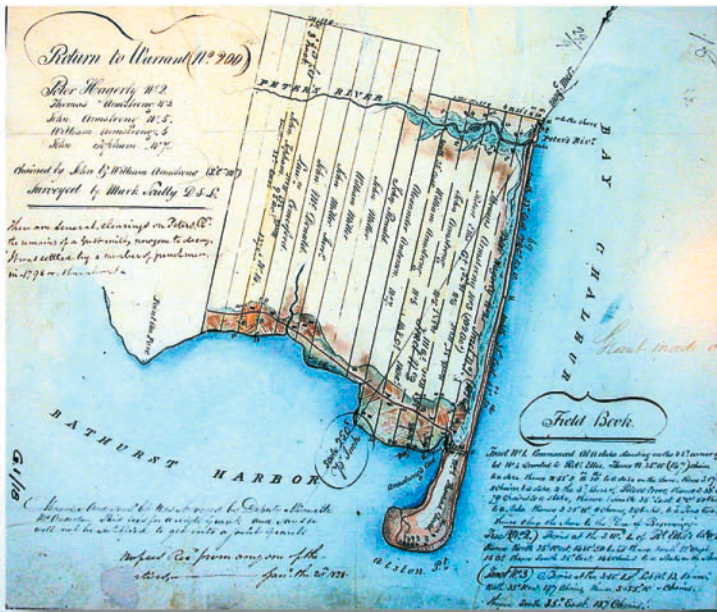


# ALSTON POINT, BATHURST, NEW BRUNSWICK: AN IMPORTANT COMMUNITY CENTRE THROUGHOUT THE LATE 18<sup>TH</sup>, 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES



"First Boat"

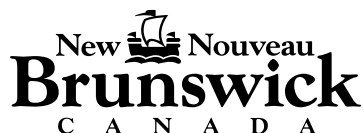


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Alston Point, Bathurst, New Brunswick:  
An Important Community Centre  
throughout the  
Late 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries

*New Brunswick Manuscripts in Archaeology 32*

By  
Patricia Allen



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Culture and Sport Secretariat

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## **Abstract**

Alston Point, at Bathurst, New Brunswick, Canada has been an important center in this northeastern region throughout the past three centuries. Using the evidence from historical documents and oral histories, this paper details the importance of this locale during the late 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The role played by Alston Point in the development of the town of Bathurst is explored. Alston Point was a commercial shipping center for fishing and lumbering products but it also served as a place of residence, a 19th century shipbuilding station, a militia training grounds, a bird hunting destination, and as a recreational property. This summary of the more recent history of Alston Point covers an era in the social, commercial, and industrial heritage of the emerging town of Bathurst on New Brunswick's north shore.

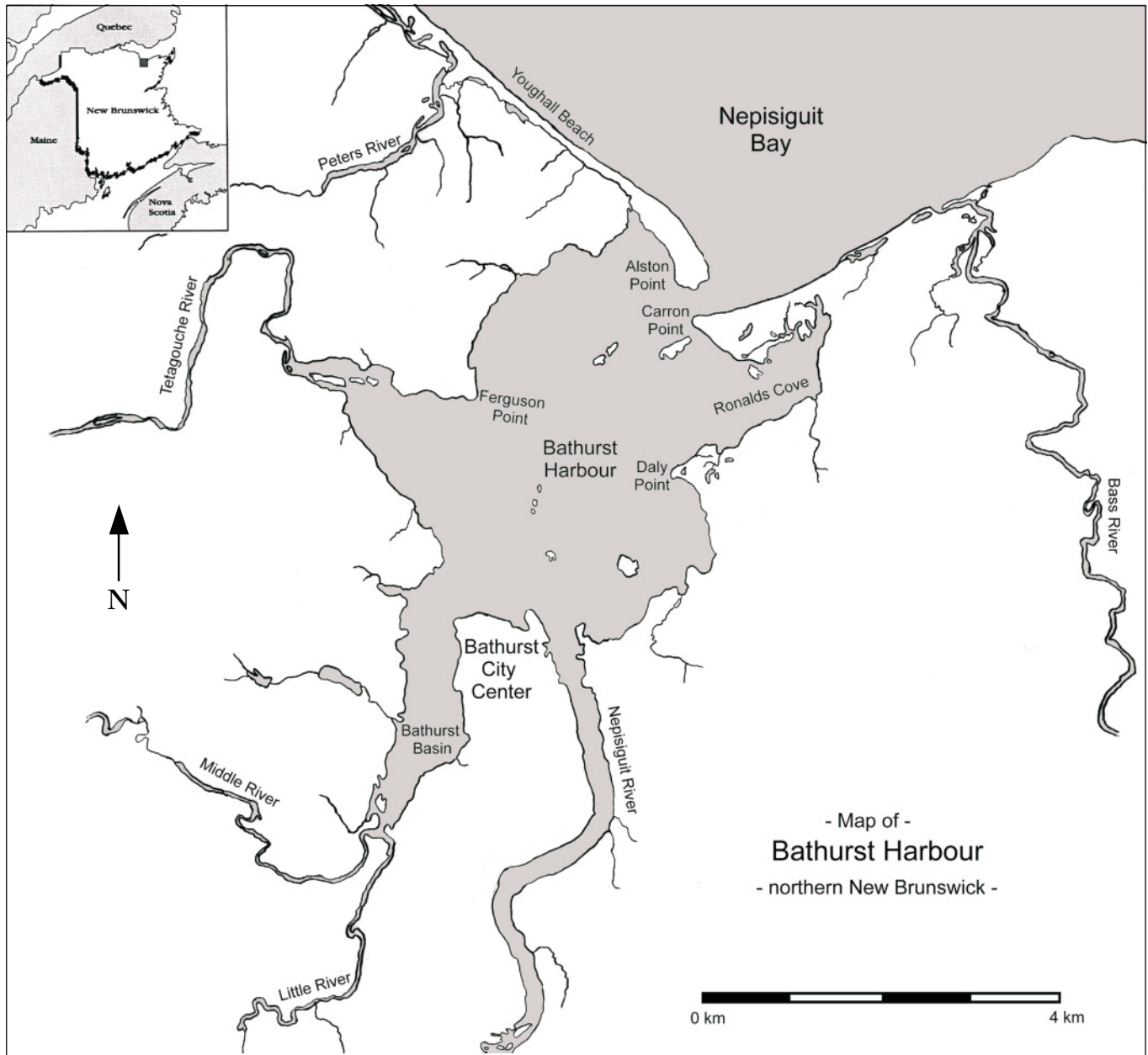


Figure 1: Bathurst Harbour with Alston Point, Carron Point indicated. (Map Courtesy of Brent Suttie).

## Introduction

On the south shore of Chaleur Bay in northeastern New Brunswick lies a *very excellent harbour*. First known as Nepisiguit, then Bathurst, the deep and narrow harbour entrance is flanked by two broad sand spits (Figure 1). The low dunes of Alston Point form the northern arm of the entrance while Carron Point lies on the opposite shore. Of the two, Alston Point presents the finest view of Chaleur Bay, the widest white sand beaches and, a sheltered anchorage for vessels ranging in size from dories to tall ships. To the Mi'kmaq their settlement within the harbour was Nepisiguit, to the Acadians the place was St. Peters and later, to the Scottish and Irish settlers, the emerging 19<sup>th</sup> Century town became Bathurst.

