

St. John Valley Cultural Byway

(La route culturelle de la vallée St-Jean)

Maine Scenic Byway Eligibility Application

Corridor Vision

The St. John Valley Cultural Byway is a working Byway, but more importantly, it is a cultural journey. Hewn from many political conflicts, border disputes and treatise resolutions that resulted in deportation, migration, exile, and expansion, the historical and cultural remnants are a well-preserved testimony to past struggles and triumphs. The St. John Valley Cultural Byway is a place like no other, where communities still celebrate their ancestry, from the Maine Acadians to the Scotch-Irish settlements; from the Native American tribes of the Wesget Sipu, Maliseet, and Mi'kmaq to the French-Canadian or "Quebecois". This is a place of cultural traditions where it is as common to hear the French language as it is English. Small-town values and helpful, knowledgeable locals leave visitors with a lasting impression and sense of place, which they are eager to recount to their friends and family. The St. John Valley Cultural Byway exhibits a heritage and a way of life as it once was and how it continues to be.

1. Resource Specific Criteria

1.1 Cultural Resources

The proposed St. John Valley Cultural Byway corridor exhibits distinctive and unique cultural customs and values. Early European settlement patterns, political conflicts, border disputes and treatise resolutions resulted in deportation, migration, exile, and expansion involving the French, British, and American colonies, as well as tribal first nations of the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, and Wesget Sipu.

The Acadians



Figure 1 - Acadian Historic Cross

Perhaps the strongest cultural influence comes from the Acadian ancestry of the many generations of families who have resided in the Upper St. John River Valley or "the Valley" as it is commonly called. Maine Acadian identity has developed over several hundred years in response to changing political, economic, and social circumstances. While some aspects of their heritage are shared with other Acadian groups in North America, Maine Acadians

maintain a distinctive ethnic culture of their own. (NPS, 1994). The French-Canadian influence is also very prevalent in the St. John Valley.

There is an inseparable tie between the Acadian culture and Acadian history, including the historic resources found along the corridor. The best-known history of the area, written in 1920 by Father Thomas Albert, claims that the first Acadian settlers landing occurred on the southern shore of the valley in 1785, at what is now St. David parish, in the present-day town of Madawaska. Most of Maine's Acadian ancestors escaped during the deportation of the Acadians by the British from Nova Scotia in 1755.

Maine Acadians possess a strong sense of who they are. Like many other Americans with rural roots, Acadians' cultural identity is directly tied to retaining connections to family, religion, and land. The Acadian identity is clearly evident to the travelling public, particularly in the communities from Fort Kent east to Hamlin.

The University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK) is home to the Acadian Archives. The Acadian Archive documents, and preserves, celebrates, and disseminates information about the Upper Saint John Valley. In pursuing this mandate of cultural conservation, the Archives focus particular attention on the Acadian and Franco-American history and culture. (UMFK1).

The Acadian Landing Site on the banks of the St. John River in Madawaska commemorates the first landing in the St. John Valley. The site is part of the Tante Blanche museum complex which includes artifact displays, a one room schoolhouse, and a house built with square sawn logs over 100



Figure 2 - Tante Blanche Museum

years ago. This is the scene of an annual event where residents symbolically cross the river from Canada each year.



Figure 4 - Ste-Agathe Cultural Preservation Center

On Route 162, the Ste-Agathe Cultural Preservation Center was added to the grounds of the Historical Society property in 2003, and houses over 2,000 artifacts depicting Acadian History and the

history of the community of St. Agatha. Items include religious artifacts and agricultural artifacts among other pieces that are displayed and made available to the general public during the summer months.



Figure 3 - Pelletier/Marquis House

The Pelletier/Marquis House is one of St. Agatha's oldest homes and is a museum of artifacts and history from years gone by. Acquired in 1978 by the newly formed Ste-Agathe Historical Society the House is maintained by the Society and is open to the public during the summer months.



