

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

PORT DANIEL-P.E.I. CONNECTION

Recalling the Wheatley River Lime Co.,
the Philip Blatch Quarry at Port Daniel,
and a business connection of more than a
century ago.

KEN ANNETT.

PORT DANIEL - P.E.I. CONNECTION

A visitor to the peaceful cemetery of St. James Anglican Church, Port Daniel, may note a gravestone inscribed to the memory of Catherine Matheson, a native of Queen's County, Prince Edward Island, wife of Philip R. Blatch and, apart from momentary curiosity, pass by, quite unaware that the monument bears witness to a story of interprovincial interest, linking the Gaspesian community of Port Daniel with that of Wheatley River, Rustico Bay, P.E.I.

WHEATLEY RIVER Far across the Gulf of St. Lawrence on the North shore of Prince Edward Island the Wheatley River flows into an arm of Rustico Bay. According to Alan Rayburn's "GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND" this Lot 24 river was named by the Surveyor, Samuel Holland in 1765 as WHITLEY RIVER, probably for Thomas Whately, politician and horticulturist. An old tradition that a man called Wheatly built a hut there and then disappeared cannot be substantiated. In 1832 the cartographer, Bouchette, used the name WHATELY RIVER. The 1880 Atlas of P.E.I. shows a number of Matheson farms adjacent to the Wheatley River and its tributary of Crooked Creek. This was the homeland of Catherine Matheson and it was at Rustico that she and Philip R. Blatch were married.

BLATCH FAMILY The Blatch family, like that of Matheson, had deep roots in P.E.I., having settled there before 1800. Records held by the Heritage Foundation of P.E.I. show that Philip Blatch was an Officer of the Queen's County Regiment of Militia. In 1861 he won a prize of £ 6 at a shooting match with the Wheatley River Rifles.

The late Don Stewart, a devoted P.E.I. historian has noted:
 " His (Philip Blatch's) wife (Catherine) took sick and he took her to Florida where she died. Philip's Son, John Benjamin, was married to

Elizabeth Horie of Port Daniel. They later moved back to P.E.I. with Philip and are all buried on P.E.I. John Benjamin's son, Frank (Ted) Blatch was born on the Island and his son, Philip Blatch still lives here.(1984)

WHEATLY Thanks again to the persistent research of the late
RIVER Don Stewart the following ACT of the Legislature of
LIME CO. Prince Edward Island, dated April 19,1869 was found.
"AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE WHEATLEY RIVER LIME COMPANY."