From well before European contact until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the business of this place, was conducted almost solely by water. Mi'kmaq canoes, then European fishing boats, trading ships, armed vessels and cargo ships entered and departed the harbour. Drawn by the Mi'kmaq presence, some of the earliest 17<sup>th</sup> Century Recollect and Jesuit missions were established at Nepisiguit. Later, in 1652, Nicolas Denys, Governor of the Gulf shore of Acadia, here set up a fishing and trading post. In 1761 Nepisiguit witnessed one of the last deportation acts of the Acadian Expulsion. In 1768 a Scottish gentleman, Commodore George Walker, set up a trading, fishing and shipbuilding settlement on Alston Point. A decade later, during the American Revolution, his settlement was destroyed by marauding privateers.

The gently sloping wide sand beaches that surround Alston Point were suited to various purposes, from landing bark canoes to fish drying to ship building. The low grassy dunes that rim the shoreline, to some extent protect the slightly lower interior of the Point from

wind and water. Numerous varieties of fish come and go on the tides that feed through the deep channel that defines the harbour entrance. Until recently, just inside the entrance a natural anchorage existed. Immediately to the west, extensive beds of soft-shelled clams have offered generations a bounty in food and fish bait.

Over the past years, many historical artifacts have been picked up from the Alston Point beaches. Private individuals have found Native stone tools, 17<sup>th</sup> Century coins and religious artifacts, as well as an assortment of items from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Preliminary identification and assessment of these artifacts indicate that Alston Point played a role in the lengthy cultural history of this northern region. The extent of this role is a question that can be answered by archival and archaeological research. To prepare for potential future archaeological research, the more recent history pertaining to the property has been compiled. The human history of earlier time periods will be dealt with in future publication(s).

This report is the second document that Archaeological Services has printed concerning the recent history of Alston Point. The first report, *Commodore George Walker at Alston Point, Nepisiguit 1768-1777*, looks at the personage of George Walker and his efforts to bring the north shore of then Nova Scotia into the fold as a productive British territory shortly following the years of the Acadian Expulsion. This current report, *Alston Point, Bathurst, New Brunswick: An Important Community Centre throughout the Late 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, attempts to provide a summary of the more recent history of the Point. This report covers an era in the social, commercial, and industrial heritage of the emerging town of Bathurst on New Brunswick's north shore.



## The Earliest Records for Alston Point

The earliest records of European ownership of land on Alston Point concern William Allen and Commodore George Walker. Following the forced abandonment by American privateers of George Walker's fishing/trading post on Alston Point in the summer of 1778, Alston Point does not appear to have been occupied by any known historical figures for a number of years.<sup>1</sup> The property was still registered as being part of the 1770 Captain William Allan Grant in 1820,<sup>2</sup> even though Allan, shortly after receiving the Grant, had sold his interest in Alston Point to George Walker for 600 pounds sterling.<sup>3</sup> William Allan seems not to have taken much interest in Nepisiguit following this sale. Historical references suggest his being comfortably settled in Cumberland with various Commissions including Justice of the Peace, Collector of Tax and Duties, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in the Cumberland County Militia.<sup>4</sup> William Allan Esq. died at Cumberland in 1790.<sup>5</sup> Thirty years later, his Nepisiguit Grant was surrendered officially to the Crown for non-compliance to conditions.<sup>6</sup>

## Late 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Activities at Alston Point

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Alston Point continued to offer the first protected anchorage within Nepisiguit harbour as well as wide sand beaches and an appropriate land base from which to access excellent clam beds. Unfortunately, there are few documents existing to describe what transpired specifically on Alston Point between 1778 and 1820. There

are, however, documents referring to: activities in the general Nepisiguit area; a few of Walker's crew members who remained in this locality; the Acadians; the Mi'kmaq; and some new English arrivals.<sup>7</sup> From various sources it is apparent that the fishing traffic and related uses of Alston Point continued, despite the demise of Walker's establishment. Information available on Colonel Goold supports this.

## *The Eastern Side of the Harbour and Colonel Goold*

In late 1777, Colonel Arthur Goold, a member of the Council of Nova Scotia, later private secretary to Lord William Campbell and former commander of the Marines aboard *H. M. S. Romney*, saw a void and an economic opportunity at Nepisiguit. It was Goold's intention to move to Nepisiguit and establish a community. He promptly applied for permission to set up a fishing/trading business there.<sup>8</sup> It was not until 1784, however, that he received a 2000-acre Grant. As can be seen in Figure 2, Goold's property faced Allan's Grant and encompassed nearly the entire eastern side of Nepisiguit harbour.<sup>9</sup> Goold himself did not take up residence on this Grant but for some years he employed a number of people in the salmon fishery on the Nepisiguit River. His men worked with John Robertson, a man who had previous experience fishing here, as a member of Commodore Walker's crew.<sup>10</sup>

In 1784, Colonel Goold wrote about the use of Nepisiguit harbour and its shores stating that, "adventurers in the fishery... resort to this harbour to cure their fish and take in a fresh

<sup>1</sup> See Patricia Allen, *Commodore George Walker at Alston Point Nepisiguit, 1768-1777*, Manuscripts in Archaeology, No. 31, (Fredericton, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Nova Scotia Land Records, Land Grantees List, 1738-1811, Vol. 371, Book 9, p. 199, University of New Brunswick Archives (hereafter UNBA).

<sup>3</sup> Memorial of John Schoolbred, January 17, 1775, documents from P.P. Gaudet via Fidele Theriault.

<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant Governor's Commission Papers, Nova Scotia., 1749-1766, Book 164: pp. 164, 173, UNBA; 1759-1766, unnumbered Book [p.364, UNBA; 1759-1781, Book , Unnumbered Book, p.61, UNBA.

<sup>5</sup> Ester Clark Wright, *Planters and Pioneers of Nova Scotia 1749-1775*, (Hantsport, Nova Scotia, 1978), p.37.

<sup>6</sup> New Brunswick Land Petitions Registry, Petition of William Armstrong, Dec. 2, 1820, New Brunswick Provincial Archives (hereafter NBPA).

<sup>7</sup> W.O. Raymond, "The North Shore. Incidents in the Early History of Eastern and Northern New Brunswick" Collections of The New Brunswick Historical Society, No. 4, pp. 129-132 (Saint John, New Brunswick 1899).

<sup>8</sup> Raymond, "The North Shore...", p. 126.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond, "The North Shore...", p. 126.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond, "The North Shore...", p. 130.

quantity of bate, there being a bank of clams in the center of the harbour for that purpose.”<sup>11</sup> A June 1785 letter written by Robert Conner, a new arrival at Nepisiguit, confirms the importance of the Nepisiguit clam banks. He wrote to Goold that “seventeen sails of vessels sailed from your harbour this morning, who had called in for bate”.<sup>12</sup> This large number of vessels, counted on one day in the early summer of 1785, demonstrates the importance of the Nepisiguit clam banks to the overall fishery of the Bay and likely beyond as well. Following Goold’s death in 1792, his large Nepisiguit Grant was sold at public auction.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 2: Nepisiguit/Bathurst Harbour with portions of the Allan and Gould Grants marked (original circa 1770). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Provincial Archives (Ref.RS686C,G4/2)

### ***Grantees on the Western Side of the Harbour, Youghall***

With the escheat of the William Allan Grant in 1820, the 2000 acres on the western side of Nepisiguit harbour were opened for settlement. Immigrants from both Ireland and Scotland, most having resided at Nepisiguit for only a few years, applied for and received Grants with harbour frontage. The community on the western side of the harbour became known as Youghall, most probably named after a coastal town in County Cort, southern Ireland. These properties, which averaged just over 100 acres, ran from the Nepisiguit harbour shoreline westward to span Peter’s River. A few of the Grants were issued in 1820, the year of the escheat, with others being issued early in 1821 and from then on through until the 1830s. Some of the earliest of these Youghall Grants were to: Alexander Anderson (1820), William Miller (1820), John Miller (1820), William Armstrong (1821), Thomas Armstrong (1821), John Armstrong (1821), Robert Ellis (by 1828), Thomas Dodd (by 1833) and Peter Hagerty (by 1828).<sup>14</sup> The locations of these properties are illustrated in Figure 3.

