17.

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

IN 1819-20, MORE THAN A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO, OUR GASPESIAN FOREFATHERS MADE CLAIM TO THEIR LANDS BEFORE THE COMMISSIONERS FOR GASPE LAND CLAIMS. THIS WAS AN UNPRECEDENTED AND SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT FOR GASPESIA.

IN ADDITION TO THE RECORD OF
LAND CLAIMS, THE COMMISSIONERS
REPORTED ON THE STATE AND NEEDS
OF THE DISTRICT OF GASPE. THIS
REPORT, WHICH FOLLOWS, PROVIDES
A UNIQUE AND COMPREHENSIVE VIEW
OF GASPE OF YESTERDAY.

KEN ANNETT

Castle of St. Lewis Quebec, 9th June, 1819

The Commissioners for Claims,
District of Gaspe

Gentlemen.

In addition to the instructions contained in the Bill, passed in the last Session of the Provincial Parliament, under which you have received your appointment of Commissioners to investigate the claims of persons to Lands in the Inferior District of Gaspe, I have received His Grace the Governor in Chief's commands to call your attention to the state of the Fisheries in the said District, and to require your opinion as to the most probable mode of affording encouragement for promoting the same; to take a census of the population of the said District and to ascertain the state of the Agriculture thereof, the nature of the soil, and its various productions, the general quality of the unsettled lands, the places best adapted to the location of Settlers, the state of the Internal Communications, and places most in want of highways and roads &c and in general, all such information as may, in any wise, tend to the public utility.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, Your most obedient Servant,

or Leader that their remained set well all the teacher

J. Ready

To His Excellency the Right Honourable the Earl of Dalhousie, Governor in Chief in and over the Province of Lower Canada and its several Dependencies &c &c &c May it please your Excellency,

We, the Commissioners appointed in virtue of an Act of the Provincial Parliament of the fifty-ninth year of the reign of His late Majesty, George the third, intituled, "An Act to secure the Inhabitants of the Inferior District of Gaspe in the possession and enjoyment of their Lands", in obedience to the orders of His Grace the late Duke of Richmond, Governor in Chief, signified to us by letter from Mr. Secretary Ready of the 9th June, 1819, have the honour of submitting our Report on those subjects to Your Excellency, independently of the Report, which, agreeably to the fifteenth section of the said Act, we are bound to make.

To fulfil the views of His Majesty's Government, it is in the first place necessary to give a general statement of the District of Gaspé. which will be seen in the annexed statement and statistical table, which we have been enabled to digest through the liberal and ready-assistance of divers respectable and intelligent persons, resident in the District; and is as correct as the times and circumstances under which it was made would permit, and may convey a toler le idea of the state of that District, and of the Fisheries at the several places therein mentioned.

The District of Gaspe, extending from Cape Chat in the River St. Lawrence, to Cape Rosier, and from thence along the Coast to the River Ristigouche, at the head of the Bay des Chaleurs, comprehending Gaspe Bay and the North Shore of the said Bay des Chaleurs, including some excellent harbours and secure roads for anchorage, is a Country of Agriculture, Fishery and Trade, which, with some encouragement, may ultimately become of much importance to the Province, and one of its most considerable Districts. With respect to climate, the Bay des Chaleurs has much the advantage of Gaspe Bay and the adjacent Coast of the River St. Lawrence. The soil is, in general, of a good quality, with the exception of a few places. In the Bay des Chaleurs, from Port Daniel to New Richmond, an extent of twenty leagues or thereabouts, the Country is level and the Soil of an excellent description: the other parts of the District are less level, and in some places, as at Maria and Carleton, the land rises into lofty mountains, especially along the St. Lawrence, from Cape Gaspe to Cape Chat, where, however, it is at some places intersected by rich vallies, abounding with wood. The Bay of Gaspe and particularly the Bay desCChalauss are susceptible of the most improved Agriculture, and have in this respect a decided superiority over the Tolond of Nowfoundland and the Talanda in the Bult. The improvement of the

