

Francis Peabody



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Written and produced by Miramichi Literacy Writers, a Project of the Literacy Corps Program, Employment and Immigration, Canada, sponsored by Miramichi Literacy Council, New Brunswick

Readability Level 4.1

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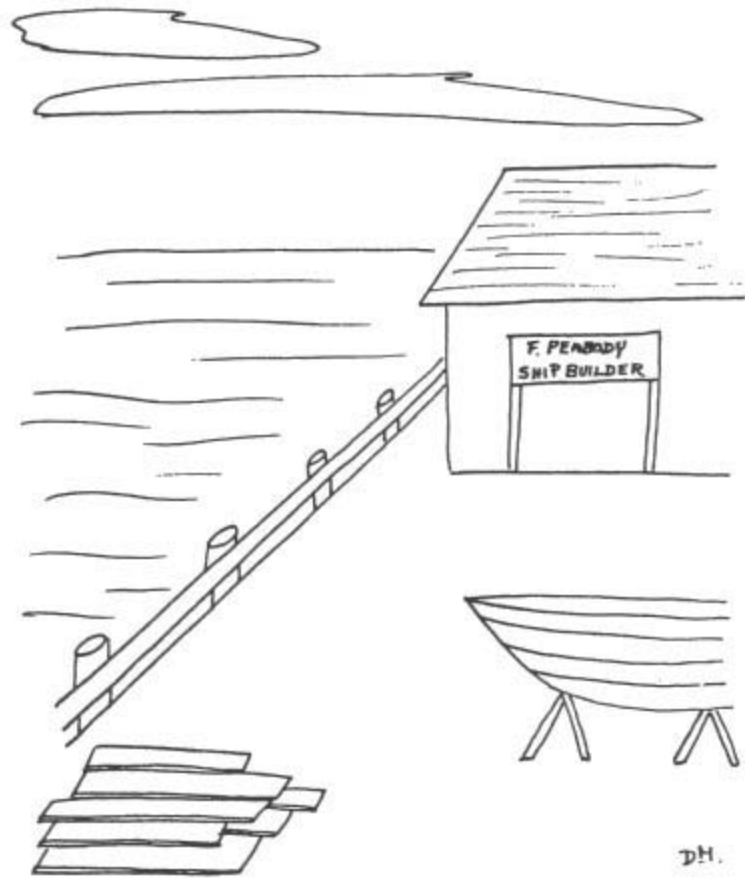
ISBN-0-920709-03-6

Miramichi Literacy Council - Miramichi Literacy Writers series

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Acknowledgements: We wish to acknowledge support funding from the Governments of Canada and the Province of New Brunswick, especially the Departments of Education and Continuing Education.

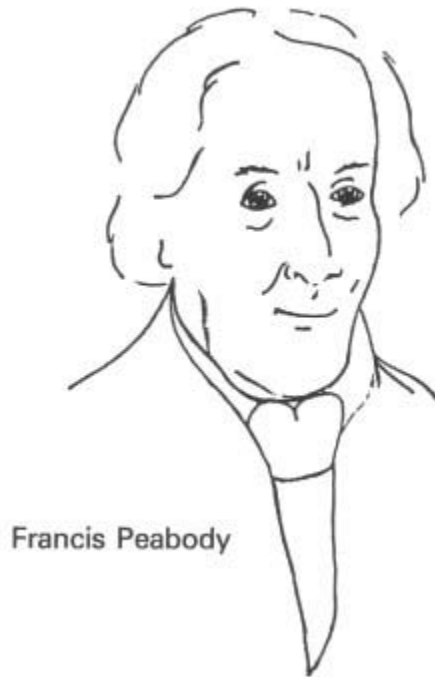


FRANCIS PEABODY

CHAPTER I

One of the most famous people to live along the Miramichi was Francis Peabody. Peabody was born at Boxford, Massachusetts on November 9, 1760. His relatives had come from England to Massachusetts in the 1600's. Peabody's father decided to move his family to Mougerville in 1762. Mougerville is a small village near Fredericton. Francis was only two years old when the family moved to Mougerville.