<sup>11</sup> Raymond, “The North Shore...”, p.128.

<sup>12</sup> Raymond, “The North Shore...”, p.130.

<sup>13</sup> Raymond, “The North Shore...”, p.133.

<sup>14</sup> New Brunswick Land Petitions Registry, Gloucester County, 1820, 1821, 1825, 1828, 1833. NBPA

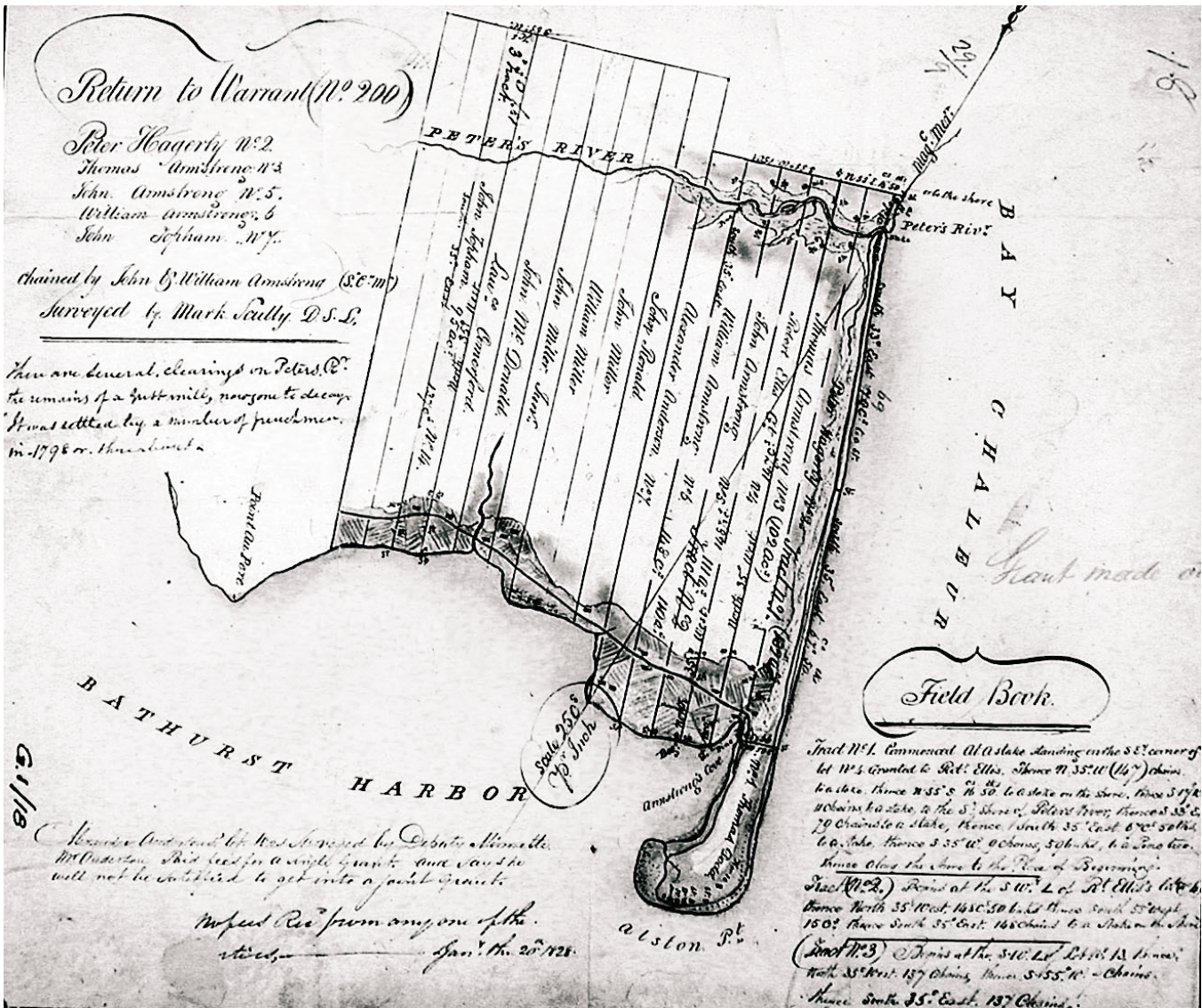


Figure 3: Map of Youghall Grants Issued 1820-1830. Courtesy of the New Brunswick Provincial Archives (Ref.RS687 B/4/18 )

**Alston Point Grants and Grantees**

Shortly after the first of the above-mentioned Grants was issued, further Petitions were made by some of the aforementioned gentlemen as well as by others who wished a share of the tip of Alston Point. A Survey Plan dated January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1828 depicts six buildings strung across the end of the Point. A "reserved road" leading down the harbour side from Youghall and up the outside shore towards Peter's River is also indicated. The

buildings are located within the boundaries of Lot #1 which, according to the 1828 survey plan, belonged to Thomas Dodd. The extent of his property and those on the tip of the Point are evident in Figure 4.

Thomas Dodd built a substantial house on Alston Point, inland from the Point, indicated on Figure 4. On the 1828 map the Dodd property is marked as 81 acres, however, his official Grant, dated May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1833, indicates his original area

had been reduced to 79 acres.<sup>15</sup> The survey particulars of this Grant mention small Lots at the Point end having been issued to Hugh Munro and others.

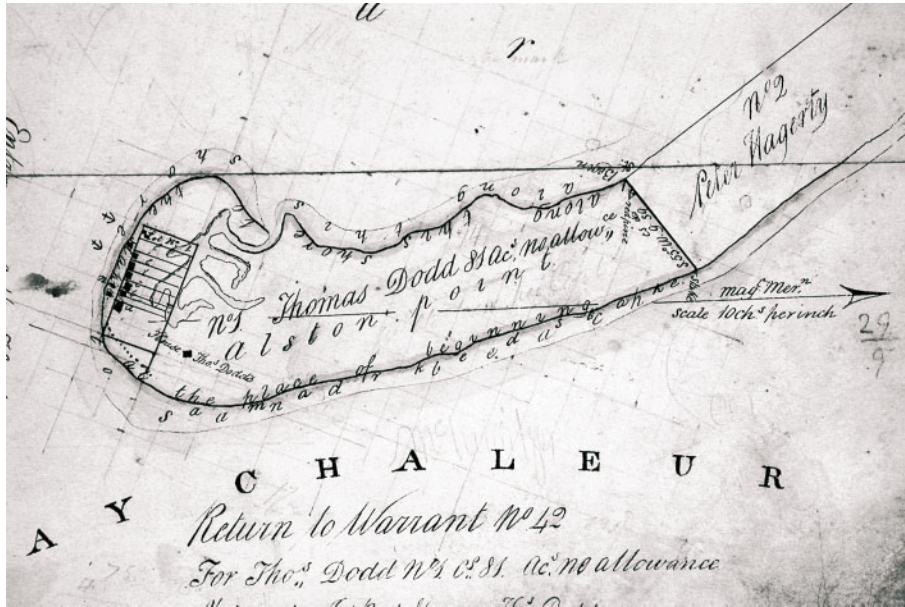


Figure 4. Youghall Grant # 1-Thomas Dodd with house and surveyed lots at tip of Alston Point circa. 1831. Map Courtesy of the New Brunswick Provincial Archives (Ref.RS687 B/4/12 )

An 1831 Survey Plan by M. Scully, reproduced here as Figure 4, illustrates most of the end of the Point sub-divided into eight lots (a-h) and it shows the six buildings mentioned above. A key to the Plan gives the names of the various Lots' occupants and indicates the nature of activities that were being pursued from the Point. The Plan refers to the Lots as: "a. Mr. Munro's salt store b. Mr. Miller's salt store c. William Armstrong's store and dwelling house d. John Fraser's store e. John Busted's store f. Thomas Armstrong's house g. sawpit h. new frame William Armstrong's."<sup>16</sup> The same Survey Plan also, by symbol, indicates the principal anchorage associated with the Point.

