

# Belledune

## VILLAGE HISTORY

(The following article taken from "The Sunny Side of Life" - June 1993)  
- Marc Belliveau - Telegraph Journal -

**BELLEDUNE** -When Francois Guitard came to the shores of the Bay of Chaleur in 1824 to farm and fish in what would become Belledune, he could not have imagined the industrial hotbed, which it has become today. Guitard, born in Fauxbourg, St. Antoine, France, had a colourful past. He was 19 years old when Louis XVI was beheaded and served under Napoleon Bonaparte at Mareng and Lodi and after the evacuation of Italy by the Austrians, followed Napoleon to Egypt and fought at the battle of the Pyramids.

### **New World**

As was the case with many others, Guitard soon headed off to the new world to seek a better life. He wasn't in Belledune long before others came to clear land and make a home for themselves. Many Irish and Scottish came here following the great Miramichi fire of 1825. To this day, the community has a rich mixture of Irish, French and Scottish descendents.

Theresa Landry, who has done some research on the history of the village, says the first settlers came across many sand ridges near the village, hence the name Belledune, or "pretty dune".

It was not long after the first settlers arrived that Belledune gained it's first church. Built in 1830, a Roman Catholic Church was built at chapel point. It measured only 42 by 28 feet.

In 1856, Bishop Thomas Connolly of Saint John appointed John Maloughney, a Belledune resident, as treasurer of the new, larger Roman Catholic Church that was built within the village. The first mass was celebrated there May 8th.

Seniors in the village recall the first schools in Belledune were built in the 1850's. At one point, there were four one-room schoolhouses in the village. Students took turns starting

fires in the wood stoves of the school in winter. They also took turns carrying water for drinking. Teachers, who also did janitorial work at the schools, were paid \$90 a year.

As the Belledune community lies along the shore of the Bay of Chaleur, many older residents tell of sighting the renowned Phantom Ship - or as it is sometimes called - "The Burning Ghost Ship". The stories vary from community to community along the bay and versions differ, depending on which community sighted the apparition. Theresa says the most common version she has heard is as follows;



"The Phantom Ship" - Vetta LaPointe Faulds

*It was during the war between the French and English in the early 18th century that a sea battle took place. Two ships were sighted, about 1.5 miles from shore, fighting fiercely and within minutes one was in flames. The people on shore watched the spectacle in horror. One of the ships, instead of sinking right away, remained in flames for two hours or more.*

## **Shouting for help**

*Some of the older citizens in the village say they could hear men, women and children shouting for help while the ship was burning - and for days after the tragedy they could still hear the dying screams coming from the bay. Sightings of the Phantom Ship occur to this day, usually before a storm.*

Belledune became the hub of industrial activity in northern New Brunswick beginning in 1963 when Brunswick Mining and Smelting Corporation established a lead smelter and fertilizer plant near the village.

## **Port Facilities**

Excellent port facilities brought much import/export business to the village and Shell Oil set up a bulk plant near the village. The most recent addition to the industrial sector was the construction of a 450-megawatt thermal generating station constructed by NB Power at a cost of nearly \$1 billion.

## **History Overview**

**1799** - A short time after the "Battle of the Pyramids" in Egypt, Francis (Jacques) Guitard was the first settler to arrive.

**1824** - People awed at the beautiful beaches and "pretty sand dunes" hence the name **Belledune** originated.

**1825** - Following the great fire on the Miramichi, both Irish and Scottish settlers began to relocate here.

**1830** - First Roman Catholic Church was built at Chapel Point, originally called St. Patrick's Parish.

**1830-1850** -. Increasing number of settlers arrived from Scotland, Ireland, England and France.

**1850's** - There were four one-room schools.

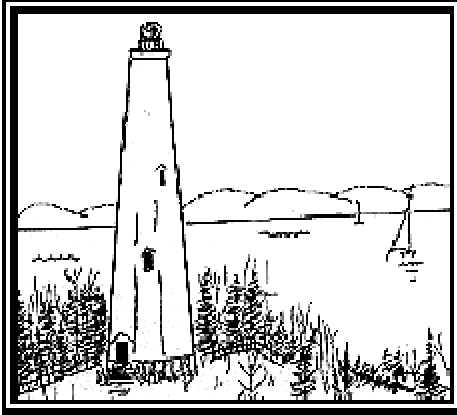
**1850's & 1860's** - During this time period, major employment was farming, fishing and lumbering.

**1966** - Brunswick Mining & Smelting began it's lead/zinc smelter operations.

**1968** - On January 1, 1968, Belledune incorporated as a Village.

**1993** - The completion of a one billion dollar project by NB Power saw their new Thermal Generating Station begin operations.

**1994** - Realizing their potential as a combined force, the Super Village of Belledune incorporated through amalgamation with the communities of Jacquet River, Armstrong Brook, Archibald Settlement, Sunnyside Becketville and Mitchell Settlement.



"The Lighthouse" - Clara Shannon

Some Area Artists/Writers views on History

- **Clara Shannon** - *EASTERN BREEZES - Volume 1 "Treasures of the Heart"* - a collection of poetry.
- **Joan Blake-Savoie** - *THE BACKYARD RINK - A Daughter's Memory* tells the story of how a Canadian winter tradition grew into a symbol of community spirit.
- **Vetta LaPointe Faulds** - *The Way It Was Along My Bay - Volume 1* a collection of paintings and observations of Nash Creek and Jacquet River over the years.