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Excerpt from Ten Years at Pemaquid by J. Henry Cartland

J Henry Cartland

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TEN YEARS
AT
PEMAQUID

SKETCHES OF ITS HISTORY
AND
ITS RUINS

BY J. HENRY CARTLAND

The restless sea resounds along the shore,
The light land breeze flows outward with a sigh,
And each to each seems chanting evermore
A mournful memory of the days gone by:
All underneath these tufted mounds of grass
Lies many a relic, many a storied stone,
And pale ghosts rise as lingering footsteps pass
The ruined fort with tangled vines o'ergrown.

—Mrs. M. W. Hackelton

PEMAQUID BEACH, MAINE
1899

many favorable accounts of Smith written by his contemporaries; will simply quote one by Thomas Carlton.

"I never knew a warrior yet, but thee,
From wine, tobacco, dice, debts and oaths so free."

Among the early charts of five different nations: the English, French, Spanish, Portugese and Dutch, who were in early times struggling for a foothold upon this continent, I find upon examination, that of Capt. John Smith is far superior to that of any other. Smith's description of this part of the country, and the publication of his map of the coast, was an important event in our history.

CHAPTER VII.

Early traffic at Pemaquid — Record of one hundred and nine ships between 1607 and 1622 — Intercourse between Pemaquid and Virginia — Pemaquid the place where civilization began in New England, according to Thornton — Capt. John Smith's testimony in 1614 — Fort and relics at New Harbor — Thirty ships sailing and trading at Pemaquid in 1622 — Alewives and other fish for bait obtained by vessels from Portland, Gloucester and Boston, at Pemaquid — The Plymouth colony supplied with food from there in 1622 — Governor Bradford sends Winslow there for food — Fishing vessel from Plymouth wrecked here — Lack of interest in our history by the people of our state — A monument should be erected at Old Pemaquid — Blockhouse at Edgecomb — The sacred cod-fish.

CONSIDERABLE business was transacted along this coast with the fisheries and fur trade, which centered chiefly at Monhegan and Pemaquid, as we have evidence by the records of the number of ships sailing here annually from Europe. It has been determined that between the years 1607 and 1622, no less than "109 ships entered and cleared from the harbors of Pemaquid and its dependencies, where they did more or less business in the discharge and receipt of cargoes and commerce with Europe." The English ships employed in transporting emigrants to Virginia with their necessary supplies, found it for their interest, on their return, to call on this coast and obtain such return cargoes of fish and furs, as the constantly increasing business of the country was able to afford.

"While the Pilgrims were struggling for life at Plymouth, and Conant was founding Cape Ann," says Thornton, "Pemaquid was probably the busiest place on

the coast." J. Wingate Thornton of Massachusetts, was a reliable historian, and another quotation of his is worthy to be mentioned, which reads as follows: "*To Pemaquid we must look for the initiation of civilization into New England.*"

Smith says, that the ship of Sir Francis Popham had been accustomed to trade at the port of New Harbor several years previously. The definite lines of an old fort with foundation walls 51 x 52 feet square, and 5 feet thick, still remain. Many cellars can still be traced about New Haven. Choice relics have been found in that vicinity: the fragments of ancient mill-stones, unglazed earthen pottery, remains of kettles, large spoons, lead, bullets in large quantities, a leaden relic of trade, such as was used by the English people in olden times to tag cloth with, with the date of 1610 upon it.

In 1622 there were thirty ships trading and fishing about Pemaquid; this, no doubt included Boothbay Harbor, Damariscove, Monhegan, New Harbor and Pemaquid as known to-day. One gentleman has suggested that Pemaquid was not entitled to the credit of this number of ships, and suggested that they must have belonged to Damariscove, but he could not have been familiar with that place, for as one fisherman aptly remarked: "there is not room to moor thirty dories in that harbor, let alone thirty ships," all of which must have been large enough to cross the ocean. The harbor of Monhegan is not more suitable for that number of ships, neither is New Harbor. I find a statement sworn to by Abraham Shurte, stating that "*Damariscove with all the islands adjacent belonged to Pemaquid.*"

Another reason why this which is known as Pemaquid Beach must have been the principal resort for fishing and trading is on account of its excellent harbors and being

by far the best locality for the fishermen to obtain bait which they found in great abundance at the Falls of the Pemaquid River which have ever since supplied bait for the fishermen and excellent food for the people of this locality, known as "smoked alewives." To this day many of the best fishermen which sail from Boston, Gloucester and Portland visit this place to obtain fresh bait; the alewives of the Pemaquid River are especially sought for during their season, being considered the best bait that can be obtained to catch halibut.

From the following copied account and other writings of early times, some have been led to think that Damariscove and Monhegan were superior to Pemaquid, but the testimony of Shurte teaches us differently. It was natural that the early mariners should write of these islands as they did, they being the most conspicuous to them when they approached or passed this locality in their ships. No one familiar with this whole region can for a moment doubt that this was the metropolis of this locality, as stated in history. Even to-day, after centuries have elapsed, during which man and nature have combined to lay waste and obliterate its remains of former civilization, there is more left beneath the waters of its harbors, along the banks of its noted river, its waterfalls and its tributary lakes for twenty miles back into the country, and in much of the territory then known as the "kingdom of Pemaquid;" more relics of early civilization yet remain here than can be found at Plymouth and Jamestown, Virginia, combined. The Pemaquid River was once noted for its wild game; its waters were the highway of the natives leading back to the territory, where they trapped and shot wild game and procured the fine furs which foreign ships came here to purchase.