John Fraser's store e. John Busted's store f. Thomas Armstrong's house g. sawpit h. new frame William Armstrong's."<sup>16</sup> The same Survey Plan also, by symbol, indicates the principal anchorage associated with the Point.

## Merchants and Militia

An August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1831 Survey Plan by Peters gives a detailed look at the tip of Alston Point. As is apparent from Figure 5, this official survey plan depicts a total of ten lots and associated buildings. While some of the men holding the 19th century Alston Point Lots cultivated adjacent Youghall Grants, others were prominent businessmen from the emerging town of Bathurst. For example, both John Fraser and Thomas Busted also had town properties and would have been interested in the commercial advantage of the Point for both shipping and the fishery. Each was a Commissioned Officer with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Gloucester County Militia. Fraser retired as a Major

in 1845.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Loyalist Hugh Munroe, arriving from Gaspé in 1794, obtained a

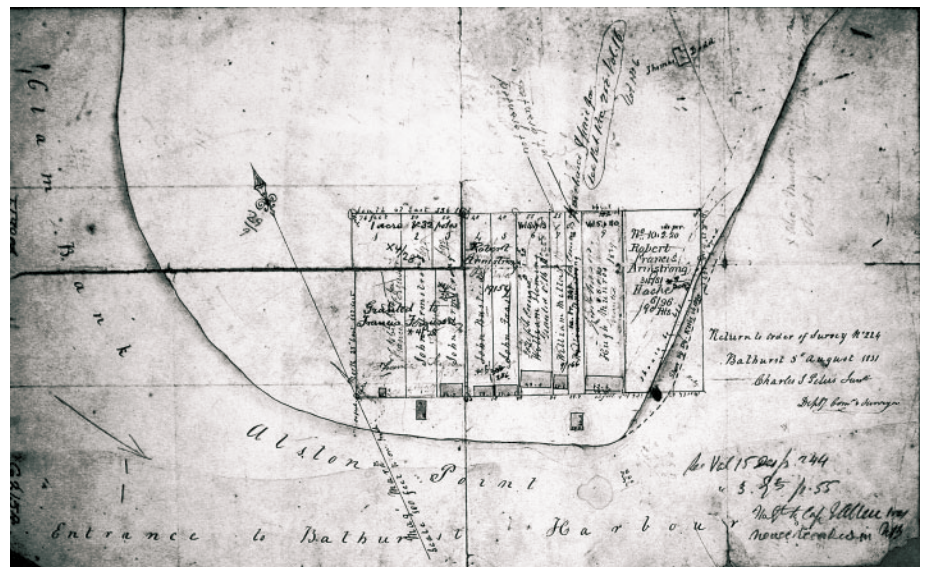


Figure 5. End of Alston Point plan August 1831, by C.J. Peters, showing commercial lots and buildings (Courtesy of the New Brunswick Provincial Archives Ref.# RS687 B/4/54.

<sup>15</sup> New Brunswick Land Petitions Registry, Gloucester County, Land Grant of Thomas Dodd, May 23, 1833. NBPA.

<sup>16</sup> Survey by M. Scully, Return to Warrant No. 42 for Thomas Dodd, Grant 1, 81 Acres, 1831. NBPA.

<sup>17</sup> The New Brunswick Militia-Commissioned Officers List, 1st Battalion Gloucester County Militia, 1787-1867, pp.95-103, UNBA.

substantial farm Grant on the Tetagouche River. Munroe had wide ranging business interests. He no doubt maintained his Alston Point Lot because it was advantageous for shipping and for participation in the fishery. His salt store is evidence supporting his involvement in the latter.

Some of the names on this Plan lead to sources which confirm the importance of the location for its good anchorage and commercial value. On February 19, 1833 the following advertisement was printed in The Chatham Gleaner. "For Sale: New Store and Premises with Boom for timber at Alston Point, well situated, commercial business, as vessels can load in good safe anchorage opposite the shore. - Hill Grove, Bathurst, 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1833, Nicholas W. Busted".<sup>18</sup> That the Point itself was well known regionally is also indicated in an obituary dated June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1832. "Died: At Alstoin Point, Bathurst. Thomas Huston, a native of Muckamore, in the county of Antrim, Ireland."<sup>19</sup> Another set of documents refer to legal affairs concerning the Alston Point lots. Between 1830 and 1835 at least four disputes concerning the ownership or occupancy of Point lots were taken to the Supreme Court in Fredericton. Cases were heard involving William Gray, William Armstrong, William Miller and Joseph Cunard. All of these disputes lend credence to the economic importance of lot ownership.<sup>20</sup>

The Youghall residents who also owned Alston Point Lots were prominent citizens. For example, John Miller was Captain of the Bathurst Rifle Company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Gloucester County Militia until 1837. He was later promoted to Major and then to Colonel before his death in 1842.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Miller was very active in the affairs of the developing town. He sat on various committees and was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1833.<sup>22</sup> It was perhaps John Miller, as Captain of the Rifle Company, who arranged that a canon salute be fired from both sides of the harbour entrance, when a steamer carrying

<sup>18</sup> The Chatham Gleaner, February 19, 1833

<sup>19</sup> The Chatham Gleaner June 24, 1832.

<sup>20</sup> Supreme Court Original Jurisdiction Case Files, 1784-1836. NBPA

<sup>21</sup> The Chatham Gleaner June 24, 1832.

<sup>22</sup> The Chatham Gleaner, February 5, 1833.

Lieutenant Governor John Harvey entered Bathurst Harbour in 1838.<sup>23</sup>

### *Fishery and Shipping*

Youghall Grantees William and Thomas Armstrong were involved in the fishery as evidenced by their salt stores and dwelling houses on the Point. Their properties also included a saw pit, perhaps indicating that that shipbuilding was still carried on here as it had been in Commodore Walker's time. Possibly, Thomas Armstrong's involvement in shipping and the fishery prompted him to advertise his Youghall farm property at the northern end of Alston Point, for sale. The Chatham Gleaner of July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1835 carried the following:

*For Sale - Armstrong's Cove, lot 3, owned and occupied by Thomas Armstrong, 100 acres, 30 cleared, 15 under cultivation, marsh tract dyked from salt water, two dwelling houses (one of them newly erected) 28 x 20, each having a cellar, other outhouses, seaweed and mud for manure in the cove, and a Boom which brings in annual rent. Youghall, Bathurst. 10<sup>th</sup> July 1835. T. Armstrong.*<sup>24</sup>

Although the exact place of construction is not certain, one R. Armstrong built the Schooner *Fury* at Bathurst in 1866.<sup>25</sup> An August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1831 Grant Plan by C. J. Peters, shows that a Robert Armstrong then owned Alston Point Lots 4, 5, and 10 (Figure 5). In 1881 the packet Schooner *Bay State* was owned and sailed by Captain John Armstrong.<sup>26</sup> One John Armstrong had previously owned Alston Point Lots 2 and 3 as indicated on the Peter's Grant Plan.

