

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

7
AN EARLY TOURIST IN GASPEZIA

Some references to the life of Captain Justus Sherwood, U.E.L., and to ~~the~~ conducted tour he had of Gaspesia in the summer of 1783.

KEN ANNETT

AN EARLY TOURIST IN GASPESIA

This tourist tale did not have its beginnings in a Tourist Bureau or Travel Agency but in the office of Governor Haldimand in the old Castle of Saint Lewis in Quebec. Situated near the present site of the well-known Chateau Frontenac Hotel, the Castle of Saint Lewis looked out over the majestic St. Lawrence River and, directly below it, the busy Quebec seaport. It was there, on May 27th., 1783, that Governor Haldimand was about to sign and seal a letter to Felix O'Hara of distant Gaspé, which read, in part:

Captain Sherwood of the Loyal Rangers does not wish to return to the Colonies or to risk the attempt, and being desirous of settling on the sea coast, I send him down, accompanied by other Loyalists attached to him, to take a view of the Bay of Chaleur and that quarter...

My knowledge of him would induce me to settle him upon my own Seigniory if it can be proved beneficial to him; but to make that agreeable to him it will be necessary to settle those who look up to him in this neighbourhood.

Civilities will have to be paid to his family...

As Haldimand finished his letter to Felix O'Hara, a friend of long standing, at one of the wharves of the waterfront below the Treasury Brig, "ST.PETER" was loading supplies for the trip downriver to Gaspé and Bay Chaleur. Two days later Captain Justus Sherwood, his family and party, would board for the trip that would bring them to Gaspé Bay on the 7th. of June. That voyage and the subsequent tour of Bay Chaleur must rate as one of the earliest of tourist tours to Gaspesia.

THE BACKGROUND OF CAPTAIN JUSTUS SHERWOOD

Who was Justus Sherwood and why did he rate the respect and personal attention of Governor Haldimand to the extent that he placed the Brig "ST.PETER" at his disposal for an extended tour of Gaspesia?

As few, if any, of the published works on Gaspesia, throw light on the above questions, it will be the purpose of this article to recount something of the background of Captain Sherwood before turning to his recorded impressions of his Gaspesian tour.

A native of Connecticut, Captain Justus Sherwood, on the outbreak of the American Revolution, was resident in the New Hampshire Grants of the Province of New York. An ardent Loyalist, he became an Officer in the Loyalist battalion recruited by Lieutenant-Colonel John Peters and served subsequently in the battalion commanded by Major Jessup. But to really appreciate his personal experiences in those stirring times let us turn to the actual text of the Memorial that he was later to submit to the Commissioners appointed for Inquiry into the Losses and Services of the Loyalists:

The Memorial of Justus Sherwood, formerly Resident in the New Hampshire Grants in the Province of New York and County of Charlotte, late Captain in His Majesty's Provincial Regiment called Loyal Rangers.

Sheweth -

That your Memorialist at the Commencement of the late unhappy Rebellion manifested his Attachment to His Majesty and the British Government by Exerting his Influence to prevent the people in his Vicinity from taking Arms against His Majesty for which your Memorialist was in August taken by order of the Committee by an armed Company of Men from his House and Farm in New Haven who wantonly destroyed and took away the Household Furniture, Wearing Apparel and provisions etc., belonging to your Memorialist breaking open his Chests taking tearing and trampling under foot all his papers and writings which they could get hold of. Your Memorialist procured Bail at that time and permission to go to his Family and Continue under certain restrictions untill further Orders from the Committee. But the same night on which your Memorialist came to his Family he was taken out of his Bed by an Armed Force who kept him under a Guard of

Insulters for some time obliging him to bear his own and their Expences. Your Memorialist was then ordered to prison by a Committee for the Crime, as they alledged, of being Enimical to the Country Refusing to take the Oaths required by the Committee and sending Intelligence to General Carleton in Canada. After about a Months Imprisonment your Memorialist was brought before the Grand Committee (as they called it) and by that Committee Condemned to be shut up in Simsbury Mines during Life. But before they could Execute this shocking Sentence (worse than Death) Your Memorialist had the good fortune to break away from his Keepers and fly to the Mountains where in a few days about 40 of the Loyal Inhabitants (distressed) for their Loyalty joined him whom your Memorialist piloted about 200 miles thro the Wilderness and joined General Carleton at Crown Point in the Month of October 1776 - the first body of Loyalists in America that Joined His Majestys Army.

In March following your Memorialist went with five men by Order of General Carleton ~~in~~ a private Scout as far as Shaftsbury opposite Albany for Intelligence and returned in the beginning of May to General Philips at Montreal with an Account of the Rebell Troops from Albany Northward and a Sketch of the Fortifications at Ticondoroga and Mount Independent their Number of Artillery etc. Your Memorialist was 41 days on this Scout and lost two of his party taken prisoners by a Rebell Scout on the Coast of Lake Champlain and your Memorialist escaped with the rest of his party by seizing the Rebell Boats which lay on the Shore and pushing out into the Lake.