Figure 5 - The Acadian Village

The Acadian Village in Van Buren is listed in the National Historic Register. The Village contains more than a dozen buildings in traditional styles including three square-hewn log houses, a barn, and school house. There are artifacts on display throughout the village and it

hosts several historic and cultural events annually.

First Nations

Before the arrival of the first Acadian settlers in about 1784, the Upper St. John River valley was home to Native Peoples, in particular to the Wulustukieg or Maliseet (Malécite) Nation, a branch of the Algonquin peoples. The very name Madawaska is from the Maliseet's Algonquin language: "madawes"—porcupine, "kak"—place.

The Maliseet's name for themselves, Wolastoqiyik, or Wulustukieg, is derived from the word wolastoq, which means "beautiful river." Wolastoq (Wulustuk, or anglicized, Wolloostook) is the Maliseet name for the St. John River. The Wulustukieg or Maliseet people thus call themselves the people of the St. John River, which shows the extent to which they identify with this region. (Native Peoples in the Upper St. John River valley)

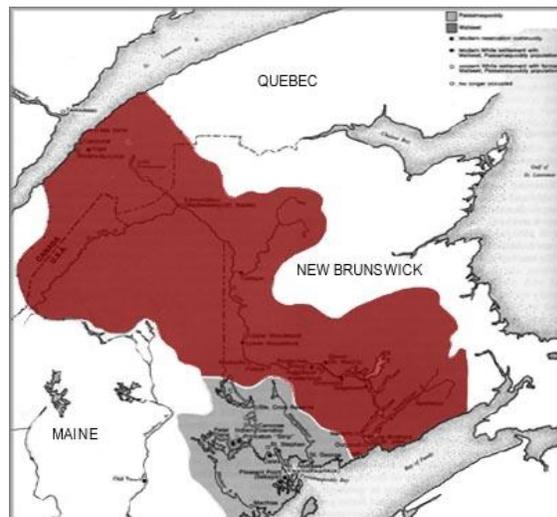


Figure 6-Source: Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 15, p.124.

The Maliseet and Mi'kmaq People of the Wesget Sipu have lived on their native lands along the Fish River and the St. John River for many generations. Many of the Wesget Sipu People are French speaking Native Mi'kmaq descendants who

came along with the Acadian People to this region during the Grand Deportation years. (Wesget Sipu~Fish River Tribe)

Scotch-Irish

The towns west of Fort Kent have a distinctively different cultural heritage than those in the eastern part of the valley. The first settlers of town of Allagash, often



Figure 8 - McBreairty Point Lodging

referred to as “Moosetowners”, reportedly came from then Baie Chaleur, and included people of English, Scotch-Irish, and Irish origin with names such as the Gardners who “poled their laden boats up the St. John in the second decade of the last century. When they found the valley taken up by the Acadians, they pushed on to the mouth of the Allagash and settled on a river island as protection

against the hunting wolf packs that infested the

region. ... At the front line on the rivers were Allagash men, the Gardners, Moores, Kelleys, McBreairtys, Walkers, Haffords, Jacksons.” (Dietz, 1968)



Figure 7 – The Old Gardner House

Today, these ancestral names are still integral to Allagash. The Gardner family decedents operate a sporting camp and guide service in Allagash and at the end of the Allagash Bridge, a sign bearing the name “McBreairty Point Lodging” is prominently displayed.

Early settlers in the towns of St. Francis and St. John tended to be a mix of French-Canadian, Acadian, English and Scotch-Irish, and therefore the cultures of those ethnicities became intertwined as well.

The Church

The region remains strongly connected to their French Catholic heritage. Catholic parishes have historically defined community boundaries, their civic and social functions intermingling with their spiritual mission. The first Catholic parish in the St. John Valley was the St. David Church located east of downtown Madawaska adjacent to the Tante Blanche Museum. The corridor contains many long-established and beautifully ornate Catholic churches such as St. John’s in St. John, St. Louis in Fort Kent, St. Luce in Frenchville, St. Agatha, St. Gerard-Mont Carmel in Grand Isle and St. Bruno in Van Buren.