The 1831 Survey Plan also indicates that Francis Ferguson owned two lots on Alston Point. The Ferguson name is one often associated with Bathurst shipbuilding during the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>27</sup> Two other Lots were assigned to the notable ship builder/lumber baron Joseph Cunard. Cunard launched his first ships from the

<sup>23</sup> The Chatham Gleaner, September 11, 1838.

<sup>24</sup> The Chatham Gleaner, July 21st, 1835.

<sup>25</sup> Louise Manny, *Shipbuilding in Bathurst*, Brunswick Press (Fredericton, New Brunswick 1965), p. 21 .

<sup>26</sup> Manny, *Shipbuilding in Bathurst*, p. 22.

<sup>27</sup> Manny, *Shipbuilding in Bathurst*, pp. 11-13

Bathurst yards in 1839 at which time the “timber trade at Bathurst was flourishing.”<sup>28</sup> In 1835, a total of 49,600 tons of timber had been shipped from the Port of Bathurst.<sup>29</sup> Alston Point definitely played a role in this industry. “There are two or three vessels loading with timber at the entrance of the Bay, and Messrs Cunard have several fine vessels in the stocks.”<sup>30</sup> Further that Cunard made good use of his Alston Point lot is also reflected in the following excerpt from *Shipbuilding in Bathurst* by Louise Manny:

*The Louisa was a full rigged ship of 1033 tons, by far the largest vessel launched up to that time in Bathurst. She was built for the “southern trade”, likely for the Liverpool-South America route, as were so many of the vessels Cunard built in Miramichi. The Louisa was constructed (in 1845) of the very best materials, so the Gleaner said. Captain Carpenter was master on her first voyage, to Liverpool. The ship was lying at the entrance to Bathurst Harbour, ready for sail, and the Captain and four men were going out to her in a boat. The night was stormy and dark. The boat struck a cable and capsized with the tide running at ten miles an hour and they were all carried out into the Bay. When the Captain was sinking, as he thought to rise no more, the boat came drifting up to him, and he got into her and saved the four seamen. The Louisa was apparently a very durable ship, for she was classed 6A1 at Lloyd’s in 1863, and was still on the register in 1871.*<sup>31</sup>

From the above, it would appear that Alston Point continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century to play an impressive role in the overall development of industry, trade and commerce in the Nepisiguit/Bathurst region. One can see from the transfers in lot ownerships that Alston Point was considered valuable commercial property, at

a good location. Its historical importance to the 19<sup>th</sup> century is reflected very convincingly in the large number of archival Maps and Survey Plans that were drawn and which now help to tell its story. Except for the town plot itself, no other 19<sup>th</sup> century Nepisiguit/Bathurst property received such attention.

On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1833 an Act was passed to regulate the salmon fishery in Gloucester County. From that time forth there was to be no fishing on Sundays, the season was restricted to from July 20<sup>th</sup> until August 15<sup>th</sup> only, and no drift nets were allowed.<sup>32</sup> In 1848, even more rules were applied to the Gloucester County salmon fishery.<sup>33</sup> As fish stocks declined and regulations increased the importance of Alston Point as a fishing station diminished.

### **Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Activities at Alston Point**

With the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century came gas, diesel and steam engines. As a result of these new technologies, sailing ships were gradually replaced. The substantial shipbuilding yards at Bathurst and other Maritime centers dwindled in importance. However, shipping of goods continued by water. Dredges widened and deepened harbour channels to the town of Bathurst. Wharves lined the waterfront. Captains now commonly brought their engine-driven vessels directly to their town destinations, rather than anchoring at Alston Point.

Lumbering was the primary industry of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Bathurst and several lumber companies loaded their shipments at town wharves.<sup>34</sup> The importance of Alston Point as a place of commerce, despite its deep channel waters and well-sheltered anchorage, dwindled dramatically. By the turn of the century, only a few families still pursued the fishery from its shores. The Point switched from having a commercial prominence to a place for military training and recreation.

<sup>28</sup> The Chatham Gleaner, October 19, 1839.

<sup>29</sup> The Chatham Gleaner January 26, 1836.

<sup>30</sup> The Chatham Gleaner, August 25, 1840.

<sup>31</sup> Manny, *Shipbuilding in Bathurst*, p.5.

<sup>32</sup> The Chatham Gleaner, May 21, 1833.

<sup>33</sup> The Chatham Gleaner, July 18, 1848.

<sup>34</sup> Bathurst -The Convention Center, 1962, published by the Bathurst Golden Jubilee Association.

## ***The Militia***

One early 20<sup>th</sup> century non-commercial activity that took place at Alston Point involved the Gloucester County Militia. The brothers William and Gordon Allen, now in their mid-eighties, remember, as small boys, the Militia troops marching past their home on the Youghall road. The troops marched to the beat of a drum and that drew the attention of the local people, including the Allen boys. The Militia marched to Alston Point where the officers would have the men set up camp. Then, they used the open spaces of the Point as training grounds. (Wm. Allen pers. comm. 1999).

The Militia's use of Alston Point in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century revived or was a continuation of a traditional practice which started in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, a number of the Point Lot owners were leaders in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Gloucester County Militia. Thomas Busted, John Fraser, and John Miller were all commissioned officers as was Youghall resident Alexander Anderson.<sup>35</sup> As Captain of the 1st Gloucester Rifle Company and a local property owner, it is probable that John Miller used the Point as a rifle range. Furthermore, there is material evidence for this supposition.

The late Mr. Clarence D'Entremont, a Bathurst resident with a keen interest in history, often walked the shores and sand dunes of the Point with a metal detector. One item he frequently uncovered was spent shot. The shot collected by Mr. D'Entremont ranged from small iron balls that could have been fired from cannon, through numerous sizes of lead musket balls, to shot of various calibers for older rifles and modern shotguns. A photograph of a sample of these shot pieces is presented here as Figure 6. Mr. D'Entremont also found several pieces of lead by-product from on-site manufacturing of shot. Additionally, at least one canon ball has been recovered from the inside shore of the Point

(Jean Babin pers. comm. 1996). Future archaeological research at Alston Point could identify a source with which to associate these potentially earlier pieces.

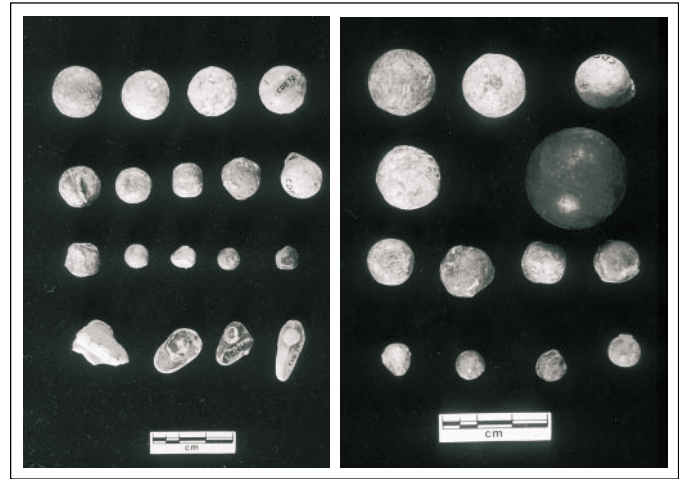


Figure 6: Spent lead shot collected from Alston Point by the late Clarence D'Entremont. Photos by Author.

