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THE PORT OF SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, 1867-1911:

EXPLORATION OF AN ECOLOGICAL COMPLEX

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Elizabeth McGahan

Periodically, urban historians have been reminded of the need to view the development of cities as a process.¹ In tracing the growth of the Port of Saint John, 1867-1911, the theoretical perspective of ecology is employed to examine the process by which one urban community was integrated, through its transport node, into a larger eco-system of cities.

The transport node of the City of Saint John provides an exemplary model of an agent of integration since it is generally recognized that a significant correlation exists between the sophistication of a society's instruments of transport technology and the organization of that society.² Similarly, it has been suggested

¹See especially Leo F. Schnore and Eric E. Lampard, "Social Science and the City--A survey of research needs", in Leo F. Schnore (ed.), Social Science and the City (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 40. See also Allan Pred, The Spatian Dynamics of Urban Industrial Growth: 1800-1914 (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 3.

²See especially Scott Greer, The Emerging City (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 43-48; R.D. McKenzie, The Rise of the Metropolitan Community (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967 [1933]), p. 143. See also Leo F. Schnore and Gene B. Peterson, "Urban and Metropolitan Development in the United States and Canada", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 316 (March 1958), p. 64; Carl A. Dawson and Warner E. Gettys, An Introduction to Sociology (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), pp. 214-215; C.D. Harris and E.L. Ullman, "The Nature of Cities", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 242 (Nov. 1945), p. 9; D. Michael Ray, "The Spatial Structure of Economic and Cultural Differences: A Factorial Ecology of Canada", The Regional Science Association Papers, XXIII (1969), p. 14; W.T. Easterbrook, "Innis and Economics", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. 19 (1953), 294. For a nineteenth-century viewpoint see J. Edward Boyd, Narrow Gauge Railways (St. John, N.B. 1865), p. 3.

that the infrastructure of transportation systems is closely related to the operation of urban systems and, hence, a nodal focus can offer some indication of Saint John's place in the functional hierarchy of cities.³ In this regard Otis Duncan, a demographer, remarked that "... a system [of cities] frame of reference assumes that what cities are like depends at least in part on what cities do (their functions); that the functions of cities are in some measure a reflection of inter-community relationships".⁴

Previous research has revealed that from its earliest beginnings the transport node determined the primary functions of Saint John.⁵ As Jean Gottman noted, Atlantic seaports served as "hinges" between the interior and Europe.⁶ For Saint John this interior was largely based upon a provincial lumber and shipbuilding wealth,⁷ and consequently, the technological and organizational revolution of the nineteenth century, which disrupted this base, forced the city to seek integration in an industrializing system emphasizing continental

³James W. Simmons, Canada as an Urban System: A Conceptual Framework (Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for Urban and Community Studies), Research Paper #62, pp. 1-6.

⁴Otis D. Duncan et al., Metropolis and Region (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1960), p. 82.

⁵W.S. MacNutt, The Atlantic Provinces: The Emergence of a Colonial Society (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1965), pp. 108-109, 100-101.

⁶Jean Gottman, Megalopolis (New York: The Twentieth-century Fund, 1961), p. 103.

⁷Graeme Clifford Wynn, "The Assault on the New Brunswick Forest" (University of Toronto: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1974), pp. 41, 62, 277-279.

linkages. Thus, following the decline of its Port based wealth in the 1870's and having realized by the 1880's that the basis of that previous prosperity would never be regained, the City worked towards acquiring a rail connection to central Canada. Acquisition of this connection was predicated on the ability of the City to provide a particular service to the larger system: an ocean Port. Hence, during the 1880's the significance of the transport node for Saint John resulted from the eventual perception by the municipal government of the synchronous nature of Port and City economic recovery. However, unable either to expend the necessary funds itself or secure these in sufficient quantity from the Provincial Government, the City resorted to a common alternative in late nineteenth-century North America: Federal Aid.⁸ This alternative singularly demonstrated the increasing scale of transport and organization throughout the country.