District will principally depend on the attention which its inhabitants bestow on the culture of the soil and the encouragement they may find in its pursuit. The Fisheries may occassionally fail, and the consequent decline of trade would materially prejudice the District, unless it contain within itself sufficient resources for its own subsistence. For the establishment of Emigrants no part in Canada offers such immediate resources of livelihood as may be derived from the Fisheries. It is a fact worthy of notice that in the year 1816, when the lower parts of the Province were afflicted with a famine from the destruction of the harvest with frost, no such inconvenience was experienced at Paspebiac, nor at any other place within the level tract above mentioned. We are of the opinion that to establish these parts for the purpose of Agriculture, it would be expedient to divide and sub-divide such parts of the District as are susceptible of improvement, into Townships and Lots, which would soon be taken up by the natives of the Province, and by British Emigrants. The establishment of an Agricultural Society, as in other Districts, would, with some public assistance and judicious management, on the part of its members, essentially promote the Agriculture and general welfare of the District. The due execution of the road laws and moderate legislative aid in those cases which the road laws do not reach, would also much contribute to its prosperity. To this subject we shall again more particularly advert in the present report. The total want of Public Notaries and Land Surveyors in the District, by whose professional assistance many family differences might have been adjusted, is, we consider, one cause among others, which may have contributed to retard the improvement of the District; and it may be worthy of consideration whether some inducements ought not to be afforded to persons of character and capacity to be exclusively devoted to these professions to settle in this District.

The staples of the trade of the District are fish and oils; that is to say, green and dried cod-fish, salmon and herring, whale and cod oils. The most considerable of the fisheries is the cod, which commences in May and terminates in October. It is principally carried on in open barges of eighteen feet keel, each conducted by two fishermen, who daily go to the distance of three or four miles from the land to fish. There are not less than 680 barges employed in this manner along the coasts. This fishery is also distinguished into summer and fall fisheries. The former is by far the most considerable. The cod fishery is also carried on in small craft or vessels, which proceed to greater distances than the barges from land, and fish for several days at a time on the neighbouring banks. There are ten or twelve vessels of this description belonging to the District, manned with from six to ten men each, thus employed for about two months in the summer season. They who fish in barges, for the most part, form a sort of

co-partnership for the purpose, one party taking charge of the boating business while the other is charged with the concern on shore, the former provides a man to assist him in fishing and managing the barge and furnishes the fishing gear the latter receives the fish ashore, splits and prepares it for salting, furnishes the salt and the flakes and stages, where it is cured and dried by him. A barge makes in the course of a season from 150 to 300 quintals of dry fish; this is disposed of to traders who visit the coasts or who are settled in the country, some of whom also carry on very extensive fisheries. The far greater part of the choicest fish is sent to the south of Europe - a quantity is exported to the West Indies as well as to Quebec. That for the European market is invariably of the first quality, white, smooth and well and cleanly cured and dried - that for the West Indies and Quebec markets is of a secondary quality. The cod-fisheries employ about eighteen hundred persons of both sexes, of whom about five hundred are men who go thither for the season from the parishes in the neighbourhood of and below Quebec. The whole product of the cod-fishery may be estimated at about fifty thousand quintals of dried fish and ten thousand quintals of green fish, with about twenty thousand gallons of cod-oil which is sent to Quebec. The fishermen are occasionally employed at the herring fisheries; which while fresh, are useful as bait for cod fishing. About four thousand barrels, as well smoked as pickled, are annually sent to Quebec. The salmon fishery is, in part, carried on along the sea coast, but principally in the rivers, the chief of which is the Ristigouche; the north side of this river is in this Province, the opposite shore belongs to New Brunswick. The annual product of the salmon fishery in the Ristigouche formerly amounted to three thousand barrels; at present, the whole amount of the salmon fishery throughout the District is estimated at little if any thing more than two thousand barrels. This fishery is carried on by persons who are not employed in the cod fishery. The salmon is exported to Quebec, Halifax and the West Indies.

The whale fishery is carried on with some success by a few active and enterprising inhabitants of Gaspé Bay who are almost exclusively employed in this kind of fishery. Four or five large schooners, manned each with from eight to twelve able and skilful persons, are occupied in whaling during the summer months. This business yields about eighteen thousand gallons of oil, which is sent principally to Quebec. The number of hands employed in reducing the blubber to oil, preparing casks, and other incidental labour, may altogether amount to about one hundred. This valuable fishery, so peculiarly favoured by Great Britain, and of a nature so well adapted to the mutual interest of the mother country and the colony, we feel it our duty particularly to recommend to the

favourably consideration of Your Excellency, as deserving of every encouragement and assistance from His Majesty's Government and of Legislative Provision, by bounties or otherwise, as may be thought expedient.

