

1911 Encyclopædia Britannica, Volume 22 — Prince Edward Island



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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, a province of the Dominion of Canada, lies between 45° 58' and 47° 7' N. and 62° and 64° 27' W. The underlying geological formation is Permian, though outliers of Triassic rock occur. The coal seams supposed to underlie the Permian formation are apparently too deep down to be of practical value. The rocks consist of soft red micaceous sandstone and shales, with interstratified but irregular beds of brownish-red conglomerates containing pebbles of White quartz and other rocks. There are also beds of hard dark-red sandstone with the shales. Bands of moderately hard reddish-brown conglomerate, the pebbles being of red shale and containing white calcite, are seen at many points; and then greenish-grey irregular patches occur in the red beds, due to the bleaching out of the red colours by the action of the organic matter of plants. Fossil plants are abundant at many places. Beds of peat, dunes of drifted sand, alluvial clays and mussel mud occur in and near the creeks and bays.

Physical Features.-The island lies in a great semi-circular bay of the Gulf of St Lawrence, which extends from Point Miscou in New Brunswick to Cape North in Cape Breton. From the mainland it is separated by Northumberland Strait, which varies from 9 to 30 miles in width. It is extremely irregular in shape, and deep inlets and tidal streams almost divide it into three approximately equal parts; from the head of Hillsborough river on the south to Savage Harbour on the north is only one and a half miles, while at high tide the

distance between the heads of the streams which fall into Bedeque and Richmond Bays is even less. North of Summerside the land nowhere rises more than 175 ft. above sea-level; but between Summerside and Charlottetown, especially near north Wiltshire, is a ridge of hills, running from north to south and rising to a height of nearly 500 ft. From Charlottetown eastwards the land is low and level. The north shore, facing the gulf, is a long series of beaches of fine sand, and is a favourite resort in summer. On the south, low cliffs of crumbling red sandstone face the strait. The climate is healthy, and though bracing, milder than that of the neighbouring mainland. Fogs are much less common than in either New Brunswick or Nova Scotia.

Area and Population.—The greatest length of the island is 145 ni., its greatest breadth 34 m., its total area 2184 sq. m.

The population in 1901 was 103,259, having sunk from 109,078 in 1891. It is thus much the most densely populated province in Canada, there being nearly fifty-two persons to the sq. m. Though very large families are not so common as in the province of Quebec, the agricultural character of the population makes the average number of persons to a family greater (5-51) than in any other province. As in all the maritime provinces, there is a steady immigration to the Canadian West and to the United States. The population is mainly of British descent, but also comprises descendants of the French Acadians and of the American loyalists. About 200 Indians of the Mic-Mac tribe remain, and have

slightly increased in numbers since 1891. In 1901 the origin of the people was: Scots, 41,753; English, 24,043; Irish, 21,002; French, 13,867; all other nationalities, 1604. The principal religious denominations and the number of their adherents were as follows: Church of Rome, 45,796; Presbyterians, 30,750; Methodists, 13,402; Anglican, 5976; Baptists, 5905. The Irish and French are almost entirely Roman Catholic, the Scots about two-thirds Presbyterian and one third Roman Catholic. Jurisdiction over the Catholics is held by the bishop of Charlottetown, and over the Anglicans by the bishop of Nova Scotia. The Presbyterians form part of the synod of the Maritime Provinces.

Administration, ff.-Five members of the House of Commons and four senators are sent to the federal legislature. At its entry into federation in 1873, the number of members was six, and the reduction to five in 1901 was bitterly denounced. The local government now consists of a lieutenant-governor and of a legislative assembly. This conducts not only the general affairs of the province, but most of those of the towns and villages; legal provision has, however, been made for the establishment of a municipal system, and Charlottetown and Summerside are incorporated municipalities, though with powers of self-government much more limited than those of any other incorporated Canadian towns. The provincial revenues, which tend to prove inadequate, are largely made up of the subsidy paid by the federal government, though there are

numerous taxes, which bear heavily on the small industrial population. But for the increase in 1907 of the federal subsidy, financial exigencies might have forced the adoption of direct taxation, in spite of its unpopularity among the farmers.

Education.-Primary education in the province has been given free since 1852. Since 1877 it has been under the control of a minister of education with a seat in the provincial cabinet. At Charlottetown is the Prince of Wales College, really a rather advanced secondary school, with which is affiliated the Normal School. St Dunstan's College, another advanced high school in Charlottetown, is under Roman Catholic control. Advanced university education is not given in the province. Attendance at the primary schools is by law compulsory, but the exigencies of a farming population and the lack of adequate means of enforcement render the law inoperative. The salaries of the teachers are, as a rule, low, and the school buildings cheerless and ill-maintained.

Agriculture.-The soil, an open sandy loam, deep red in colour, which was slightly exhausted at the beginning of the century by repeated crops of cereals, has been renewed by the application of mussel mud dredged from the bays and tidal streams. All the staple crops are grown-especially oats, potatoes and turnips. Wheat is raised only for local consumption. Cattle and hogs flourish. In the last years of the 19th century the introduction of co-operation gave a

great impetus to the manufacture of butter and cheese. The first cheese factory was opened in 1892, and the first Creamery in 1894. Of over 15,000 farmers all, save about 900, own their own farms, and are in nearly all cases well-to-do. Large quantities of animal and vegetable food, amounting to about one-half of the total product, are exported, chiefly to Cape Breton, Newfoundland, and the New England states. Fruit is raised less extensively than in Nova Scotia, but enough is grown to supply the local market, and apples of good quality are exported.

