

The History of Newcastle

Three Hundred Years Ago Trading Posts were Established Along That Coast and there Has Been Something Doing Ever Since

Newcastle, the rapidly growing shiretown of Northumberland county, superbly situated at the head of deep water navigation on the noble Miramichi river and at an important divisional point of the Canadian Government railways, has now about 3,500 people, a very substantial increase on the figures of the last census. In the thriving suburbs of Nelson, Douglastown, Lower Derby and Millerton, there are nearly as many more.

The history of the town and district goes back nearly three hundred years. Though the French inhabitants are now very few, and these have moved in very recently, the first settlers were of that nationality and for years no European language but that of La Belle France was heard on these waters. In 1632, Isaac de Razilly, governor of Acadia, assigned the islands of Cape Breton and St. Jean (Prince Edward) and all the coast from Canso to Gaspe to Nicholas Denys.

Soon afterwards Denys opened up trade with the Indians of the Miramichi, establishing posts on different parts of the river. Denys was, in 1645, dispossessed by D'Aulnay, who had just taken Fort La Tour, at St. John, but Denys regained his dominions on the death of D'Aulnay in 1650. Settlement increased, until by the end of the seventeenth century Miramichi river and bay were dotted with little hamlets.

By the year 1725, a strong fort, with a church, stores and over two hundred houses, was established on Beaubair's Island between the northwest and southwest branches of the Miramichi. Another battery of sixteen guns guarded the lower end of Newcastle, the cove where it stood being still called French Fort Cove.

The French settlers, who were always on good terms with the Indians, remained in possession till 1758. In that year the British conquest, sweeping up the coast from Louisbourg, swept away the settlements on the Strait of Northumberland. In 1759, it is said, a British vessel bearing the body of General Wolfe, was driven by stress of weather over thirty miles up the Miramichi. A party sent to land at Henderson's Cove, opposite Chatham, to get a supply of water was set upon by the Micmacs and massacred. In revenge the British destroyed all the settlements along the river, whether of Indians or of French. The name of "Burnt Church" perpetuates the memory of this unfortunate occurrence. The settlers who escaped, all fled from the district, and according to Cooney's history of northern New Brunswick, in the year 1764 there was not a single white person left in the whole of what is now Northumberland county, and not a house standing. The abandoned buildings of the French had been destroyed by the Indians.

In the summer of 1764 a new immigration took place. A Mr. William Davidson of Scotland settled in what is now the town of Newcastle, having obtained from the British government a grant of 100,000 acres in the Newcastle district and up both sides of the southwest branch, the grant being known as the Elm Tree Tract. He was accompanied by settlers from northern Scotland, more of whom came out each year. Settlers also came up from the peninsula of Nova Scotia, and a large trade sprang up in fish and furs.

In 1786 the erection of two saw mills laid the foundation of the great lumber industry of the Miramichi. Thenceforth lumber was regularly shipped to Britain, and population grew rapidly. In that year the town of Newcastle was laid off and several public buildings erected. In the same year Northumberland county sent two members to the newly constituted legislature of New Brunswick, and some

measure of municipal government was established. The first Circuit Court was held here in 1797.

From the small schooner "Monneguash," built in St. John by Jonathan Leavitt before 1770, and the large schooner "Miramichi," built by William Davidson here in 1773; dates the shipbuilding industry of New Brunswick. The long war with France (1793-1814) partially — at times wholly — cut off Baltic timber from British ports. This, with the unfriendly attitude of the United States of America, made Britain dependent upon Canada for much of her lumber and greatly increased both the export of lumber and the building of ships here. Soon the exports from this river were nearly \$1,000,000 with the imports slightly greater.

At the time of the great Miramichi fire, 1825, Newcastle had about two hundred and sixty buildings and some thousand people. The fire left but twelve houses standing, and many people lost their lives. But so swiftly did the energetic people overcome their calamity that by 1832 there were some one hundred and seventy houses in the town, twelve mercantile establishments, two schools, two churches, County Court and record office, etc., etc., with eight hundred people. Gradual growth followed, until in 1877 the Intercolonial railway passed through the town.