Upwards of sixteen square rigged vessels are annually employed in the export of dried fish to the south of Europe; most of these vessels are built in the District, and are of the first class of Merchant's ships. Upwards of fifty small vessels are constantly, during the summer months, employed in the coasting trade, and from thence to Quebec, Halifax and the West Indies.

It is asserted by the inhabitants of the District that the cod and salmon fisherie diminish annually. In former years three hundred quintals of dried fish might be realized per barge, at present it is with much exertion that one hundred and fifty are obtained. This diminution they attribute to various causes; principally to the great number of American bankers, who, by splitting their fish and casting their offal over-board, draw the cod from the coasts. This is greedily devoured and in addition to the insonvenience above mentioned, impoverishes and destroys the fish by the great quantity of indigestible bones adhering to the offal; from experience this supposition seems to be well founded; during the late American war, when the American fishermen were excluded from the Gulf, the cod fisheries along the Coast were unusually productive; since the war and the return of these fishermen, they have sensibly diminished.

The Salmon fisheries decline so rapidly as to give cause to apprehend their total annihilation in a very short time, unless immediate Legislative provision be made to prevent the destruction of this kind of fish by the alarming abuses committed. Complaints are made that some of those concerned in this fishery obstruct the entry and channels of the rivers with nets so as to prevent the salmon from ascending: that others, after the fish have surmounted the obstructions, shut them up in sertain parts of the rivers and destroy them while spawning.

The inhabitants are desirous that some Legislative regulations be made to prevent the banking vessels from throwing the offal of their fish into the sea; to enforce such regulations, we apprehend however, would be extremely difficult if not impracticable. They also suggest that to encourage the fisheries it might be expedient to exempt from duty all twine for nets, cordage and fishing tackle and apparatus necessary for the fisheries, and to allow a moderate bounty on the exportation of fish - that it be prohibited to fish for salmon after the 29th July, or to purchase the same from the Indians after that time, and that

for their own subsistence; and that on no account they be allowed to fish for salmon after the 15th August. And finally, that to obstruct the rivers with nets be strictly forbidden under a penalty. It is believed that some such regulatio as these would, in a few years, restore the former abundance of salmon, as after the fishing season was over they would be left undisturbed in their spawning recesses and would annually repeople. The inhabitants along the rivers.concerned in the salmon fishery, would by such regulations, more equally enjoy the advantages of the fishery than at present; as the obstructions complained of force many of them to labour under peculiar disadvantages. It is, however, to be observed that any regulations on this subject, affecting the River Ristigouche must prove ineffectual unless corresponding regulations be also adopted in New Brunswick. We are of the opinion that the Act 47th Geo III. cap.12. with some modifications might answer the purpose. From the ampracticability of providing adequate regulations for every local and temporary inconvenience relating to the fisheries, it might probably be expedient to invest the Grand Juries of the District with authority to make, at the recommendation of the Justices of the Peace, temporary regulations on this subject, liable to the approbation of the Governor or Lieutenant-Governor of the Province.

Among the subjects requiring our most serious attention, and which we probably shall find the most difficult of adjustment, are the claims for fishing rooms or beach lots. The most eligible spots along the coast for curing and drying fish have been taken up and temporary buildings and scaffoldings have, for this purpose, been erected on the brink of the water, by the occupants; and in some places, as it suited their convenience, without regard to the rights of the proprietors in the front of whose grounds they have so built. On the regulations which may hereafter be introduced on this subject, the harmony, good order and prosperity of the District will most essentially depend. We have studiously consulted the most intelligent persons of the District on this point, and although they unanimously concur in the wish for some proper regulations; they differ widely in opinion with respect to those which it might be expedient to adopt. It is thought by some, that to grant them would encourage the proprietors to make more substantial improvements with a view to the fisheries; as the bare occupancy engenders endless quarrels among the occupants , who, from the uncertainty of their respective limits sometimes encroach on each other. On the other hand it is contended that by granting the beaches they would ultimately fall into the hand of a few wealthy proprietors, and thus turn to the disadvantage of the fisheries in general. We humbly suggest the two following propositions for consideration: First, to grant the beach lots in proportion to the number of barges to be employed in the fisheries, giving the preference to the present occupants:

