

Report on Location of the "Pont a Buot" over the Missaguash River in the Chignecto Isthmus

by

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March 2013

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Executive Summary

There is some debate over the location of the bridge crossing the Missaguash River that existed at the time of the Siege of Fort Beausejour in 1755. Local experts tend to locate the bridge quite near the present site of Pointe de Bute, while other sources (including a map at the Fort Beausejour Museum) locate it near the present bridge on the Eddy Road near Mount Watley.

The bridge was important as it was the only means of crossing the Missaguash River on the land route from the Atlantic Ocean to "Canada" in the 17th and 18th Centuries when there was a gold rush (of sorts) for European powers to expand their influence into the heartland of North America.

In researching my novel on the Expulsion of the Acadians ("Tintamarre!"), I required specific knowledge on the location of this bridge for my narrative and conducted considerable research on this subject.

I needed a better understanding of how the Acadians relocated from their original settlement in Beaubassin to a new one in Beausejour and how the English 43th Regiment of Foot, along with the companies of New England militia, deployed their troops from Fort Cumberland to attack and lay siege on Fort Beausejour on June 4, 1755.

I am publishing this report to share my research with other interested parties and only request that if the content of this report is used in another freely available publication that I be appropriately acknowledged. It may not be reproduced for commercial purposes without permission.

I am very welcome to discussing my findings in this report. My email is brianfrench@outlook.com and cellular is 416.803.5301.

Introduction

The determination of the location of the "Pont a Buot" bridge is important for archeological purposes as well as to better understand how the Acadians crossed the river after the burning of Beaubassin and how English troops actually deployed during the initial assault.

On the northwest side of the Pont a Buot was a tavern / trading post originally established by an Irishman, "Roger Casey". This eating place, blacksmith shop and tavern was a common stopping off point for travellers. It also provided a congenial place for French and English soldiers to relax with victuals and libations when there were lulls in their conflagrations from 1751 to 1756. And it was a convenient place for secret messages to be exchanged.

The French also built a redoubt at the site to defend the bridge in the event of a British insurgency which was the first site of hostilities during the Battle of Fort Beausejour.

This report examines one means of determining where this bridge was: by comparing a map drawn by a British Surveyor in 1755 to a satellite map of 2012.

Findings:

A comparison of a map of the area produced in 1755 by "Engineer Brewes", that records notable events of that time, was made with a contemporary 2012 map produced by Natural Resources Canada. It indicates that Pont a Buot was located east of the crossroads of the NB Highway 15 and Pointe de Bute Road. This is about two kilometres further downstream from the existing bridge on the Eddy Road. This means that the trading post was less convenient than expected for residents of either Fort and for the Acadian exiles forced to leave Beaubassin.

A comparison of the two maps would seem to confirm the Colpitts / Mackinnon / Trueman research that the Pont a Buot - the bridge crossing the Missaguash - was near the current location of the village of Pointe de Bute.

Methodology:

There are several ways of determining as closely as possible the specific place where the Pont a Buot was located. These include archeological findings that indicate the location of the French redoubt built to defend against a crossing of the bridge as well as detritus from the Casey Trading Post. There are reports from local Pointe de Bute historians of finding items such as musket balls and pipes along the north side of the river.

The method for this study was to compare a contemporary map of the area with an historical map from the period being studied. British surveyors are justifiably famous for the accuracy of their maps, but their map making technology would be expected to produce a different final product than a satellite product that represents terrain precisely. (An attempt was made to overlay the historical map on the contemporary map which had limited value but is attached as an appendix).

It was decided to look to both maps and find similarities in the course of the Missaguash River bed. There were four distinguishable points in the river course in both maps illustrated in the following maps. These are labeled A, B, C, D.

