

GASPE OF YESTERDAY

14

BEYOND RECORD ARE THE EONS OF TIME DURING WHICH THE WATERS OF A VAST HINTERLAND CREATED THE SCENIC VALLEY AND BASIN OF THE RESTIGOUCHE ON THEIR WAY TO BAY CHALEUR.

EVEN THOUGH THE HUMAN HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT IS FRAGMENTED AND FAR FROM COMPLETE, IT IS PROPOSED TO VENTURE INTO PROVIDING THE FOLLOWING GLIMPSES OF THE STORIED PAST OF THE RESTIGOUCHE.

KEN ANNETT.

STATE OF TEXAS

41

BEFORE ME, the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared _____, known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed.

My commission expires _____.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and official seal this _____ day of _____, 19____.

Notary Public in and for the State of Texas.

WITNESSED MY HAND AND SEAL THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 19____.

THE STORIED PAST OF THE RESTIGOUCHE

Among the many fine rivers of Gaspesia the Restigouche has long been famed for its beauty and significant for its role in the history of the region. From its source in the Lake Temiscouta watershed the river flows eastward through rugged mountain lands to divide in a network of channels among scenic islands and to expand finally into the magnificent estuary extending to Miguasha at the head of Bay Chaleur. The tributary rivers of the Restigouche are in and for themselves well known and the sonorous roll of their names -Matapedia; Upsalquitch; Patapedia; Kedgwick - are at once a reminder that the vast territory they drain, once the hunting and trapping lands of the Micmac Indians, is now shared by the neighbouring provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec.

The Micmacs, members of the great Algonquin Indian family, called the Restigouche, "LISTOGOTCH" or "RIVER THAT DIVIDES LIKE THE HAND". In summer, encamped along its shores, they enjoyed the abundance of its fine salmon and other fish. In winter they retired to the shelter of its forests, abundant in game for food and fur bearing animals. We can catch a glimpse of the Micmac life-style in those distant days from the following extract of the "NEW RELATION OF GASPEZIA" written by an early missionary, Father le Clercq:

"...Their wigwams are built of nothing but poles, which are covered with some pieces of bark of the birch, sewed one to another; and they are ornamented, as a rule, with a thousand different pictures of birds, moose, otters, and beavers, which the women sketch themselves with their paints. These wigwams are of a circular form, and capable of lodging fifteen to twenty persons; but they are, however, so made that with seven or eight barks a single one is constructed, in which from three to four fires are built. They are so light and portable that our Indians roll them up like a piece of paper, and carry them upon their backs wheresoever it pleases them, very much like the tortoises which carry their own houses.

They follow the ancient custom of our first fathers, who remained encamped in a place only so long as they found there subsistence for their families and herds. In the same manner, also, our Gaspesians decamp when they can no longer find the means to subsist in the places where they are living; for, having neither animals to feed, nor lands or fields to cultivate, they are obliged to be almost always wanderers,

Such were the Micmac Indians of the Restigouche encountered by the French explorer, Jacques Cartier, when he sailed into and named the Bay Chaleur in the summer of 1534. But almost a century would go by before that initial encounter was followed up by the arrival of missionaries of the Recollet, Capucien and Jesuit Orders, respectively, to work among the Micmacs and not until the year 1685 that Richard Denys, the able son of Nicolas Denys, whose vast holdings included the ill-defined, Seigneury of Restigouche, granted to the Recollets some eighty square miles of land about Old Mission Point for their missionary base. At that time it was estimated that the Micmac population on the Restigouche was some four hundred.

The long, confused, and often bitter struggle between France and England for the control of Acadia, with its consequent displacement and hardships for the French Acadians, led, about the year 1750, to the building of a French fort on the Restigouche. Located just to the West of the present community of Cross Point, this fort, complete with arsenal, shops, storehouses and a hospital, and protected by outlying gun emplacements, was intended to command the vital routes to the rivers St. John and St. Lawrence. Under the command of Jean-Francois Bourdon this fort, known as "Camp des Reserves" became an important centre of French operations for northern Acadia. It served as a base for the ships of Privateers that left the Restigouche to raid British shipping in the waters of Acadia, Bay Chaleur and the St. Lawrence estuary. After the fall of the Miramichi to the British, a number of British officers and soldiers, were held at this fort as prisoners of war. To the Restigouche were drawn Acadian refugees who established themselves for a time at Pointe-a-la-Garde in a palisaded village of some 1500 inhabitants.

