Towards a Historical Geography of Fraternal Associations in Loir-et-Cher (France) 1815-1914*, Sainte-Foy, CIEQ, 1998, 7 p.

Faulkner, Alaric, *From Pentagoet to the Old Canada Road: Finding and Delimiting Habitations of Downeast Maine*, Sainte-Foy, CIEQ, 1999, 12 p.

McCalla, Douglas, *Consumption Stories: Customer Purchases of Alcohol at an Upper Canadian Country Store in 1808-9 and 1828-9*, Sainte-Foy, CIEQ, 1999, 11 p.

Delpal, Bernard, *L'observation quantitative du fait religieux: les approches sérielles et les comportements «dissonants»*, Sainte-Foy, CIEQ, 1999, 6 p.

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