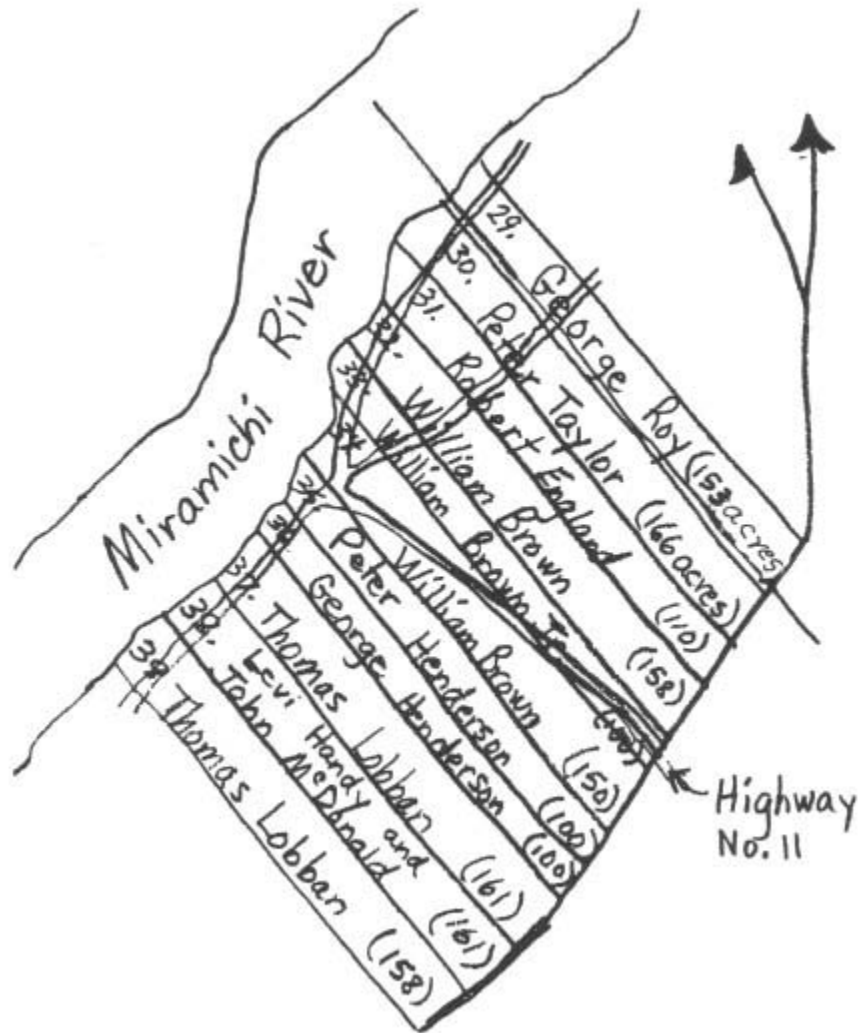
Peabody grew up at Mougerville. The first years of his life are now known well. We do know that he was a trader. By 1785, he and his brother-in-law had a large boat. They used this boat to trade in the United States and in other parts of Canada.



One of his trading journeys brought him to the Miramichi in 1799. He did business on board his boat. He gave the people the things they wanted. In return, the people gave him fish for his drums of strong spirits. He sold these fish in Halifax and the United States.

CHAPTER II

Around 1800, Francis Peabody moved to the Miramichi. At that time the Miramichi was a heavily-wooded area. There were no roads. The only way to travel was by water. There were no churches, schools or bridges. Many farms still did not have all the trees cut down. The land where Chatham stands today was then in the hands of eight men. Each man had a piece of land between one hundred and two hundred acres.