Your Memorialist commanded the Loyalists after Colonel Festers Death in the Battle of Bennington and was employed in various Scouts and Services under General Burgoyne and was in every Action and Skirmish thro that Campaign at the unfortunate conclusion of which your Memorialist became a prisoner at the Saratoga Convention and suffered many Insults and abuses by the Rebels who happened to know him.

In 1778 your Memorialist was again employed by order of General Carleton to procure Intelligence etc. and Continued

in that and various other services by order of General Haldimand untill the Conclusion of the War during which time your Memorialist had the Honour to serve under the Command of a number of Experienced and brave Officers in various Expeditions and Actions- Viz - Major General Powell, Brigadier General St.Leger, Colonel Carleton, Major Carleton, Major Jessup, Major Rogers and many others.

In Consequence of the above recited Attachment and Active Services for His Majestys Government your Memorialist was attainted and outlawed by the Rebels and of course his little property which he had accumulated by honest Industry was forfeited and sold or otherwise taken for the use of the Rebels

Justus Sherwood

NOTE- In a supplementary Schedule of Losses, Sherwood listed the loss of his Home, Lands, Cattle, Implements, etc., at £ 1209.18.6

Over and beyond the above record of Sherwood's Memorial, that of his extensive correspondence with Sir Guy Carleton, General Haldimand and others, preserved in the Public Archives of Canada, is revealing of the great scope, importance and ever present danger of the role that Captain Sherwood played in Intelligence work during those critical years of War with the American States. He was evidently a born leader - fearless and persistent in his difficult and dangerous role. Gaspesians may be interested to learn that two of the men who were involved with Sherwood in Intelligence work were Azariah Pritchard and Thomas Mann, both destined to settle in Bay Chaleur.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF THE VOYAGE OF CAPTAIN JUSTUS
SHERWOOD FROM QUEBEC TO GASPY, BAY CHALEUR AND MERIMISHI
(as submitted to Governor Haldimand)

May the 29th., left Quebec in the Treasury Brig, St.Peters, 7th., June arrived in Gaspy Bay, landed my family at Captain O'Haras where we were received with every mark of civility and politeness. Mr.O'Hara is a most worthy, sensible man, perfectly attached to the Government and well disposed to serve the distressed Loyalists, he gave me every assistance in his power to explore the country at Gaspy and Bay Chaleur, to which last he accompany'd me for the purpose of giving me every possible Information.

The country round Gaspy, Point Peters, Percey is in general a succession of mountains as far as the eye can see, which by their naked, barren appearance present to one's view the very picture of indigence. There are, however, some exceptions, for on the north and south arms of Gaspy Bay there is a quantity of level land, light timbered and a good soil (I think if properly cultivated) for the sustenance of forty or fifty Family's on each arm.

On the river St.Johns which empty's into the Bay, about one league below Mr. O'Hara's, is an equal quantity of land, and a very pleasant, commodious place for about forty Inhabitants, those rivers abound with Salmon, as does the whole Bay with cod fish, eels, lobsters etc., Point Peters is exceedingly well situated for the fishery and would admit of a considerable settlement for that purpose, but the land is not fit for cultivation. Percey is a very pleasant place, finely situated for the fishery, it is a point of about 200 acres of good level land, bounded in front by the sea and in the rear by tremendous mountains, if this Point was regularly divided into equal lots, it might form a very pretty town of about 100 houses with land sufficient for fishing grounds, gardens etc., I spent but three days in viewing the above mentioned places.

16th., we arrived at Paboc in the Bay Chaleurs, this is an exceedingly pleasant place when one is in the Basin or Harbour, but the entrance is narrow and somewhat difficult for large vessels by reason of a rock in the centre. The land around the Basin, except the south side, is very level for about a league back to the mountains, the timber is not heavy to clear, the soil is exceedingly good and natural for grass, rye, oats, barley etc., but I think it is in general too low for wheat. There are two fine rivers put into this bay, the one from the N.W. and the other from the S.W., these are well stocked with Trouts and salmon and we found a number of good mill places, especially for saw mills, which will be the more valuable as the adjacent mountains afford a great plenty of good timber. But the prime value of this place (in my opinion) consists in its eligible situation for an extensive fishery and trade for which it is the best adapted of any place I have seen in the Gulph of St. Lawrence.

Port Daniel is six leagues from Paboc West, this is a very bad harbour, or rather a roadstead closely surrounded by mountains.

