

EASTON

The beautiful St. John River flows for many miles nearly parallel with the eastern boundary of the County of Aroostook and but a few miles distant. There is no more beautiful river in all America, and though the settlement of the disputed boundary question has long been acquiesced in, yet it would seem that the natural limit of Aroostook on the east should be this same magnificent river, and that the many fine streams that trace their winding course through this fertile county should not be obliged to discharge their waters in a foreign land. It may, however, be only a question of time when this grand water way shall be permitted to flow to its mouth wholly within the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam, and when the eagle that now circles around Sugar Islands can trace the course of the river away to the Bay of Fundy and be hailed through all his flight as the chosen emblem of the grand nationality. The tier of townships lying along the boundary line comprises many fine agricultural towns, but none more excellent than the fertile town of Easton. Nowhere in Aroostook do the maples tower to so great a height, or make a more thrifty growth than in this town. Though lying upon the border it was unsettled at the time of the boundary dispute and its most ancient archives contain no annals of the famed Aroostook War.

Easton was originally a Massachusetts township, but was about 1834, in common with all the other towns owned by the mother State, purchased by the State of Maine. In 1855 and 1856 it was letted by Noah Barker into 160 acre lots and was opened by the State for settlement. Previous to that time, however, a few settlers had commenced clearings upon the town and it may be that in earlier times some of our New Brunswick neighbors had wandered over the boundary and invaded the forest.

The earliest settler, however, of whom we could obtain any authentic account was Mr. Henry Wilson. Mr. Wilson came first to Presque Isle and taught school in a log house on what is now the Hugh Jamison farm about the year 1847. He taught a number of years in the town and in 1851 went away into the wilderness and commenced a clearing near what is now Easton Centre. There was at that time a logging road from Presque Isle across the present town of Easton to the St. John River. This road was of course passable for teams only in the winter season. A number of the young men in Presque Isle went over

with Mr. Wilson to the spot he had selected for his forest home and helped him build a log house. To this new house he brought his wife and lived here a number of years before any other settler came to the neighborhood. About the time that the town was lotted he sold his improvements which were on a part of three lots, to W. H. Rackliffe, Josiah Foster and Theophilus Smith, and moved to the adjoining town of Mars Hill. Mr. Wilson is now living in Houlton and his son, Vinal B. Wilson, Esq., is a prominent member of the Aroostook bar with the promise of a brilliant future.

In 1854, Mr. Albert Whitcomb commenced a clearing about a mile south of what is now Easton Centre. Mr. Whitcomb at that time lived with his father, Mr. Emmons Whitcomb, in Presque Isle, on the farm now owned and occupied by Mr. H. H. Cook. In 1856, he removed to his new farm, having at that time twenty acres cleared and a log house and frame barn built. The road from Fort Fairfield to Blaine had then been run out but was at that time merely a spotted line through the forest, not even having been opened for winter travel. The early settlers paid for their land in grubbing out and building this road which was not made passable for wagons until 1859.

In 1854 also, Mr. William Kimball commenced a clearing north of Mr. Wilson's and was one of the most prominent of the early settlers of the town. In later years Mr. Kimball removed to Presque Isle, where he continued to reside until his death in February, 1890. In the same year also came Solomon Bolster, Dennis Hoyt, Emmons A. Whitcomb and A. A. Rackliffe. Mr. Hoyt was not, however, a resident of the town and soon afterwards sold his improvement to William D. Parsons.

Mr. Jacob Dockendorff also commenced a clearing in 1854 in the western part of the town on the bank of the stream near what is now the thriving village of Sprague's Mills. Mr. Dockendorff did not become a resident of the town, however, until 1857.

In the spring of 1856, Josiah Foster and George Foster settled near the Centre. John L. Pierce took the lot adjoining Albert Whitcomb's and John C. Cummings settled near the Fort Fairfield line.

In the fall of 1856 Ephraim Winship and Israel Lovell took up lots in the northwest corner of the town next to the Presque Isle line.

The township was organized as a plantation July 26, 1856, and was named Fremont Plantation, in honor of Gen. John C.

Fremont, who was that year the standard bearer of the young Republican party of the nation. We find by examining the records that at the time of the organization in 1856 there were but nine legal voters in the plantation. These settlers who took part in the organization were all living along the line of the road from Fort Fairfield to Blaine, but soon after a settlement was commenced in the western part of the town. Between these two portions of the town is a low, marshy bog, which, though not of great width at any point, runs in a northerly direction for about four miles and is about all the waste land there is in the town.

In May, 1857, Mr. Samuel Kneeland, who had married a daughter of William Kimball, came from Sweden, in Oxford County and settled in the west part of the town near the Presque Isle line. Mr. Kneeland first brought his family to Mr. Kimball's and from there he and his wife walked through the woods and across the bog to their new home, each carrying a child, and leading a third by the hand.