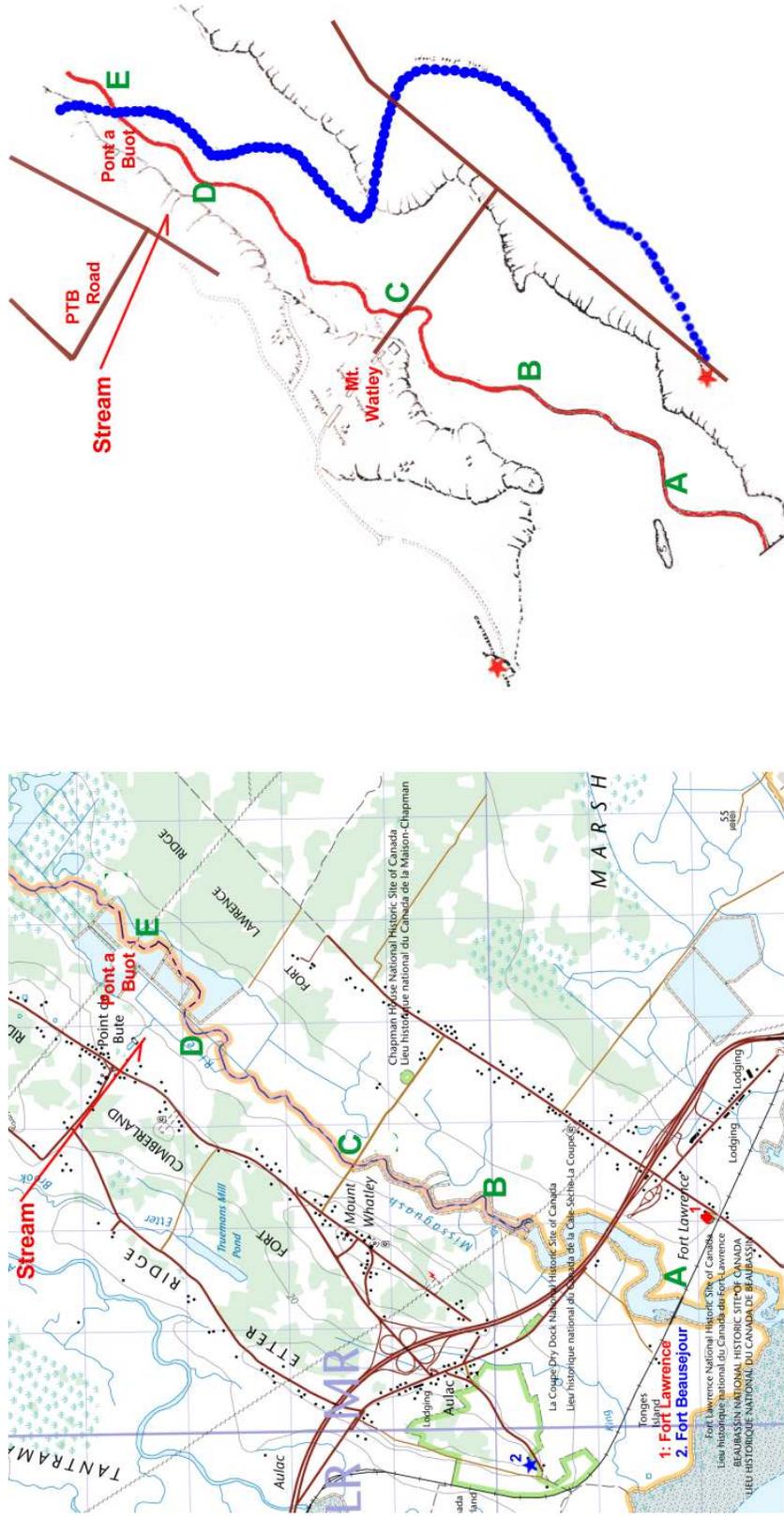
Label C indicates the location of the current bridge across the Missaguash River on Eddy Road, which is described as the site of Pont a Buot in the map located at the Fort Beausejour Museum (Appendix E).

Label E represents the site of Pont a Buot on the historical maps and the most likely equivalent position on the contemporary map.

Study Results:

The following display compares Engineer Brewses 1755 Map of the siege area (as adapted from a photograph on the wall of the Fort Beausejour museum) with a contemporary elevation map of c. 2012 (Natural Resources Canada - <http://geoapps.nrcan.gc.ca>).

Figure 1.0: Side by side comparison of Contemporary Topographical Map with



2012: Adapted topographical map of the Missaguash River - Natural Resources Canada
 1755 Engineer Brewses Map of the Missaguash River adapted by the author. Entire Map is included as Appendix A

Limitations of Comparison:

There are a number of limitations to this comparison that need to be considered before a final determination of its accuracy in locating the bridge can be made.

