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*Nec aranearum sanè textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.*

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## REPORT

ON THE  
SEA AND RIVER FISHERIES OF  
NEW BRUNSWICK,  
WITHIN THE  
GULF OF SAINT LAWRENCE AND  
BAY OF CHALEUR.

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*Miscou Island.*

This Island lies at the north easternmost extremity of New Brunswick at the entrance into the Bay of Chaleur. It is about nine miles in length, and four in width, at its broadest part. The whole of it is very low, and its greater portion consists of cariboo bogs, mossy swamps, small lakes, salt marshes, and sand plains; the two latter producing a scanty growth of wild grass. There are however, some small tracts of land upon it fit for agricultural pursuits, and these have been granted to Mr Andrew Wilson, and Mr John Marks, who reside upon their lands. But wild, barren, and almost desolate as is this Island of Miscou, yet it is an admirable station for the Fisheries; its value in this respect was well known more than two centuries ago to the French, in whose history it has a conspicuous position. About the year 1635, a company was established in France for the purpose of carrying on the Fur Trade and Fisheries in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, of which, the King of France was at the head. It was called the 'Royal Company of Miscou,' and it had extensive powers and privileges. The principal station of the company was on the Island of Miscou, within the Harbor of Little Shippegan, which is formed between the Islands of Shippegan and Miscou, where it is said some of the foundations of the Company's buildings are yet to be seen. The principal pursuit of the Company of Miscou, was the taking of the Morse or Walrus, whose favorite *echouage*, or strand, was near Point Miscou, the north eastern extremity of the Island. These huge animals were valuable for their skins and the oil they furnished, as also for the ivory of their tusks. They were frequently killed by three and four hundred at a time, and their destruction was carried on so unremittingly, and with such success, that they have become wholly extinct at Miscou.

On visiting the *echouage*, or place where the Walrus were formerly slain in such numbers, a little to the westward of Point Miscou, it was found that the ancient beach is now nearly a quarter of a mile from the Sea; a long strip of sand plain, covered with coarse grass and a great abundance of Cranberries, at this time intervenes between the present Sea-beach and the former strand. This strip of recent formation is called the *Grande Plaine*; and the curving shore in its front is called by the Fishermen *L'Ance à Grande Plaine*. On examining the ancient shore, near the outer edge of a belt of small spruce and fir trees, the bones of the Walrus which had formerly been slain there, were found imbedded in the sand in large quantities, and in good preservation, some of the skeletons being quite complete.

The Harbor of Little Shippegan is an exceedingly good one, and well sheltered; it is much resorted to by American Fishing vessels during heavy easterly storms, and as many as ninety sail of these vessels have been observed in this harbor at one time. The entrance from the Gulf is by a small gully, in which there is only eight feet at low water and twelve feet at high water, in ordinary tides. This passage is only used by Fishing boats and small crafts. The principal entrance is from the Bay of Chaleur; it is about half a mile in width, with 8 fathoms at low water, which depth is maintained well into the Harbor, where the channel becomes narrow, with perpendicular sides, yet still very deep. This excellent Harbour is of great use and importance to the numerous Fishing vessels frequenting the Gulf, and the Bay of Chaleur.

### *Mr Andrew Wilson's Establishment.*

The farm of Mr Wilson is on Miscou Island, a short distance to the eastward of Little Shippegan Gully, into which his Fishing boats run for shelter; within the Gully, on the Miscou side, he has for several years occupied a convenient place for curing Fish. The soil here although light and sandy, yields good crops. There were on the 23rd August, several fine fields of oats, and some good wheat. The quantity of Potatoes planted was 70 barrels, and nothing could be finer than the appearance of this crop, which promised an abundant yield. It was stated by Mr Wilson, that in former years his potatoes had been but slightly effected with the potatoe disease, and that his crop of this vegetable was generally good. He keeps seventy sheep, and the mutton is peculiarly fine, owing to the character of the wild grasses on which the sheep are pastured.

Mr Wilson is an Emigrant from Aberdeen, in Scotland, who has been settled on this Island upwards of 16 years. He has a family of eight sons and two daughters, all residing with him; from their unceasing industry and economy, this large family is now living in much comfort, and apparently becoming quite independent. Mr Wilson himself is a person of intelligence and observation, and he furnished much information as to the Island of Miscou, and its fisheries, which is here embodied.