Seeking Federal assistance, however, was not without difficulty. Competition with Halifax within a national context for winter port status resulted in a sobering realization of the position of the Port within the transport hierarchy. Dependent upon an external agency—the Federal Government—Saint John waited until the mid-1890's before linking into a national transportation system. Throughout the negotiations with Ottawa and the Canadian Pacific Railway, the City

⁸See Corporation of the City of Saint John, Common Council Papers, 26 November 1879, Memorial to the Governor-General. For contemporary theoretical implications see Amos H. Hawley, Urban Society: An Ecological Approach (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1971), p. 236; and Melvin M. Webber, "The Post-city Age", Daedalus, Vol. 97 (Fall, 1968), 1093.

presented the Port as a winter appendage to Montreal.⁹ This civic response to integration suggests the need for analyzing transport nodes within a national administrative unit.¹⁰ For although concern over Portland, Maine's competitive abilities were real, by positioning itself within the Montreal transport matrix, Saint John hoped to diminish that threat through a Canadian intra-nodal association.¹¹ Again viewing Saint John within a national system of cities, Ottawa's role in encouraging cooperative competition between Canada's two Maritime ports becomes apparent. Consequently, the presence of two port cities on the Atlantic resulted in the recognition by Ottawa of a dual transport primate within the Maritimes.¹²

⁹A.M. Belding, "St. John as a Winter Port", Canadian Magazine, 12:5 (1898-1899), pp. 398-399. See also Amos H. Hawley, Urban Society: An Ecological Approach, p. 9. More recently, L.S. Bourne has suggested Saint John's appendage to Montreal. See "Urban Systems in Australia and Canada: Comparative notes and research questions", Australian Geographical Studies, 12 (Oct. 1974), p. 166.

¹⁰See especially N.S.B. Gras, "The Development of Metropolitan Economy in Europe and America", American Historical Review, XXVII (July 1922). Despite the opinion contained in the previously cited article, Gras believed "... that the Maritime Provinces of Canada would be better off in the metropolitan region of Boston". See N.S.B. Gras, "Regionalism and Nationalism", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 7 (1928-1929), 466. See also Donald Kerr, "Metropolitan Dominance in Canada" in John Warkentin (ed.), Canada: A geographical interpretation (Toronto: Methuen 1965), p. 531.

¹¹Saint John Common Council and Saint John Board of Trade, "Saint John as a Canadian Winter Port and the Terminus of the Canadian Pacific and Inter-colonial Railways" (Saint John, N.B., 1898).

¹²For discussion on dual primate city, see Donald Kerr, "Metropolitan Dominance in Canada". In regard to Maritime dual primate city see S.A. Saunders, Studies in the Economy of the Maritime Provinces (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1939), pp. 173-174.

For discussion of functional hierarchy see Walter Christaller, Central Places in Southern Germany (translated by W. Baskin) (Englewood

Although not experiencing population growth similar to other Canadian cities,¹³ Saint John through its nodal integration still underwent organizational and spatial changes resulting from its entrance into the system of cities. These changes were observable in the relationships between the City's power centers: the elected members of the Saint John Common Council and the voluntary membership of the Saint John Board of Trade. Each performed a function in regard to the Port.¹⁴ The Common Council was primarily concerned with civil self-service functions, such as operating the ferry. The Board was more intimately connected with the performance of external functions.¹⁵ Struggling to make inroads in the trade network over which it had no formal control, the Board of Trade attempted and succeeded in obtaining positions in the municipal government. Thus, organizationally at the municipal level, increasing participation by the Common Council in discussions related to the external functions of the Port indicated an emerging coalescence of opinion, stimulated by the presence on the Council of Board of Trade members. In this regard, members of Saint John's power center

Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966 [1937]). For contemporary comment see Amos H. Hawley, Urban Society: An Ecological Approach, pp. 227-239; and John N. Jackson, The Canadian City (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1973), pp. 186-192. See also A.F. Burghardt, "A Hypothesis About Gateway Cities", Annals Association of American Geographers, Vol. 62 (June 1971), pp. 272-273.