Among the early settlers in this part of the town besides those already named were James E. Dudley and Samuel Barker, who came together from Waterford, Oxford County, in 1859, and settled on adjoining lots next to the Presque Isle line, purchasing improvements of Mr. W. H. Ryan, who is now a druggist at Presque Isle. Benjamin Farnham came from Castine the same year, and Joseph Johnson and James Moore had already settled in this part of the town.

In 1858, a schoolhouse was built at the Centre and at a meeting held on June 7th of that year the town voted fourteen against license to four in favor and it has been a strong prohibition town ever since. In 1859 there were forty-two legal voters on the list and seventy-one scholars in the plantation. In 1860 the list contained sixty-three voters and in 1861 seventy six. In 1862 the records show that it was voted that the taxes should be paid in grain or shingles at the market price at Fort Fairfield, and that the collector should give each tax payer thirty days notice. Buckwheat and cedar shingles were at that time the legal currency in Aroostook and were about all the resources the settlers had for the payment of debts.

The town was settled slowly and in 1860 contained but 320 inhabitants. During the war many of the settlers went into the army and not much growth was made until after the war was over.

In 1860 Mr. D. Russell Marston built the mill now standing

at the village of Sprague's Mills. This mill had an up and down saw, and later Mr. Marston put in a shingle machine which he bought of Mr. Isaac Hacker of Fort Fairfield and which is said to be the first shingle machine brought to Aroostook County. Mr. Marston continued to run the mill until 1870, when he sold it to Messrs J. H. & E. W. Sprague. The Spragues made extensive repairs. They sold the mill in 1878 to W. H. Newcomb, who a year later sold to Johnson & Phair. It is now the property of Hon. T. H. Phair, who has put in a rotary.

Of the other mills in this town we may as well speak in this connection. About 1859 Mr. Isaac Wortman built a mill on the River de Chute in the east part of the town. This mill contained only an up and down saw. It was burned in 1870 and was not rebuilt. In 1879 Mr. E. W. Sprague built a steam shingle mill in the western part of the town near what is known as the village of Sprague's Mills. This mill contained one shingle machine with balance wheel and often turned out as many as twenty-four thousand shingles in ten hours. After running five years the mill was burned and was not rebuilt. The engine was saved and was removed to Robinson's Mill in Blaine.

About this time Mr. A. B. Walker built a grist mill some three fourths of a mile above the saw mill on the same stream. This stream is called the Presque Isle of the St. John to distinguish it from the other stream of the same name which flows through the village of Presque Isle and empties into the Aroostook. This grist mill contains three run of stones, and after operating it about four years Mr. Walker removed the wheat stones to Masardis, where he had built another grist mill and for a time the Easton mill was in possession of E. W. Sprague, who put in two shingle machines and introduced steam power. In 1887 Mr. Arno Fling built a steam shingle mill in the east part of the town. This mill is now owned by B. F. Jones of Blaine and has a rotary and one shingle machine.

In 1877 Messrs. Johnson & Phair of Presque Isle built a large starch factory at Sprague's Mills. The factory had but one dry house when first built, but a second one was added a few years later. The building of this factory was an enterprise which resulted in great benefit to the farmers of Easton and did more than anything else toward building up the thriving village of Sprague's Mills. The farmers at once turned their attention to the raising of potatoes for the factory, each man at first contracting to plant a certain number of acres and to deliver the potatoes at the factory for 25 cents per bushel.

The contracts were usually for five years and the business proved to be a profitable one. Soon, however, the demand for Aroostook potatoes for the outside market at good prices induced the farmers to plant many more acres than they had contracted for, selling the merchantable stock to shippers in years when the price was good, and having the starch factory to fall back on when the prices for shipping dropped.

Easton has proved to be one of the greatest potato producing towns in the County and vast quantities are hauled each year to the shipping stations of Presque Isle and Fort Fairfield.

In the fall of 1884, in the midst of the starch making season, the factory was consumed by fire. This subjected both the proprietors and farmers to great loss and inconvenience, but the factory was rebuilt during the following year and has done a large and prosperous business ever since. It is now owned by Hon. T. H. Phair and is one of the most profitable of all his factories.

In 1883 Messrs. Kimball & DeLaite built a steam shingle mill on the Spear Brook near Easton Centre. This mill contained one shingle machine, but before it was fairly in operation the boiler burst, killing one man, Mr. Edward Lord, and severely scalding a number of others. A large number of school children were in the mill watching the working of the engine but a few minutes before the explosion, and had they remained the disaster must have been far more terrible.

