

**THE HISTORY OF EASTPORT,  
AND VICINITY: A LECTURE,  
DELIVERED APRIL, 1834, BEFORE  
THE EASTPORT LYCEUM**

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The History of Eastport, and Vicinity: A Lecture, Delivered April, 1834, Before the Eastport Lyceum by Jonathan D. Weston

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**JONATHAN D. WESTON**

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*Handwritten note:*  
The early history of this town  
is not well known in the  
great part of Europe July 17839

## LECTURE.

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WITH the view of rescuing from oblivion, some of the facts and circumstances relative to, and connected with the early history of this town and vicinity, together with the hope of gratifying a laudable curiosity on the subject, in those who have been but little acquainted with its history, I have been induced to collect such as have come within my own observation, as well as those I could learn from others. Such is the nature of the subject, that very little aid can be derived from books and written evidence, and resources are very scanty. — Unless, indeed, they are soon collected in a more permanent and tangible form, our early history and the events connected with it, will soon be lost, or known only by tradition. I have made careful inquiries, and have had recourse to all the documentary evidence within my reach; still, I am by no means certain of fixing your attention, or interesting you in the details I am about to give, for they are little susceptible of polish. The dry detail of dates and references, of facts and statistics, are, necessarily, less attractive, than a well written essay, abounding with illustration, or than biography, history, poetry, or treatises on the sciences, where harmony of period, melody of style, and the graces and beauties of composition add to the pleasure derived from the subject itself, which is treated of.

Connected with this subject, it may not be irrelevant to advert to the history of this section of the country, and that of

its boundaries, previous to its actual settlement ; and this I propose to do, as concisely as practicable, consistently with a full and distinct understanding of the subject.

At the close of the 16th century, the northern coast of the American continent had become generally known to the nations of Europe, several parts having been frequently visited for the purposes of discovery, fishing and traffic. But all knowledge of the interior country, its geography and resources, was extremely limited, and all acquaintance with its shores, rivers, bays and inlets was quite imperfect.

In the several voyages to this continent, we find no account of any one who visited the waters or shores of Maine, earlier than 1602, when Bartholomew Gosnold, an English navigator, is supposed to have fallen in with some part of the coast of Maine. But in the following year, Martin Pring, in the *Speedwell*, a vessel of fifty tons, with a crew of thirty men and boys, accompanied by another vessel, the *Discoverer*, of twenty-six tons, with thirteen men and a boy, sailed from Milford-Haven, and, on the seventh of June, fell in with the coast, in the waters since called Penobscot Bay, but by the French called 'Pentagoet.' Thence he sailed along the coast to Piscataqua ; thence farther southward, and for home in August. Pring also made a second voyage in 1606.—The subsequent voyages of others, added still more to the stock of knowledge of the country, and to the thirst of gain expected to be derived from it.

The French, as well as the English, were repeating their visits to this northern country every year, and making it, at home, a favorite topic of conversation and inquiry. Purchass, an early writer, states that one Savelet, an old mariner, had, before 1609, made no less than forty-two voyages to these parts. — Both nations were highly elated with ideas of extensive foreign dominions, and the prospect of an abundant commerce ; but the means and measures best fitted for their attainment, were unknown, as well to the sage as the speculator.

It was a great misfortune to those nations, and no less to this country, that they both coveted the same territories, using all practicable means to establish, in themselves severally, the most plausible title to their claims. Twenty years before, Humphrey Gilbert had taken formal possession of Newfoundland, and the region two hundred leagues about it, in behalf of Queen Elizabeth; and the Marquis de la Roche was commissioned by the king of France, to conquer and colonize all the regions bordering on the St. Lawrence, and unlimited in extent. The people of both nations were resolved in their purposes; and, with such objects in view, and with the rival feelings of each towards the other, it might easily be foreseen that these counter-possessory claims would produce the severest excitements, if not actual war.

By a royal patent of November 8th, 1603, King Henry IV., of France, granted to Pierre de Gast, Sieure de Monts, all the American territory between the fortieth and forty-sixth degrees of north latitude, and appointed him Lieutenant General of this extensive region, with authority to colonize and rule it according to his discretion, and to subdue and christianize its native inhabitants. The name given in the patent was 'Acadia,' or 'Acadie.' This charter or patent, having no other boundaries or confines than the degrees of latitude mentioned, was found to embrace the American coast, between the island of Cape Breton and the shores below the mouth of Manhattan, now the Hudson or North river. De Monts, during the winter, procured and equipped two vessels, and sailed for America March 7th, 1604, and arrived the 6th of May following, at Cape de la Heve, near Liverpool, on the southerly side of the peninsula of Nova Scotia. He was accompanied by his friends, M. de Potrin-court, and Samuel Champlain, who was his pilot. Leaving la Heve, they sailed northerly round Cape Sable, and eastwardly along the northern shore of Nova Scotia, entered a spacious basin, and anchored in a good harbor. Potrin-court was charmed with

the beauty of the place, and determined to make it his future residence. He obtained a grant of it from de Monts, which was afterwards confirmed by the King, and gave it the name of Port Royal, now Annapolis; and here his party dwelt for several years.

In exploring the Bay of Fundy, de Monts visited the river St. John, and gave it the name it has ever since borne. Thence he proceeded into the waters of Passamaquoddy, ascended the Schoodic, to a small island, which Champlain selected for a resting place and a fortification, and here they passed the winter. As Passamaquoddy Bay and the river Schoodic now form a part of the eastern boundary of this State, a more particular account of its first discovery and situation, may not be uninteresting. But as I propose again to recur to this part of the subject, at a subsequent period of this Address, I prefer to continue the regular chain of the narrative, uninterruptedly.

