

Heritage Charlotte Series:
Communities of Charlotte County

Beaver Harbour

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History of Beaver Harbour

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Originally written by Mr. A. W. Hawkins, March 1967

History of Beaver Harbour and Some of the First Families

To get a clear understanding of the history of Beaver Harbour, also called Penn's Field Colony and Bellevu (or Belleview), one should go back to earlier days and find why and how people came to settle there.

During the Monmouth Rebellion in England, there was a group called the Society of Friends of Quakers, who refused to take up arms against Catholic King James II and for this they were branded as rebels and many were thrown into prison and suffered great persecution. This led to many of them leaving England and coming to the colony of Pennsylvania.

Years later, for almost the same reason 'Loyalist' descendents of these same people were leaving Pennsylvania and migrating to Canada because they would not swear allegiance to the United States of America against England. IN 1783 one group under the leadership of Joshua Knight made arrangement to go to the colony of Nova Scotia of which New Brunswick was then a part.

Early in 1773 Joshua Knight had sought British protection in New York and he and many of his followers went there. Joshua was a man of prominence from Arlington, Pennsylvania. He was descended from Elizabeth Shorter, wife of John Rush Sr., captain of the horse under Cromwell.

In June 1873 a group of people met at Joshua's New York home and a month later the following advertisement appeared:

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to those of the people called Quakers who have entered into an agreement to settle together in Nova Scotia that they are requested to meet at the house of Joshua Knight No. 30 Chatham Street a little above sea water Pump on the seventh day next of the 5th of July at four o'clock in the afternoon in order to conclude upon some matters of importance to them and those who mean to join the above mentioned body. They are request to call at No. 188 Water Street between the coffee House Bridge and the Fly Market and have their names entered as soon as possible. No slave master admitted.

It is interesting to note that the Quakers were antagonists of slavery 80 years before Lincoln's emancipation proclamation. Forty-nine names were signed to this agreement.

The Settlement

The place chosen for settlement through John Parr of Halifax and Governor Carleton was Beaver Harbour or Bellevu. The settlers were brought to Saint John, New Brunswick by ship under convoy. One ship was the *Camel*, 293 tons, Capt. William Tinker, and arrived 19 September 1783. A list of the people she carried included James Reed, Pilot, wife and two children; 30 children over the age of ten years found as super numeraries for victuals and victualles at two-thirds of all provisions (spirits except) by order of Rear Admiral Digby.; also Loyalist and refugees, consisting of 104 men, 50 women, 20 servants as well as 47 children who received half rations.

Nearly all the passengers of the *Camel* belonged to two special companies of Quakers and Anabaptists. They were immediately sent down the shore by ship to beaver Harbour where they settled what was to have been a large town by the name of Bellevu. They suffered many hardships during the first winter.

One hundred and forty-nine lots were laid out as first grants, and these were soon followed by 950 more. There were 15 streets and 800 residents when the town was incorporated on June 4th, 1785. There agents were appointed, Samuel Fairlamb, John Rankin and George Brown.

Original Grantees of Beaver Harbour town plots: John Rankin, Isaac Woodward, Peter Walton, Samuel Fairlamb, Samuel Stilwell, Daniel Registrar, John Knight, Nimrod Woodward, Thomas Buckley Sr., Moses Foulk, Benjamin Brown, Joshua Knight, John Gill, John Horner, John Dennis, John Loufbouron, William Holmes, John Harris, Joseph Harris, Joseph Parker, Elias Wright Sr., Elias Wright, Abraham Woodward, Jeremiah Fills,

Richard Mead, Anthony Woodward, Jacob Buffington, Freeman Smith, John Strickland, Joseph Tomlinson, George Bennison, Jesse Woodward, Richard Matthews, Amos Strickland, Samuel Woodward.

Only two families are now living on their original grants: J. L. Wright (a direct descendent of Elias Wright, Loyalist) and Alvah Eldridge (a direct descendent of William Eldridge, Loyalist).

Early Records

Among the records of the Pennfield Colony we find the following which is taken from pages of record books founding an old trunk at but since believed destroyed.