Paspebiac is six leagues West from Port Daniel, this is the best situation for fishing and trade, except Paboc, of any place I have seen. And the soil is much the best I have seen in the Gulph - it is naturally bounded on the East by the river called Little Novel and on the West by the river called Little Paspebiac; these rivers are about three leagues asunder and the land between them for near 2 leagues back is very level and in general a tolerably good soil for wheat or any kind of English grain.

Bonaventure is 4 leagues West from Paspebiac, this is a good harbour and a pleasant, level country for several miles back from the sea, it is well settled and appears at a distance like a populous town.

Kaskabijack is 6 leagues West from Bonaventure, here is a very good Roadstead for vessels of any Burden, the land is tollerable between the two Rivers called Great and Little Kaskabijack which are about 3 leagues apart. These two Rivers afford a very

profitable Salmon fishery, and tho the face of the country is not level, nor the soil in general quite so good for wheat as Paspébiac, yet I think the salmon fishing places it nearly on a footing with the latter for making a valuable settlement.

Tracadigash is 6 leagues West from Kaskabijack, this is a good harbour and is well situated for fishery but the land is by no means favourable for the farmers.

Grand Novel at the mouth of the Restigouche River is the western extremity of the Bay Chaleurs and is 2 leagues from Tracadgouch, it is a beautiful little Bason somewhat resembling Paboc, but the Harbour is only good for Boats and Shallops. Here is a large body of good land, but the Restigouche Indians claim it, as they do all the meadows up the Restigouche River, which are the largest and finest that I know of in the world, and would, if properly tended, afford many hundred thousand tons of good Hay.

Longuil River puts into the South side of the Bay just below the mouth of the Restigouche, here is a large tract of good land equal to that on Grand Novel, but this is likewise claimed by the Restigouch Indians, the river abounds with Salmon. East, or down the Bay from Longuil, the land is wet and low for about one league and then the land is very good with Beech and Maple timber, which extends near two Leagues down the Bay, below which I did not explore on the South side.

I spent only eight days in viewing the Bay Chaleurs and then sett out to look at the Misco Islands and Mèrimichi; but before I enter on a description of that country I must observe that, in my opinion, the climate in the Bay Chaleurs is more favourable than on any part of the River St. Lawrence below Sorrell, Wheat. Barley, Oats, Pease, Grass etc., were forward there and at Gaspy, as I found them on the South side of the river opposite the Isle of Coudre twenty days later, and I think that 1500 familys might immediately settle to good advantage for themselves and the Government at Paboc, Paspébiac, Bonaventure, Kaskibijack, and Grand Novel, and that at least 200 might be well settled from Percey to Gaspy, and I think in this number a sufficient part might be employed at farming to raise bread, butter and

beef etc., for the whole - at least in a very short time. They would doubtless require some other resource for three or four years untill they could get the land a little cleared and themselves provided with horses, cattle and farming tools etc. and I think it would be much to the benefit of Government to assist the first settlers and encourage agriculture by providing those things, by which I am persuaded their country would, in a little time, become the most valuable part of His Majesty's present Dominions in North America.

But it is to be observed that the settlement of this country never can flourish while under the monopoly of a few designing traders, who make it their study to discourage the cultivation of the lands and to keep the poor inhabitants so much in debt as to oblige them to spend the whole summer season in fishing to pay up their arrears. This is the case at present with the poor Inhabitants of Bay Chaleur, and I think the only reason why so fine a country is generally reported to be uninhabitable except for a few poor fishermen...

SHERWOOD'S RETURN AND HIS CLAIM

After visiting the "Misco Isles and Merimishi" Captain Sherwood and his party returned to Gaspé on July 14th. While he had been on tour in Bay Chaleurs it would appear that his wife, Mary Bottum Sherwood and their children had been guests at the Gaspé Basin home of the O'Hara's, for when, on July 20th., they sailed from Gaspé for the return trip to Quebec, they were accompanied by Captain O'Hara's eldest son and daughter. The voyage to Quebec took twenty-four days so that it was not until mid-August that Captain Sherwood and his party reached the Quebec waterfront whence they had sailed for "Gaspy" at the end of May. In the following letter to Governor Haldimand Captain Justus Sherwood reported as follows:

" Quebec, 23rd August, 1783

Sir,-

In compliance with your Excellency's commands to me, I have inclosed an extract of such parts of my Journal to

the Bay Chaleurs which contained my observations of the situation, soil, climate and produce of the country...I am persuaded that was I to choose a place in Bay Chaleurs for myself, it would be Baspebiac, from the centre of the long sandy point, which is a rideing place for vessels, East to the little River Novel; and up this River so far as to compleat my intended quantity of land. I mention the centre of the Sandy Point because I do not think it right that any grant should engross the whole of so valuable a place for curing fish, and it would be my ambition to promote the Publick good as well as my own interest by going there. For these purposes I pray your Excellency will be pleased to grant me a tract of land extending so far up the little Novel and north from the centre of Paspebiac point as your Excellency may judge meet.