Second, to lease upon such terms as to preclude the danger of monopoly, the said beach lots proportioned to the number of barges to be employed in the fisheries. It appears to us that some suitable and permanent regulations ought to be provided as early as possible, to prevent controversies which exist and must continue to follow from the present state of things in this respect. We are not, however, prepared to submit to Your Excellency, the best regulations which might be adopted on a matter of such vital importance to the fisheries; sensible as we are that to innovate precipitately might occasion incalculable mischief. His Majesty's instructions on this subject, at divers periods since the conquest, might, after all, be the most salutary regulations that could be devised.

The exports of the District, besides fish, consist of lumber and a small quantity of peltry. The imports from Europe, as well as from the other districts of the Province, of course correspond with their exports and realize a revenue considerably beyond the public expenditure for the civil government of the District The annexed statistical table will show where the trade is principally carried on, and where the large vessels and small crafts are constructed. The lumber trade has only commenced in the District of Gaspe, within four or five years past. In 1818 four vessels sailed from thence laden with lumber. In 1819 and 1820 the number was much increased; and this trade, from the abundance of pine in certain places, is susceptible of great augmentation. On the New Brunswick side of the Bay des Chaleurs it has recently been carried on to a very great extent. Exclusive of other benefits arising from this trade, the employment of a number of hands in the winter season, when, from the suspension of the fisheries, they would otherwise remain idle, is a considerable advantage. Some remonstrances have been made assainst the havoc committed in felling the timber for exportation in such quantities as to threaten the total destruction of that article: it is cut down and carried off without regard to any authority and in violation of repeated injunctions by the Magistrates to trespassers to refrain from this kind of depredation. Quantities have been felled and carried away by persons from New Brunswick, who, aware of the weakness of the civil power in that District , come over and audaciously plunder the Crown lands of the choicest pines, in defiance of the public authorities. From the depredations of this description, by unauthorized speculators in timber, and from the want of some effective regulations on the subject, much mischief has sprung; attended with some instances of crime of the most aggravated and alarming nature. Should any regulations be established on this subject, they ought to be so framed as to secure the useful pines and at the same time afford an equal chance to the Lumbermen in obtaining those of an inferior description. The regulations established in New Brunswick may be considered with advantage. We, however, consider the interests of agriculture entitled to a decided preference over that of the lumber trade and, therefore, that in every instance where lands are required for immediate settlement in that District, it would be for the public advantage to grant them without reserve. The provisions of the lumber Act, we are of opinion, ought to be extended to the Bay des Chaleurs and Gaspé, an omission which was overlooked when that Act was passed.

The administration of justice, we regret to say, is extremely defective. The jurisdiction of the Provincial Judge of Gaspe is limited to \$20; nor can any process issue from his Court against real property, as in other Districts, for sums exceeding \$10. To those who do business extensively the consequences are ruinous, inasmuch as they are obliged to have recourse to the Courts at Quebec, for the recovery of debts exceeding \$20. The expenses of suits, the distance and unavoidable delays that necessarily result, are often such as to render the debt scarcely worth the pursuit, and in some instances it might be preferable to sacrifice the debt rather than to sue for its recovery. By law, the Provincial Judge cannot issue Writs of Capias or attachment; a defect of which traders and other transient persons of bad faith sometimes take advantage. The influence which these disadvantages must have on trade is obvious; they have, we conceive, materially delayed the progress of the District.

The Law has made ample provision for the holding of Courts of Quarter Sessions in the District, in four different places, and it is the only District in the Province which in this respect has been so favoured. The want of a prison has, however, heretofore prevented the District from enjoying the full advantages of this Law. At New Carlisle, in the Bay des Chaleurs, there is a prison not yet fully completed, but which it is of the utmost importance to finish with the least possible delay. A sum of £ 1800, or thereabouts, will be necessary, as well to complete the same as to pay certain arrears due by the Commissioners on account of its construction.

