

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

24

THE SEIGNIORY OF MATANE

KNOWN TO THE MICMAC INDIANS OF GASPESIA AS "MTCTAN" OR THE POND OF THE BEAVERS, THE SITE OF THE MODERN COMMUNITY OF MATANE WAS FREQUENTED BY THOSE NOMADIC FOLK TO FISH, HUNT AND TRAP LONG BEFORE EUROPEANS ENTERED THE ST.LAWRENCE.

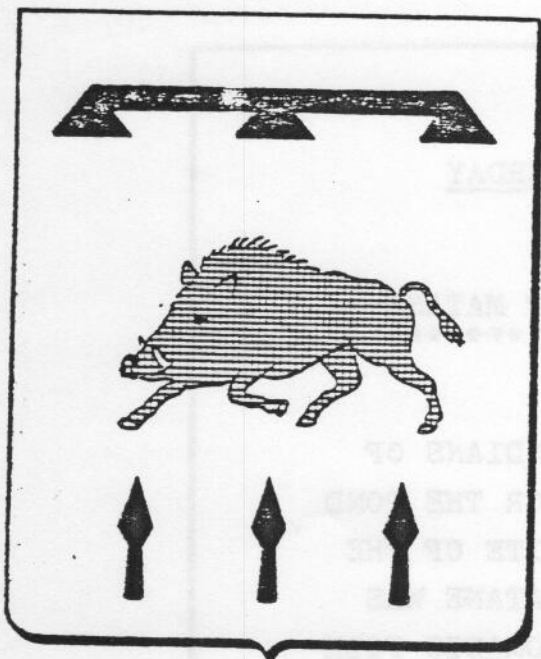
GRANTED IN FIEF AND SEIGNIORY TO MATHIEU D'AMOURS IN 1672, MATANE REMAINED IN THE D'AMOURS FAMILY FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS.

ACQUIRED IN 1781 BY DONALD MCKINNON AND AFTER HIS DEATH BY SIMON FRASER, MATANE'S DEVELOPMENT WAS INFLUENCED BY THE SEIGNIORSHIP OF THOSE STUDRY SCOTS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS.

THE MODERN, DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF MATANE THUS DRAWS UPON A PAST THAT IS A UNIQUE CHAPTER OF THE HERITAGE OF GASPESIA.

KEN ANNETT

FAMILY CRESTS OF THE SEIGNIORS OF MATANE



D'AMOURS

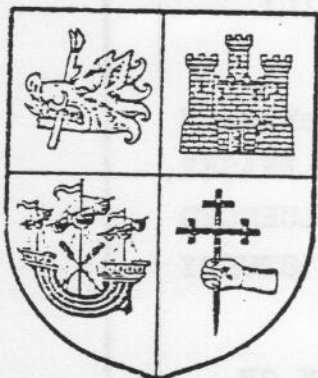


FIG. 75. — MACKINNON OF MACKINNON. Quarterly: 1st, vert, a boar's head crased argent, holding in its mouth the shankbone of a deer proper; 2nd, azure a castle triple towered and embattled argent, masoned gable, windows and post gules; 3rd, or, a lymphad sails furled and oars salterwise sab., flags gu.; 4th, arg., a dexter hand coupé fesswise holding a cross-crosslet fitchée sab. (Lyon Reg., xxxvi, 153).

M'KINNON



FRASER

THE SEIGNIORY OF MATANE

The Gaspesian community of Matane on the North shore of the Gaspé Peninsula, some 240 miles to the East of Quebec, traces its origins to the distant past of pre-history and has a story worthy of recall. The very name, Matane, echoes the Micmac Indian word, "Mtctan", or Pond of the Beavers, and recalls the encampment of those nomadic fishers, hunters and trappers near the mouth of the beautiful river Matane. Since those distant days the name, Matane, has come to designate the river, seigniory, county, town-site and the park of some 400 square miles along the upper valleys of the Matane and Cap Chat rivers. Facing upon the majestic St. Lawrence estuary and with the massive Shick-Shock Mountains as a backdrop, Matane conveys the sense of immensity of space that is characteristic of the Gaspesian scene. This is complemented by the bracing tang of salty air, the sylvan beauty of its river valley with limpid waters flowing over gravel beds, and the forest lands that have always been a vital resource.

When European explorers and fishermen first ventured into the St. Lawrence they soon noted that the Basin at the mouth of the river Matane provided one of the few natural havens to be found along the rugged North shore of Gaspesia from Cape Gaspé to Bic. It is speculated that Viking ships may have anchored there to shelter from fierce storms in the Gulf. What is more certain is that the Basque fishermen and whalers knew the Basin of Matane decades before Jacques Cartier raised the Cross at Gaspé and recorded his explorations of the Gulf and River St. Lawrence. In 1543, Jean Alphonse, geographer with the expedition of Roberval, wrote of being at Matane. Samuel de Champlain knew it well as did his trusty friend and companion, the Huguenot seaman, Pont Gravé.