In the summer of 1760 the waters of Bay Chaleur and the Restigouche estuary witnessed dramatic and decisive action in the French and British colonial war for the control of Canada. A convoy of French supply ships, escorted by units of the French navy crossed the Atlantic but received warning that the Gulf and River St. Lawrence were blockaded by British warships of the Royal Navy. The British received information on the approach of the French fleet and dispatched Captain Byron, R.N., with three Men-of-war - the FAME, flagship, DORSERSHIRE and ACHILLES, together with the frigates - REPULSE and SCARBOROUGH to seek out and destroy the French ships. After the capture of two of his ships in the Gulf, the French commander sought refuge in Bay Chaleur and the relative shelter of the Restigouche basin. Fearing Royal Navy pursuit, the French crews, aided by the resident Acadians, built gun emplacements on Pointe-a-la Garde and Battery

Point, sank small boats to block the channel upstream, and removed guns from the supply ships to strengthen the "Camp des Reserves".

The French concern for British attack was soon to be justified when the Royal Navy flotilla of Captain Byron came foaming up Bay Chaleur in hot pursuit. The first action took place off Point Miguasha where an armed French schooner was taken by the British. Ordering the ACHILLES and DORSETSHIRE to guard the head of Bay Chaleur, Captain Byron began the difficult task of taking his flagship, FAME, and the frigates up the unknown, and often deliberately obstructed, Restigouche channel. Finally he was able to bring the guns of his ships to bear on the French positions on Pointe-à-la Garde and Battery Point and destroy them. Proceeding slowly, but irresistably, upstream, Byron fought and captured the French frigate, LE MACHAULT and seized the supply ships, LE BIENFAISANT and LE MARQUIS DE MALUZE, with cargo of an estimated value of £ 200,000. More than sixty English prisoners of the French were liberated. With his mission accomplished, Captain Byron did not attempt to storm the "Camp des Reserves". That task was entrusted to a British Army force under Major Elliott later that year. Conveyed to the Restigouche in the frigate, REPULSE, Major Elliott accepted the surrender of the seven French officers and the garrison of the "Camp des Reserves". The provisions that were seized were left with the Acadians when the British sailed from the Restigouche in early November. In the following year the Acadian settlement was dispersed and it is of interest to note that a number of the families moved down the coast of Bay Chaleur to settle at Carleton and Bonaventure.

The Fall of New France in 1760 marked the end of an era for the Restigouche and the opening of a new chapter under the British Regime. In 1768, George Wakker, a Scot whose exploits would fill a volume, came to the Restigouche to develop its rich resources of fish, furs and timber. Hugh Baillie became his partner. In 1773, John Shoolbred, a merchant of London, acquired Baillie's interests and, with his agent, William Smith, expanded the fishery and trade, established a busy shipyard and brought the craftsmen who established permanent settlement. But Shoolbred's business suffered from the American Revolutionary War and the raids of American privateers into Bay Chaleur. In 1779 he decided to abandon his Restigouche enterprise and lease his holdings to Samuel Lee. Of Shoolbred's men, Robert and John Adams, John Dunwan and John Duthie are recorded as having remained as Restigouche settlers. In compensation for his losses during the War, Shoolbred received a grant of 10,000 acres of land on the north side of the Restigouche and thus his name, if not his memory, has been preserved in the district to this day.