The Act 48th Geo.III, chap. 13th, authorizes the erection of a Gaol at Perce (23 leagues from New Carlisle) for which & 1000 was appropriated by that Act, this sum having been ascertained to be very inadequate, nothing has consequently been done. This being a place of much business and a general rendyvous for shipping and trading craft, a building of this nature ought to be of the most substantial materials. The multiplied delinquencies of the most atrocious kind such as murders, burglaries, arsons, highway robberies, without taking into account those of an inferior description, which remain unpunished, cannot fail to fill the peaceable and respectable inhabitants with alarm; while the magistracy, unable from the want of secure places of confinement, are compelled

maltreated in turn by the criminal, bold in the consciousness that there are no means of confining him, however flagitious his conduct may be. Courts of Oyer and Terminer and General Gaol Delivery, which, after suitable prisons are erected, may occasionally be found necessary, would soon restore order and suppress the many evils so justly complained of throughout the District, which owing to the total suspension of criminal justice, is scarcely sensible of the protection of Government to which it belongs, and the benign influence of the Laws.

The Court of Quarter Sessions has not been held for many years past, nor has the Sheriff summoned for that purpose any grand or petit Jury, assigning as a reason that no precept has ever been issued or addressed to him by the Justices of the Peace, under pretence that without a prison the administration of Justice must, by a Court of Quarter Sessions, be utterly ineffectual. This may indeed be in part true, but we are nevertheless humbly of opinion that this is not a sufficient reason to prevent the assembling of Juries at the proper times and places as by Law required. By this ommission the District has, for a number of years, been deprived of some of its most important rights; the representations which might have been made to the Legislature and to the Government by the Grand Juries concerning the state, the grievancess and the needs of the District would have been attended to as expressing the sense of the population. The little information heretofore possessed of the true state of the District we attribute, in a great measure to this inexecution of the Laws. which must, no doubt, have been otherwise highly prejudicial to the general welfare and improvement of the District. Several Justices of the Peace and other respectable persons have, we are well informed, long felt and in vain protested against this neglect in conforming to the Laws; but the Justices of the Peace, doubtful of their own abilities, and unskilled in the Laws of the Province, have thought it more prudent to decline any attempt to administer justice in the Quarter Sessions than to incur the risk of not strictly proceeding according to the established forms of Law; which, however conscientiously they might endeavour to discharge their duty, they were not supposed to be qualified to pursue without professional aid. We are humbly of opinion that it is incumbent on the Provincial Judge to impart this aid to the Justices of the Peace, as the only officer of professional acquirements in the District, to whom they can consistently resort for instructions in this respect. Indeed it seems the Law intended that this officer should be particularly charged with the principal conduct of the Criminal Justice in the District, the terms of the Court of Quarter Sessions being so ordained as not to interfere with the Civil Terms, but immediately to succeed them, at the several places where, by Law, the

latter are held.

In this District there are but two schools, one at Douglastown, in Gaspé Bay, the other at New Carliste in the Bay des Chaleurs. The inhabitants in other parts of the District universally desire the advantage of similar establishments.

The Law for preventing the introduction and spreading of infectious diseases does not extend to the Bays of Gaspe and Chaleurs. The consequences of this oversight have been serious in the loss of some respectable and valuable inhabitants, by contagion, particularly at Gaspe, by vessels arriving from Europe with infectious diseases generated among the passengers in the course of the voyage.

The roads are generally in a very bad state and in some places impassable, in others they are merely footpaths of from three to ten feet wide; in many places there are no roads at all; the inexecution of the Road Laws, viz. 36th Geo.III, chap. 9th, and 48 Geo.III chap.25th is a cause of much dissatisfaction. These Laws do not require the Grand Voyer of the District to visit the Bay of Gaspé annually, which is nevertheless necessary. This officer has but the small salary of £ 50 per annum as a compensation for the duties of his office, and the appointment of his deputy, which, considering that his duties are more difficult in the execution than those of any other Grand Voyer in the Province, we consider as inadequate; and we therefore humbly submit the expedience of enabling this officer suitably to fulfil his duties; otherwise the improvement of this District must be essentially retarded. The Road Laws, with the exception above stated, are, we apprehend, if duly executed, sufficient for those places which are already settled.