The family has three boats, manned by six of the sons; up to the 23rd of August last, they had caught and cured 200 quintals of dry Fish, besides 140 barrels of Herrings. Last spring, the Herrings came in much earlier, and in greater quantities than was ever known before. Mr Wilson said, that when he put out his nets on the 15th of May last, they became so completely filled with Herring that he could not lift them out again.— He cured as many as he could with all the salt at that time to be had. The Fish were in such abundance and so close to the shore, that they came rolling in with the breakers in masses, and were picked up along the strand by the children.

It was stated by Mr Wilson, as also by other persons along the coast, that none of the Jersey Houses would furnish salt, even to their best customers, to cure Herring, Mackerel, or any pickled Fish; and that they discouraged the catching and curing of all Fish, except such as were dried and fit for the Foreign Markets already mentioned. This was assigned as one reason why the valuable Herring and Mackerel Fisheries on this coast are not more extensively prosecuted.

During the time Mr Wilson has resided at Miscou, he never knew the Herring fail in any spring, but they were more abundant the last season than he ever knew them before. Many Herring Fishers from the main land resort to this Island every spring; but it is thought that not more than one tenth of the Fish they take are salted, the remaining nine tenths being put on the fields as manure.

There has always been a good supply of Capelin at Miscou until the last two seasons, during which very few have been seen; but this falling off is supposed to be only temporary or accidental. It is said that when Capelin are plentiful at Miscou, they are scarce at Labrador, and *vice versa*. The past season Capelin were unusually abundant at Labrador, and the Fishing there, in consequence, was better than usual. Some of the boats that were there, with two men only, caught one hundred quintals each boat in 12 days. At Labrador, 100 Cod of 18 inches each in length are accounted a quintal.

The ice usually clears away from the shores of Miscou at the latter part of March or early in April. During some winters the open water is seen at all times; but if easterly winds prevail the ice is driven in and closes the coast.— The fishermen sometimes go out in April in small boats to take Seals among the ice in the Gulf, and it is said that they succeed well in proportion to their outfit.

When the Spring Herring come to the

shore, the Cod, which follow them in, are taken at a very short distance from the land. As the season advances, the Cod retire to the deeper water; in August the best fishing was at 15 miles from the shore, or even more.

Mr Wilson's farm is bounded to the north eastward by a salt water Lake, called Grand Mal-Bay, which communicates with the Gulf by a very narrow gully through the sand reef, or sea wall, which separates the Lake from the Gulf. Mr Wilson stated, that some years since a run of Cod entered Mal-Bay through the Gully, and as a large portion of this Lake is dry at low water, about ten thousand Codfish were then left dry. Of these Mr Wilson secured about one thousand, which he cleaned and cured; he was unable to take any more from the want of assistance, and the rest of the Fish spoiled and were lost. On another occasion, he surrounded, and took at one haul of his net, the whole of a 'schull' of Basse, 570 in number, weighing from 4lbs to 8lbs each.

In this Mal-Bay there is always during the season a great abundance and variety of wild fowl; in August, black ducks and large plover were observed in very large flocks. In the latter part of every season the sons of Mr Wilson are accustomed to shoot, at this place, from 300 to 400 wild geese, for which sport they have proper decoys and large guns; the feathers are valuable, and the bodies of the geese, then in fine condition, are frozen down for winter use.

A small fat Herring comes in on this coast at the end of June, and remains all the season. They are caught at various distances, from half a mile to 20 miles from the shore, in a net with a mesh of one inch and a quarter. These fish are quite distinct and altogether different from the Spring Herring, or the 'Fall' Herring. The latter are usually caught in nets with a mesh of one inch and three quarters, but the finest are taken in Mackerel nets, with a mesh of two inches and a half.

In corroboration of the testimony of Monsieur Leon Robicheaux, that Salmon were roving about Miscou, Mr Wilson mentioned, that by way of experiment he put out a small Salmon net last June, and caught altogether 12 Salmon; the largest Fish weighed 18 pounds. In the same net he also took 7 Mackerel of very large size, two sturgeon, two shad, and more than a dozen of the large white trout of the Gulf. During the last week in August there were many Basse along the shore, very fat and in fine condition. Mr Wilson said that when salted, these Fish are nearly as good as Salmon for winter use. Halibut of large size are said to be abundant at this locality.

