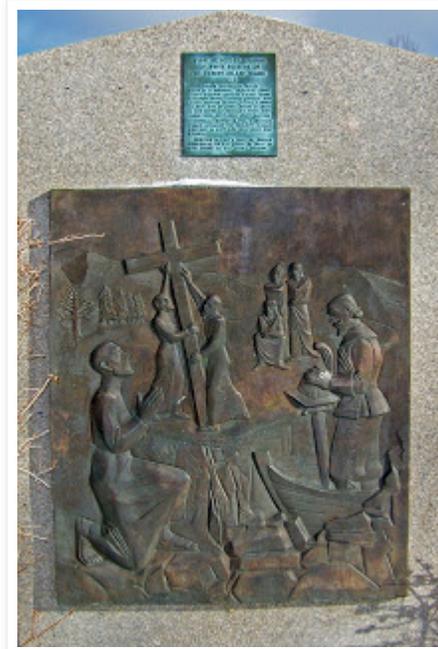


400th Anniversary of Mount Desert Island's First European Settlement and Introduction to Christianity

A bronze memorial outside St. Ignatius Church in Northeast Harbor, ME summarizes an event whose 400th anniversary on Mount Desert Island occurs this summer.*1 It states:

*FIRST RECORDED LANDING OF WHITE PERSONS ON MT. DESERT ISLAND, MAINE 1613
FRENCH EXPEDITION, UNDER SIEUR DE LA SAUSSAYE, INCLUDING THREE JESUIT PRIESTS, FATHERS PIERRE BIARD, ENNAMOND MASSA, JACQUES QUENTIN AND JESUIT BROTHER GILBERT DU THET, LANDED ON WEST SIDE OF SOMES SOUND AT WHAT IS NOW KNOWN AS FERNALD'S POINT. THEY NAMED THEIR SETTLEMENT SAINT SAUVEUR. SEVERAL MONTHS LATER, A BRITISH FORCE ATTACKED THE COLONY, KILLED BROTHER DU THET AND DISPERSED THE COLONY. BROTHER DU THET'S BODY IS BURIED SOMEWHERE ON THE SHORE OF WHAT IS NOW KNOWN AS THE JESUIT MEADOW.*



This event and its location have been recorded by many historians, among them Francis Parkman, William Otis Sawtelle, Samuel Eliot Morison and David Hackett Fischer. My intent here is to verify the location of the Saint Sauveur settlement on Fernald Point based on Father Biard's own description.*2

With regard to their landing on MDI after departing Port Royal, Nova Scotia, some 150 miles eastward, Biard records, "... by morning the fog had all disappeared. We recognized that we were opposite Mount desert, an Island, which the Savages call Pemetiq. The pilot turned to the Eastern shore of the Island, and there located us in a large and beautiful port, ..."

Indians arrived and told Biard, "'It is necessary that thou comest, since Asticou, our Sagamore, is sick unto death; and if thou dost not come he will die without baptism, and will not go to heaven. Thou wilt be the cause of it, for he himself wishes very much to be baptized.' This argument, so naively deduced, astonished Father Biard, and fully persuaded him to go there, especially as it was only three leagues away, and in all there would result no greater loss of time than one afternoon; so he got into one of their canoes with Sieur de La Mote, lieutenant, and Simon the interpreter, and went off."

Biard met with Asticou, who was not dying but suffering from a cold, at his summer camp on Manchester Point, in Northeast Harbor, opposite Fernald Point. The Indians convinced Biard to settle nearby.