“Agreed by the said Company that they do meet on the seventh day of the week and the 16th of the seventh month to build a meeting house”. This house was to be used by Quakers. In 1875 records shows that land was cleared for a burying ground. This land is now the property of the Baptist Church, Beaver Harbour. There are no stones to mark it as a burying ground because the Quakers did not believe in markers. Members of the Knight and Cross families are buried there. The last known burial was of Asa Best, son of John and Ann Best, about 75 years ago. This grave was marked until recent years.

The last entry in the old records, written by an unknown hand, reads as follows: *“At a meeting of Friends at the Meeting House, Beaver Harbour, for settling the business of the Society on the 10th day 3 month 1789, Jacob Buffington, John Dennis, Daniel Registrar and Richard Mead were appointed a committee to examine the accounts and proceedings of the committee who distributed the provisions which were received from friends from England from this place and to report thereon.”*

Little by little, it became evident they could not make a living here and in 1789 the Affairs of the Association were closed up.

The Great Fire

In 1790, Bellevu was destroyed by a forest fire. Elias Wright's was the only house saved. The meeting house and all records were lost. Elias Wright, Loyalist from New York, Magistrate and grantee of Saint John, married (first name not known) Kline. Elias Wright was also grantee of Bellevu, and died in 1825, age 76, at Beaver Harbour. His son, Elias Wright, 1784-1854, married Mary Walton, daughter of Jesse Walton. Both are buried in the Pennfield Baptist Churchyard.

In 1794 we have the record of a Quaker wedding at Pennfield. Joshua Knight Jr., married Jame Vernon, daughter of Moses Vernon.

Scattering of Settlement

After the fire many of the settlers moved to Pennfield Ridge, Pocologan, New River and Maces Bay. In fact, Maces Bay was first settled by five loyalist families from Beaver Harbour, Joshua Knight's dream of a large colony with Bellevu as its city was now crushed. Only a few struggling settlers remained to rebuild the little village of Beaver Harbour.

The following appears in the Winslow papers, 1803: *“Parish of Pennfield, population 54”*.

Rebuilding

Gradually more families began moving into Beaver Harbour. They were excellent farmers and lived quite comfortably. There was plenty of land for all as the first settlers had abandoned their grants. The new comers settled on small farms and dished and farmed fro a living. They were Anabaptists and Anglican and a few Quakers.

There were two saw mills which cut about 400,000 feet of lumber annually. Two vessels were built at Beaver Harbour – about 250 tons.

Fenian Raids

During the days of the Fenian Raids (1864-1866) the people lived through days of anxiety. According to traditional stories of old settlers, the men of the village took turns doing guard duty. Armed with muskets and

clubs they guarded the shoreline and roads entering the village to warn the people of any invasion but the Fenians never did arrive and their fears gradually abated.

However, there were several plundering at a later date by another faction. The following is taken from a Saint John paper under the date June 17th, 1813, the editor remarks:

"It is reported that last week the privateer whaleboat 'Weasel', Daniel Snow commanding, mounting one gun of small caliber and manned by eight men from Castin, Maine, put into Beaver Harbour where the plundered the inhabitants of that place. Mr. Wright and Mr. Young were, we understand, the principal sufferers. These marauders plundered them of almost everything they could lay their hands on, taking even the wearing apparel of the women and children."

A 10th June, 1813, letter written in simple language presumably by the same Mr. Wright, gives details of the scurvy treatment that he and his neighbours underwent at the hands of the gang.

"I wish to inform you for the good of the public that on the night of the 8th inst., there came to my house 12 or 13 men in a boat and with a crowbar broke open the door and robbed me of 300 lbs of sugar, nearly a barrel of coffee, 200 lbs of dried meat, my wife and daughter's cloths, two pair boots, all my fishing line, parts of a barrel of molasses, parts of a cask of nails, a large trunk filled with small articles, one piece of dowlas, one and one-half gross of Cod hooks, several padlocks, several gross of buttons, 4 lbs of powder and many other articles. They went to Capt. Young's house and robbed him of 10 lbs of sugar, seven pieces of broadcloth, six pieces of cotton and all his wife and children's clothing. They also took Capt. Cross' boat and fishing lines, ect. After loading Capt Cross' boat and their own with plunder they said they were sorry that they had no more boats to load. The sturdy men of Charlotte County were not the kind to be overwhelmed and stand idly by while their friends and neighbours were being robbed. A number of them collected and manning three boats went after the buccaneers, put them to rout and drove them ashore."