Figure 9 - St. Luce of Frenchville

1.2 Historical and Archeological



Figure 10- Fort Kent Block House

Fort Kent contains a historic Blockhouse that was constructed after the bloodless Aroostook War of 1839. The Blockhouse is located at the Fort Kent Historic Site, a National Historic Landmark. The cedar building is evidence of the border dispute between the United States and England, which eventually resulted in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty resolving the border dispute between the state of

Maine and New Brunswick, Canada

The Bangor & Aroostook Railroad acquired the Fish River Railroad in 1903 and completed the 60 mile St. John extension from Van Buren through Fort Kent to St. Francis in 1910.

In the Town of Frenchville, the "The Green Water Tank" as it is affectionately called, is often used as the vantage point for directing newcomers in town. Built in 1910 by the B & A Railroad and put into operation in December of that year, the water tower has a capacity of 50,000 gallons. It is constructed of redwood, with steel reinforcing rods; the room

underneath the tower was used for storage and had a coal stove for heat to insure that the water did not freeze. By 1958 the diesel locomotive had replaced the old steam "iron horse", and the tower was no longer needed by the railroad. The Town of Frenchville purchased the tank from the B & A and used it for many years as a water reservoir by the fire department.



Figure 11- The Green Water Tank

In its early days of use, trains would stop at the tank for a "fill her up" pit stop, carrying wood products, and even providing passenger service. The Frenchville Fire Dept. discontinued their use of the water tank in 1981. In 1985, a quasi-historical society was formed and took over the tower. The water tower is accompanied by a 1943 Pullman caboose, donated by the B&A to the Frenchville Historical Society in 1988.

In 1995, the "Green Water Tank" was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. (The Frenchville Historical Society)

On September 16, 1904, Sister Marie Therese, Superior, Sister Anseleme, Sister Victorine and Sister Euphrone, from the Daughters of Wisdom order, answered the call to establish a mission in Ste-Agathe, in the State of Maine. The convent eventually grew to house a District School, a boarding school, and a hospital with a home for the aged, but most of the buildings have been torn down. Wisdom High School was named in honor of the sisters' contribution to the religious and social life of the people of St. Agatha and the region.



Figure 12 - St. Agatha Convent

Source: <http://www.stagatha.com/convent.html>



The Musée culturel du Mont-Carmel in Lille has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1973. Constructed in 1908-09, it was designed by Theophile Daoust, a French architect from Montreal and the angels atop the towers were carved by notable sculptor Louis Jobin of Quebec. The museum has been beautifully restored and houses the largest collection of Acadian and French-Canadian artifacts in the U.S.

Figure 13- The Musée culturel du Mont-Carmel

Nearly every St. John Valley byway community has a historical society and/or museum that houses historical artifacts, photos and documents that help describe its origins, culture and industry. In addition to those already mentioned, these include:

- The Allagash Historical Society Museum
- The St. Francis Historical Society Museum
- The Fort Kent Historical Society Museum
- The Roosevelt School House in Hamlin



Figure 14 - The Allagash Historical Society Museum

Figure 15 - St. Francis Historical Society Museum (left)

1.3 Recreational

The St. John Valley is rich in outdoor recreation opportunities. Visitors can find something to do outdoors all four seasons. Many of the area businesses specialize in the outdoor recreation business. Visitors can go into the outdoors on their own or hire one of the many local Registered Maine Guides in the area to make their trip both enjoyable and often an educational experience. No matter what a person is looking for The Greater Fort Kent Region has it.

Winter Sports

Cross Country Skiing and snowshoeing are two winter activities that are gaining popularity in the region and with good reason. The 10th Mountain Ski Facility has 22 km of trails for all abilities. This facility hosted the 2004 World Cup Biathlon and host smaller events annually. Lodging establishments in the area have trails for their guests as well. The area lakes provide scenic day trips as do sections of the Allagash and St John Rivers.