The first store in Easton was opened at the Centre in 1863 by Mr. W. H. Rackliffe. Mr. Rackliffe continued in trade some three years, when he closed up this branch of his business, as he was extensively engaged in farming and in buying and selling cattle and sheep. In 1872 Mr. Charles W. Kimball built a store at Easton Centre, where he traded for a number of years, and was followed by Mr. C. F. Parsons, who leased the Kimball store and in 1882 built a new store on the opposite side of the street, to which he removed. Kimball and DeLaite then commenced trade in the Kimball store but after the disaster at the steam mill they went out of business and sold the store to Mr. Parsons. Mr. H. W. Knight afterwards succeeded Mr. Parsons in this store and was in turn followed by Samuel G. Wheeler, the present occupant and the only merchant at Easton Centre.

The principal village in the town is at Sprague's Mills, in the western part of the town, near the Presque Isle line. The first store in this part of the town was built by Nathan Jewell in 1868. It was used for a store but a short time, when it was

converted into a dwelling house and afterwards burned.

In 1878 E. W. Sprague built a store near the mill. Mr. M. C. Smith, now a thriving merchant in the village of Presque Isle, commenced trade in this store and afterwards bought it. The store was burned in June, 1880, and was replaced by the large store now occupied by Mr. J. Sawyer.

In 1882 Mr. M. L. DeWitt built a store at the Mills, which for a number of years was occupied by various parties and was afterwards destroyed by fire in the same year.

E. W. Sprague built a store which he occupied as a lumber supply store and also as a post office, Mr. Sprague having then been postmaster at Sprague's Mills for four years. The next store was built by F. E. French in 1883, and was occupied by him as a dry goods and millinery store until 1885, when it was purchased by E. W. Sprague, who now occupies it as a variety store and post office.

In 1885 Mr. Byron Wheeler built the large store with Grange Hall above. This store was first occupied by Mr. Forrester Burns, who was succeeded by Spear & Stanchfield, and they by F. L. Spear & Co., the present occupants.

In 1886 Samuel Kneeland built a store with dwelling above. Mr. Kneeland has since died and his widow now carries on the dry goods and millinery business in this store.

In 1886 the Odd Fellows built a fine two story building and finished off a handsome hall for the accommodation of the lodge in the second story. The lower story is now owned and occupied by the Methodist society as a house of worship and is very comfortably and conveniently arranged for that purpose.

In 1886 the Free Baptist society erected a very fine church building at the Mills, which is an ornament to the village.

Although the first growth of the town seemed to indicate that the principal business would cluster around the Centre and that the village would there be located, the fine water power at Sprague's Mills and the erection of the starch factory determined that as the main center of industry, and a handsome and thriving village has there grown up in a few years. The place has an air of life and activity and the business men are men of energy and staunch business integrity. The buildings are neat and pleasantly located and everything points to a sure and solid growth.

The schools in the town of Easton are well sustained and rank among the best. The town system was adopted some five years ago and the citizens take great interest in their schools.

There are ten schools in the town under the efficient supervision of W. J. Weymouth. Four terms of free high school are maintained each year, two of which are held at Easton Centre and two at Sprague's Mills.

As a farming town Easton has few if any superiors in Aroostook. Though comparatively a new town, reclaimed from the wilderness within the recollection of men who are still young and active, yet there are upon all the roads throughout the town large, smooth and well cultivated farms with extensive farm buildings and every evidence of comfort and prosperity.

Easton was incorporated as a town on Feb. 24, 1864 and in 1880 had a population of 835. The population in 1890 was 978 and the valuation \$208,765.

In the fertility of its soil and its natural advantages as an agricultural town it is surpassed by few, if any, of the towns in the fertile valley of the Aroostook.

MAPLETON

Directly west of the town of Presque Isle lies the goodly town of Mapleton, formerly known as Township No. 12, Range 3. The Aroostook River barely touches the northeast corner of the town, the corner post being upon an island in the river. Some two and a half miles west of this corner the river in bending around a large island again touches the north line of the town. Mapleton has Washburn for a neighbor on the north, Castle Hill on the west and Chapman Plantation upon its southern border.

The first settlement made upon the town was upon the lots in the northeast corner bordering upon the Aroostook River. Previous to the time of the Aroostook War, people from New Brunswick had ascended the river and made settlements upon its banks at various points, and after the boundary dispute was settled by the Treaty of 1842 these settlers were given deeds of their lots in accordance with the recommendations of the Commissioners sent here by the States of Maine and Massachusetts and these lots so deeded have since been known as treaty lots. Very few of these lots were located in what is now the town of Mapleton, as that town has but a small extent of river frontage.

We find by the report of the Commissioners that Lot No. 14 was thus granted to Joshua Christie and Lot No. 16 to "Edward Erskine, James Erskine and Abigail, wife of Winslow Churchill." These two lots, now included in the town of Maple-