There is a traditional story that on another occasion, the marauders sailed into the Harbour under cover of darkness and stole nearly all of George Wright's flock of geese. One of the group made a bag with a piece of sail-cloth or canvas, they put a penny in the bag for each goose stolen and tied it around the gander's neck with the following note: *"Mr. Wright, we bid you goodnight. We stole your geese at a penny apiece and left the pay with the Gander."*

This petty plundering was carried on under the plea of legitimate warfare for although these small boats could not in any manner be described as sea-going vessels yet they all acted under a commission of the President of United States of America which entitled them to treatment as prisoners of war if captured.

On another occasion an American naval ship, or man-o-war as they were then called, fired at the rocks in the middle of Beaver Harbour. This rock was called Rams Head by the settlers as it resembled the head of a ram, the cannon balls knocked out great pieces of the rock so we now have one ram's head minus his horns.

On some early maps, Ram's Head is called Jail Rock. It has also been known as Sailors Rock. This heads back to times when naval ships landed sailors there whom they wished to punish. They were left with little to eat and tied to a ball and chain for such time as their superior officers saw fit to leave them, depending on the nature of their crime which in those days need be very minor.

There is a traditional story that a man by the name of Antonio escaped and swam ashore. His true last name was not know but is spelled "*Wadlin*" today. He was hidden by the people in the village, lived and married there. Thus began the present Wadlin families of Beaver Harbour.

The Paul Family

Caleb and Jonathan Paul, sons of James Paul of Warminster, Pennsylvania, were among the early settlers of Beaver Harbour. They were members of the Horsham Quaker Meeting, Pennsylvania. Caleb Paul married Joshua Knight's sister, Priscilla, he had the first crown grant to the Eastern Wolves Island (500 acres), 20 acres on the west side of Beaver Harbour and a town lot. Jonathan Paul, a ship builder, owned the land on the east side of the harbour. We have no record of his marriage which took place in Pennsylvania. He had several children, of which daughter Eliza Ann married William Melony of St. Andrews. Jonathan Paul was burned to death at his home in Woodlands.

The name Woodlands was given to this property at a later date by the wife of William Lockett, Lady Ann Lockett. She named it after her family's estate in England. Ellen Lockett, daughter of William and Ann Melony, married Daniel Justason of Pennfield and they lived at Woodlands until the property was purchased by Millen McDowell from members of the Thompson and Parker families, heirs of the Jacob Paul property. Ellen and Daniel Justason were the grandparents of Mrs. Grovenor Wright and Mrs. Allen Paul of Beaver Harbour.

Joshua Paul moved his family from St. Andrews to Caleb Paul's grant on the Eastern Wolves Island. He farmed and fished and raised a family there. His wife, Elizabeth, was disowned by her family because she had married a Quaker but later the two families became reconciled and they visited one another frequently and a member of Elizabeth's family, Joseph Stinson, is buried at Paul's Cove, Eastern Wolves Island. Joshua Paul died at the home of his daughter, Julia Ann Wright on 24 January 1890, age 94 years. Elizabeth died at the home of Julia Ann Wright on 28 February 1890, age 87 years. Among his children were two sons, Thomas and Joshua, from whom the present day Paul families of Beaver Harbour descended.

In 1893 Wallace Matthews of Campobello while fishing off the Wolves Island, picked up a bottle presumably while taking a stroll on the island, contained the poem quoted below:

November 13th, 1858
*Kind friend do not destroy me
For I bear upon my breast
The name of those who placed me here
Long years ago to rest
Yes, they kindly placed me here,
You see the pains they took,
To give to my poor self alone
This quiet little nook.
They were a youthful laughing band
With spirits high and free,
They were united by true friendship
And lived in harmony.
They made me as their trusty friend
Their names thus safe to keep
That future ones may think of them
As neath the sod they sleep.*

*Signed,
Mr. Joshua Paul Sr., Mrs. Elizabeth (Stinson) Paul, Thomas Paul, Joshua Paul
Jr., Walter Warnock, Julia Ann Paul, Agnes Kennedy, Elizabeth Kennedy
(cousin), Harriott Paul, Isadore Margaret Paul, Emily Euphemia Paul*

The poem had been written by Julia Ann Paul one evening while the family was gathered in the old homestead on the Island. The poem was signed by each of the company and placed, with a lock of hair of each, in a bottle which was hidden in the bottom of the kitchen chimney.