Snowshoeing into the woods during the winter can take visitors to areas not frequented by mechanized travel. Countless woods roads and frozen streams and brooks will take those wishing solitude to their destination. The Town of Allagash supports one of the largest deer wintering yards in the region. Deer can be seen and photographed all winter. Many choose to take to the big woods in search of moose antlers that have shed. This is a popular and prosperous past time in the region and serious searchers can utilize the services of one of the many local registered Maine guides.

The Four Seasons Lodge and Trail in Madawaska promotes year-round outdoor recreation by offering free use of its trails. Lonesome Pine Ski Area in Fort Kent provides downhill skiing for all abilities. The ski area has a rental shop as well as food service and lounge.



Winter visitors often plan their trips to coincide with Can Am Sled Dog Race. This is the largest and most prestigious dog sled race in the New England. Mushers come from all across the US and Canada to participate in the 250 mile run. The Can Am 250 is a qualifying race for any musher wishing to eventually move on to the Iditarod Race. The start for the race is held on Main St in Fort Kent. The 250 Race is preceded by the 30 and 60 mile races. Events are planned annually for spectators of the race. Two spectator-friendly race check points are located near-by in Portage and Allagash. The finish Line for all the races is Lonesome Pine Ski Area in Fort Kent.

Some area businesses offer point to point overnight sled dog trips for the hearty adventurer.

The winter fisherman will find fishable waters throughout the region. The Fish River Chain of Lakes is very popular with locals and visitors alike. Lakes on the St. John and Allagash watersheds can be accessed from the area as well.

Winter visitors will find all the amenities they may need. Sled Rentals are available, local guides to help in your trip and a full array of lodging, restaurant, and support services await.

Snowmobiling



The St. John Valley is considered one of the premier snowmobile destinations in the northeast. The region is consistently trail-ready for snowmobilers by January 1st and the local clubs, towns and businesses are very active in maintaining the 2200 miles of existing trails.

Riders can find trails leading from town to town and many of the businesses are located on ITS trails or have spurs leading to them. Gas, food and lodging are always just a short ride away. Maintained trails through the North Maine

Woods take riders into one of the last uninhabited areas of Maine. Adventurers can find powder riding in the area west of the maintained trail to the Canadian border. This is an undeveloped area and few services exist. Riders are urged to use caution and should be self-sufficient when traveling this area.

Fishing

The St. John Valley region is blessed with some of the best fishing within the State of Maine and New England. Couple the outstanding sport with some of the most spectacular scenery and it can be understood why many make the trek to the region annually.

This region of Maine is one of the last strong holds for Native brook trout. Brookies can be found in almost any of the free flowing waters throughout the area. Outstanding brook trout can be found in the regions lakes and ponds. Brook trout up to four pounds are taken annually from the Fish River Chain of Lakes.



Lake Trout or Togue as they are known locally can be found in the lakes of the Allagash River Chain as well as the Fish River Chain of Lakes. Both open water and ice anglers find the fish plentiful and the action fast.

Landlocked Salmon are considered by many to be the king of the game fish in the region. In 2008 Long Lake of the Fish River Chain located in St. Agatha and Madawaska was rated as one of the top landlocked salmon waters in New England and with good reason. This body of water regularly produces salmon six pounds and over!

The St. John Watershed once known for its brook trout fishery is now home to muskellunge. Muskie were stocked by the Quebec Government in Lac Frontier, the headwaters for the Northwest Branch of the St. John. From here, muskies infiltrated the entire St. John River system. Today there is a thriving muskie fishery that is unique to other fisheries in North America.



Much of the fishing takes place on the three lakes. Baker Lake located in Piscataquis County was the first downstream water to produce a viable fishery. Later Beau and Glazier Lake on the St. Francis River a tributary of the St. John started producing good fish. The current state record muskie came from Glazier Lake and was taken through the ice.