HUGUENOT TRADERS AT MATANE

For the half-century following the voyages of Jacques Cartier there was remarkable little French activity in the St. Lawrence region. France was wracked by religious wars and it was not until King Henry IV issued the Edict of Nantes in 1598, promoting religious toleration, that a veritable outburst of overseas activity and trade

began. In the vanguard were the Huguenot seamen and merchant-traders of maritime France. In the short span of eight years, from 1600 to 1608, Huguenots were active in the foundation of Tadoussac, Port Royal in Acadia, and Quebec. But even before 1600 two Huguenot traders of La Rochelle, France, Samuel Georges and Jean Macain had come to Matane for trade and were followed by others, including the de Caen family. Indeed, our conventional histories tend to overlook the role that such Huguenot traders had in supporting the infant colony of Champlain at Quebec. As word of this trade spread in France, the Prince Condé obtained, in 1612, a monopoly from the King of France and founded the Company of Rouen and St. Malo. Despite competition the merchants of La Rochelle, the great Huguenot seaport, continued to send ships each year to Matane - "Le Soleil" in 1613; "Madeleine" in 1614; "Jehan" in 1616. Trade was not the only activity that drew men to Matane for from the first decade of the 17 Century it was one of the five great fishing ports exploited by the French in Gaspesia. Typical of such French fishermen was Nicholas Denys, who not only used the harbour of Matane as a fishing station but built a mill there, driven by a hydraulic turbine in the Matane river, to provide lumber for the repair of his fishing craft and the homes and store-houses needed for his enterprise.

THE FIRST SEIGNIOR - MATHIEU D'AMOURS.

It was in 1672 that Jean Talon, Intendant of New France, granted the territory of Matane "in Fief and Seigniory" to Mathieu d'Amours. The son of a family of Old France that traced its nobility back to 1489, Mathieu d'Amours had arrived in Quebec in 1651. The year following he married Marie, daughter of Nicholas Marsolet who had been of the company of Champlain at the founding of Quebec. The couple were to have a large family - twelve sons and daughters were living at the time of the census of 1681 and three others had died in childhood.

Mathieu d'Amours rose to prominence in New France. He served as Town Major of Quebec and after long service as a member of the influential Sovereign Council was made a Life Member of that body by the King of France in 1675. He died in 1695 - his wife, Marie

Marsolet d'Amours, survived her husband for sixteen years as the Seignioresse of Matane to die at Montreal in 1711. Of the family of Mathieu and Marie d'Amours the eldest son, Louis, became the Seignior of Jemseg in Acadia and his daughter, Marie, became the wife of the noted Acadian, Baron de St.Castin. Another son, Charles, was the Seignior of Lac Matapedia. His brother, Mathieu Jr., succeeded to his father's post as a member of the Sovereign Council of New France.

A decade before the death of Mathieu d'Amours, Sr., there arrived on the Matane scene the Sieur Denis de Riverin with ambitious plans and Royal support for the development of a fishery and whaling. In 1702 Riverin acquired from the Widow Seignioresse d'Amours her share of the Matane Seigniorship but only six years later she recuperated her lands and rights from the Sieur Riverin when he abandoned his enterprise. Thus the Seigniorship remained in the hands of the d'Amours family for more than a century - from 1672 until 1781. There is no evidence that during that long period of time the family had a permanent home at Matane or made any determined effort to bring settlers to their seigniorial lands.

DONALD MCKINNON - SEIGNIOR OF MATANE

Lieutenant Donald McKinnon, Scotch and Roman Catholic in Faith, had come to Quebec with the British Army of General James Wolfe and, like a number of his fellow-soldiers, had decided to remain after the Conquest. From his home at Berthier-en-Bas, McKinnon laid his plans to acquire the Seigniorship of Matane from the d'Amours heirs. He was aware that it was official policy to encourage former Army Officers, whose loyalty to the Crown could be counted on, to acquire the strategically located lands along the vital seaway and river St. Lawrence. It was thus that Colonel John Nairne had acquired the Seigniorship of Murray Bay and his fellow officer, Colonel Malcolm Fraser the Seigniorships of Mount Murray and Rivière du Loup. Little by little Donald McKinnon bought out the seigniorial rights and lands of the d'Amours family. By 1781 he was in a position to swear Faith and Homage as the new Seignior of Matane. On taking position of the Seigniorship, McKinnon proceeded to build his Manor House on the Basin at the mouth of the Matane River. There he lived with his

wife, Marie Angèlique Malouin McKinnon, and their family of seven children. McKinnon had very ambitious plans for the development of Matane - too ambitious, in fact, for his resources, with the result that when he died in 1791, the Seigniorship had to be put up for sale to meet his debts. It is of interest to note that the McKinnon name remained associated with Matane. When Bishop Plessis visited Matane in May, 1812, he celebrated Mass in the most spacious Catholic home of the community - that of the Pilot, James Forbes and his wife, Marie McKinnon Forbes, the daughter of the late Donald McKinnon.