Julia Ann Paul was the wife of George Wright of Beaver Harbour. She was the daughter of Joshua Paul and Elizabeth Stinson Paul of St. Andrews. They made their home for many years at Paul's Cove, Wolves Island, Charlotte County, New Brunswick.

Industry and Modern Times

Lewis Holmes of Beaver Harbour was the first person to pack sardines in New Brunswick. At this time, Patrick and Lewis Connors became interested in the sardine industry. They took over Lewis Holmes' business, moving it to Blacks Harbour in 1882. This was the beginning of Connors Bros. Limited and the famous *Brunswick* brand sardines. At that time women packed the fish and put the covers on by hand with a metal hand tool called a *header*.

Today Beaver Harbour is a prosperous community of about 400 citizens. It consist of two general stores, a post office, new break water and government wharf, a small restaurant, community hall, Baptist Church, Anglican Church Hall, Connors Bros. No. 4 Sardine Factory, filleting plant and cold storage, new school and many fine homes.

Time and Change in Beaver Harbour

From the days of log cabins, candle light, open fireplaces and brick ovens to the days of electricity, street lights, electric stoves and baseboard heating. From the day when men and women were called home to meals

by the dinner or supper horn to the days of the shriek of factory whistles, the swish of rubber tires on hard-surface roads, diesel engines in boats bringing the fish into the plants to be processed or perhaps even a jet plane breaking the sound barrier overhead. From the days when ladies wore hoop skirts, bustles and Quaker bonnets to the days of shorts and mini-skirts. From 1783 to 1967, Canada's centennial, we have come a long way. Who knows what the future holds? We are proud of the part our forefathers played in building Canada. Proud of our sons and daughters who defended its freedom in two world wars and glad to be alive and be Canadians in Canada's Centennial Year.

-the end-

A Brief History of Beaver Harbour

Saint Croix Courier, 9 November 1999
Originally written by Dale Wright, Pennfield

Looking back to the early 1960s, there were a number of homes in Beaver Harbour that were built in the 1800s. Unfortunately, these homes were torn down and a large part of our history went with them. It's sad to say, but I helped tear down some of these old homesteads.

In one of the homes there were old letters being kicked around by the workmen, so I picked them up and brought them home. Some of the information which I am writing came from such papers. A certain businessman in Beaver Harbour owned a grocery store, dry goods store, ran the post office, owned a wharf, and was a fish buyer for A&J McLean of L'Etete who were wholesalers in fresh smoked fish, fish oil, and Pumice. They also sold groceries, dry goods, and fishing gear, which was sent to Beaver Harbour on the Schooner Sara. Goods coming from Saint John to Beaver Harbour were sent on the Schooner Birch.

While tearing down one of these homes, I discovered next to the chimney a small closet which was boarded in and papered over. After opening the door, I found a musket with its balls on a shelf. This musket has the crown stamp of England on the barrel. I still have the musket.

In another house, I was rummaging around the attic and found an old store ledger dating from 1870-1875. There were entries of different people selling fish, mittens and socks to the store. Also, there were a number of names of people who did business at the store: David Eldridge, George Dickson, Andrew Holmes, E.J. Barry, William Ash, Mrs. Doon, John Doon, George Wright, Nelson Holmes, John Best, Seward Cross, Charles Brown, Milton Eldridge, Henry Noddin, W. Cross, G.E. Crofs, William Douglas Wright, E. Pool, John Wadlin, E. Wadlin, Albert Crofs, Mrs. L. Holmes, Mrs. McLean, Joshua Prescott.

