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Nec aranearum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vitior 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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In entering upon a description of the Fisheries of New Brunswick within the Gulf of St. Lawrence, it is necessary to state, that they fall naturally into two Districts, separated distinctly by the Miramichi River. To the northward of the Miramichi, the Sea Fisheries are prosecuted in a regular and systematic manner from permanent Fishing Establishments, technically termed 'Rooms,' while to the south of the Miramichi, there are no such establishments, and the Fisheries, which might be prosecuted extensively in that quarter, are only followed in a desultory manner.

This Report will therefore fall under three heads:—

1st. The Sea Fisheries on the coast north of the Miramichi, around the Island of Miscou, and within the Bay of Chaleur, to the Canadian Boundary.

2nd. The Sea Fisheries from the entrance of the Miramichi River southwardly, to the Nova Scotia Boundary.

3rd. The Fisheries in all the Rivers within these two Districts.

The various Fishing Establishments north of the Miramichi, will be first described in the order in which they were visited, with such information as to the Fisheries of the Coast as was obtained on the spot.

THE DISTRICT NORTH OF THE MIRAMICHI.

Portage Island.

On the northern side of Miramichi Bay, at the entrance of the Miramichi River, Portage Island, which on some of the older Maps is called Waltham Island. It is about four miles and a half in length, and nearly a mile in width at its southern end, tapering gradually to its northern extremity, where it terminates in a long narrow sand-bar.

This Island is yet ungranted. It is low and sandy, much cut up with marshes, swamps and small lakes; a portion of it only is wooded, with dwarf white birch, and scrubby pine and spruce trees.

Near the north eastern end of Portage Island, some buildings were erected about five years ago, with the necessary conveniences for putting up Salmon and Lobsters, in tin cases hermetically sealed. This station was occupied during the season of 1849, by Mr William J. Fraser, of Chatham, who then for the first time set up 'Fish Flakes,' and undertook to set up and cure Cod and other Fish caught near this locality.

When this establishment was visited in August last, it was in charge of George Letson, who furnished the following information in relation to it.

The season for putting up Salmon and Lobsters was over. There had been twenty two thousand pounds of Salmon, and four thousand pounds of Lobsters, put up in tin cases, of one pound and two pounds each. The quantity of Lobsters put up was much less than usual, owing to the prevalence of Cholera in the United States, and the consequent want of a market there.

The salmon put up here were all taken around the Island, and were purchased of the fishermen, by this establishment, at 3d. per pound, fresh caught, with a discount of ten per cent. for cleaning, which was said to be equal to £3 5s. per barrel. The Lobsters were chiefly caught by the French inhabitants of the neighboring Neguac Villages, from whom they were purchased at 2s. 6d. currency per hundred. They were very plentiful the past season, especially at Black Lands and

*From 1643 to 1647, Jean Jacques Enand, a native of the Basque Provinces of France, had an establishment on this Island for taking the Moose or Walrus, and for prosecuting the Fur Trade and Fisheries.

Tabusintac Gully; and as proof of the ease with which they were taken, it was mentioned that one Frenchman, (Victor Savoy) had, unassisted, caught 1200 Lobsters in part of one day. There were from twenty to twenty five men employed at the preserving establishment during the season.

Up to the 19th August, there had been 700 quintals of Cod, Ling, and Haddock, caught and cured at this 'room,' to which a considerable addition was anticipated before the close of the season. There were then 33 boats engaged in fishing at this station, averaging three men to each boat; these were chiefly settlers from the neighboring shores, who employed the period between seed time and harvest, in following the fisheries. One boat was owned and manned by three Micmac Indians, from Burnt Church Point, and it was stated, that although their boat was an old one, worse rigged and provided than most of the others, yet these Indians would remain on the fishing ground in more severe weather than any other of the fishers, and never returned without a full load of fish.

In the early part of the season, the fishing boats here obtained their tares at no great distance from Portage Island; but as the season advanced, they had to go out from 10 to 15 miles from the land.— In August they were fishing near Point Escuminac, about 12 miles from Portage Island. These fishermen split and salted their fish in the boats, which usually came into the 'room' about twice a week; they were using Mackerel and Clams as bait, but previously had used Herring. No Capelin had come in on this part of the coast.