It would be easy to open roads of communication throughout this District and the adjacent County of Cornwallis, in parts where the existing Laws have not provided for making them. The roads which it may be expedient to open for the particular advantage of these counties, may, at the same time, be connected with a general system of communication between this and the neighbouring Provinces of Nova-Scotia and New Brunswick. The frequent and melancholy instances of shipwreck along the coast, and amongst them the recent misfortune of Mr. Therien, at Mount Louis, with the total loss of his property, and some lives, for the want of assistance, shews the necessity of some establishment, such as Post-Houses and Roads along the uninhabited parts of the coast, by which the unfortunate might find some refief; the sum of \$5000, including the \$1000 already appropriated for the purpose by the Legislature, would, on granting the Rands on this road, so soon as the same is opened, be sufficient. This aid, we conceive, ought not to be considered as a benefit exclusively conferred on the County of Gaspe; but such as the Province at

large will experience the advantage of, from the facilities afforded to its trade and navigation.

The roads, which we apprehend would be of the most immediate use, are as follows: that is to say, from Gaspe Bay across the Peninsula to Griffin's Cove, on the St. Lawrence, about ten miles - from Lake Matapediach to Grand Mitis on the St. Lawrence, twenty-four miles - from the source of the Ristigouche to the River St. John, about thirteen miles - A road from the Basin of Gaspe to Perce, over ungranted lands, about twenty-four miles - From Perce to New Carlisle over the intervening ungranted lands, about twenty-four miles - From New Carlisle to Carleton, about nine miles over ungranted lands - From Carleton to Ristigouche, twelve miles over ungranted lands -From Mitis to Cape Chat, sixty-six miles -From Cape Chat to Fax River, one hundred and five miles; and from thence to Griffin's Cove, about six miles. It is to be observed, that from Cape Chat downwards there are several places where it would be necessary that the road should pass behind the Mountains; and in some places there may be interruptions from ravines and gullies. These roads, it would, at first, only be necessary to open in a rough manner; that is to say, about twentytwo feet wide, twelve feet of which to be clear of impediments (which might cost about \$ 10 per mile, as paid by the Commissioners of Internal Communications in the District of Quebec, for work of a similar description) leaving them to be hereafter improved by the grantees occupying the adjacent land, as provided by the Act 36th Geo III chap 9th. Those roads upon which it might be expedient to establish Post-Houses at an early period might be done with more particular care. A line of Posts from that District to Quebec, must, for the above as well as other manifest reasons, be of essential advantage to travellers, as well from Gaspe and Chaleurs Bay, as to those arriving from parts beyond the sea; who, on making the soast, might find it preferable to proceed by land to Quebec. From Grand Mitis to Quebec the road is already opened, and for that part of it which is near Mitis, the country is indebted to John Macnider, Esquire, of Quebec, who in public spirit, at his own private expense, has cut several practicable parts of the road over points of land between Rimouski and Mitis, by means of which the communication with the latter place is not only opened, but materially shortened. This road is connected with that opened from Rimouski to Erois Pistoles, in virtue of an Act for improving the Internal Communications.

We have also to observe that to accomplish the improvements we have the honour to suggest, it will be expedient that the Proprietors of the Seigneurie on Lake Matapediach, in conformity with the obligation of their titles, should make some establishment on that Seigneurie. The land round the Lake is good and abounds with excellent timber; which, having travelled over it, we have ascertained from personal

communication between Quebec and Ristigouche, as well as New Brunswick; and when the public and private advantages resulting from such a settlement are considered, the Proprietors of that Seigneurie could not have cause to complain of injustice on being called upon to make an immediate settlement.

In this District are several valuable rivers, the navigation whereof, is, in some places, obstructed by the accumulation of drift wood. The appropriation of a small sum of money would be of great service in removing these impediments, which prevent the inhabitants from rafting down their timber in safety.