Biard's description of the settlement site: "*This place is a beautiful hill, rising gently from the sea, its sides bathed by two springs; the land is cleared for twenty or twenty-five acres, and in some places is covered with grass almost as high as a man. It faces the South and East ...*"



Saint Sauveur/Fernald Point from Flying Mountain

Regarding the two springs: In his autobiography, Boston Congregational minister and Fernald Point Road summer resident Charles Dole commented, "... where now the 'rusticators' come in troops to see splendid sunsets, and to look over the 'Jesuits' Field' on the old Fernald farm, with its springs of ice-cold water under the shore, each submerged twice a day with the salt tides and presently pure as crystal again."³ Rev. Ephraim Cummings stated "... and as I recollect how they [Professor C.H. Fernald and his son Professor H.T. Fernald] walked with us [on August 3, 1893] over Flying Mountain, pointed out the two springs, ..." ⁴ Clara Barnes Martin contributed, "... There is a spring at high-water mark on each side of the Point, ..." ⁵ Benjamin DeCosta added, "... While at the farm-house, we inquired if there were any springs of water on the Point, as Biard says that it 'was supplied with water by a spring on each side.' The query was promptly answered by Mr. Fernald, who led us to a spring on the east side, and one also on the west. That on the east side ran into the sound. Its outlet has been greatly disturbed by the wearing away of the shore, yet we found the water still running. That on the west side of the Point overflows into a little cove, boiling up out of the sand with considerable force. At high tide the salt water flows into it, yet when the tide recedes the spring is found as pure and fresh as before. ..."⁶

The west side spring is well known and has been marked on maps as

"Jesuit Spring" from at least 1896. It still flows strongly into Fernald Cove.



West spring or "Jesuit Spring"

The east side spring has not been marked on maps and its flow is weak into Somes Sound, just as DeCosta described in 1869.

Both springs are below the high tide line.

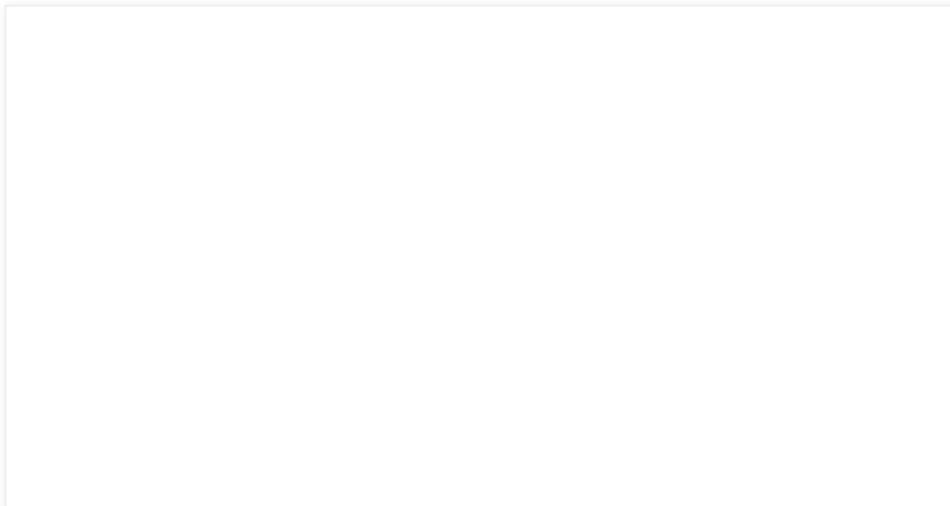
Their locations are noted on the attached aerial photograph.*7



East spring

As to the acreage: Biard described the land as being 20 or 25 acres.

