

Castine, Maine
and
Roque Island, Maine

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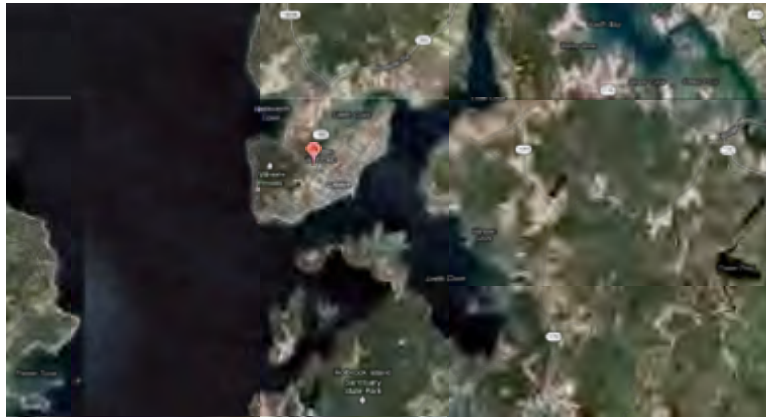
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Castine, Maine:

History and Comfort Combined



Castine, Maine and Smith Cove
(A is the site of Fort George)

Castine is on the Bagaduce River in the northeastern corner of Penobscot bay, a few miles north of Eggomoggin Reach and a few miles south of the Penobscot River that runs up to Bucksport and Bangor. The town, with a year-round population of about 1200, is unique among Maine's coastal cities and towns: for the visitor the town's very long and turbulent early history is a major attraction, as are the stately houses near the waterfront; for the boater, it offers one of the largest, most peaceful, and best-protected anchorages in Maine.

Occupied long before the arrival of the Mayflower by the Penobscot Indians of the Abenaki nation and by the French Acadians of New France, Castine has had more names than Henry VIII had wives: Majabigawaduce, Bagaduce, Pentagoet, Penobscot, Nova Hollandia, and, finally, Castine. Printers have been kept busy changing the stationery.

The frequent renaming reflected Castine's history of occupation by the Abenaki Indians, French, the Massachusetts colonists, the British, the Dutch, and, finally, the Americans. Its large and protected harbor, and its location on a peninsula jutting out into Penobscot Bay, made Castine a natural military site. Its strategic importance was

that it controlled the trade route in furs and timber running down the Penobscot River, and through Penobscot Bay.

In the early 17th century the French colony of Acadia dominated the northern Maine area. Acadia's southern border was at Penobscot Bay, which was then called Pentagoet. Later in the 17th century the southern edge of Acadia was moved southward to the Kennebec River, putting Castine well inside Acadia's border. In 1613 a trading post was established at Pentagoet for trade with the Penobscot tribe, part of the Abenaki nation. In 1625 the French built Fort Pentagoet on Castine's waterfront to control trade routes, but in 1628 the Plymouth Colony of Massachusetts occupied the area when northern Maine was merged with Massachusetts. In 1635 the French retook Castine, returning it to Acadia, but in 1654 it was retaken by the Plymouth colony.

In 1667 the Treaty of Breda gave Pentagoet back to the French and the command of Fort Pentagoet was given to Baron Jean Vincent d'Abbadie de Saint Castine, from whom Castine gets its present name. In 1674 the Dutch took Acadia from the French in the French-Dutch war and the area was renamed Nova Hollandia. Then in 1676 Castine retook Pentagoet, renamed it Bagaduce, and returned it to French Acadia. In 1692 the English colonists retook Castine, razed Fort Pentagouet, and put Castine into a collection of villages called "Penobscot." There the matter stood for many years.

At the end of the French and Indian War (1754-1763) Britain got title to all of North America and Castine's name was changed from Penobscot to Bagaduce (derived from Majabigawaduce, the Abenaki Indian name for the area). Until the American Revolution it was part of the Massachusetts colony. But In 1779, three years after the Declaration of independence, a British fleet arrived in Penobscot Bay and took Bagaduce from the American colonists. During their occupation the British constructed Fort George (then called Fort Castine) on the heights of Castine, overlooking the river, the cove, and Penobscot Bay.