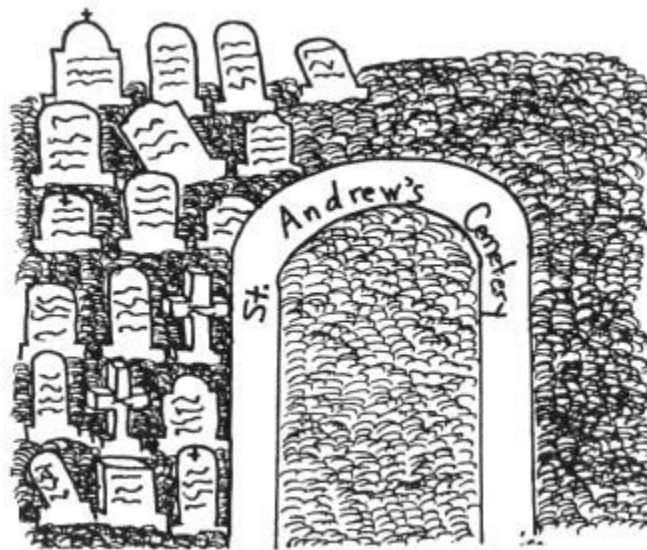


On October 1, 1801, Francis Peabody bought a large piece of land for a small sum of money. The land was near the river's edge. It was on this piece of land that Chatham was to grow. A large tree grew on the land that he bought. He used to tie his boat to the tree. Today, this piece of land takes in the main business part of downtown Chatham between Water and Duke Streets.

Peabody built his first home near the present-day N.B. Telephone Building in Chatham. It was a small house. This home was destroyed by an electric storm. In 1838, he built a beautiful new house. It was much bigger than the first one. It was made of stone. Part of his home was used as a store. This building was later torn down. The land is now a parking lot in downtown Chatham opposite the Williston House.

Peabody named his new village Chatham. He did this to honor William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham. Pitt was a famous minister in the Government of England. His family was very important in England at that time.

Mr. Peabody's first wife was Miss Perley from London. After her death, he married for the second time. His second wife was Lydia Brooker. They married in 1808. He was forty-eight years old at the time. He had no children from these two marriages.



CHAPTER III

During these first years, Peabody's business on the Miramichi continued to grow. Five ships were built in his shipyard. One of them burned in the Great Miramichi Fire in 1825. His shipyard was at England's Hollow in the east end of Chatham. Peabody also ran a saw mill on the Cains River. The Cains River is a small river that empties into the Miramichi near Blackville.

Peabody was very well-liked. In business, he was known to be very just and fair. For this reason, he was known as the "Cheap Merchant". In 1827, his friends got an artist to make a large painting of Peabody. He was seventy-seven years old at the time. This painting was four feet by five feet. It was first put in the Kings Arms Hotel. This was done so the public could see it. Later, it was placed in the Peabody home. Today, this picture is in the Loggie Cultural Center in Chatham.

Francis Peabody died on July 4, 1841, at the age of eighty- one. At the time of his death, he was the most active businessman on the river. He was thought of as a fine gentleman as well.

He and his wife were both buried in St. Andrew's Cemetery in Chatham. His headstone was not very large. This graveyard was not well looked after. Many of the graveyard markers were falling down. In 1970, the town of Chatham cleaned up St. Andrew's Cemetery. They moved the headstones to one end of the graveyard. Peabody's headstone was also moved. This is the only marker left of the founder of Chatham.

Francis Peabody was important to Chatham for many reasons. When he first arrived, there was very little here except wood-covered land. Soon, he started shipbuilding, fishing and mills for the use of wood. More importantly, he set an example. Other men interested in these same things later came to Chatham. One such man was Joseph Cunard. You may read more about Joseph Cunard in another book called, "Joseph Cunard." Truly, Francis Peabody can lay claim to the title, "The Father of Chatham."

WORD LIST

yard

Acknowledgement:

Information for this book was taken from James A. Fraser's "By Favourable Winds", Esther Clark Wright's "The Miramichi" and Carmel and John MacDonald's "Community Leaders of the Miramichi."