It was stated, that early in July there were from 20 to 30 sail of American vessels fishing in Miramichi Bay, at the Distance of 5 to 10 miles from Portage Island; and that they all obtained full fares of No. 3 Mackerel. One of these schooners entered the Miramichi River, and went up as far as Oak Point trading with the settlers for Salmon. The master of this vessel exchanged two barrels of superfine flour for each barrel of Salmon, but he neither entered, or paid duties on what he landed. He took the dimensions of the various nets in use, and told the fishermen he would furnish them next year with similar nets at half the prices they had been accustomed to pay. These American fishing vessels have, during the last three years, traded at Fox Island on the south side of Miramichi Bay.

On the bar at the southwest point of Portage Island was found a hovel occupied by a man and boy; they had been there a fortnight, with nets and lines, but had only caught a barrel and a half of Mackerel. These were all the Mackerel which had been caught at this station during the season, by the New Brunswick Fishermen, except such as had been used for bait. This man and boy had taken some fine Fall Herring, and a small quantity of Gaspereaux, exceedingly fat—so fat that they were boiling the oil in a kettle to extract the oil, which appeared abundant. It was stated here that numerous shoals of large Basse were then roving about Fox Island and along the coast, and that they could be, and were, readily taken, even in the day time, by a proper Basse spear.

A quantity of coarse bent grass grows on the Marshes and Beaches of Portage Island; and certain French residents of the Neguac Villages, under an old Minute Council, claim a permissive right to cut and carry away this grass, paying the sum of £5 annually to the Crown.

Presuming upon the permission to cut grass, these parties have of late years, set up a claim to the Fisheries of the Island, and during the past season the actually leased the Salmon Fishing on its shores to various parties, at rents from £2 10s. upwards. Six of the persons to whom they leased are persons residing at or near Burnt Church, named Peter Morrison, George Loggie, John Davidson, George Davidson, John Anderson, and Alexander Loggie. These parties during the past season, furnished the Salmon for Mr Fraser's preserving establishment.— But the most extraordinary part of this

affair is the fact, that the Act regulating the Fisheries in the County of Northumberland, (29th Geo. 3, c. 5.) positively prohibits any net whatever being set off Waltham or Portage Island; and this Salmon Fishery has been carried on here in open defiance of the Law, and as is alleged, much to the detriment of the Salmon Fishery of the Miramichi River generally. This case will be found more particularly referred to under the head of River Fisheries of the Miramichi.

Tabusintac Gully.

This Gully, (from the French *goulet*.) is a narrow entrance, between two low sand bars, into the lagoon of Tabusintac, and through that lagoon to the large River of the same name. The depth of water in this Gully is six and a half feet at low water, and 11 feet at high water, an average tide being four and a half feet. The sides of the Gully are steep, enabling Fishing boats and small vessels to come directly up to the shore.

On the west side of this gully, a Fishing 'room' was established during the past season by Roderick M'Leod Esq., of Tabusintac. There were 19 boats employed, with three men each, fishing here and Mr M'Leod himself had two small schooners of 15 tons each. At this 'room' there were taken during the season, 100 barrels of Spring Herring, 500 quintals of dry Fish, and 300 barrels of pickled Fish, chiefly Ling and Haddock. Late in the season, Mr M'Leod's vessels were sent to Caraquee, and they there caught 86 barrels of the Fall Herring. This new establishment may therefore be considered to have made a successful commencement. Only five barrels of Mackerel were taken here during the season; a Mackerel seine was provided, but the Fish did not come sufficiently near the shore to be taken with it.

It was stated here that American Fishing Vessels were frequently seen in the distance, but that they did not come near the shore, owing to the light draught of water.

The Fishing Boats from this Gully went out a long distance towards Escuminac, and caught their Fish in 25 fathoms water. They used Herring and Mackerel as bait, when they could be procured; but in August they were using Clams. They frequently took Halibut of large size, a single fish being sometimes sufficient to fill a barrel.

Tracadie Gully.

The principal entrance to the Tracadie Lagoon and Rivers is at Little Tracadie Gully, in which there is six feet at low water, and nine feet at high water; at Spring tides there is ten feet. At this place Mr James Young, of Tracadie, has a small Fishing Station; which employed ten boats, with three men each, up to the 5th August, when the season was closed. The catch was 200 quintals of dry Fish.