## ***Bird Hunting***

Some of the spent shot uncovered by Mr. D'Entremont undoubtedly accumulated from 20<sup>th</sup> century hunting of birds, particularly brant, and geese. Brothers Donald and Harold Gammon and William and Gordon Allen remembered the brant hunts that took place at the end of the Point.

*"There were thousands and thousands of brant. It was common practice that hunters would sit in their little boats in the channel between the Points (Alston Point and Carron Point) and fire at the birds when they returned from the open water. They rowed out, anchored and shot the brant with all kinds of guns. The Stever's, the Willis's, Ned Thibodeau, whoever had a boat hunted the brant. You're bound to find all kinds of shot at the end of that Point. After World War II the brant seemed to die out and people started hunting geese" (G. Allen pers. comm. 1999).*

<sup>35</sup>The New Brunswick Militia- Commissioned Officers List, UNBA.

This reminiscence is confirmed by that of Harold Gammon.

*“There were so many brant in Bathurst that when they came in from the outside (Bay) the sky was black with them. For many people they were the primary winter food supply, that and a lot of salt fish. They and the ducks and geese would be hunted in December when they could be frozen and stay frozen in the icehouses. My father hunted a lot of brant and we ate a lot of brant” (H. Gammon pers. comm. 1999).*

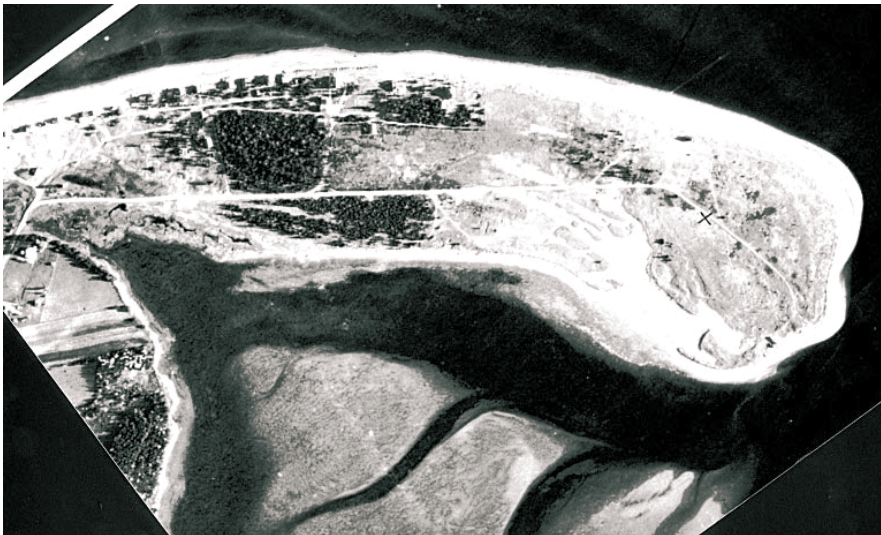
Donald Gammon recalled that his father was once asked to take a Governor General of Canada, who was visiting Angus McLean, the manager of the Bathurst Lumber Company, out in his boat to hunt brant (D. Gammon pers. comm. 1999). Although both Mr. Allen and Mr. Gammon describe hunting from boats only, undoubtedly some birds were shot over land and considerable hunting shot can be found in the soils of Alston Point. Harold Gammon’s account indicates that hunting brant and fishing were important activities for the family’s diet, however, local people did not depend on such subsistence activities only for their livelihoods.

Many had family members working in the lumber business.

### ***Bathurst Lumber Company***

The Bathurst Lumber Company was the most prominent employer in Bathurst during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> Company manager Angus McLean built a large summer home on the outside edge of Alston Point and there he entertained various government dignitaries and high profile business associates (D. Gammon pers. comm. 1999). The Bathurst Lumber Company employed men, horses and machinery in every aspect of the production of lumber for export.

*“Alston Point was taken over by the Company and the Youghall end of it became a storage area for log booms. The Company had buildings down there with horses for hauling the booms up and a cookhouse for the men. Mr. McKinnon looked after the horses and buildings and Mr. Hennesy was the cook...this was when the road got changed. It used to run up shore just inside the beach but it got moved to avoid running past the doorsteps of the new summer homes along the outside edge” (Wm. Allen pers. comm. 1999).*



This new road and portions of the original road can be seen in air photos from 1944 and 1968, Figures 7 and 8 respectively.

Figure 7: Air photo Alston Point (1944).  
Courtesy of New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources.

<sup>36</sup> Bathurst -The Convention Center, 1962, published by the Bathurst Golden Jubilee Association.





Figure 8: Air photo Alston Point (1968). Courtesy of New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources.

The magnitude and excitement of this Picnic was captured beautifully by the Mullins' camera. As well, there are archival photos of the fully loaded Lumber Company barge and tug, of the softball game between the saw and pulp mill teams, of foot races, wheel barrow races, potato sac races, hurdles, canoe races, and pie-eating contests. There are photos of tap dancers and of couples waltzing on a large wooden dance platform. There are also

### ***The Bathurst Lumber Company Picnic***

The most remarkable and memorable use of Alston Point in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is related to the Bathurst Lumber Company. From 1918 through into the 1920s, the Company would host a full day Picnic, complete with entertainment and recreation, for all employees and their families. The Picnic announcement came complete with 17 regulations or rules on how one was to conduct oneself at the event. The day was apparently a paid holiday and it was given as a reward for employee loyalty. During its last years, the Picnic included the employees of the newly constructed Bathurst pulp mill. Competitions between the saw mill and pulp mill employees were incorporated into the Picnic activities.<sup>37</sup> Figures 9 through 12 are photographs by B.C. Mullins taken of the 1919 Picnic. The day began with a Company barge trip to the Point and ended with people waiting to return home after the festivities.

photos of demonstrations of skill and endurance such as balancing bricks, ladies "driving" nails and "toeing the line".



Figure 9a: Bathurst Lumber Company Tug leaving the town wharf with a barge full of employees headed for the Alston Point Picnic. Original photo by B.C. Mullins, Courtesy Mrs. Frank Mersereau and Bathurst Heritage Trust.

<sup>37</sup> Bertrand Brideau, *Entre Profit et Paternalism: La Papeterie de Bathurst et ses Ouvriers de 1907 à 1945*, Thèse, Département d'Histoire, Université de Moncton, 1999.



Figure 9b. Bathurst Lumber Company Barges unloaded at the end of Alston Point. Original photo by B.C.Mullins, Courtesy Mrs. Frank Mersereau and Bathurst Heritage Trust.



Figure 10: Dancing on the platform at the Bathurst Lumber Company Picnic, 1919. Original photos by B.C.Mullins, Courtesy of Mrs. Frank Mersereau and Bathurst Heritage Trust.

In addition to these historical documents and photographs, there are also peoples' remembrances of the picnics. Although Gordon Allen was too young to have attended the Bathurst Lumber Company picnics, he does remember them. His father worked in the Company lumber mill and his older brother, William, recalls walking to one of the last Picnics with his grandfather Albion Allen. Beatrice Allen, William's wife, recalled "in those days in Bathurst it (the Picnic) was the only entertainment of the year, the only event, and everybody was going to go" (B.Allen pers. comm. 1999).

Donald Gammon remembers the Company Picnic from the viewpoint of a four or five year old boy. He recalls there were changing tents set up for swimming and that there was a great deal of activity and excitement for children (D. Gammon pers. comm. 1999).