¹³See Table 1.

¹⁴Roland I. Warren, The Community in America (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1972), p. 12.

¹⁵Harland W. Gilmore, Transportation and the Growth of Cities (Illinois: The Glencoe Press, 1953), p. 82. See also N.S.B. Gras, "Why Study Business History", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. 4 (1938), pp. 320-340.

TABLE 1
POPULATION OF CITIES AND TOWNS HAVING OVER 15,000 INHABITANTS IN 1911,
COMPARED WITH 1871-81-91-1901

<u>Cities and Towns</u>	<u>Provinces</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>
Montreal ¹	Quebec	115,000	155,238	219,616	267,730	470,480
Toronto ¹	Ontario	59,000	96,196	181,215	208,040	376,538
Winnipeg ¹	Manitoba	241	7,985	25,639	42,340	136,035
Vancouver ¹	B.C.	---	---	13,709	27,010	100,401
Ottawa	Ontario	24,141	31,307	44,154	59,928	87,062
Hamilton	Ontario	26,880	36,661	48,959	52,634	81,969
Quebec	Quebec	59,699	62,446	63,090	68,840	78,710
Halifax	Nova Scotia	29,582	36,100	38,437	40,832	46,619
Saint John	New Brunswick	41,325	41,353	39,179	40,711	42,511
Victoria	B.C.	3,270	5,925	16,841	20,919	31,660
Windsor	Ontario	4,253	6,561	10,322	12,153	17,829
Sydney	Nova Scotia	---	1,480	2,427	9,009	17,723
Glace Bay	Nova Scotia	---	---	2,459	6,945	16,562

¹Population of the City Municipality.

Source: The Canada Year Book 1912 (Ottawa, 1913), p. 9.

experienced changes similar to other late nineteenth-century cities.¹⁶

Associated with the above organizational changes, the physical evolution of the Port of Saint John reflected the extent to which national integration had contributed to the process of land-use succession. In particular, each of the following areas, during the years indicated, displayed varying degrees of dominance along the waterfront:¹⁷

1. The Market Slip-Long Wharf, encompassing that section of harbourfront extending from the Long Wharf to approximately the Custom House Wharf and dominated during 1867-1879 [Figure 1 (1872)];
2. The Reed's Point-Lower Cove section located at the southern end of the main peninsula and dominant during 1879-1895 [Figure 2 (1878)];
3. The Carleton or West Side waterfront incorporating the entire harbour area of the Carleton peninsula and dominant during 1895-1911 [Figures 3 (1911) and 4 (1919)].

In summary, by focusing on a transport node - the Port of Saint John - this study illustrates how the complex of altering functional relationships suggested in the ecological perspective effected, and were influenced by, the city's endeavors to cope with its changed situation.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Samuel P. Hays, "The Changing Political Structure of the City in Industrial America", Journal of Urban History, Vol. 1 (November 1974), 6-38.

¹⁷ These distinctions are not intended to represent a social reality but are merely a set of temporal designations which conveniently lend themselves to the period under investigation. For further comment regarding the imprecision of stage theory see especially Wilbert E. Moore, Social Change (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974), pp. 2, 37-39. See also Amos H. Hawley, Urban Society: An Ecological Approach, p. 333.

¹⁸ J.M.S. Careless, "Somewhat Narrow Horizons", Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1968, p. 7. "But where are the studies of the attempts of Halifax or Saint John to cope with their changed situations, or the accommodations they partially achieved as continental winter ports!" See also Careless, "Aspects of Metropolitanism in Atlantic Canada", in M. Wade, ed., Regionalism in the Canadian Community (Toronto, 1969), pp. 119-124.