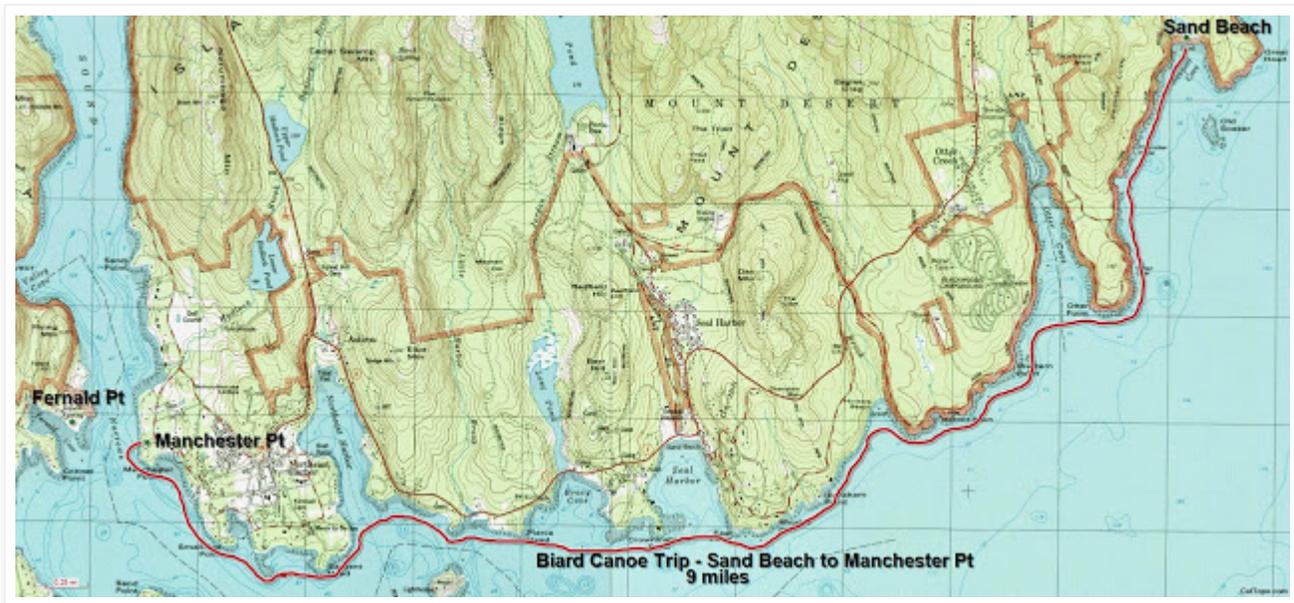
Using GPS software and U.S. Geological Survey aerial photography I measured Fernald Point along its current shore and tree lines. It encompasses 25 acres.





Aerial view of Saint Sauveur or "Jesuit Field" now Fernald Point

While the exact location of Biard's landing on MDI is not known, his many references to league distances while he was in the Port Royal/Bay of Fundy area equate a league to about three miles. Back plotting three leagues or nine miles from Asticou's summer camp at Manchester Point indicates Biard's ship landed at or near Sand Beach in Newport Cove on MDI's eastern shore.



The English ship *Treasurer*, sailing from Virginia and under the command of Samuel Argall, destroyed the settlement within a few months of its establishment. This event effectively started an English-French war of colonization that would last 150 years.

No known artifacts of the settlement have been found, nor is it known if any attempt has ever been made to recover them. Yet Biard states that the three individuals killed in Argall's attack, including Brother du Thet, were buried there. On a return visit to completely destroy the settlement, Argall executed one of his own men. Perhaps then there was a fourth body buried on Fernald Point. The question begs, Would a serious archaeological search to locate their remains, and any other remains of the settlement, still be feasible?

Footnotes:

1 GPS location of memorial: N44° 17.643' W068° 17.619' For this memorial's information see my blog post of September 27, 2012 titled *J.J. O'Brien and His Jesuit Settlement Memorial*.

2 *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents - Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, multiple volumes ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites and published from 1896.

3 *My Eighty Years* by Charles F. Dole. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. 1927, p.290.

4 *Father Biard's Relation of 1616 and Saint Sauveur* by Rev. E.C. Cummings. Read before the Maine Historical Society, December 7, 1893.

5 *Mount Desert on the Coast of Maine* by Clara Barnes Martin, 4th ed. 1877, p.50.

6 *Sketches of the Coast of Maine and the Isle of Shoals* by B. F. De Costa. 1869, p.49.

7 GPS location of springs:

West spring: N44° 17.858' W068° 18.809'

East spring: N44° 18.049' W068° 18.641'