The Harbour and Basin of Gaspe is said to be one of the best and most commodious harbours in America; and is capable of containing more than three hundred vessels in the most perfect security. It is of easy access, and may, probably, at some future day, be of importance as a rendezvous for the homeward and outward bound fleets. At present it is frequently resorted to by ships on their way to and from Europe, meeting with tempestuous and adverse weather in the Gulf. This place deserves attention by persons skilled in nautical affairs, and competent to give a correct view of the advantages it possesses as a Port. Applications have been made for grants of water lots in the Basin, by several persons, which it might be expedient to grant under certain conditions, such as the immediate erection of wharves and store-houses for the convenience of shipping and trade; taking care, however, to make suitable reserves for the public purposes, such as laying up and repairing vessels, &c. This, we apprehend, would not be attended with any detriment to the fisheries, none being carried on at this spot.

The matters we have thus submitted to Your Excellency, we consider of the utmost importance to the improvement of this District, so long neglected and so imperfectly known; and we consider it peculiarly entitled to Your Excellency's protection and encouragement, as an indemnity for the neglect which it uniformly experienced previous to the solicitude with which your Excellency's predecessors, the late Duke of Richmond and Sir John Coape Sherbrooke, were pleased to receive the remoistrances of its inhabitants.

By some, this District has been thought of no advantage to this Province, and that it ought properly to be an appendage of one of the adjacent Provinces. This, we are of opinion, is erroneous; as it must, from its geographical position, become an entrepot of trade between Quebec, the West Indies, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The merchandise it receives through Quebec, would, if attached to another Province, be subjected to certain additional duties. Our coasting trade would also be exposed to additional charges in entering and clearing out of the

ports in that District. The valuable trade which might be carried on with the South of Europe, by the merchants of this Province in common with industrious and intelligent merchants of Jersey and Guernsey would, no doubt be in some respects impeded, and the demands for Canadian produce in that quarter consequently diminished. The returns to these fisheries from the West Indies, the Mediterranean, the ports of Spain and Portugal, will, soon or late, afford employ to numerous river craft. In fine, this District gives to the Province the command of the Gulf trade, in which it is more than any other Colony concerned, and therefore, ought to be maintained. The same may be said of the Islands of Anticosti, Mingan and St. Paul, which properly ought to belong to this Government; and so true is this, that Lower Canada is obliged to maintain, at its own expense, an establishment on Anticosti, (an appendage to the government of Newfoundland) for the convenience of the Gulf navigation and to relieve and assist the shipwrecked.

The whole, nevertheless, most respectfully submitted,

J.T. Tashereau

L. Juchereau Duchesnay

Quebec, 27th Dec. 1820

GASPE OF YESTERDAY

A GLIMPSE OF GASPESIA IN
1820 FROM THE STATISTICAL
TABLE ACCOMPANYING THE
REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS
FOR GASPE LAND CLAIMS

KEN ANNETT

Though statistical reports are not always easy to comprehend and to translate into real life terms, that prepared in 1820 as part of the report of the Commissioners for Gaspe Land Claims does provide a graphic and revealing picture of Gaspesia of one hundred and sixty years ago.

At the outset the list of the Gaspesian communities of that time and their respective populations provides a striking contrast with modern times:

Community Pop	ulation	Community	Population
Ristigouche & environs	93	Beach of Malbay	26
Carleton (Tracadigueche)	488	Malbay	163
Maria	414	Point St.Peters	63
New Richmond (Cascapedia)327	Grand Greve & environment	ons 151
Bonaventure	468	Township of Haldiman	nd 35
Cox (incl.New Carlisle)	498 -	Douglas Town & envi	rons 129
Paspebiac	390	Gaspe Basin & entgronschool66	
Hope fown-Port Daniel	324	Cap Rosier	21
New Port	117	Gwiffin's Cove	. 38
Pabos	40	Great Fox River	42
Grand Riviere	117	Petite Ste.Anne	39
Island of Bonaventure	55	Grande Ste. Anne	10
Cape Despair & Anse a Beaufils	132	Cape Chat	22
Perce & environs	327	and any residence methodology	

Of the 715 persons designated as HEAD OF FAMILY in these communities, the great majority, 652, were shown as proprietors. Gaspesia of 1820 had few tenants indeed.