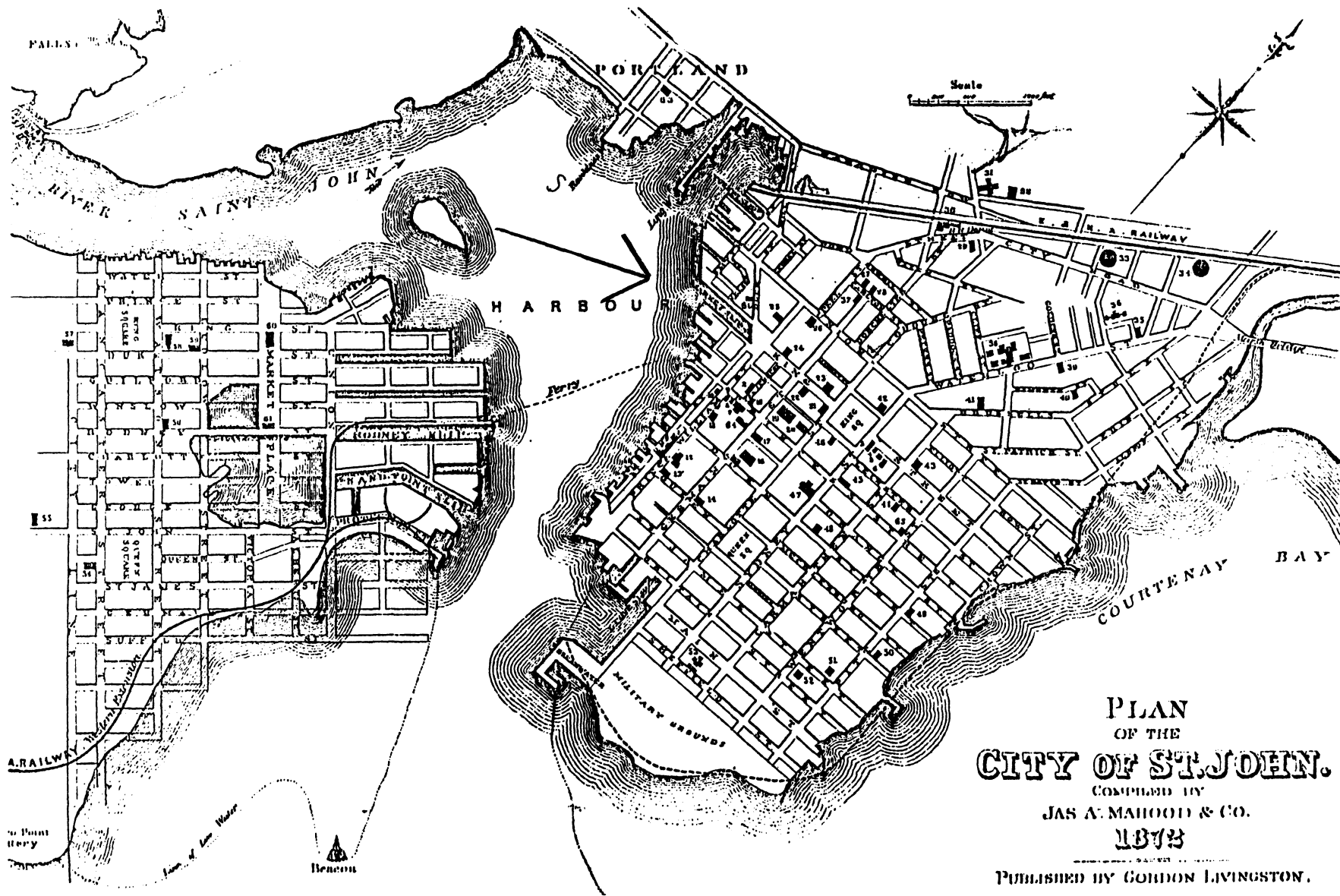


Figure 1. City and Harbour of Saint John, N.B.--1872.

Source: Harriet Irving Library Archives, University of New Brunswick.