The jewel of the fishery is the main stem of the St. John itself. The northern sections of the river accessible by traveling through Fort Kent to Allagash and into the North Maine Woods will bring anglers to sections of the river that will see few anglers during the course of a season. Fluctuating water levels can make river travel difficult in the summer months. The road system inside of the North Maine Woods has many access points either right to the river or just a short hike from conventional vehicle access.

Today the Town of Fort Kent holds an annual International Muskie Derby each August. On average 400 to 600 anglers participate in this three day event. Some anglers will find sections of the river to fish during this event and not see another angler.

The Town of St. Agatha holds the Long Lake Ice Fishing Derby in January. This derby has become very popular and includes a mix of species and fisheries from several of the other lakes in the Fish River Chain as well.

Canoeing and Kayaking

The Greater Fort Kent Area is a gateway to both the St. John River and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. These two rivers are famous for their pristine settings and feeling of remoteness that one will encounter while on either river.



The St. John is the longest free flowing river east of

the Mississippi River. Due to the fact that it has no dams for water control it is really only canoeable during periods of high water in the spring and early summer. The Allagash is canoeable all summer and is the choice of many mid to late summer paddlers.

Both rivers have maintained camp sites. The Allagash does have its own set of rules and visitors should go to the North Maine Woods web site for more information. Numerous vehicle shuttle services and canoe liveries can be found in St. Francis and the Town of Allagash. Registered Maine Guides are also available to canoe trippers if they so desire.

There are numerous day paddles of varying lengths available to visitors. These trips are not only on the St John and Allagash but also on the Fish River Chain of Lakes and its thoroughfares. These are easy sections of water to paddle even for beginners. Local businesses in Fort Kent and Eagle Lake rent canoes and kayaks and offer shuttle services for the Fish River Chain.



ATV Riding



Visitors wishing to ride ATV's will find a vast network of trails. Thanks to the local ATV clubs working with local landowners, many new trails have been opened. The trails in the region twist and wind through some of the most beautiful scenery in Maine. Wildlife abounds in the area and is sure to be spotted by the alert rider.

Bike Riding

Bike riding gives the visitor the chance to take in the scenery of the area at a slower pace than by automobile. There are 2 mapped cycle tours that include portions of the byway: Le Tour d' Valle and the Century Ride. The 10th Mountain Ski Center in Fort Kent opens its cross country trails to riders wishing to take on this challenging course, and the Heritage Trail – an abandoned rail bed – provides an excellent recreational trail for those seeking solitude while still in close proximity to the nearby towns.

Two cycling events are held each year in the Valley. The County Cycle Classic is held the Second weekend in July and starts in Van Buren. Le Tour de la Valle is the second weekend in August from Fort Kent.

Hunting



The St. John Valley Cultural Byway communities have a rich hunting heritage. The region is the gateway to Allagash and the North Maine Woods, and more bear are taken in Aroostook County than any other county in Maine. On the average six hundred deer over 200 pounds are taken annually in Maine, one third of these animals come from Aroostook County.

Bird hunters will find diverse hunting opportunities in the region. Abandoned farm land reverting back to poplar and alder hold grouse and woodcock. The vast networks of logging roads, leading west towards the Canadian border, are annual hotspots for the visiting hunter with or without a dog.

The region has large populations of moose as well as coyote. Hunters will find numerous guide services and lodging establishments to help them on their quest. With the large land mass available to hunters, often one can have the area to themselves.

