

## 2 HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

### 2.1 Town History

According to archeologists the St. George peninsula has been inhabited for thousands of years. Native American artifacts attest to seasonal land use and settlement before the coming of the European explorers.

Late in the spring of 1605, the English explorer George Weymouth moored the Archangel near the mouth of the St. George River. His mission was to assess the natural resources of this region and to determine whether or not the land was suitable for English settlement. Weymouth's crew planted an experimental garden on Allen's Island – the first known attempt at agriculture in North America.

The unsuccessful Popham colony at the mouth of the Kennebec (1607) resulted from Weymouth's voyage. Weymouth had called Monhegan St. Georges Island. The name St. Georges or St. George became attached to the river and to the town when it separated from Cushing in 1803.

The territory between Muscongus and the Penobscot was granted to Thomas Leverett and John Beauchamp in 1629. However, there was no known attempt at settlement and only two or three individuals or families are known to have lived on the river in the 1600's.

In 1736 Samuel Waldo of Boston, who had gained a controlling interest in the patent of 1629, brought Scott-Irish families to the St. George River. For many years their log homes and small clearings marked the easternmost frontier of British settlement in North America. Waldo had agreed with the Penobscot Indians that settlers were not to live on the east side of the river below the Creek in Thomaston. Therefore, St. George remained almost unsettled by European colonists until after the French and Indian War in 1763.

Children and grandchildren of the Scott-Irish in Cushing and Warren began settling in St. George in the late 1760's and 1770's. At the same time, persons of English descent from older settlements to the westward were building homes on the ocean side of the peninsula. A map made in 1776 shows 19 dwellings in what is now St. George.

Settlement seems to have stalled during the Revolution. Three settlers had their land confiscated because of their Loyalist sentiments and departed. The British raided the home of Samuel Watts at Wallston and Watts was held prisoner for some time at Castine. The local Committee of Safety stationed a guard at Tenants Harbor at one point during the war.

A virtual land rush occurred after the revolution. Because they were Loyalists, the Waldo's property had been confiscated. It seems to have been assumed that lots not occupied before the Revolution were up for grabs. Dozens of men, many of them veterans, brought their families here in the 1780's. Those settlers were later obliged to buy their land from Lucy Knox, the only Waldo heir who had sided with the Patriots.

There were two engagements with the British during the War of 1812. British raiders rowed up the river in dense fog in June 1814 and captured the fort, which had been erected by the US Government in 1809 to protect the growing commerce at Warren and Thomaston. The raiders retreated down the river. In August of 1813 at Tenants Harbor, the local militia turned out and repelled raiders from the Bream or Brim. Two vessels belonging to Hart and Watts were destroyed or taken.

In 1789, St. George and Cushing were incorporated as the Town of Cushing. Even at that time, St. George's population exceeded that of Cushing. St. George's population was 578 people in 1790, 886 in 1800, 1127 in 1810, 1325 in 1820 and then generally increased until the 1880's.

Fluctuations in population reflect the economic activities in the various decades. The earliest settlers derived most of their cash income from cutting cordwood and shipping it to Boston, where there was a constant demand for firewood. At least four tidal sawmills were operating around 1800 for sawing lumber and grinding grain. From the first, many men were engaged as sailors and captains. It appears that almost every family was engaged in some small-scale farming.

The commencement of quarrying and expansion of shipbuilding reversed the population decline of the 1820's. Granite quarrying began in the 1830's and soon several large operations in Town provided employment for hundreds of men. Over sixty vessels were built in Town during the 1800's and when both quarries and shipyards were operating, population peaked at near 3,000 in 1880.

The granite industry brought in immigrants who have given St. George a population mix quite different than that of neighboring towns. By the time of the Civil War, there were numerous Irish workers in the quarries. In the 1870's, skilled stonecutters and paving cutters came from Great Britain, the English settling mainly at Long Cove and the Scots at Clark Island. Finnish quarry workers began arriving in the 1890's. They seem to have replaced the Irish, who with few exceptions, moved elsewhere, probably during the labor troubles in the early 1890's. Large numbers of the young Swedish paving cutters arrived between 1910 and 1930. Most of the Swedes moved away as the granite industry declined in the 1930's and 1940's. The last quarry to operate in town, Hocking Granite, at Clark's Island, ceased operations in the early 1960's.

The fishing industry predates the settlement of the town. Probably some of the first settlers from the westward had been here earlier to catch and dry fish. Fish were a

staple in the local diet and fish were exported along with cordwood. According to the late Albert Smalley, a cannery was operating as early as 1859 at Port Clyde. Lobsters were canned, giving impetus to the lobster industry, which still survives. Clams were canned well into this century, and the sardine factory operated until it burned on September 24, 1970. A facility for cleaning, grading and shipping mussels was opened at Long Cove in 1982 and operated until 2008. Groundfishing has seen a major decline. Port Clyde holds the last remaining fleet of Groundfishing boats between Portland and the Canadian Border. Today, the lobster fishery is the major industry. In 2008 a Fisherman's memorial was completed and dedicated at Marshall Point.