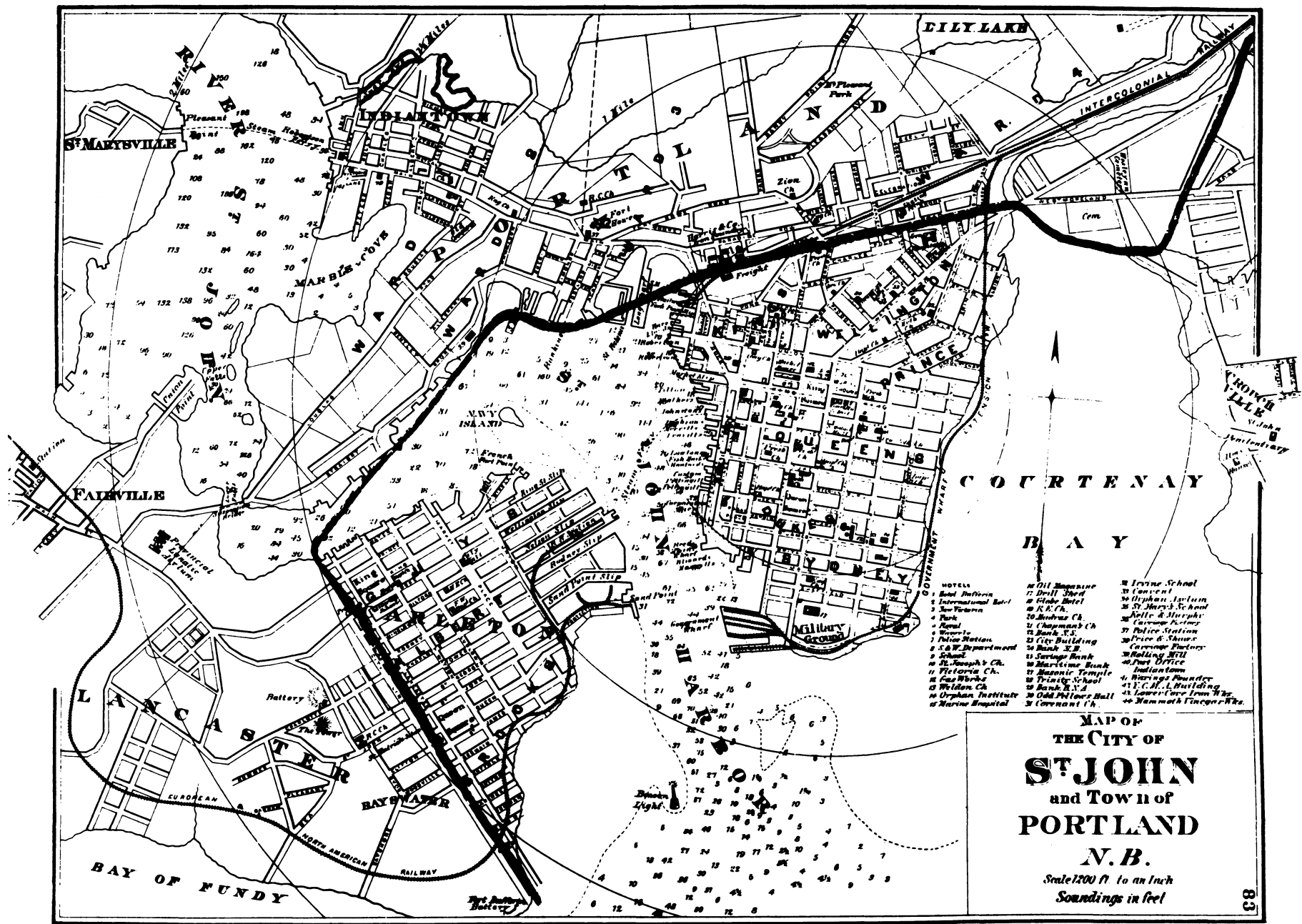


Figure 2. City and Harbour of Saint John, N.B.--1878.