This ledger also lists the prices for goods bought in 1872:

| <i>1872 Goods</i> | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>1 bbl. Flour.....</i> | <i>8.25</i> |
| <i>2 gal. Molasses.....</i> | <i>1.00</i> |
| <i>1 lb. Tea.....</i> | <i>.50</i> |
| <i>2 lb. Sugar.....</i> | <i>.24</i> |
| <i>1 bushel Potatoes.....</i> | <i>.57</i> |
| <i>2 lb. Shot.....</i> | <i>.24</i> |
| <i>19 lb. Pork.....</i> | <i>2.97</i> |
| <i>1 gal. Kerosene.....</i> | <i>.40</i> |
| <i>1 Lamp Burner.....</i> | <i>.25</i> |
| <i>1 File.....</i> | <i>.11</i> |
| <i>4 Bowls.....</i> | <i>.24</i> |
| <i>1 Fig Tobacco.....</i> | <i>.05</i> |
| <i>1 lb. Soap.....</i> | <i>.10</i> |
| <i>1 Broom.....</i> | <i>.40</i> |
| <i>1 Knife.....</i> | <i>.20</i> |

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| <i>½ lb. Dates.....</i> | <i>10</i> |
| <i>4 yds. Cotton.....</i> | <i>.36</i> |
| <i>¼ lb. Mustard.....</i> | <i>10</i> |
| <i>1 pr. Mittens.....</i> | <i>.30</i> |
| <i>1 doz. Eggs.....</i> | <i>.14</i> |
| <i>14 lb. Butter.....</i> | <i>3.64</i> |
| <i>1 lb. Rice.....</i> | <i>.08</i> |
| <i>¼ lb. Pepper.....</i> | <i>.08</i> |

There also were a number of fishing vessels out of Beaver Harbour. Here are names of a few which were called "Pinks". They weighed around 10 to 15 tons, carrying a crew of five.

Mystery - Capt. Ezra Munroe
Speedwell - Capt. James Eldridge
Eagle - Capt. George Bates
Exenia - Capt. William Parker
Adelia - Capt. Elias Wright III
Enchantress - Capt. John Paul
Fred - Capt. George Eldridge
Maggie Jane - Capt. Seward Cross
Christian Visitor - Capt. Michael Nodding

These boats netted large herring in the winter months and took their catch ashore and froze them in the fields. Boats from the American side would come and pick them up for market. The smoked herring industry was booming with their product being sold to the West Indies. They were also selling fish oil, hake sounds, cod liver oil, fresh and salt fish and Pumice.

Freight was also being delivered to Beaver Harbour from L'Etang, L'Etete, and Saint George by horse and wagon; also freight was delivered by the Shore Line Railway to Pennfield Station and hauled to Beaver Harbour by horse and wagon.

The King Edward Hotel in Beaver Harbour provided accommodations to travelers, and also rented horse and wagon, or horse and saddle.

The Schooner Sara landed \$422.82 of dry goods to Beaver Harbour, freight being \$3. July 12, 1883, Ganong Bros., manufacturing confectioners, was shipping goods to Beaver Harbour by vessel. They were dealing in teas, spices, tobaccos, cigars, fine fruits, nuts, canned goods, sardines, corn cakes, paper and paper bags.

Times did not seem to be that hard in our community of Beaver Harbour. There was a community hall where dances, pie suppers, were held. Also to raise money for their sewing circle, they would have an auction on a quilt.

The Valley Calvinist Baptist Church which was built around 1851 was holding services. Also the Free Will Baptist Church, built in 1862, on the Meeting house hill was open. There were new homes being built and the road from Beaver Harbour to Pennfield required repair work. Men would be required to work on the road so many days out of each year. This was the law.

A sawmill at Woodland's stream was supplying lumber. Lumber was also being brought to Beaver Harbour from Saint John on the Sch. Birch.

Fishing equipment was being brought in from Eastport on the Schooner Sara. Many boats from Nova Scotia were fishing out of Beaver Harbour with fish being abundant at this time.

Pulpwood was being shipped from Beaver Harbour to Maine on four-masted vessels.

On Feb. 25, 1875, tenders were to be received by Ottawa to build a lighthouse at Drews Head, Beaver Harbour. Plans for the lighthouse were to be sent to Joshua Prescott, Pennfield.

In the late 1800s, our two-room school house was built where the Post Office sits today. The day they finished building the school, someone burned it down the same night. One man spent nine days in the St. Andrews gaol, but there was no proof and he was released. The granite stones for the basement were brought from the quarries in Saint George by vessel.

This is just a small insight of the History of Beaver Harbour which was settled in 1783. These people landed in September on the ship Camel, and spent the winter in tents issued by the English army. They covered their tents in spruce bows and kept fires burning day and night.

I feel they were very noble, patriotic people who flew the Union Jack.

- the end -