The Massachusetts Colonists responded to English effrontery with the ill-fated "Penobscot Expedition." A fleet of warships and transports commanded by the Continental Navy's Commodore Dudley Saltonstall was sent to Penobscot Bay. Massachusetts Militia General Solomon Lovell commanded 2,000 troops and Lt. Col. Paul Revere commanded the artillery. At great cost the American marines achieved a

foothold on land in an effort to take Fort George, but then Lovell ordered a stop, refusing to advance unless Saltonstall's fleet took the Castine harbor. Saltonstall refused to take the harbor because it was unnecessary to victory and would involve high losses. For three weeks the standoff continued.

The Americans snatched defeat from the jaws of victory when a second British fleet arrived at Penobscot Bay to support the British at Fort George. Belying their heroism at Concord and Lexington, the Americans fled up the Penobscot River and destroyed their ships to prevent their capture. Saltonstall and Revere were court-martialed, Saltonstall for cowardice and Revere for disobeying orders, including refusing to inconvenience himself to save sailors on a grounded ship and deserting his command to return to Boston. Revere was certainly guilty but he was acquitted so that all blame could be put on Saltonstall. The cloud over Revere's name was not lifted until Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1861 poem extolling his role in the revolution was published.

Saltonstall was convicted and cashiered, but modern historians believe he was framed and that Solomon Lovell's equivocation was the primary reason for the failure. In his historical novel *The Fort* Bernard Cornwell follows Buker's *The Penobscot Expedition* in claiming that Saltonstall, though incompetent, was not cowardly, and that the motive for framing him was that by pinning the entire blame on the only commander who was a Continental officer, Massachusetts could be reimbursed by the Continental Congress its loss of troops, fleet, and provisions, valued at 1.5 billion pounds; Massachusetts was eventually reimbursed. Simon Lovell, a farmer turned militia general, came out of the fiasco a hero.

In 1796 the Town of Castine was incorporated. During the War of 1812 the British again occupied Castine, but the 1815 Treaty of Ghent restored it to the Americans. This ended Castine's tempestuous period as a pawn on the chessboard of the great powers.

Castine remained a very small village serving summer homeowners until 1941, when the Maine Maritime Academy was started at Castine. The Academy's 900 students (recently expanded) are the primary year-round residents, but during the summer the students leave and flatlanders from the south arrive to open their summer homes.

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Topography

On entering the Bagaduce River the first impression is one of pristine houses and inns strung along the waterfront; there are no mega-mansions—all houses are substantial but subdued, and in the colonial style. One of the inns is on the site of Fort Pentagoet. The rolling green mounds, the remnants of the earthwork foundations of Fort Pentagoet, shape the area between that inn and the Bagaduce River. The next sight, also on your port side, is of *The State of Maine*, the Maritime Academy's training ship, and of the Academy's red brick buildings. Just past the ship is the town dock, a restaurant, and after a bit you will reach Eaton's Boatyard. Eaton's has dockage for several boats and its dilapidated appearance reflects true Maine disregard for décor.

These are all strung along the north side of the river. There is nothing of interest on the south side until the entrance to Smith Cove—a broad and deep cove that once held the French fleet. The boater who wants to anchor out can find flat water and serenity deep inside the cove; I prefer the drop anchor at the most southern end of the cove. It is a broad bowl in which you find plenty of space and few neighbors.

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Visiting Castine

From the town dock a short uphill walk takes you up to Castine's almost invisible commercial center: a tiny and ancient convenience store, a real estate office, an arts store—and that's about it. Continuing up the hill you reach Perkins Street, on which those stately waterfront houses rest. A walk down Perkins is well worth the effort.

If you continue uphill for a block or so you'll see the Pentagoet Inn on your left. Its location is the site of inns occupied by military officers of all the occupying nations during the turbulent years. This well-kept Victorian inn has good food.

If, instead of walking uphill from the town dock you walk eastward, you see little until you come to Eaton's Boatyard. Check in and say hello to Kenny Eaton. He'll bite your head off, but you will have met a real Mainer. The boatyard says it is "full service," but it is a Down-east notion of service.

All through the town are markers describing the sites of historic importance; all are military events, and all are in the 17th and 18th centuries. Castine is a town that treasures its history as much as it treasures its peace.