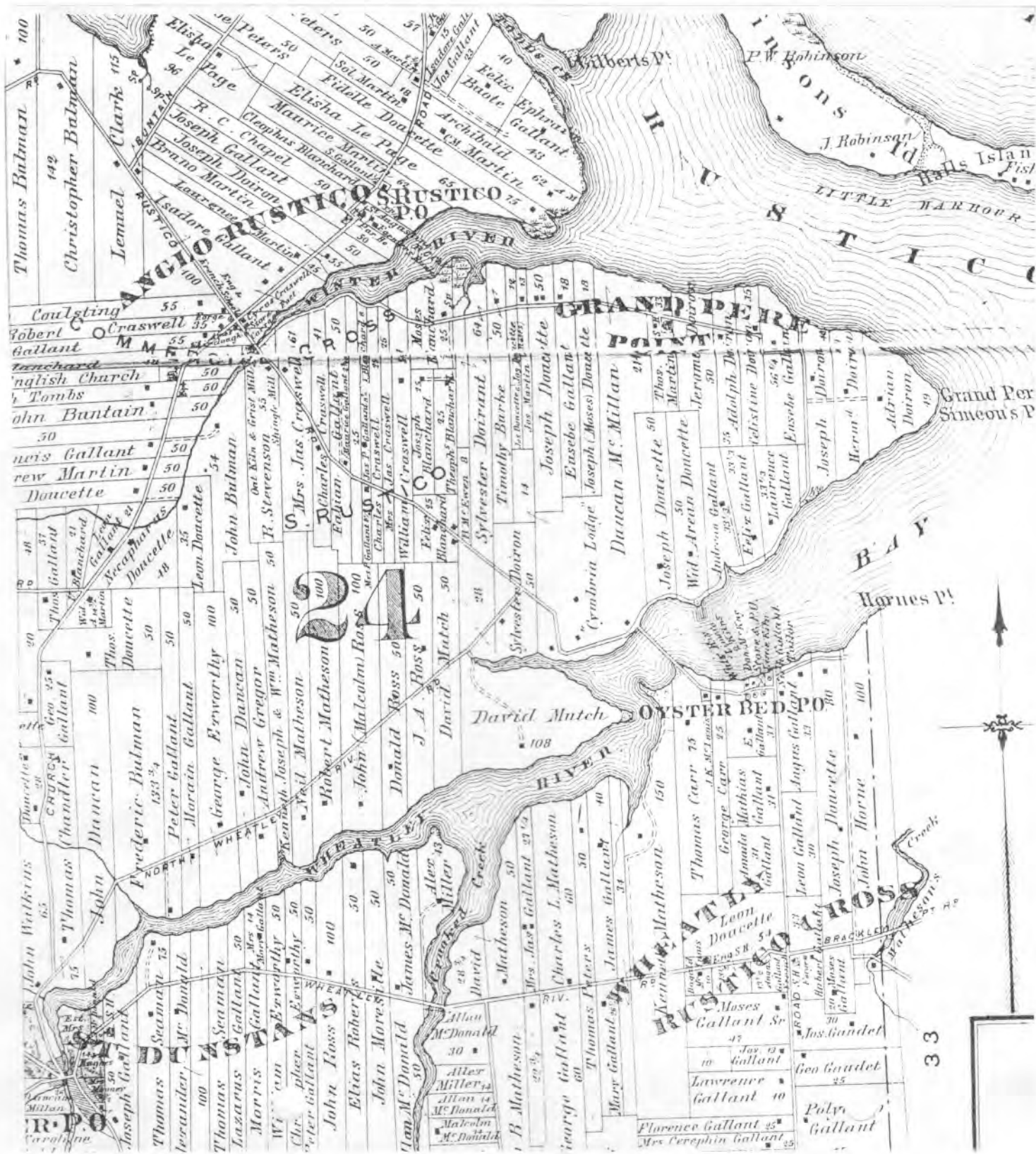
Whereas the persons hereinafter named have formed themselves into a Company for the making and burning of Lime, and it is expedient that such company should be incorporated:

BE IT THEREFORE ENACTED by the Administrator of the Government, Council and Assembly as follows, that is to say :-

I. Alexander M'Millan, Philip Robert Blatch, Donald McKay, John Matheson, James Gregor McCallum, Thomas A.Chandler and John Hughes, their associates, successors or assigns, shall be, and the same are hereby declared to be, a body corporate by the name of The Wheatley River Lime Company..."

The following comments were added by the late Don Stewart:

"In the 1880 Atlas (of P.E.I.) in the Map of Lot 24, it shows that the Wheatley River Lime Company had two like kilns just above Donald McKay's store at Oyster Bed. There was also a kiln up on the Glasgow Road on the farm of John Matheson. It is said that there were three or four more kilns in the same area, perhaps all working as part of the Wheatley River Lime Co. George McKay and John McKay were said to be Masters of schooners that brought the limestone from Port Daniel on the Gaspé Coast to P.E.I. Import records for the Port of Rustico indicate that almost all the limestone coming in there came from "Canada" and