(Recreation, 2008)



Hiking

Non-motorized recreational activities are numerous, but the most notable hike is the Deboullie Trail that leads to the Fire Tower atop Deboullie Mountain located in the Maine Public Reserve Land in T15 R9. This block of Maine Public Reserve Land also maintains numerous campsites and boat launches on Black, Gardner, Deboullie, Denny, Crater, Perch, Upper and Togue Ponds, in addition to hiking trails. The traveler has access to these opportunities from the St. Francis checkpoint to the north, as well as the Fish Hatchery Road in Eagle Lake to the south. **(See Exhibit B – Map of Deboullie Public Reserved Land)**

Guide Services, Camping/Lodging

There are several guide services available, as well as equipment rentals for boating or snowmobiling. A variety of lodging establishments exist for the byway traveler seeking accommodations including:

Allagash Guide Service	Camel Brook Camps	Countryside Retreat
Cross Road Cabins	Daigle's Bed & Breakfast	D & D Rental – 4 Season
Fish River Junction	Four Seasons Inn	Gateway Motel/Restaurant
KLC Lakeside Rentals	Lakeview Restaurant & Camping Resort	Long Lake Motor Inn
Northern Door Inn	Pelletier's Campground	Trailside Vacation Rentals

1.4 Scenic and Natural

The St. John River is both a scenic and natural resource of regional and international significance. As mentioned earlier, it is the longest free-flowing river east of the Mississippi. The St. John and St. Francis Rivers form the international border between Maine and New Brunswick, Canada. The St. John River Basin is one of the largest watersheds in eastern North America. From its source in Baker Lake, Maine, near the Maine-Quebec border to its mouth at the Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick, the River follows a course of about 435 miles (700 kilometers).¹ The watershed has a drainage area of 21,310 square miles (55,200 kilometers).¹ The international character of the St. John River is emphasized by the fact that it follows the Maine – Quebec boundary before passing through Maine and then flows along the Maine-New Brunswick boundary before flowing through New Brunswick to its end in the sea. The St. John River is home to numerous endangered plants and wildlife as well as being the habitat of one of Maine's premier wild brook trout fisheries.¹

The Furbish Lousewort

The lousewort plant has been listed as endangered in both the United States and Canada. The plant's discovery by Kate Furbish in 1880 created an initial flurry of excitement. Interest gradually died down and Miss Furbish's wood betony, as it was originally called, was forgotten and assumed extinct until 1976 when the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers searched for rare plants that would be affected by the proposed Dickey-Lincoln Dam.



Figure 15 - The Furbish Lousewort; ©Edward S. Ayensu. Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, Dept. of Systematic Biology, Botany.

The banks of the St. John River, in northern Maine and adjacent New Brunswick, are the only places in the world the rare plant grows. Aside from the slopes of Mt. Katahdin, the habitat on the St. John River banks is home to the highest variety of rare plants in Maine.

Only a narrow band of steep, damp, well shaded riverbank offers the ideal habitat needed for the Furbish Lousewort to survive. The lousewort grows mostly on north-facing riverbanks because the vegetation is less dense there. They never grow in the spruce-fir forest, on lower cobble beaches or in areas where there is standing water. The forest canopy above is crucial to their survival. The annual scouring of the river banks by ice flows helps to keep the habitat free of competing vegetation, but also can wipe out entire colonies of the plant itself.

¹ Water Quality in the Saint John River Basin, International Joint Commission, and Canada and Unites States, 1977.

The St. John “Quaking” Bog

The St. John Bog is located 3.3 miles west of the Route 11/US Route 1 intersection in Fort Kent. This 10-acre bog contains several beautiful and unusual plant species including orchids and bog laurel. It is also a “quaking bog”, which is formed when a pocket of water from an ancient lake is trapped beneath a thick layer of moss that grows over time from the shoreline. The St. John Bog has been the focus of several research studies by students from the nearby university.

The many scenic view sheds found along the St. John River Valley provide an interesting mix of untouched pastoral beauty and distinctive development patterns that can be traced to the earliest settlers of the valley. The Canadian hillsides of the St. John are dotted with dwellings and ornate churches with steeple spires. Though the scenic value of the St. John may not compete with awe-inspiring geologic formations found on other state and national byways, the scenic quality of the area is a resource that is noticed and appreciated by people that visit the area, and therefore is a resource worth preserving.