In 1899, when the population had grown to nearly 2,500, the town was incorporated. Self-government brought many improvements, among them an up-to-date water and light plant and a partial system of sewerage, at a cost of nearly \$100,000. The fire protection is of the best.

The total assessable property of the town is given at very nearly a million, of which the real value is probably between \$1,500,000 and \$2,000,000. Several properties, among them the Radio Syndicate's wireless plant, worth about a quarter of a million, are largely exempt from taxation, as are all church buildings, etc.

Newcastle is the distributing centre for the county, both by water and rail. Before the war, several vessels could be seen every day loading lumber at the mills in the town and in the enterprising suburbs of Nelson (joined with the town by the Morrissy Bridge) and Douglastown, and of late years a thriving trade in the shipment of lumber by rail to western Canada has sprung up. A large amount of fish and furniture is also shipped, while from Millerton goes tanning extract, and pulp from Lower Derby and Millbank. Newcastle is also the centre of an important agricultural district, and with its enterprising Board of Trade, Agricultural Society, Town Council, Women's Institute, Town Improvement League and other societies the business of the town is steadily increasing, the value of property steadily rising, new and up-to-date dwellings replacing old structures, granite sidewalks taking the place of plank walks, and many changes for the better being continually made.

Newcastle is an important railway centre. While the main I. R. C. runs through the town, branches run from here to Fredericton and from here to Loggieville. Two fast express trains daily between Newcastle and Fredericton, with close connections for each with Loggieville and Chatham, and three express trains each way daily on the main line give this town an ideal train service. Railway facilities here have recently been much extended, and greater development is promised by the railway authorities. There is first class steamship connections with all points down the river and up the northwest branch as far as Redbank, the latter fourteen miles distant. Adjoining Hickson's mill is the deep water terminus of the I. R. C., now largely undeveloped, but capable of being made into a first class shipping centre. Along our wharves the water is from twenty-two to forty feet deep, and by dredging at the mouth of the river, where the channel is about twenty-five feet, the largest vessels could come up the river. As it is, quite large ships come up and load and pass out safely.

Every available house in town is occupied, and a large number of new dwellings are in process of building.

As the town contains about five square miles, there is lots of land available for house sites. Streets have been already run through some of these lands. There is water and sewerage on part of them and further extensions are projected.

Newcastle's days of struggle for existence are over and she has entered upon a period of development that shows every sign of being permanent.

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 DON'T place gas or other light where a blown curtain can reach it.
 DON'T go to bed and leave a kerosene lamp burning.
 DON'T use a light when looking for escaping gas in the cellar.
 DON'T leave matches about, except in metal or earthen boxes.
 DON'T use snap matches.
 DON'T keep matches where rats or mice can get at them.
 DON'T place ashes in wooden receptacles.
 DON'T neglect to watch gas and oil stoves when in use.
 DON'T leave a room where fat is boiling.
 DON'T use an open grate without a screen.
 DON'T use kerosene to kindle fires.
 DON'T allow flues to become defective.
 DON'T leave oily rags — animal, or vegetable — about.
 DON'T use a receptacle filled with sawdust for a cuspidor.
 DON'T neglect to ascertain immediately the cause of unusual smoke or smell of smoke.
 DON'T forget the location of the nearest fire alarm box.
 DON'T delay sending in an alarm when you discover a fire.
 DON'T hesitate to send in an alarm or telephone to a fire station if you cannot find the cause of unusual smoke.
 DON'T invite fires by neglecting to guard against and to be prepared for them.
 DON'T be without means for extinguishing small fires at any time.

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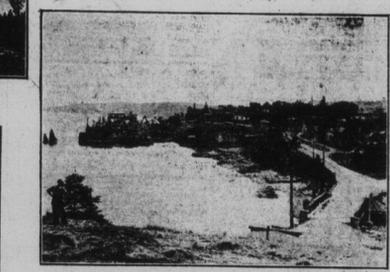
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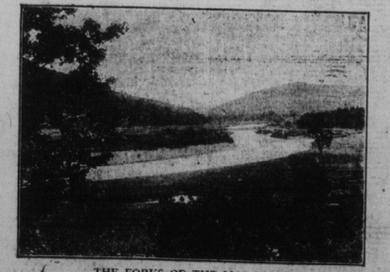


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