Following the end of the War of the American Revolution, Gaspesia received a significant influx of Loyalist and other settlers. Among those who came to the shores of the Restigouche was Colonel Edward Mann, a Massachusetts Loyalist and his capable sons - a family that would leave its mark on Gaspesian history. In 1824, when Archdeacon G.J. Mountain of Quebec was on a visit to Gaspesia, Colonel Mann was dead but the Archdeacon was the guest of a son in the Mann homestead and has left us in his JOURNAL an interesting account of which the following extracts may be of interest:

" Sept. 12th (Sunday) Before 6 we arrived at the house of Mr. Man -one of those comfortless looking dwellings in which the more newly settled parts of America abound. The house as was discoverable at one end only, had been painted red - it stood without enclosure next the river, surrounded by barns & out buildings of the same hue of weather-beaten wood, and of a make-shift & unfinished appearance tho' old & out of repair.

....Mr. Man & his whole family except Mr. M. speak the Micmac language with fluency - his daughters however are allowed to excel both father & brother in this accomplishment. Mr. Man himself is a decent kind of man so like Col. Johnson of the 68th in person that I once spoke to him as Col. J. in the streets of Quebec; he is brother to the Sheriff of the District & had another brother who was a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas at Quebec, and was himself after his father came to establish himself as a loyalist refugee in the Bay of Chaleurs, owner & Master of a tending-vessel to the W. Indies & &, & no man living perhaps has been more conversant with the ruder scenes of life; in the woods he is a perfect Indian hunter...upon the rivers which intersect the mountain & forest, put him down in his birch canoe & he is at much at home as in arm-chair by the chimney corner....His wife & daughters are in all respects of a very homely stamp, but they seem kind and well-désposed people..."

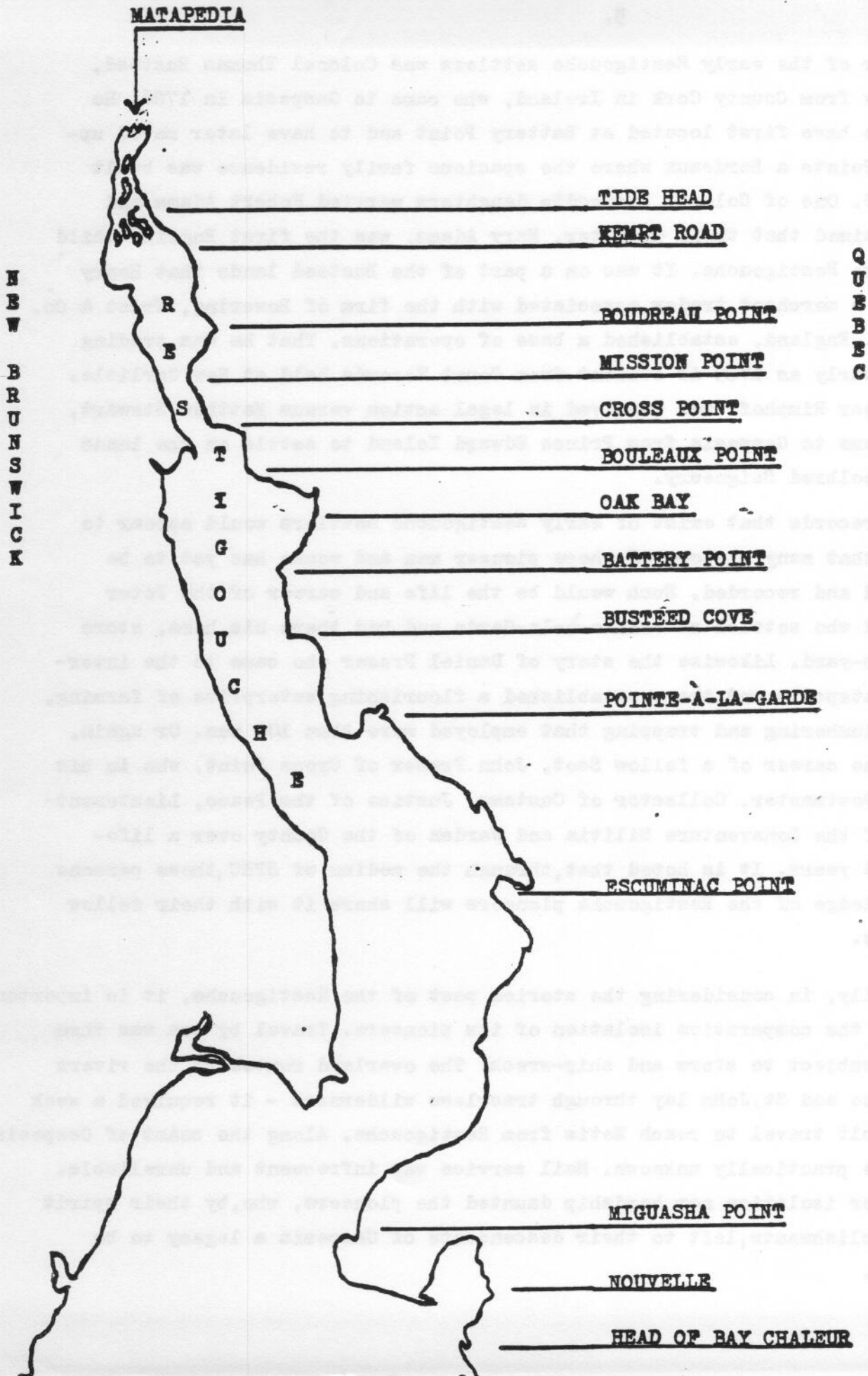
Archdeacon Mountain was to experience, from Mr. Man's hospitality traditional in Gaspesia from early times. Not only was he an honoured guest of the Mann home but Mr. Mann made the arrangements for his onward journey from Restigouche to the St. Lawrence through what then was trackless wilderness. Indian guides were engaged, canoes and provisions provided and Mr. Mann insisted on personally accompanying his guest up river to the junction of the Matapedia.