Source: Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

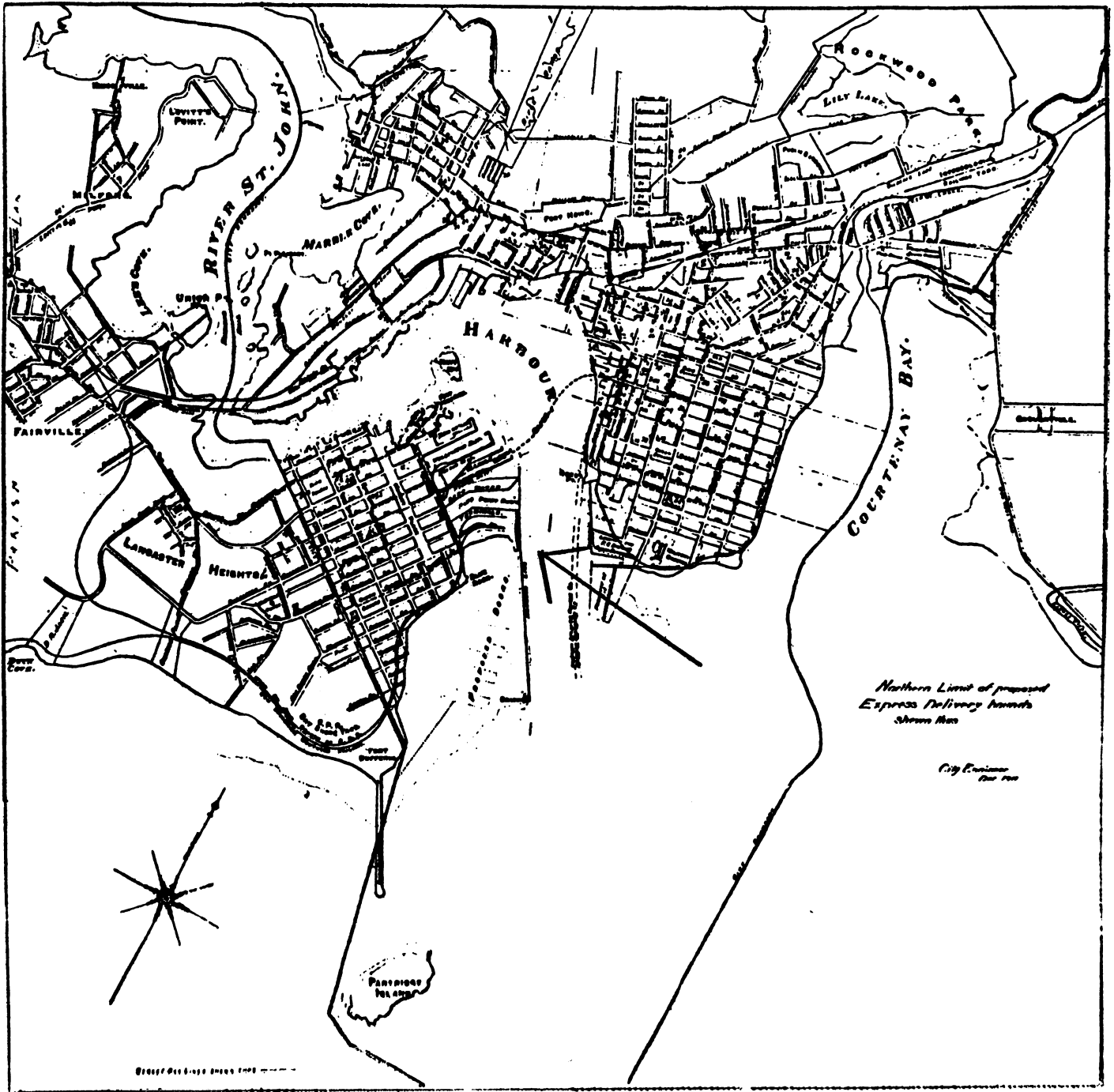


Figure 3. City and Harbour of Saint John, N.B.--1911.

