

GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE, ANTICOSTI.

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The steps which are now being taken towards the construction of an Intercolonial Railroad in British America, give unusual value to any information respecting the little-known tract of country through which the contemplated road will pass, as well as to the great Gulf of St. Lawrence, along or near which this intercolonial trunk-line will have its course. The following article refers principally to a little-known but most valuable Island in the Gulf, which may one day become the seat of a numerous maritime population, whose industry will have a great influence upon the future prosperity of Canada and the other British North American Provinces.

Anticosti was first discovered by Cartier, in 1534, and called by him in his second voyage "Assomption;" by the pilot, Jear. Alphonse, in 1542, "Ascension Isle;" and by the Indians, "Natiscotec," which the French transformed into "Anticosti."*

This fine Island is 122 miles long, 30 broad, and 270 miles in circumference, and contains nearly 2,000,000 acres of land. Its nearest point is about 450 miles below Quebec. The limestone rocks on the coast are covered with a thick and often impenetrable forest of dwarf spruce, with gnarled branches, so twisted and matted together that a man may walk for a considerable distance on their summits.† In the interior some fine timber exists, consisting of birch, a little pine and spruce.‡ The streams which descend to the coast abound with trout and salmon in the summer season. Seals frequent the flat limestone rocks in vast numbers. Mackerel in immense shoals congregate around all parts of the

* The Natiscotec River empties into the Gulf on the north side of the Island.

† Bayfield.

‡ On the authority of Pursh, the pond pine (*pinus serotina*) is found at Anticosti. This botanist visited the island in 1817. As this pine is a southern species, it having established itself on that northern island is a singular circumstance. On the same occasion Pursh brought back, in the shape of dried specimens as well as in the living state, many plants which seem peculiar to the island.—Hon. W. Sheppard, on the Distribution of the Conifera in Canada.