The division of the population by age groups and sex reveal that Gaspesia's total population of less than 5000 was relatively youthful and that the number of the male sex outnumbered that of the female. Half of the male population was eighteen years of age or less while half of the female sex were fourteen years of age or less. Only some 3% of the men and less than 3% of women were shown as being of age sixty or more. As to the marital situation we note that while 80% of men from age 18-25 were unmarried, the statistics were quite reversed for those of age 25-40 where only 20% were recorded as unmarried. While the report does not enable us to discern with precision the age at which young women generally married, there is some indication from the high percentage of married women in the age catagory starting with 14, that they married at an earlier age than men.

Education was clearly a major problem for Gaspesia's youth. In the whole, wast District the statistical report listed only one school house, that at Cox (New Carlisle). This was the school begun by the pioneer schoolmaster Benjamin Hobson, at the time of Loyalist settlement. In their written report the Commissioners referred to a second school of the District at Douglas Town. We can only presume that this school was lodged in the home of the school master of Douglas Town or in that of one of the parents. From records of such Gaspe pioneers as Felix O'Hara of Gaspe Basin we know that his sons, and most likely those of some other early families, had to travel to distant Quebec for education.

By 1820 the Roman Catholic population of Gaspesia were served by churches or chapels located in the following communities:

Ristigouche Perce

Carleton Point St. Peters

New Richmond Grand Greve

Bonaventure Douglas Town

Paspeblac Griffin's Cove

New Port

The report referred to three Protestant churches or chapels. These were located at Gaspe Basin, Perce and St.George's Cove. In her recent book on the history of the churches of Gaspe Bay, Miss Dorothy Phillips of Peninsula has written with authority and interesting detail of the Gaspe churches, including the Methodist chapel of St.George's Cove, founded in 1819 by Pierre Simon.

The sad neglect of the District of Gaspe by the administration of Lower Canada is highlighted by the fact that only one, unfinished, public building was reported by the Commissioners as existing in the whole District. This was the partially completed gaol at New Carlisle. Strong recommendations were made that this situation be corrected, with priority to be given to the completion of the gaol at New Carlisle and the building of a gaol at Perce.

We learn that grist mills were to be found at the Beach of Malbay, Cox, New Richmond (Cascapedia) and Carleton. Only one saw mill, located at the Beach of Malbay, was listed. Intriguing reference was made to a lone, "manufactory" at Cox

A section of the statistical survey dealt with the means by which the Gaspesian population was chiefly supported. It is to be noted with some surprise that no less than 560 of the proprietors were shown as farmers.

As might be expected the fishery for cod, salmon, herring and whales

supported the largest group of the working population. Of 733 persons shown as engaged in these fisheries, nearly 500 were shown as supported by the cod fishery. A relatively large numbers of persons, including some 500 men and 17 women were designated as servants. These may have included migrant, seasonal workers in the fishery, mainly from the parishes along the St. Lawrence.

From the number of "barges" employed in the cod fishery it was shown that Perce ranked first in that field, followed, in order, by Grande Greve, Paspebiac, Bonaventure, New Part, Anse a Beaufils and the Island of Bonaventure. In the herring fishery, Carleton stood first, followed by Perce, Maria and Malbay. The salmon fishery was shown as important at Grand Riviere, Carleton, Port Daniel, Ristigouche and New Richmond (Cascapedia). Seven schooners of Gaspe and its neighbourhood were engaged in whaling."

While the statistical report does not provide specific information on the extent and location of shipbuilding in Gaspesia, we do know from the main report of the Commissioners, that Gaspesians were building their own vessels, schooners and smaller fishing boats. The history of this vital and important industry has been the subject of interesting search and writing in recent years by David and Doris McDougall. Their work, revealing the initiative, skill and exploits of the early shipbuilders and mariners of Gaspesia, is a major contribution to our understanding of the Gaspesian heritage. The 1820 report reveals that for the Bay Chaleur ports alohe, no less than forty schooners were employed in the fishery and coasting trade.

Though some eight generations have come and gone since the report of the Commissioners for Gaspe Land Claims was submitted to the Earl of Dalhousie, Governor of the Province of Lower Canada, in 1820, and its pages are yellowed and ink faded with time, it affords an interesting glimpse of those days long gone in the Gaspe of Yesterday.