"Rusticators" – summer visitors – were here as early as the 1880's and summer cottages appeared on some of the choice shorefront by 1900. Until about the 1960's there were but few people "from away" who lived in town year-round. Since then, prosperity throughout the nation has enabled retirees to move here to enjoy the relative tranquility the town affords. Newly arrived younger people with families, often professionals or skilled workers, reside in St. George and find employment in Rockland. This influx of well educated, politically active and, compared with older residents, more economically aggressive individuals, has brought marked change to the Town.

The First Baptist Church was gathered in 1784 and organized in 1789, making it the oldest surviving religious group in the county. From it sprang the Ridge Church (1817), the Tenants Harbor Church (1842), and a Baptist Church at Clark's Island, now extinct. The Port Clyde Baptist Church separated officially from the Ridge Church in the 1940's, although the church building dates from 1897. The Port Clyde Advent Church was gathered prior to 1900 and organized early in the 20th century. The Community Church at Spruce Head dates from the last decades of the 1800's and St. George's Episcopal Chapel at Long Cove, open during the summer, built in 1901 is a reminder of the English granite workers who lived at "Englishtown" as that locality was called.

There are precious few structures in St. George that pre-date 1800, for even at that date, most homes were built of logs. The oldest building in town is that owned by the Clarks on Wallston, the home of Captain Samuel Watts. This house dates from the 1770's.

According to tradition related by the late Roy Meservey, the first school in town was kept for the children of Samuel Watts. That must have been in the 1780's. In 1792, four school districts were laid out. The number of districts increased as the Town's population grew, so that by the late 1800's there were eighteen or twenty schools in the town. Gradually, the districts were consolidated and in 1957, albeit with much opposition, the remaining districts at St. George, Clark's Island and Port Clyde were closed. Since then, all elementary students have attended school at Tenants Harbor.

A high school was begun in 1894 in the sail loft over Long's store. The High School building was erected in 1900. The first class graduated in 1901, the last in 1962. Since

1963, high school students have attended Georges Valley High School in Thomaston. Grammar school students were housed in the old building for a few years, until the old building was torn down and the new town office built on the site.

Drastic changes in community life have occurred since the 1950's. Relatively few people are regularly employed in town; the vast majority works in Thomaston, Rockland, or even further away. Larger numbers of fishermen must compete for a diminishing resource. Agriculture is nearly non-existent. With the closing of neighborhood schools, most children are bused away and grow up as virtual strangers in their own communities.

Perhaps nothing has done more to change St. George than the closing of the high school. Attending the same school as one's parents or grandparents provided a common experience that bonded generations together. Too, many of the school activities brought residents from all parts of the town together. Graduation, school plays, and band concerts helped maintain a pleasant sense of community pride and continuity. Those who have not lived in town through this period cannot appreciate the magnitude of the void created by the loss of our town's high school.

Another significant and related change is the declining participation in many local organizations. Despite an increase in population since 1960, support of local fraternal orders and churches has not increased proportionately. Lacking the bonding provided by local schooling, younger people do not identify with community organizations and most feel no commitment to perpetuate them. Similarly, people who have moved into town are as likely to support the religious and social organizations of Thomaston or Rockland as those in St. George.

On a more positive note, the change in population has created support for organizations with specialized interests. Many artists have made St. George their home and art shows and galleries thrive in the summer months. The Georges River Land Trust originated in St. George and has stimulated an awareness of the need to protect the entire St. George River watershed. The St. George Historical Society has succeeded in restoring the Marshall Point Keeper's House, the first building in town preserved for historic and aesthetic purposes. In the summer months, it houses a museum open to the public with many displays and artifacts relating to the history of the town. The Mary Eleanor Jackson Library has undergone significant improvement and has expanded into a new larger building.

In 2003, the Town of St. George celebrated its Bicentennial with fireworks, a large parade, reenactments, and many other special events to commemorate the occasion.

*Originally Written by James Skoglund. Updated by Comprehensive Planning Committee in 2013*

## 2.2 Historical Resources

There are numerous buildings in St. George that have architectural and historical significance scattered throughout this town. The Comprehensive Plan Committee has identified the following public buildings and historic sites as important to the town.

1. Fort Point/Fort St. George was the site of a U.S. military installation used during the War of 1812. This two-acre point is owned by the State of Maine and is periodically cleared of bushes by the State Parks Commission. There is public access to the fort by land and water.
2. The Town of St. George now owns Marshall Point and the Keeper's House. The tower with its working, automated light is still maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard. The grounds are open from sunrise to sunset and the museum on the first floor of the Keeper's House is opened certain hours during the summer months and staffed by volunteers from the St. George Historical Society.
3. Long's Sail Loft in Tenants Harbor has been used as a store, a sail loft and served as the High School in the 1890's. It is now a private residence.
4. In addition to the main burial grounds at North Parish (Wiley's Corner), Seaside (Tenants Harbor), Clark Hill (Harts Neck), and South Parish (Martinsville), there are several lesser-known burial grounds that may need positive identification and protection. They are as follows:
  - The Watts-Hathorn yards or yards on Taylor's Point (The Samuel Watts stone located here is reported to be broken)
  - Two gravestones behind the Lugar place in Wallston
  - One grave behind Bradley Wiley's in Pooley Field
  - Several marked graves at Clark's Beach (Mosquito Head)
  - A family burial ground on Teel's Island.
  - One marked grave, Pelatia Barter on McGee Island.
  - Two marked graves on Hart's Neck behind the Gallimander
  - Several marked graves on Hewett's Island.