Fisheries.-Though smaller in value than those of any other
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sea-board province, the fisheries of Prince Edward Island are, in proportion to the total population, extremely productive. Of the catch of about £200,000, lobsters, most of which are canned, are worth about £Q0,000, and oysters £20,000, in the latter case about half the total value of the catch of the Dominion, which is compelled to import largely from the United States. There are signs of the approaching exhaustion of the oyster beds, but no adequate remedy or new source of supply has been found. Herring, cod, mackerel and smelts are also caught in large quantities in the coast waters.

Other Industries.-About one-third of the province is covered with birch, beech, maple, pine, spruce, cedar and other woods, but though a little lumber is exported, the industry is

declining. The building of wooden ships, a flourishing trade till about 1886, is now almost extinct. The packing of pork and of lobsters is actively pursued near Charlottetown, and small factories have been established for the manufacture of boots and shoes, tobacco, condensed milk, &c., but the great bulk of the manufactured goods used are imported from the other provinces. Communications.-The Prince Edward Island branch of the Intercolonial railway, owned and worked by the federal government, runs from Souris in the east to Tignish in the north-west, with branches to Georgetown, Murray Harbour, Charlottetown and Cape Traverse. Good Wagon roads intersect each other everywhere, and nearly all the villages and country districts are connected by telephone. During spring, summer and autumn Charlottetown has daily communication with Pictou in Nova Scotia and Shediac in New Brunswick, and a frequent service to other ports in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Massachusetts. The harbour of Charlottetown and the Northumberland Straits are closed by ice from about the middle of December to the beginning of April, after which there is a service by specially constructed ice-breaking boats between Georgetown and Pictou. The ice is often too thick to make a regular service possible, and the island has long agitated for federal construction of a railway tunnel between Cape Traverse in Prince Edward Island and the neighbouring shore of New Brunswick, 9 m. distant. History.-Jacques Cartier sighted Prince Edward Island on his first voyage in June 1534, but mistook it for part of the mainland. Succeeding voyagers discovered his mistake, and

toward the end of the 16th century it was called Isle St Jean, which name it retained till 1798, when it was given its present name out of compliment to the duke of Kent, at that time commanding the British forces in North America. In 1603 Champlain took possession of it for France, and in 1663 it was granted by the company of New France to Captain Doublet, an officer in the navy whose failure to make permanent settlements soon brought about the loss of his grant. Little attention was paid to the island until after the Peace of Utrecht, when the French made efforts to colonize it. In 1719 it was granted, en franc allen noble, to the count of St Pierre, who tried to establish fisheries and a trading company. He spent large sums on his enterprise, but the scheme proved unsuccessful and his grant was revoked. In 1758, soon after the capture of Louisbourg, Isle St Jean was occupied by a British force under Lord Rollo (see Annual Register, 1758). Its population at this time numbered about 4000, under a military governor with his headquarters at Port la Joie (Charlottetown). After its final cession to Great Britain in 1763 it was placed under the administration of Nova Scotia, but later was made a separate government, its first parliament meeting in 1773. I

In 1764-1765 it was surveyed, and most of the present names given; in 1767 it was divided into townships of about 20,000 acres each, grants of which were made to individuals with claims on the government. They were to pay a small sum as quit rents, and the conditions imposed provided for the establishment of churches and wharves and

bona-fide settlement. On these terms practically the whole island was granted away in a single day. The grantees were in most cases mere speculators, and the lands fell into the hands of a large number of non-residents. A continual agitation against the absentees was kept up by the settlers, who rapidly increased in numbers. During the early 10th century many Scottish immigrants settled in the island. A commission appointed in 1860 advised the compulsory purchase of the lands, and their sale in smaller holdings to genuine settlers, but a bill passed with this intent was disallowed by the imperial authorities.

In 1864 a conference to consider the question of maritime union met at Charlottetown. The visit of delegates from Canada widened it into a general conference on federation, from which sprang the Dominion of Canada. Prince Edward Island's local patriotism forced its representatives to withdraw from the later conferences, but the abrogation in 1866 by the United States of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854, financial difficulties connected with the building of an island railway, and the offer of better terms by the Dominion government, brought it into federation in 1873. A bill on the lines of that formerly disallowed was soon afterwards passed, and the land difficulty was finally settled. Since then the main political issues have been the quarrel with the federal government over the construction of a tunnel and the control of the liquor traffic, which has been prohibited but by no means suppressed.

AUTHORITIES.—Sir J. W. Dawson, *Acadian Geology* (1891); Report of Dr R. W. Ells, Geological Survey (1882–1884); Report of R. Chalmers, Geological Survey (1894); Rev. G. Sutherland, *Manual of History of Prince Edward Island* (1861); D. Campbell, *History of Prince Edward Island* (1875); *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, vol. iv. (London, 1901); articles in J. C. Hopkins's *Canada*, an *Encyclopaedia* (Toronto, 1898–1900). ([W. L. G.](#))

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