From the point south of Little Shippegan Gully, which is named 'Pidgeon Hill,' to Point Miscou, the shore has a general curve inward, forming a sort of bight in front of Mr Wilson's farm. This bight is much frequented by American schooners fishing for Mackerel. They entice the Mackerel to the surface by bait cut up by the Butt-Mill, (as described in the Report of 1849) and they are sometimes so abundant here that the 'jig' even is not used.

One of Mr Wilson's sons said he had seen the Mackerel almost in a solid mass alongside one of these American schooners, the crew of which were lifting them in very rapidly with iron wires, about three feet in length, having a hook at the extremity, which were fastened to a wooden staff, or handle, of about the same length. These schooners have been known to make full fares of Mackerel here in nine days. Since the Americans began taking these fish in such quantities, they have become more scarce, or rather the resident fishermen are unable to take them, owing to their imperfect tackle, and antiquated mode of fishing.

Mr Wilson is clearly of opinion that it would be far better for the resident Fishermen if the American fishers were allowed to land on these shores, for the purpose of cleaning and curing their Fish, than to compel them, as at present, to clean their Fish on the Fishing Grounds, where the bones and offal seriously injure

the Fisheries—he says, they should either be excluded altogether from the Gulf, or else allowed to land upon its shores. He conceives that great good would arise, both to the Herring and Mackerel Fisheries, and much improvement, if the Americans were allowed to establish Stations on the shores of New Brunswick, for prosecuting those Fisheries. The benefits of competition were also alluded to by Mr Wilson, who said— the Jersey houses, exact too large profits, and keep the fishers in poverty; they look only to one branch of Fishing, and discourage all others.'

### *Point Miscou.*

About four miles to the north eastward of Mr Wilson's farm, and near to Point Miscou, are two fishing 'rooms' belonging to the Jersey houses of Fruing & Co., and LeBoutillier Brothers.

The first of these 'rooms,' belonging to Fruing & Co., is very close to the sea-beach, with an open roadstead in front, and a heavy sea rolling in with any wind from the eastward between north and south. It was found in charge of Mr DeCarteret, acting under the orders of Messrs. Alexandre at Shippegan.

This establishment employs 20 boats, having two men each; on the 24th of August there was on hand 1100 quintals of dry Fish, and it was expected there would be 300 quintals more caught and cured before the season closed. There was no pickled Fish at this 'room.'

Mr DeCarteret stated, that an American vessel fishing off Point Miscou, a week previously, and having on board nearly a full fare of Cod, had found the Mackerel in such extraordinary abundance, that the crew had thrown overboard one hundred and fifty quintals of green Fish, in order to make room for Mackerel, with which the vessel had been quickly filled up.

The 'room' of Messrs. LeBoutillier is the nearest to Point Miscou, and was found in charge of Mr LeBas. The buildings here are well and substantially built; they were in excellent order outside, and very cleanly within. The Fish Flakes are on a piece of ground neatly levelled, and now in grass; it is surrounded with high palisades, as well to keep off marauders, as to prevent the loose sand from drifting in upon the Fish while drying.

At this 'room' there were also twenty boats engaged, having two men each; they had taken 1200 quintals of fish, and were expected to take 300 quintals more before the season closed.

Mr. Lebas stated, that the Americans had injured the cod-fishing by glutting the mackerel, so that a sufficient quantity could not be caught for bait; and that this, added to the failure of the capelin, had caused a great diminution in the cod fishing at Miscou. Other baits being scarce in August, smelts were used, which were taken by a seine. While the writer was at this 'room,' the seine was hauled three times, and besides securing a supply of very fine smelts, it brought on shore small cod and ling, flounders, one plaice, many crabs, sculpins or *crapaud de mer*, and Lobsters of all sizes in abundance. At an earlier period in the season, Mr LeBas said, the seine brought on shore large quantities of shrimps, which were turned out again as being of no use.

Although the beach in front of Messrs. LeBoutillier's 'room' is a little sheltered by two gravelly sand spits, which run out a short distance from the land, yet it is much exposed to easterly gales, and a very heavy sea then comes tumbling in. At such times the fishing boats are moored outside the outermost roller, with the masts struck, and all made snug to ride out the gale; or else they beached and hauled above high water mark.— Except when the wind is off shore, there is much difficulty in landing supplies here, which are chiefly furnished from Messrs. LeBoutillier's principal establishment at Paspébiac in Gaspé.

The extreme point of Miscou was granted some years since to Peter John Duval, of Jersey, after which it was occupied by his agent Mr Falle, as a Fishing station. The grant includes a wide, shall