The late Robert Armstrong, who tended his father's salmon weirs at the Point during the time of the Picnics, remembered the Company barges unloading the masses of people. Although he did not participate in the festivities, he well remembered the "all day party" that was the *Picnic*. In later years Mr. Armstrong became an employee of the Bathurst Pulp and Paper Company but by that time the *Picnic* was a thing of the past (R. Armstrong pers. comm. 1999).



Figure 11: Pulp Mill versus Saw Mill softball game at the Bathurst Lumber Company Picnic 1919. Archival photos by B.C. Mullins, Courtesy of Mrs. Frank Mersereau and the Bathurst Heritage Trust.



Figure 12: Bathurst Lumber Company employees gather at day's end on Youghall Beach. Original photo by B.C. Mullins, Courtesy Mrs. Frank Mersereau and the Bathurst Heritage Trust.

### **Band Concerts**

The Lumber Company Picnic set the pattern for continued 20<sup>th</sup> century use of Alston Point as a recreation area. The Picnic was superseded by another form of public entertainment, band concerts. Throughout the summers of the 1930s, Sunday concerts were performed at Alston Point by the town band. The bandstand or pavilion stood on the outside of the Point near the spot where the Park Concession building and volleyball pit are located currently. The bandstand was an open sided structure with a raised wooden floor and a peaked roof covering. The wooden dance/band floor was approximately 40 feet by 25 feet. While not used frequently after World War II, the building did not collapse until the mid 1960s (H. Gammon pers. comm. 1999). Figure 13 captures the band stand only a short time before it was dismantled.



Figure 13. Alston Point Band Stand as it was in 1962. Photo Courtesy of Donald Gammon.

As a high school student in the 1930s, Harold Gammon played the trumpet, the trombone and other instruments in the town band. He remembers well the concerts given on Alston Point. The bandleader at that time was Bob Doucet. Harold recalls carrying the larger musical instruments down to the “Points” in his father’s boat. When asked how it was advertised that the band was going to play on a certain Sunday, Harold Gammon’s response was quick and to the point. “You didn’t have to advertise! If you went down to the Points on a sunny Sunday afternoon, the whole town was down there anyway!” (H. Gammon pers. comm. 1999). Mr. Gammon remembered also that not many people traveled by car because there was really no place to park.

*“Most people, if they didn’t have a boat, paid \$.10 for a ride on one of the boats that offered Sunday shuttle service between the town wharves and the beach. Charlie Stever, Jack Stever and other fellows would offer the shuttle. People caught the boats at any one of a number of town wharves. People came to the “Points” to picnic and swim, to listen to the Band, to enjoy “clam boils” and to have a nice day (H. Gammon pers. comm. 1999).*

Thus, the information gathered from older inhabitants of the area has shown that Alston Point, throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, lost its pre-eminence as the business center and became instead an important spot for social activities. A post card postmarked 1935 claimed that Youghall was *Canada’s Perfect Beach*. (Figure 14). Harold Gammon fondly remembers the activities on the Point as “childhood memories of what sophistication should be” (H. Gammon pers. comm. 2003). In the memories of several, the social events at Alston Point united the entire town. For some members of the community however, the Point remained a focus of economic activities especially for those relying on the region’s excellent fishing resources.



Figure 14: *Canada’s Perfect Beach at Youghall 1935*. Post card Courtesy of Gordon Allen.

### **Fishing**

In August of 1999, then ninety-six-year old Robert Armstrong still lived on the original Thomas Armstrong Youghall Grant. He remembered, as a young boy, tending to his grandfather’s and his father’s salmon weirs. The family stands were located along the outside edge of Alston Point and at Peters River. He recalled that the family shipped their fish to markets in Boston and New York in their own, family built boats (R. Armstrong pers. comm. 1999). A 1944 air photo illustrates that one of the fishing stands was still in operation at that time (Figure 7). Harold Gammon remembered, as a boy, seeing salmon stands on both sides of the harbour entrance (H. Gammon pers. comm. 1999) and William Allen remembered that his grandfather Ellis of Youghall caught sea bass in nets off the end of the Point. He also remembered a run of sea trout that could be counted on to arrive at the harbour entrance each year on or about the 24<sup>th</sup> of May (Wm. Allen pers. comm. 1999). Retired fisherman Gordon Allen recalled the sights and sounds of fishing schooners and their crews when they anchored off his Youghall boyhood home during the 1920s.

*The schooner crews came to dig clams from the great bar on the northeast side of the harbour channel. There could be as many as five or six two-masted schooners from away, Caraquet, Shippegan or*

*thereabouts, along the banks at one time. They would stay overnight and wait for the low tide. They would dig the clams, shell them and salt them to use as cod bait. On warm summer nights you could see their lanterns as they lay at anchor along the bank, their crews singing, playing fiddles. (G. Allen pers. comm. 1999).*



Figure 15: Fishing Boats anchored off Alston Point 1969. Photo courtesy of Gordon Allen.

The harbour clams continued to be harvested until well into the 1960s and people without boats often drove to the Point to walk to the bars at low tide to dig clams. Clams were dug for eating as well as for cod bait. Harold Gammon recalled, "that there were millions of clams on those bars. You only had to dig one scoop down and then you dug in from the side because they were as thick as thick as could be, great bait!" (H. Gammon pers. comm. 1999). Sometime during the 1950s, a case of typhoid was attributed to the eating of the harbour clams. After this scare, some people stopped eating clams altogether while others continued, apparently without any bad consequences (G. Allen and H. Gammon pers. comm. 1999).

Gordon Allen remembered, in the 1920s, seeing posts or pickets on the end of the Point where the road currently ends. He thought these had supported fishing sheds. He also recalled from his youth that one William McLean used a shed at the Point for storing lobster traps. One fishing family, the Stevers, lived in a small house on the end of the Point for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Mr. Allen himself often used the Point anchorage for his commercial fishing boat and later, for his tourist charter boat (Figure 15) (G. Allen pers. comm. 1999). Other fishing boats as well as pleasure craft continued to use the *reserved for public landing* anchorage until the dredging for, and the construction of the current Bathurst Marina during the 1980s.

## Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Activities at Alston Point

Presently, the Marina offers a well protected and convenient docking for impressive recreational watercraft. From both the oral histories and documented research, it is evident that Alston Point, until quite recently, was a traditional anchorage for those pursuing commercial and subsistence fishing. The Marina approach channel, for safety reasons, cannot allow outside anchorage and hence the option for fishing craft to anchor has been removed. With the extreme decline of fish stocks in recent years and the changes necessitated by the Marina traffic, the use of Alston Point for public anchorage takes its place in history. Still, as in times past, recreational fishermen without boats continue to cast their lines into the channel waters from the Point shores.

### *The Park*

Just as fishing continues, so too do recreational uses of the land. The pattern of using Alston Point for recreational activities established by the Company picnics and community concerts continued throughout the 1940s, '50s and '60s. In 1969, the Province of New Brunswick created Youghall Provincial Park on the southeastern half of the Point (Figure 16). Thus, the area was officially designated for recreational purposes.

The bandstand and other buildings were gone but a half dozen new bathing/change houses and several outhouses were constructed. Some of these structures can be seen in the 1969 air photo (Figure 8). A large parking area was established in the level field that had accommodated the Lumber Company Picnic ball games. Fortunately, according to a late 1960s air photo, the limited Provincial upgrades for public use do not appear to have had much impact on the 18th and 19th century heritage areas located at the terminus of the Point itself. That this was still the case in 1996 can be seen in Figure 17.