The Jersey Houses, formerly, had an extensive Fishing 'room' near this Gully, at which they caught and cured from 3000 to 4000 quintals of Cod annually. The Capelin then came in on this part of the coast in great abundance, and they were largely used by the Settlers for manuring the land. Apparently this had the effect of breaking up the run of these Fish, as now they have almost ceased to appear along this shore. With the disappearance of the Capelin, the Cod Fishery fell off greatly, and about six years since, the Jersey Houses found it necessary to break up their establishments here. A very few Capelin were seen at this place in the season of 1848, but none whatever in the season of 1849.

At Little Tracadie Gully, a number of the large White Sea Trout of the Gulf (*Salmo trutta marina*) were taken in nets during the early part of June last.

Shippagan Gully.

This Gully is at the southern end of Shippagan Island, and between it and the main land. It forms an entrance to Shippagan Harbor, from the Gulf, and has nearly the same depth of water as Little Tracadie Gully.

Just within this Gully, on Shippagan Island, in a well sheltered and very convenient position, is the Fishing 'room' of Messrs. Wm. Fruing & Co., of Jersey,

of which Capt. George Alexandre, of Jersey was found in charge.

At this place there were 60 boats engaged in Fishing, averaging two men and a boy to each boat. It was stated that each of these boats would probably take 100 quintals of fish during the season, but that the boats belonging to the firm, manned by Jersey men, would take more.

On the 21st August there were at this 'room' 2,500 quintals of dry Fish, exceedingly well cured. On the day it was visited there were 600 quintals of Cod spread out to dry; they were exceedingly white and hard, of the finest quality and were about to be shipped to Naples, for which market the very best fish are required. They are shipped in bulk, and the manner in which they are stowed in the holds of the vessels is very neat and compact. It requires great skill and care to stow them without breaking, and in such a manner as to prevent their receiving damage on so long a voyage; but long practice and experience have conquered these difficulties, and cargoes are rarely injured by bad stowage.

The Ling cured at this establishment are sent to Cork for the Irish market; and the Haddock to the Brazils. The first quality Cod cured here in 1848, instead of being sent to Naples were shipped to the Mauritius; it was not stated what success had attended this adventure.

Nearly all the fishermen at this establishment were French settlers who had small farms, or patches of land somewhere in the vicinity, which they cultivated. It was the opinion of Captain Alexandre that the fishermen here could not live unless they possessed land, and obtained something from the soil; if they did not they nearly starved. Those who are too poor to own boats hire them of the firm for the season, that is, until the 15th of August, when the summer fishing ends. If the boats are used for the Autumn and Fall Fishing, there is, of course, another hiring.

The Fishing usually continues until the 15th October, and the whole catch of the season of 1849 would amount to three thousand five hundred quintals—it the weather proved favorable, probably 4,000 quintals.

The boats come in here directly to the 'stage head,' upon which the Fish are thrown; they are at once split and cleaned by the fishermen, on tables provided for the purpose; and 300 lbs of fish, fresh from the knife, are weighed off as sufficient to make a quintal of dry Fish, with the allowance of one tenth for the curer. If the fish are split and salted in the boats, and lay one night, then 252 lbs are weighed as a quintal. The fishermen are allowed for a quintal of Cod thus weighed, ten shillings, Ling and Haddock, five shillings—the amount payable in goods at the store of the firm, on Point Amacque, where a large quantity of foreign goods are kept of every variety. Here were found Jersey hose and stockings—Irish butter—Cuba molasses—Naples biscuit, of half a pound each—Brazilian sugar—Sicilian Lemons—Neapolitan brandy—American tobacco—with English, Dutch, and German Goods—but nothing of Colonial produce or manufacture, with the exception of Canadian pork and flour.

Some of the residents at Shippagan, who are in more independent circumstances, prosecute the fisheries in connection with their farming, curing the fish themselves, and disposing of them at the close of the season to the Jersey merchants, or to others, as they see fit. Of this class is Monsieur Leor Robicheaux, (who is mentioned in the Report of last year). He has a good farm on Shippagan Island; the last season he planted 49 barrels of potatoes, as also wheat, oats, and barley, the whole of which promised an abundant return. Besides these farming operations, Monsieur Robicheaux and his family, caught and cured during the season, 250 quintals of dry fish—in all 24000 fish, the whole taken in 25 to 40 fathoms of water. For these, well cured and of the best quality, Mons. R. would receive from the Jersey,