I am with all due Respect,

Your Excellency's most Humble
and most obedient servant,

Justus Sherwood "

POSTSCRIPT

Though the subsequent career of Captain Justus Sherwood lay beyond Gaspesia and the scope of this account, the reader may be interested in a brief note. In the following summer of 1784, which saw the movement of a major group of Loyalists to Bay Chaleur under Captain George Lawe, Sr., Captain Justus Sherwood was to be found west of Montreal looking over the new Townships that were opening there for Loyalist settlement. He finally chose to settle in Augusta Township where, over the next fourteen years of his life, he was to play a prominent role. In the summer of 1798, while on his way downriver to Quebec with rafts of timber, he became ill and died at Three Rivers. His wife, Mary, would live for another two decades, to die at Montreal in August, 1818. Of their sons, Levis Peters

Sherwood, a graduate in Law, became a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada and was chosen as Speaker of that House. In turn his son, Henry Sherwood, had an even more distinguished career as a Member of the Assembly, Solicitor-General, Judge and Attorney - General of Upper Canada.

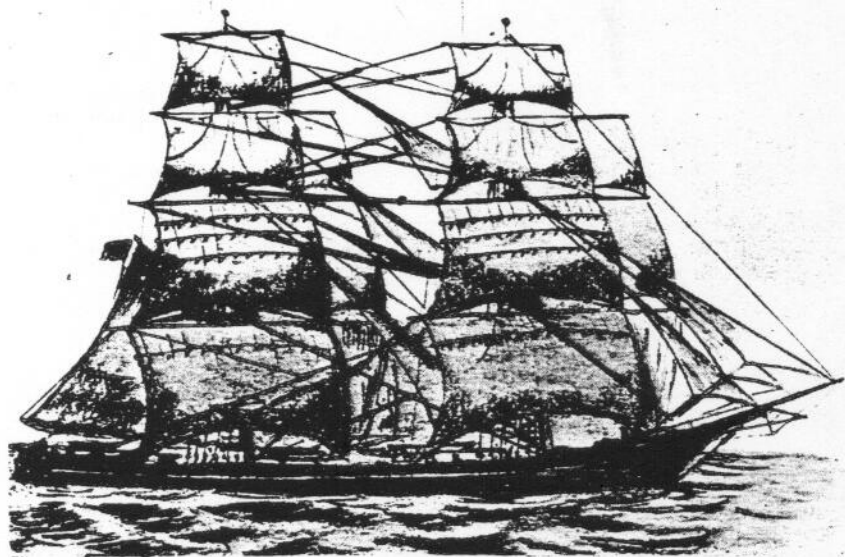
... to the little river... and up this river... as to... quantity of land... I do not think it right... that any grant should exceed the value of no valuable... plates for curing fish, and it would be my ambition to... produce the Publick good as well as my own interest by... doing them. For these purposes I pray your Excellency... will be pleased to grant me a tract of land extending... far up the little river and north from the centre of... Esopias point as your Excellency may judge best.

I am with all due respect,

Your Excellency's most humble
and most obedient servant,
James Sherwood

ESOPIAS

Though the subsequent career of Captain James Sherwood lay beyond Esopias and the scope of this account, the reader may be interested in a brief note. In the following summer of 1784, which saw the movement of a major group of loyalists to Bay Chalmers under Captain George Lewis, Sr., Captain James Sherwood was to be found west of Montreal looking over the new townships that were opening there for loyalist settlement. He finally chose to settle in Augusta Township where, over the next fourteen years of his life, he was to play a prominent role. In the summer of 1798, while on his way downriver to Quebec with a cargo of timber, he became ill and died at Three Rivers. His wife, Mary, would live for another two decades, to die at Montreal in August, 1818. Of their sons, James Sherwood



BRIG

A VESSEL WITH TWO MASTS SQUARE RIGGED LIKE A SHIP'S FORE-AND MAIN-MASTS BUT CARRYING ALSO ON HER MAIN-MAST A LOWER FORE-AND-AFT SAIL WITH A GAFF AND BOOM.

RUNNING BEFORE A STRONG, STEADY WIND, A BRIG WAS A FAST CRAFT.

THE BRIG, "ST.PETER", ON WHICH CAPTAIN JUSTUS SHERWOOD TRAVELLED TO GASPE AND BAY CHALEURS IN 1783, WAS ONE OF THE VESSELS EMPLOYED IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR TO CONVEY THE LOYALIST FAMILIES TO BAY CHALEURS.