SIMON FRASER, JR. - SEIGNIOR OF MATANE

The family name of Fraser is associated with the famed 78th Highland Regiment, or Fraser's Highlanders, that came to Quebec with the forces of General Wolfe and played a distinguished role in the capture and subsequent garrisoning of Quebec. The Regiment was then commanded by Colonel Simon Fraser, the son of that Simon Fraser, the Lord Lovatt, who, in his 80th year had been executed by the British for his support of the Stuart cause in the Rising of '45. The muster roll of the 78th Highland Regiment listed no less than five Simon Frasers, three of four Alexander and John Frasers, Malcolm Fraser, who would become Seignior of Mount Murray and Rivière du Loup and Augustin Fraser, who settled near Beaumont and whose descendant, Simon Fraser, acquired the Seigniorship of Matane from the estate of Donald McKinnon. The Seigniorship was disposed of at Sheriff's Sale and acquired from the Sheriff of Quebec, James Sheppard, by Simon Fraser in the autumn of 1793.

The new Seignior and his wife, Jane McCallum Fraser took up residence in the Manor House at Matane but, as a deep sea captain, Simon Fraser was often away from home for extended periods. In his absence the Seigniorship was managed with great competence by his wife, Jane. Settlers were encouraged to establish homes and clear farmlands. A seigniorial mill was built and a native of Maryland, U.S.A. came to Matane to operate it and to establish the family descended from Samuel Harrison that remains associated with the community. The harbour of Matane became a port of call for more and more vessels.

In 1805, while on a voyage to the West Indies, Seignior Simon Fraser died, leaving his widow, Jane McCallum Fraser, in full and complete charge as Seignioresse of Matane. The children of their marriage were Dougald, Mary, Ann and Jane Fraser. In 1807 the Widow Fraser married again with John McGibbon and a daughter, Divina, was born of that marriage. The children grew up to marry, as follows:

Dougald Fraser	married	Jane Grant
Mary Fraser	married	Thomas Johnson
Ann Fraser	married	Benjamin Racey
Jane Fraser	married	James Douglas
Divina McGibbon	married	John Douglas

For thirty-eight years, from the time she lost her first husband, Simon Fraser in 1805, until her death in 1843, Jane McCallum Fraser McGibbon was the Seignioresse of Matane. It was a period of steady growth and development for the Seignior. In 1812 Bishop Plessis of Quebec visited Matane, travelling in the goelette, "l'ANGÉLIQUE", and noted that the population included French Canadians, Scotch, Germans, Acadians, Irish, Anglo-Americans and Micmac Indians. Many spoke three or four languages. The harbour was busy with the arrival and departure of more than 600 vessels in season. Lots for the building of a Roman Catholic Church were given to the Bishop by the Seignioresse and her family, who, though of the Protestant Faith, also contributed later to the erection of the church building. In 1824 the Governor, Lord Dalhousie, granted to the Seignioresse and her family another league of frontage for the Matane Seignior on the St. Lawrence.

DOUGALD FRASER - SEIGNIOR OF MATANE

Son of Simon and Jane McCallum Fraser, Dougald Fraser would carry on the traditions as Grand Seignior of Matane inherited from his father and mother. His wife, Jane Grant, was of the Grant family of Nova Scotia, and from the correspondence of Dougald Fraser it would appear that she was a sister of Suzanne Grant Brown of Escuminac in the Shoolbred Seignior, Bay Chaleurs. The mother, Mrs Grant died at Matane and Dougald Fraser wrote of her death and burial to Dame Brown in Bay Chaleurs.

Dougald and Jane Grant Fraser had two sons, Alexander and Thomas and a daughter, Annie. As neither of the sons had children, the Seigniory of Matane devolved to the daughter, Eugenie, of Annie Fraser's marriage to Notary J.O. LeBel.

EPILOGUE

Up until the middle of the 19th century the main highway to and from Matane continued to be the sea. Only rude trails existed on land. The growth of colonization after 1830 created demands for links by land and in 1850 a road was finally completed between Matane and the Seigniory of Metis. Many more years would pass before a highway was built to link Matane with communities to the East, along the rugged Gaspesian shore. The traveller or tourist who can today drive from Quebec to Gaspé along the North coast of Gaspesia with ease, may seldom think of the isolation experienced by the pioneers that established such communities as Matane for generations.

It is fitting that the Blazon of Arms of the modern city of Matane is the Crest of the noble family of its first Seigneur, Mathieu d'Amours de Chauffours. But the citizens of Matane, and in particular its historians, recall with pride and appreciation his Scotch successors, the McKinnons and the Frasers, and the pioneer settlers from many lands and cultural backgrounds, who contributed to the growth and modern dynamism of this Gaspesian community.