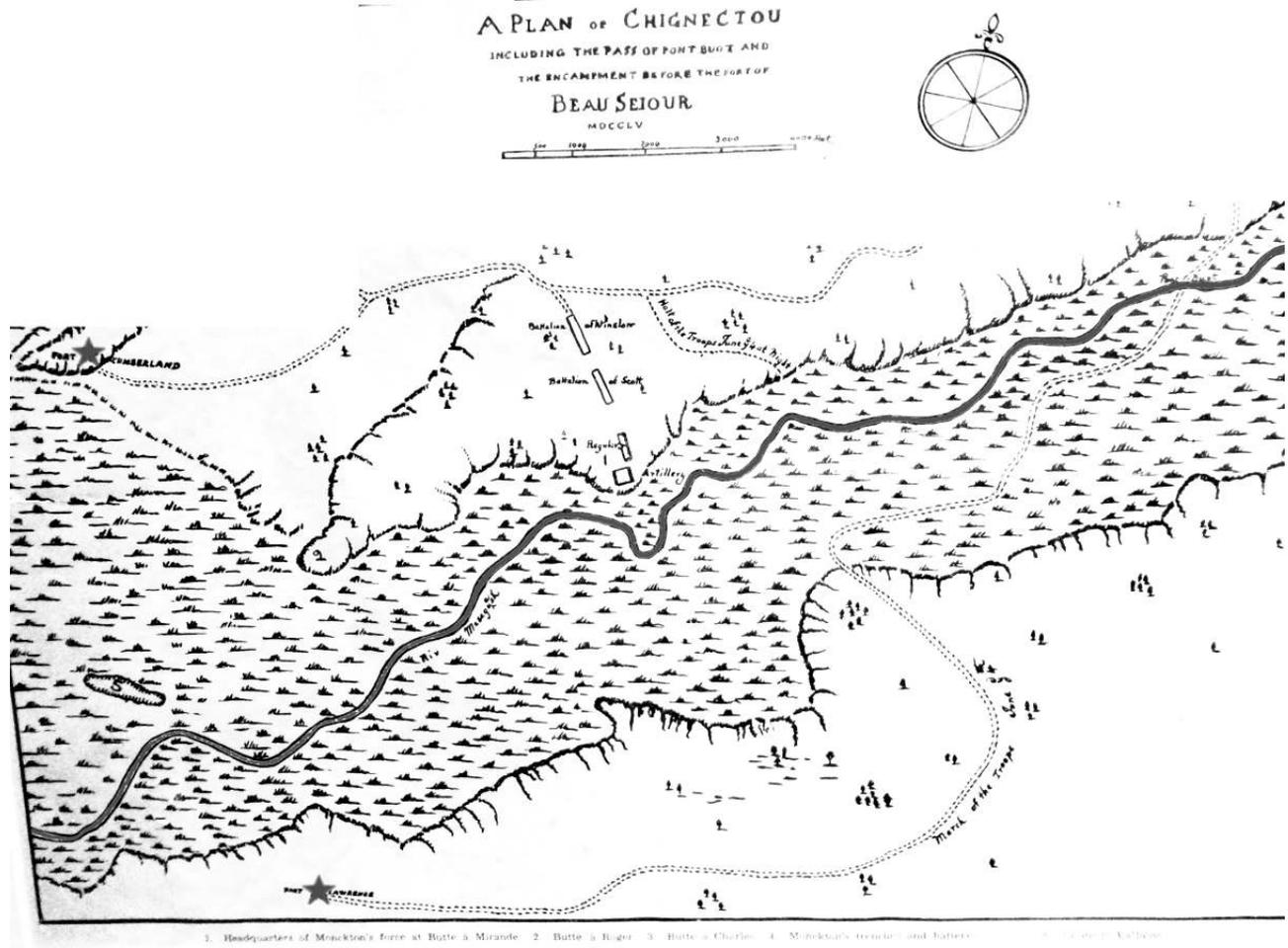
1. The bed of the Missaguash River has changed since 1755. The mouth has naturally been further eroded and it is known that the original path of the River has changed due to human activity and portions have been straightened out. (Source: discussion with Ron Trueman and Don Colpitts of Pointe de Bute).

2. The Brewses Map is hand drawn while the NR Canada map is produced from satellite imaging.

3. The Brewses Map was "hand" rotated to align with the NRCan map along the north south compass axis which likely distorts the final side to side comparison.

