



The River and the Old Ships — 1925

This Photo Presented with the Best Wishes of
Nicholson & Nicholson, St. Stephen, N.B.

Historical Background of the St. Croix Valley and the Founding of St. Stephen and Milltown

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Photographs Courtesy of Cecil Miller

The history of the settlement of our St. Croix region by white men begins with the French.

In the summer of the year 1604 a party of French settlers intent on founding a colony in the new world landed on an island at the head of a bay which the Indians called Passamaquoddy. There they erected a considerable set of buildings, put the island in a state of defense, planted gardens on the main land, and are said to have set up a water mill at the mouth of a small stream on what is now the American shore.

Lead and financed by a staunch and resourceful man, the Sieur de Monts, with the famous explorer, Samuel de Champlain, as chief pilot and cartographer, they set about to establish a settlement and open a fur trade. Champlain

explored the bay and the river called the Scoodic by the Indians. He also made a detailed map of the island. He called the island St. Croix, and gave the same name to the river.

The outlook seemed good for the little colony, but winter came with its cold and snow; food froze, then thawed and rotted, and by spring, of the seventy-nine people who made up the company, thirty-five had died of scurvy. We know our winters; they didn't.

So the colony was abandoned, and de Monts sailed for what is now Annapolis Royal on the Nova Scotia shore where he tried again with greater success. For the next hundred and fifty years the Maritime Provinces, the Acadian land were under French rule.

The history of the French period



St. Stephen, N.B., circa 1898

in North America is a story of adventure, hardship, discovery and achievement. Through small settlements, forts, trading posts and trade routes, France extended her sway over a territory from the Atlantic Ocean to Quebec and Montreal, through the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi to New Orleans.

In the meantime, the English colonies along the Atlantic seaboard from New England to Florida had become solidly established and prosperous. Each colony held a Royal Charter. Each had her own legislature modeled after the English Parliament, enacted her own local laws and administered them. England, aside from appointing Royal Governors, interfered little in their local affairs. Collectively they contained three million people, and their loyalty to the crown was beyond question.

Their future looked bright except for one thing, the constant

menace of the French along their northern and western borders. This situation resulted in a number of local wars, raids and reprisals in which the horrors of Indian warfare were freely employed.

The Seven Years War spread to this continent almost at once. France lost one strong point after another, until the capture of Quebec by Gen. Wolfe in 1759, the fighting ceased. During this time, for security reasons, the Acadians were transported to Louisiana, the theme of Longfellow's "Evangeline". France ceded all her territory in North America to Britain.

The Canadian French were treated fairly by the British. A few returned to France, but the vast majority, about 60,000, remained in Canada where they enjoyed freedom of language, religion, culture, civil law and education. After the war many Acadians returned to their homes. New Brunswick has since had two Premiers of Acadian descent, and the present