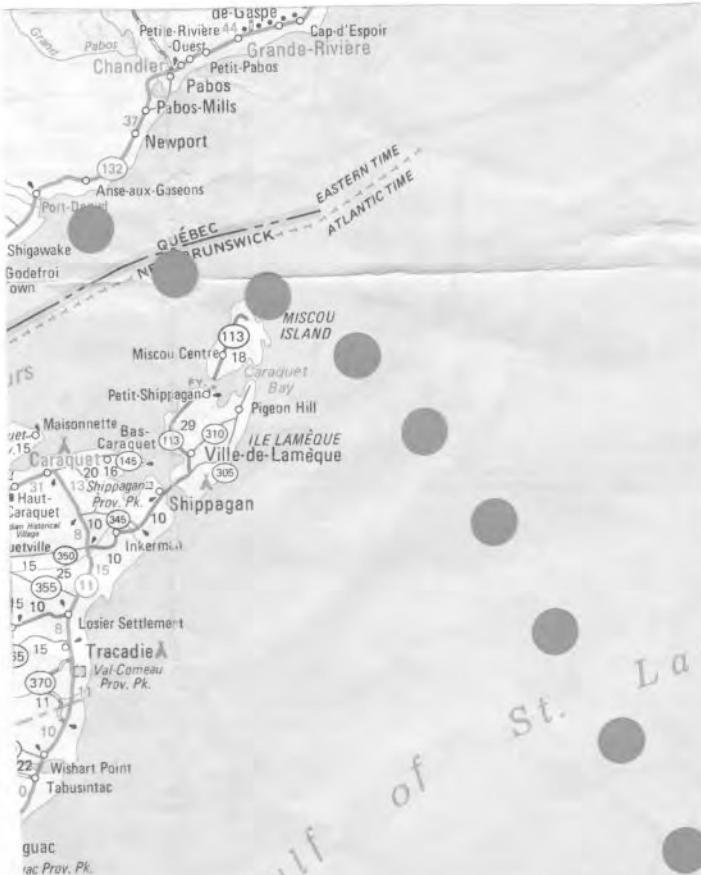
this at that time would have included the Gaspé Coast...

It seems that Philip Blatch found this limestone quarry at Port Daniel where they appeared to be having trouble blasting out the rock. He persuaded the people here (in P.E.I.) to buy it and for years he ran the quarry which at one time was called "Blatch's Quarry". As an indication of the volume of limestone imported the Rustico return for 1872 was for 4060 tons. An item from a P.E.I. newspaper, THE ISLANDER for June 18, 1869 reads: "Launched on June 10th from the shipyards of Mr. John Orr, New Glasgow, a schooner named the ECHO of 60 tons, N.M. and 130 O.M. built for the Wheatley River Lime Company. Report of the Company Auditors for 1871 shows the property held by the Company at first cost as £ 2977 7 s 4d and notes that money had been paid in advance to Stone Quarries at Port Daniel, Canada East.

MARGARET GRANT When Mrs. Margaret MacWhirter published her book, "TREASURE TROVE IN GASPE AND THE BAIE DES CHALEURS" in 1919 she wrote, in part:

"...Between L'Anse aux Gascons and Port Daniel are the limestone quarries, at the base of the mountain known as Cap à l'Enfer or Cap au Diable. Messrs F.X. Deraiche of Chandler and J.C. Fair of Black Cape are the organizers of the Gaspesian Fertiliser Company, which from these quarries supplies limestone rock to the Chicoutimi Pulp Co. and manufactures agricultural lime for correcting acidity in sour soils. This limestone is quarried near the railway, goes through a crusher and then through a pulveriser, which breaks the stone to a fine powder; it is passed through screens, and is bagged or shipped in bulk..."

There is no evidence in "TREASURE TROVE" of Mrs. MacWhirter being aware that years previously the "Blatch Quarry" had supplied Port Daniel limestone for the Prince Edward Island kilns of the



PORT DANIEL LIMESTONE MOVED
 BY SCHOONER TO THE KILNS OF
 WHEATLEY RIVER, P.E.I.

Wheatley River Lime Company. However, an earlier historian of Gaspesia, Sir James McPherson Le Moine, writing about Port Daniel of his day, noted:

"...There is a limestone quarry on the Point of Cap au Diable where forty or fifty vessels load annually for Prince Edward Island."

After the death of his wife, Catherine Matheson, and return to live in his native Prince Edward Island, Philip R. Blatch remarried with Elizabeth A. Hooper. In the Anglican Cemetery of Milton, P.E.I. stands a tombstone inscribed:

IN MEMORY OF PHILIP R. BLATCH
BORN DEC.6,1838. DIED APRIL 23, 1894
HIS WIFE, ELIZABETH A. HOOPER
BORN FEB.2,1851. DIED JULY 26,1918.

Forgotten are the sturdy Island schooners that carried their annual loads of Port Daniel limestone across Bay Chaleur and the Gulf to Rustico Bay. The Wheatley River still flows quietly out to sea but gone are the kilns that once were to be found along its banks to produce lime for the Wheatley River Lime Company.