Source: Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

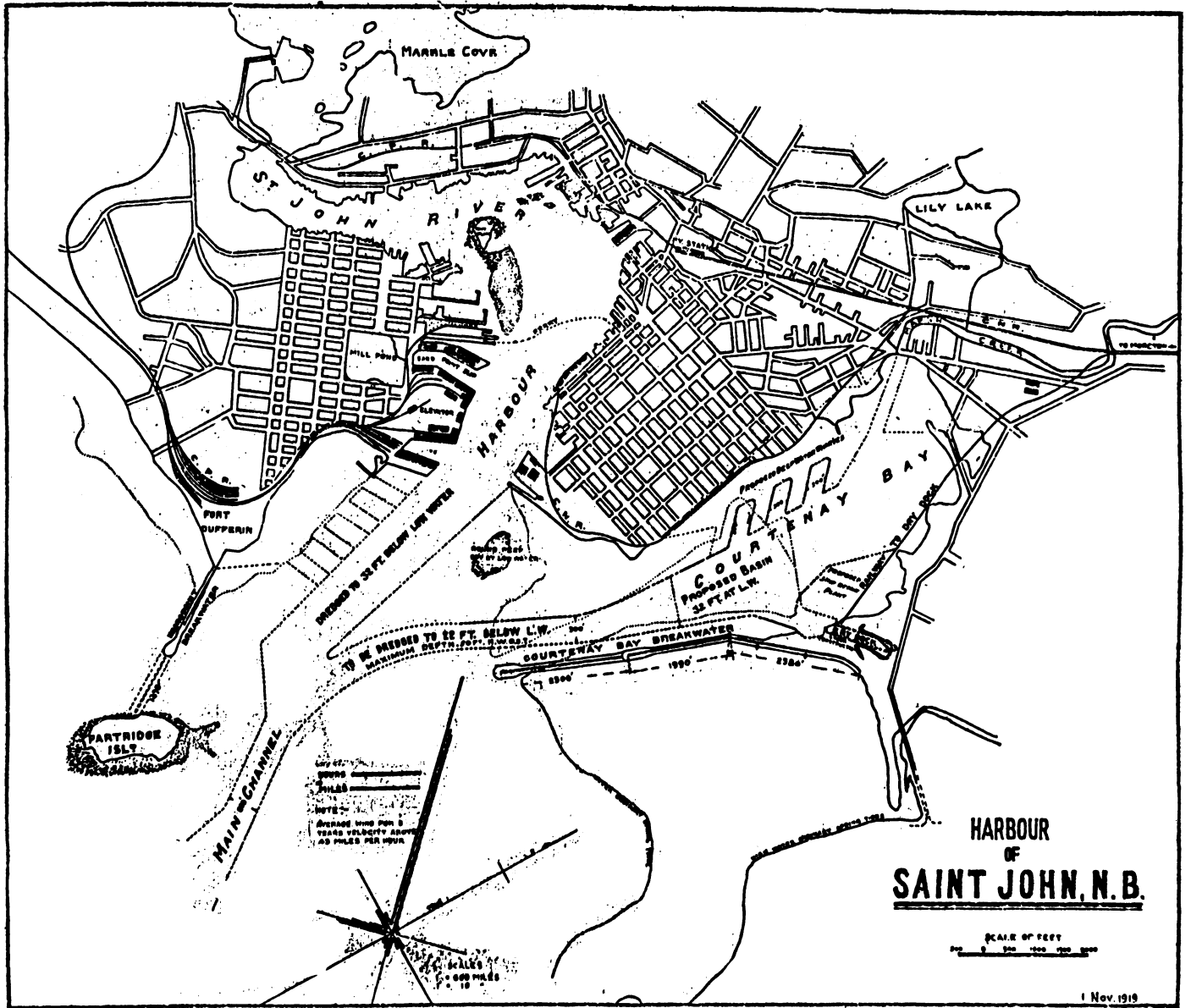


Figure 4. City and Harbour of Saint John, N.B.--1919.

Source: Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.