

APPENDIX G.

THE ISLAND OF ANTICOSTI.

ITS POSITION, EXTENT, RESOURCES, &c., &c.

Extracts from Scientific Report, made by A. R. Roche, Esq., before the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, read 4th October, 1853.

"The Island of Anticosti is situated in the River and Gulf of St. Lawrence, about four hundred miles below Quebec, and consequently that much nearer England. It is nearly one hundred and forty miles long and its greatest breadth is thirty-five miles, gradually becoming narrower as it extends East and West. It contains more than three thousand seven hundred and fifty square miles, or about two million four hundred and sixty thousand acres.

"The Island contains extensive quarries of excellent stone for building purposes, deposits of marble of very superior quality, besides stone fit for lithographic purposes.

"The fisheries in its rivers and surrounding its coast are extremely valuable, and in the Interior it contains extensive forests of most valuable timber. It also has large deposits of peat of excellent quality, exceeding one hundred thousand acres in extent.

"The excellent position of the Island in regard to ships, commerce, &c., becomes at once apparent, when we consider that every vessel must take either of the channels formed by Anticosti upon entering or leaving the river, whether having passed from the Atlantic or intending to pass to the ocean, through the straits of Belle Isle, through the more frequented passage between Newfoundland and Cape Breton, or through the Gut of Canso, or whether running between Quebec and those portions of Canada, and of the Lower Provinces lying upon the Gulf of St. Lawrence. On taking either of the channels formed by Anticosti, vessels pass close to the Island in consequence of the moderate breadth of the northern one, and of the strong south-east current which always runs along the southern channel, to avoid which, and the risk of being driven upon the truly dangerous coast of the south shore of the gulf and river, where, for several hundred miles, there is no harbour or place of shelter for any craft larger than a schooner, and where for long distances, there is not one foot of beach outside the perpendicular cliffs to land upon, vessels generally stand out till they make the West Point of Anticosti, close to which is situated the convenient harbour of Ellis Bay, occupying a spot nearly mid-distance between the northern and southern banks of the St. Lawrence and affording access from both channels of the river. Considering that about two thousand vessels from Europe alone will have made this point in the course of the present season, some slight idea may be conceived of the capabilities of position attached to the Island and in particular to Ellis Bay. The inner anchorage of this Bay has a depth of from three to four fathoms at low water, with excellent holding ground (gravel and mud) is of as large capacity as the harbour of Montreal, and has been found by experience, to afford perfect shelter in all winds, to vessels of upwards of 500 tons; while the outer position of the anchorage could be materially improved at a trifling expense, so as to be able to contain in safety during all winds, almost any number of vessels of the largest size. Docks with a patent slip, &c., could also be easily constructed there, which would be admirably situated for the repair of vessels stranded or receiving other damage throughout the Lower St. Lawrence, most of them becoming broken up by the action of the sea, and in some cases, dismantled by wreckers, before they can obtain assistance from Quebec, or the intelligence of their condition can be conveyed thence, which port of refuge is the only place from the Atlantic to Montreal (a distance of upwards of eight hundred miles,) where vessels can be properly over-hauled or be supplied with the commonest stores, such as anchors, chains, sails, &c. For steam tugs employed for the relief of vessels in distress, Ellis Bay might also be made an excellent station, with the facilities there for procuring shelter for our shipping in a portion of the St. Lawrence, where a spacious and deep harbour is more wanted than in any other part of the river or gulf, it is astonishing that no attention has yet been directed to that spot. This neglect however, cannot long continue. It could be made not only a fine commercial harbour, but also an excellent naval station in the most convenient and central spot, for commanding with a few steam vessels or gunboats, the two entrances of the river, and for sending out cruisers up the latter or to any part of the Gulf.