*Reference: Cemetery Inscriptions and Burial Sites of St. George, Maine and the nearby islands – compiled and edited by Steven E. Sullivan M.A. and Robert L. Welsch, Ph.d.*

The Maine Historical Preservation Commission provided a list of historic sites for the Resource Inventory of the St. George River (1989). These included Fort St. George State Park, listed above; early eighteenth-century house sites, though no specific locations

were given; and possible shipwrecks that are believed to exist based on historic documents, although the actual sites have not been confirmed.

The National Register of Historic Places, administered by the National Park Service, lists the following in the National Register:

- Mosquito Island House, Mosquito Island
- Sail Loft, Tenants Harbor
- Marshall Point Light Station, Port Clyde
- Whitehead Light Station, Whitehead Island
- Whitehead Life Saving Station, Whitehead Island

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Committee, a comprehensive survey of St. George historic resources needs to be undertaken in order to identify additional properties that may be eligible to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

## 2.2 Archaeological Resources

The St. George River Region is rich in prehistoric archaeological resources, with sites dating back to nine thousand years ago. Indian habitations, cemeteries and campsites are found all along the river. Shell middens identify coastal habitations and campsites, the only known prehistoric campsites in town.

It is likely that artifact hunters have disturbed all the known Indian shell heaps and coastal erosion has further damaged or destroyed the shell heaps.

The Maine Historical Preservation Commission has identified two sites in St. George as high priorities for preservation. These are major shell heaps at Watt's Cove and Turkey Cove. In addition, the Commission lists known high potential prehistoric sites throughout St. George:

- Fort Point shoreline
- Watt's Point shoreline and shell heaps
- Watt's Cove, south of Cutler Cove
- The shore between Watt's Cove and Otis Cove
- The shoreline north of Teel Cove
- The Turkey Point shoreline and shell heaps
- The shoreline between Howard Point and Deep Cove
- The Port Clyde waterfront

To protect these prehistoric sites and possible property owners (many areas are not on public land), these site locations are not made public.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission lists the Fort St. George site as the sole historic archaeological site in St. George. According to the Commission, no professional survey for additional sites has been conducted to date in St. George. Further fieldwork could focus on sites relating to the earliest European settlement of the Town, beginning in the period before 1689. In 1999 an archaeological survey was done on the middens at Snow's Point as a direct result of a subdivision request.

## 2.4 Goals, Policies, and Strategies

### A. State Goal

*To preserve the State's historic and archaeological resources.*

### B. Local Policies and Strategies

Pursuant to the State goal the Town of St. George has the following policies:

Strategies proposed in this Comprehensive Plan are assigned responsible parties and a timeframe in which to be addressed. **Short Term** is assigned for strategies to be addressed within one to three after the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, **Midterm** for strategies to be addressed within five years, and **Long Term** for strategies to be addressed within ten years. In addition, **Ongoing** is used for regularly recurring activities.

#### ***Policy 1: Identify and map St. George's important historical and archaeological resources***

Strategy	Responsibility	Date
Create and Maintain an inventory and map existing known historic and prehistoric archaeological resources and continue to add information as it becomes available.	Conservation Commission	Short Term
Explore the options for conducting a professional survey of historic archaeological sites and above-ground historic resources in St. George.	Historical Society/Town Manager	Ongoing

#### ***Policy 2: Encourage the preservation of historic buildings.***

Strategy	Responsibility	Date
Obtain and distribute information available through the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and other groups about the National Register of Historic Properties and techniques for preserving historic and archaeological resources.	Historical Society/Town Manager	Ongoing
Review and revise, if necessary, the submission requirements for projects subject to subdivision or site plan review to require that all state or locally identified historically or archaeologically significant resources on or adjacent to the development parcel be identified in the application and shown on the plans.	Planning Board	Short Term

Review, and amend as necessary, ordinance provisions to ensure they require a buffer strip and/or screening between new developments and historic structures. A waiver of buffer strips or screening requirements could be requested if the development meets specified design criteria that would make it compatible with the historic building/site.	Planning Board/Town Manager	Short Term
Maintain ordinances that include sign standards for size, location, materials, and lighting to assure visual compatibility with the Town's historical heritage.	Planning Board	Ongoing
Maintain the ordinances to allow the Historical Society an opportunity to review projects that might directly impact historic or archaeological resources.	Planning Board/Historical Society	Ongoing

***Policy A3: Encourage the preservation, maintenance and protection of cemeteries.***

Strategy	Responsibility	Date
Monitor the condition of local private cemeteries. Work with landowners and cemetery associations to provide for care and maintenance of cemeteries on their land, as resources allow.	Historical Society/Town Manager	Ongoing
Monitor Town cemeteries	Planning Board/Town Manager	Ongoing