Another of the early Restigouche settlers was Colonel Thomas Busteed, originally from County Cork in Ireland, who came to Gaspesia in 1786. He appears to have first located at Battery Point and to have later moved up-river to Pointe a Bordeaux where the spacious family residence was built about 1800. One of Colonel Busteed's daughters married Robert Adams and it was claimed that their daughter, Mary Adams, was the first English child born on the Restigouche. It was on a part of the Busteed lands that Henry Rimphoff, a merchant trader associated with the firm of Bowering, Trist & Co. of London, England, established a base of operations. That he was trading there as early as 1789 is evident from Court Records held at New Carlisle. In that year Rimphoff was involved in legal action versus Matthew Stewart, who had come to Gaspesia from Prince Edward Island to settle on the lands of the Shoolbred Seigneury.

Such records that exist of early Restigouche settlers would appear to indicate that many a story of these pioneer men and women has yet to be discovered and recorded. Such would be the life and career of the Peter Sutherland who settled at Pointe-à-la-Garde and had there his home, store and a ship-yard. Likewise the story of Daniel Fraser who came to the intervale of Matapedia and there established a flourishing enterprise of farming, fishing, lumbering and trapping that employed more than 100 men. Or again, that of the career of a fellow Scot, John Fraser of Cross Point, who in his time was Postmaster, Collector of Customs, Justice of the Peace, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Bonaventure Militia and Warden of the County over a life-span of 94 years. It is hoped that, through the medium of SPEC, those persons with knowledge of the Restigouche pioneers will share it with their fellow Gaspesians.

Finally, in considering the storied past of the Restigouche, it is important to recall the comparative isolation of its pioneers. Travel by sea was then slow and subject to storm and ship-wreck. The overland routes to the rivers St. Lawrence and St. John lay through trackless wilderness - it required a week of difficult travel to reach Metis from Restigouche. Along the coast of Gaspesia roads were practically unknown. Mail service was infrequent and unreliable. But neither isolation nor hardship daunted the pioneers, who, by their spirit and accomplishments, left to their descendents of Gaspesia a legacy to be treasured.

REFERENCE SKETCH FOR "THE STORIED PAST OF THE RESTIGOUCHE"



MATAPEDIA

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TIDE HEAD

KEMPT ROAD

BOUDREAU POINT

MISSION POINT

CROSS POINT

BOULEAUX POINT

OAK BAY

BATTERY POINT

BUSTÉED COVE

POINTE-À-LA-GARDE

ESCUMINAC POINT

MIGUASHA POINT

NOUVELLE

HEAD OF BAY CHALEUR

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