In 1995 Youghall Park came under the care and management of the City of Bathurst. The property since has been highly upgraded for multiple recreational uses of the beach and grounds to encourage local use and tourism. Power and plumbing now run to the modern washrooms and a concession stand. Sunken volleyball courts, access routes, snow fencing, parking lots, children's play area, picnic shelters, boardwalks and new information buildings and business centers have been installed. Lifeguard services are provided. Local people and tourists appreciate the raised boardwalk, shown in Figure 18, and shoreline mackerel fishing attracts numerous recreational fishermen. Youghall Park is a pleasurable place to visit for an early morning walk or for an afternoon at the beach (Figures 18, 19).

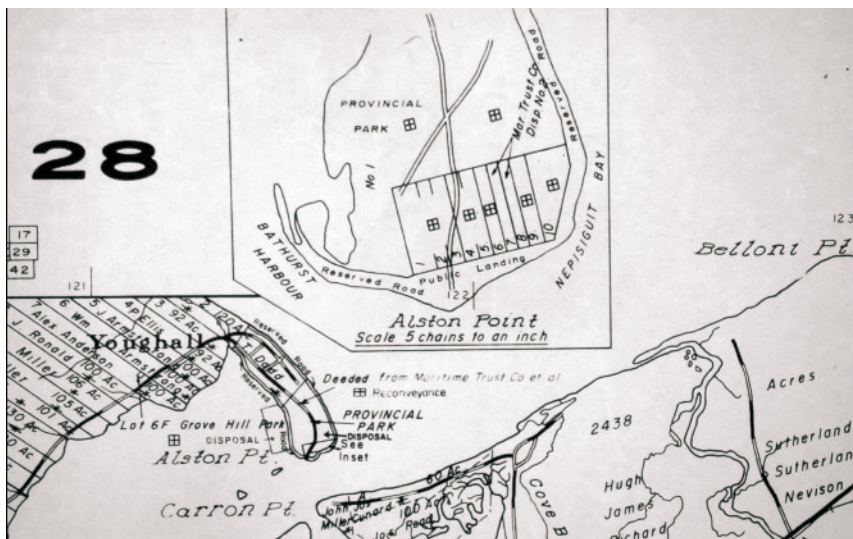


Figure 16: Map showing the area of Alston Point designated a Park in 1969. Courtesy of the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources.



Figure 17: Undeveloped tip of Alston Point, Youghall Beach Park, 1996. Photo by Author.



Figure 18: Boardwalk and Concession Building Youghall Beach Park, 1996. Photo by Author.



Figure 19: Wide sand beach at Youghall Beach Park, Bay of Chaleur side of Alston Point. Photo by Author.

### ***Physical Changes***

Just as the activities at the Point have changed over time, so too have its physical characteristics. During the archaeological 1996 testing of the area where Clarence D'Entremont had found several 17<sup>th</sup> C artifacts, the author noted that severe erosion had taken place on the outside edge of the beach over the last thirty years. In this area much of the erosion can be attributed to the beachfront rock and timber groynes that extend northward from the present Park boundaries. Between 1944 and 1968, cottage/summer homeowners installed these structures in an effort to protect their waterfront properties from erosion. The rugged groynes ran

perpendicular to both the shoreline and the natural tidal flow. As a result the structures inadvertently increased erosion along the southern outside edge of the Point. The severity of this erosion is indicated in the Air photos from the 1940s (Figure 7) and 1990s (Figure 20).

The clearest reflection of the erosion damage can be noted in the beach frontage just south of the Park boundary. While it is difficult to accurately gauge the amount of shoreline cut away within the last 50 years, the physical change reflected in the air photos is very significant (Figure 20). Rock barriers, placed into the water at the Point end to prevent ATV beach access, have begun to have an effect on the configuration of the Point tip itself. Erosion is now also a problem on the southwestern Marina side of the Point.



Figure 20: Air photo showing Bathurst Marina, tip of Alston Point, and groynes along outside beach, 1995. Courtesy of New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources.

Like the construction of the goynes, the installation of the Bathurst Marina has had a substantial impact on the land and waters surrounding the inside of Alston Point. As evidenced by a comparison of the 1944 and 1997 air photos, the Marina breakwater and associated dredged channels have altered the natural harbour channels. In the former deep water anchorage area just inside the southern tip of Alston Point and within the harbour basin at Armstrong's Cove, the water depth and flow have been substantially reduced.

Dredged materials from the Marina channel and docking area were used to create a graded mound along the southwestern edge of the Park property and to fill and level other lots north of the Marina. A portion of a known Native heritage archaeological site lies within this capped land to the north. Given the extensive history of the Point there is a strong possibility that other heritage resources, especially those relating to the late 18th and early 19th century mercantile and shipbuilding sites, could lie beneath the graded mound.



## The Heritage Value and Heritage Potential of Alston Point

Alston Point, at the entrance to Bathurst Harbour, was once the 18th century home, trading post, shipyard and fishing station of Commodore George Walker. His fishing/trading establishment at Alston Point was defended with small arms and canon before being abandoned during the American Revolution.<sup>38</sup>

As this paper has shown, there is both very good documentary and oral history evidence about the changing uses of Alston Point during recent time. During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Point played host to a number of valuable mercantile and fishing establishments owned and operated by prominent citizens of the emerging town of Bathurst. Alston Point offered a safe haven and anchorage for large and small sailing vessels. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it continued to provide anchorage for modern recreational boats and commercial fishing craft.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Alston Point functioned as a Militia training ground, as a migratory bird hunting station, and as a popular recreational fishing location. As a recreation area, Alston Point has hosted historic community picnics and band concerts as well as modern volleyball tournaments and other special events such as Canada Day celebrations. Now, on warm summer days, beach enthusiasts and tourists enjoy the wide sandy shores and warm Chaleur waters just as their counterparts did over one hundred years ago.

The historic documents and maps compiled for this report and for an earlier document concerning Commodore George Walker suggest that most of the significant 18th and 19th century Alston Point heritage sites are concentrated across the southern end of the Point. Some evidence has been destroyed by recent developments and other sites, such as the D'Entremont site, have been lost through erosion. However, a 1996 surface survey of the Park

property located both historic period and pre-European Native sites in other areas. In one heavy traffic area that has not been altered by machinery, pre-contact Native camp materials have been found in-situ.

Although modern developments and erosion have resulted in many physical changes within the Youghall Beach Park, the southeastern end of the Point appears to have escaped most modern intrusions, at least to some extent. With the exception of one long trench, the boardwalk, the approach road, and the expanded turnaround area, the southeasterly end of the Point offers a considerable area that has not been altered recently. Here it should be possible to find evidence of the activities of the makers of Bathurst history. This is the area of Commodore Walker's trading post and summer home. This is also where early 19th century dwellings, mercantile establishments, and fishery buildings were located.

In summary, over the past thirty years Youghall Park has been made modern and user friendly. It is a wonderful Park for a 21<sup>st</sup> century population. And, while a significant amount of heritage has been inadvertently lost in recent years, much likely yet remains. There is a strong possibility that archaeological sites of some of the more intriguing aspects of Bathurst history still lie buried intact beneath the low dunes near the end of the Point. This paper and the earlier Walker document provide the historical background upon which future archaeological studies can be based.

In view of the historical importance and archaeological potential of Alston Point, the Province of New Brunswick and the City of Bathurst agreed, in January of 2001, to have the Youghall Park section of Alston Point declared a Protected Historic Site under the New Brunswick Historic Sites Protection Act. In the future both parties will work together to preserve, protect and interpret the site's impressive history.

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