"Among the scattered specks of struggling civilization, dotting the skirts of the green primeval forests," said Adams, "the little colony of Plymouth was not the least." This little colony had been established only about eighteen months. It had struggled through its second winter, and now, sadly reduced in number, with supplies wholly exhausted, the Pilgrims were sorely distressed. They were entirely destitute of bread. There was an emergency of starvation at Plymouth. The whole settlement was alive with excitement, when suddenly a boat was seen to cross the mouth of Plymouth Bay and disappeared behind the next headland. A shot was fired as a signal, in answer to which the boat changed course and headed for the harbor. It proved to be the shallop of the Sparrow, Weston's ship from the Pemaquid dependency of Damariscove, with seven men and a letter from Capt. Hudson, which informed the Pilgrims of the Eastern port, a place of bread and resources of trade. The Waif had sailed forty leagues from places in the eastern parts, known as Monhegan and "Damerill's Isles" (Damariscove) where were many ships. The little boat landed under a salute of three volleys of musketry from the Pilgrims on learning the good news from these "Eastern parts," and its neighborhood.

With the return of the Sparrow's boat, Gov. Bradford sent Winslow, with the Pilgrims' shallop and means to purchase food supplies, and piloted back the Pilgrims who first learned the way and the resources of Maine by this waif of her seacoast, where fleets from Bristol and London now crowded the fishing and fur stations of Pemaquid. Thus informed, the hungry Pilgrims eagerly sought for supplies there to be had, and from the ships a "good quantity of provisions were obtained without money and without price, ample to give each Pilgrim a quarter of a pound of

bread day by day, till next harvest." "On returning and reporting, the Pilgrims at once prepared to share the profits of the business enterprises at and about Pemaquid, and a fishing vessel was procured, fitted out at Plymouth, and sent into the fisheries there." She reached Boothbay Harbor and sought the anchorage, where ships from England used to ride. In 1624, many English ships were there. A terrible storm came on which drove the Plymouth ship ashore, a wreck, when she sunk, the captain and one man being lost. By help there obtained, the wrecked vessel was raised and floated by casks attached to the heel at low water, taken ashore and repaired, refitted and put again into Pilgrim service.

I have found that some people who have visited this place though apparently well posted in history, are not willing to admit the former importance of Old Pemaquid. That may be excusable from visitors from Massachusetts who have forgotten, or never knew that during much of the period of its most striking event, this place was as much in Massachusetts as ancient Plymouth. But the apathy of some of the people of our state is surprising and I sometimes think that a majority of our best informed citizens have emigrated to other states.

I blame no one for lauding Plymouth and its noble Pilgrim settlers. None too many monuments have been erected, none too many relics preserved, none too much history recorded, all are good and excellent educators and it is right that our citizens should know as much at least about our own country, as of Africa or Australia. It is plainly shown by the above records that the early settlers of these two colonies must have become mutual friends; like two people from the same town meeting in foreign ports or cities, they at once became interested in each other's welfare.

Now, what I have to complain of is, that we have no monument here, and only an apology for a museum; that many of our relics and much of our history have been scattered far and wide, to our disgrace. It is said, not a monument or tablet has been erected to teach our children, our citizens or our visitors the place where "Civilization began in New England." Where the Pilgrims were presented with the "staff of life" that saved them to our country, where lived and died the noble Indian Sam-ar-set who first *welcomed* them to these New England shores and who saved them "from destruction both by their enemies and from starvation" as they themselves record.

Instead of building up monumental records for education, we have allowed the destruction of many of the choicest ones we had by vandalism and neglect, as the beautiful and elegant mansion, the home of Gen. Henry Knox, once Gen. Washington's trusted friend, Fort Frederick, Fort Farley and many other noted landmarks of the past. Only one of the many forts once scattered along our coast, is left, Fort Edgecomb, a blockhouse near Wiscasset, and in respect to that, the timely interest of a local editor, Mr. Wood, set on foot repairs to which summer visitors contributed, by which it was saved from disgrace and destruction.

Some have spoken with contempt of this place, judging from its present appearance that it could only have been a little "*fishing station*" in the past. But its fish even, are not to be sneered at, for they have ever been noted since Weymouth's voyage in 1605. For many generations in the State House at Boston has hung an effigy of the sacred cod-fish, and when it was transferred from the Old Capital to its new quarters a few years ago that august body of legislators on Beacon Hill suspended all other

business, while a party of their colleagues bore that sacred emblem of an occupation that helped to build up their city, in state upon a tablet draped with the stars and stripes, carried upon their shoulders and deposited, where it is still to remain in sight of their lawmakers, a reminder of the foundation industries of their commonwealth. Fish and beans, the products of the sea and land, should never be sneered at by those who love the great "Hub of the Universe."