De Monts and his men called the bay 'a sea of salt water;' but in ascending the river, found it an inconsiderable one, and admitting vessels, even on the tide, to no great distance. The island itself, containing but a few acres, they called St. Croix, because ten leagues higher, there were brooks, which came 'crosswise, to fall within this large branch of the sea'—a circumstance which has given to the Schoodic the same name. The island is situated just opposite the northeast corner of Robbinston, just below the Devil's Head: its soil is fertile, and is usually the residence of one family. It is often called Neutral Island, and was the property of the late General Brewer.

L'Escarbot, who was himself with de Monts in this voyage, and afterwards published a history of it, says, of the island, 'it was half a league in circuit, seated in the midst of the river; the ground most excellent, and abundantly fruitful; strong by nature and easy of defence, but difficult to be found. 'For,' says he, 'there are so many isles and great bays to pass,



(from the St. John,) before we come to it, I wonder how one ever pierced so far as to find it. The woods of the main land are fair and admirably high and well grown, as in like manner is the grass. There is right over against the island, fresh water brooks, very pleasant and agreeable, where divers of M. de Monts' men transacted their business, and builded certain cabins.'

The season being far advanced, de Monts concluded to pass the winter upon the island. Apprehending danger from the savages, he erected a fortification on the north part of it, which entirely commanded the river. The fort was sheltered by trees, which he directed not to be felled; and within its walls he planted his cannon, and constructed a chapel, after the Indian manner of building. 'Hoary snow-father being come, (as L'Escarbot expresses himself) they were forced to keep much within the doors of their dwellings, during the winter. But as there was not plenty of wood, which had been too prodigally used in building; and a want of fresh water, which was found on the banks of the river, strongly enclosed under locks of ice; they were under the necessity of procuring both from the shores, every day.' Some of the savages were occasionally bespoken; and through fear of surprise or assault from them, who had a lodgement at the foot of the island, and appeared to be jealous, de Monts kept a constant watch, night and day.

The winter was severe, and the sufferings of the people from the scurvy, very grievous: not one wholly escaped it; and thirty-six out of seventy, (Ogilby says ninety-seven,) actually died before the Spring. At the usual seed-time, they prepared a piece of ground and sowed it with rye; and, being absent in the first season of reaping, they gathered, in the second year, a growth of it, in the narrator's words, 'as fair, big, and weighty as in France.' This being a mere temporary residence, could never have assumed any considerable importance, had it not been the first pretension of a settlement

in Acadie. L'Escarbot adds, 'the people that be from St. John's river to Kennibeki, wherein are the rivers St. Croix and Norombegua, are called Etechemins.'

When the survivors of the party had sufficiently recovered their strength, de Monts put his provisions and arms on board his pinnace, and about the middle of May, 1605, he and his men embarked in search of a more convenient station, and a warmer climate. In ranging along the coast westwardly, they entered the bay of Penobscot, which, with the neighboring country, some European adventurers had previously understood by the natives, was called Norombegua. At Kennebec, they erected a cross, and took possession in the name of their King; and, after visiting Casco Bay and Saco River, proceeded to Cape Cod. But unsatisfied with the country, as a place of settlement, they returned to St. Croix, and soon proceeded to Port Royal. Here he met M. Dupont, with an accession of forty men, with fresh supplies, in a ship from France; and, removing the remainder of his property from the island St. Croix across the bay, he lodged it with his other stores at the mouth of the river emptying into the basin of Port Royal. At this place he constructed a fort; and, having made due disposition of his affairs, sailed for France, leaving Dupont, Champlain and Chauvin to explore the country and complete the settlement.

The expedition of de Monts drew the attention of the English to this side of the Atlantic. To avoid the jealousy of the French, and at the same time to secure the advantages of prior possession and continual claim, George Weymouth was despatched on a pretended voyage of discovery of a north-west passage. He sailed March 31, 1605, and made the land near Cape Cod, and thence coasted eastwardly as far as Penobscot. He stopped at a place, called, by him, 'Pentecost Harbor,' now George's Island Harbor, at the mouth of George's River. 'Here,' says the Journalist, 'on the twenty-second of May, we digged a garden, sowed pease and barley and garden seeds, which, in sixteen days, grew up eight inch-

es; although this was but the crust of the ground and much inferior to the mould we afterwards found on the main.' Weymouth, by treachery and force, seized and carried away a Sagamore, and three other Indians of rank and influence, and otherwise ill treated the natives. A forfeiture of trade and hospitality, hatred of the English name, revenge and cruelties were the consequences of these and much baser improprieties; and more than counterbalanced the fruits of the voyage, and the possession taken of the country. Such conduct was in the highest degree impolitic and unjust, though it seemed not to be much regarded or reprobated at home.

On the 10th of April, 1606, about two years and a half after the grant to de Monts, a charter was obtained from king James I. of England, of the vast extent of territory, lying between the 34th and 46th degrees of north latitude, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean, including all the islands within one hundred miles of the coast. This immense tract was divided into two colonies; the first, granted to a London Company, extended north to the 41st degree of latitude, and was called South Virginia. The remainder, granted to a company of adventurers in the town of Plymouth, was called North Virginia, and covered all but one degree of the previous French grant to de Monts. Under this charter, the adventurers sent out colonists in 1607. The one from Plymouth, destined to the northern shore, consisted of two ships, and one hundred men, under the command of Captain George Popham, as President, and Captain Rawly Gilbert, as Admiral, sailed on the 31st of May, and arrived at the island of Monhegan, the 11th of August, and then continued on, to the Kennebec, where they planted themselves upon an island, in the mouth of that river. Thence they removed to the main land, built a commodious house, barn, and a few slender cabins, erected a fort, block-house, &c., which they named Fort George, (afterwards called Popham's Fort,) and forty-five of the colonists passed the winter there, the two ships