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Roque Island, Maine: A Boater's Paradise



Roque Island

The Roque Island complex is a circular atoll surrounded by Chandler Bay on the east and Englishman Bay on the west. The main island is H-shaped and has several outlying islands, chief among them being Big Spruce and Little Spruce Islands, both on the west side. The crossbar on the H separates Shorey Cove on the north, where the residences are located, from Roque Island Harbor on the south.

There are several fine anchorages. Roque Harbor is large and has a long sandy beach, but unfortunately it suffers from pronounced sea swells. Enter Bunker Cove, my favorite, by a small channel on the west side; one can anchor in deep water between a cliff and an island—a perfectly calm and serene spot to stay. Lakeman Harbor on the northeast is also pleasant though shallower than Bunker Harbor.

The name Roque is not from the French cheese. It comes from the game of *Roque*, a croquet-like game in which the playing surface is bounded by walls that add ricochet shots to the usual croquet options. Perhaps the two side walls of the H reminded early discoverers of the walls of a Roque court.

Joseph Peabody (1757-1844) was a Salem, Massachusetts, resident who bought Roque Island with a business partner in 1806. Peabody was among the early ship owners who ships ran between Massachusetts and the Far East. Joseph Peabody became a major figure in Massachusetts's politics and finance.

Joseph's children inherited Roque Island at his death. Among them was Catherine Peabody Gardner, wife of the cotton broker John Gardner. In 1864 Catherine and her siblings bought the share of the island owned by the heirs of Joseph Peabody's business partner. In 1870 the island was sold to the Longfellow and Shorey families; in 1882 the extended Gardner family repurchased it. Gardner descendants have owned it since then and over time they have also acquired all of the small outlying islands.

In 1940 Olga Monks, a Gardner descendant, placed Roque Island and its neighbors into the Roque Island Gardner Homestead Corporation, an entity that operates the island for the family's benefit. The extended Gardner family that shares the island has over forty members representing a list of well-known family names. Among there are Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924), whose Boston home is now a famous art museum showing her collection, Robert A. Monks (1933-present), an early advocate of improved corporate governance, and Endicott Peabody (1920-191997) who served one term as Massachusetts governor in 1962-1966.

The Peabody name is spread around the buildings at Harvard University, represented at the Peabody-Essex Museum in Salem, which celebrates the family's role in the nineteenth century China trade. The cities of Gardner in western, Massachusetts and Peabody, pronounce *pibuddy*, on Boston's North Shore are also from the Peabody family. The family also has merged with other famous families, among them the Carnegies.

Topography

The inhabited portion of Roque is a large family compound on Shorey Cove. The compound has several large houses and outbuildings and is surrounded by open fields dotted with sheep. There the family once built boats, and family boats are moored. The associations among family members are reported as very diverse—one family is reported to have said the ex-wives still go to Roque in the summer.

The western end of the Roque complex is dominated by Great and Little Spruce Islands, between which the Roque Island Thorofare passes. The Thorofare is entered between Roque Island on the north and Little Spruce on the east. Bunker Cove, a navigable passage with deep water, opens up on the south side of that entrance, but don't go too far into Bunker Cove—ledges lurk! Patten Cove is on the north side is shallow and poor holding ground in a west wind.

Roque Harbor can be entered either from the Thorofare or from the south end of the harbor, where several small islands protect the entrance. At the eastern side of Roque Harbor are Lakeman, Bar, and Marsh Islands. These form Lakeman Harbor, which passes into Englishman Bay at high tide—this is not a passage for boats of any size because it winds between ledges and is shallow.

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Anchorage

The main anchorage at Roque Island is in Roque Harbor, near the beach. This can be very comfortable unless a swell comes in from the south. Lakeman Harbor also provides a protected anchorage but the eight-foot depth at low tide is a problem for larger boats.

As mentioned earlier, my personal favorite is Bunker Cove on Roque Island's west side between Great Spruce and Little Spruce Islands. Bunker Cove is deep enough for any boat, it has plenty of swing room, it is extremely well protected, and it is gorgeous—Little Spruce on the west side of the Thorofare is low and heavily wooded; Great Spruce on the east side has high cliffs topped by evergreens. When the sun is shining you're in heaven; when the fog is thick you're in Maine.



Roque Harbor Beach



The Thorofare



Bunker Cove



Myerah at Bunker Cove

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