4. The scale is inconsistent.

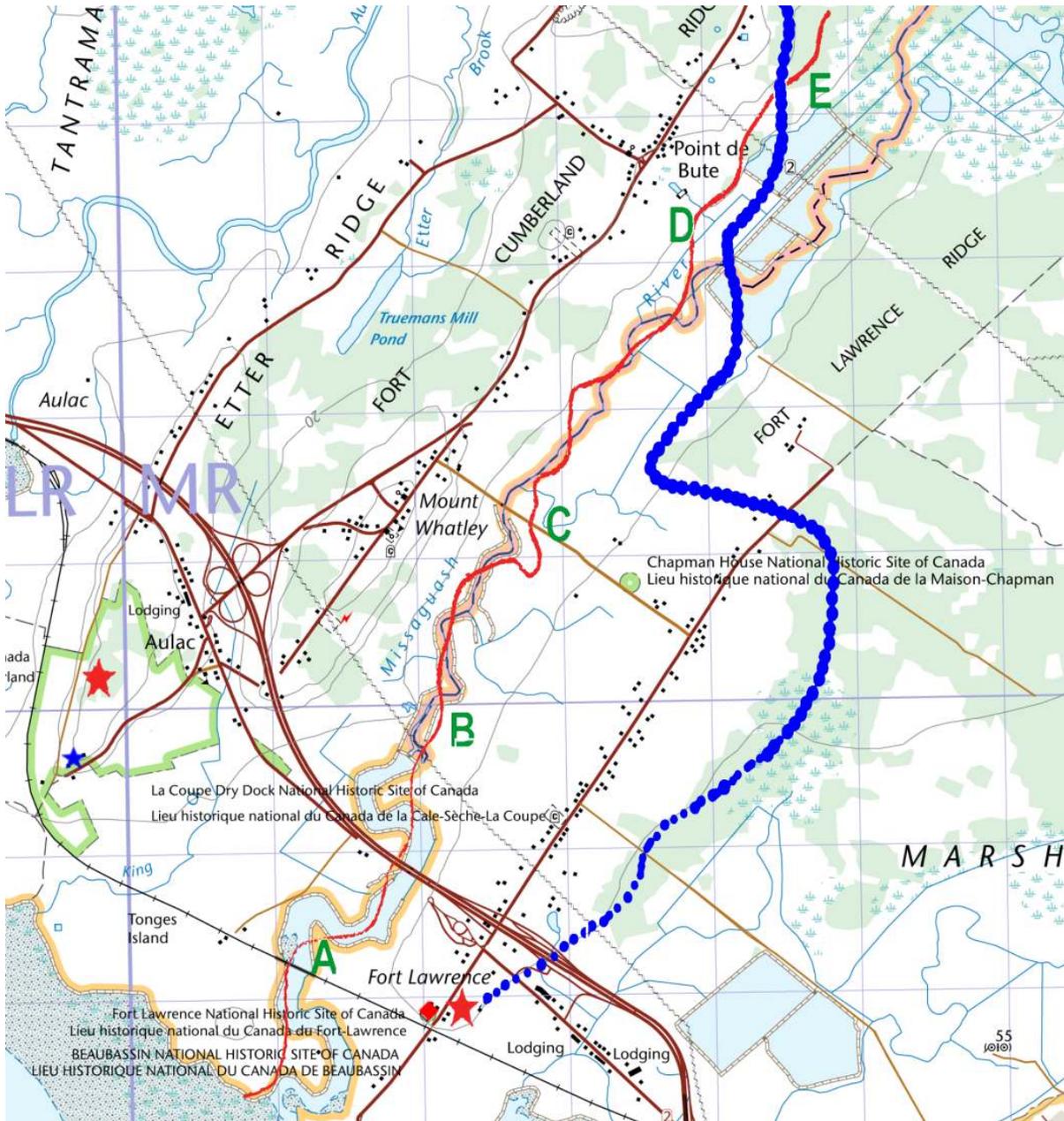
Appendix A: The Engineer Brewes Map of 1755



Appendix B: Topographical Map of Area by Natural Resources Canada



Appendix C: Overlay of Engineer Brewes Location of Pont a Buot on Contemporary Map of Area



(Blue Line represents the route taken by the British Soldiers on June 4, 1755 from Fort Lawrence to the north side of the Missaguash River.)

Appendix D: Map Locating Pont a Buot on the Eddy Road in the Fort Beausejour Museum.



The Author: Brian Lloyd French

Brian is a 1976 Graduate of the University of New Brunswick and studied Canadian History under Dr. Phil Buckler, Bernie Vigod and the legendary Ken Windsor. He was raised in Sackville, NB and graduated from Sackville / Tantramar Regional High School and enjoyed learning other Canadian history from Colin Leonard and Mr. Slauenwhite among others.

He lives in the Toronto Beach with his lively and lovely wife and a future Phd in History, Drama and Literature from the UofT.

He is author of "Mojito" a novel about contemporary Cuba and is wrapping up his novel that follows an Acadian family from 1749 to 1756. He was previously a columnist for the Toronto Sun.

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