

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

28

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO TWO MEN OF GASPESIA, JOSEPH BARTH, SHIP MASTER, OF CARLETON AND ABEL LUCAS, FISHERMAN AND FARMER OF MALBAY, TRAVELLED TO QUEBEC BY DIFFERENT ROUTES. THEY APPEARED THERE AS WITNESSES BEFORE A COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATURE THAT HAD BEEN NAMED TO LOOK INTO GRIEVANCES OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE DISTRICT OF GASPÉ.

THE TESTIMONY OF THESE GASPESIANS, WHICH IS PRESERVED VERBATIM IN THE LEGISLATIVE RECORD OF 1830, PROVIDES YET ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY.

KEN ANNETT

GASPE OF YESTERDAY

In the session of 1830 the Legislature of Quebec named a committee of its members to investigate the grievances submitted in petitions of the District of Gaspé. The committee comprised the Honourable Members Neilson, Bourdages, Cuvillier, Quirouet and Viger with Neilson as chairman. Hearings of witnesses began in February.

On February 2nd., Joseph Barth was called by the Committee and was examined as follows:

THE COMMITTEE

CAPTAIN BARTH

Have you resided long at Chaleur Bay?

I am a native of Carleton.

Do you hold property there?

Yes, I have two farms and a house.

Are you the person who brought the petition from the District of Gaspé?

Yes.

Do you know the Petitioners?

I do.

Are they inhabitants residing in the District?

Yes, all of them.

Are they proprietors?

Yes, I believe they are all proprietors.

Are they heads of families?

Mostly, if any of them are not heads of families they are at least all proprietors

Do you mean the signers or merely those from the place of your residence?

I mean the signers generally.

Do you know that any person refused to sign that petition?

No, it has been offered for signature in Chaleur Bay only from Matapedia to Ristigouche, as far as Mackarel Point.

People residing in the District of Gaspé, are they generally proprietors?

Yes, generally.

Do not a good many strangers resort thither for the purpose of fishing?

Yes.

From what part do they generally come?

The greater number of them come from Jersey and Guernsey; others from Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; there are a few Irishmen but they are seldom employed in fishing.

Are any of those strangers proprietors?

Yes, many of those coming from Jersey

THE COMMITTEE

CAPTAIN BARTH

What is the numerical proportion between the settled inhabitants and foreigners resorting thither for the purpose of fishing?

Of what origin are the residing proprietors generally?

Are there any Canadians?

What is the Religious Creed of the greater number?

What parts are more extensively settled?

What is the most considerable settlement in the Bay of Gaspé.

Are there any villages?

In what places are the Courts held?

How many Churches or Chapels are there in the District of Gaspé?

and Guernsey are owners of houses and lots of ground.

Those foreigners constitute perhaps one quarter of the population in the fishing season.

The greater number in the whole District of Gaspé are of Acadian and French origin; the greater number next are from Jersey and Guernsey; the remainder are Irishmen and others.

There are several Canadians

In the Bay of Gaspé the greater number are Protestants; in Chaleur Bay they are nearly all Catholics.

1st Carleton. 2nd. Paspébiac. 3rd. Percé 4th Gaspe

It is Douglas Town

There are villages, that is a number of houses gathered together: at the Basin of Gaspé, La Grande Grave, Cove St. George, Cove au Sauvage, Pointe St. Pierre, Malbay, Percé, l'Ance a Beauvils, Cape Despair, Grand River and Newport; at Chaleur Bay, Port Daniel, Hopetown, Paspébiac, Carlisle, Bonaventure, Hamilton and New Richmond, and another village next to Port Daniel the name of which I do not recollect.

In the District of Gaspé at Gaspé, Douglas Town and Percé; in Chaleur Bay at Carlisle and Carleton. The Gaol is in the Court House at Carlisle. The Judge resides at Paspébiac about two leagues from the Court House.

Gaspé, Grand Greve, one, Protestant I believe: Douglas Town, one, I know not of what Religious denomination, Pointe St. Pierre, one, Catholic: Perce, one, Catholic: Grand River, one, Catholic: Newport, one, Catholic: Chaleur Bay, Port Daniel, one, Catholic: Hope Town, one, Protestant; Paspébiac, c Catholic and one Protestant: Carlisle, one, Protestant: Bonaventure, one, Catholic: New Richmond, one, Catholic: Carleton, one, Catholic: Ristigouche, one, Catholic, for the Indians.

THE COMMITTEE

Do you know what denomination of Protestants those Chapels belong to?

Are there any Priests or Missionaries for all those Churches?

What number of people do actually attend at Churches?

Do you mean the Catholic Churches?

How many people are there in each of those villages?

Can Vessels put into all those villages of fishing stations?

At what times does the fishing season begin and cease in those parts?

Are there any of the harbours of the District of Gaspé that may be entered into or cleared during the whole winter?

Why?

CAPTAIN BARTH

No.

There are three Catholic Priests and two Protestant Ministers. The Catholic Priests reside, one at Carleton; one at Bonaventur and the other at Percé. The Protestant Ministers, one at Gaspé and the other at Carlisle. The Protestant as well as the Catholic Clergymen go in Mission to the Churches and Chapels.

At Carleton I have seen from six to eight hundred people at church; at other places, such as Bonaventure, three or four hundred; but I do not know the number at other places.

Yes. I do not know what number attend at the Protestant Churches.

Percé is the most populous in the County of Gaspé, it may consist of about sixty or eighty houses; the others in Gaspé may contain twenty houses or less. In Chaleur Bay the most important village is Carlisle which consists of about one hundred houses. The other villages, which are principally fishing places, may contain from twenty to twenty-five houses each. Those houses generally belong to people who own lands in the interior of the country.

Yes; there are some places where it is impossible to put in, except with certain winds; vessels of all sizes can go there except at Newport, where vessels of two hundred tons only can enter; the best are the harbour of the Basin of Gaspé, Paspebiac and Carleton.

It opens with the beginning of May and ceases at the end of November; sometimes it lasts from the 15th April to the 8th Dec.

No, I do not believe there are.

Because the Bay is sometimes obstructed by the ice.

THE COMMITTEE

Are the harbours clear of ice during the winter?

Can they sail during the whole winter to the Ports of New Brunswick?

On what extent of the sea coast are there settlements in the District of Gaspé?

Are there any communications by land?

Do the inhabitants of the District of Gaspé live more by Fishery than by the cultivation of the land?

Are there many Vessels owned in the District of Gaspé?

How many persons do you think are employed to fish along the shores in the fishing season?

People employed in that business, do they fish for their own account?

CAPTAIN BARTH

No.

Yes, but not in Chaleur Bay; they can sail to St. John's, New Brunswick, but not elsewhere.

From the Point of Cape Rosier to the mouth of the Matapédiac, there may be seventy leagues. The distance in a straight line from Mackarel Point to Cape Rosier is twenty-six leagues, by going along the coast there are forty-eight leagues; from Mackarel Point to Matapédiac, along the sea coast there may be forty or fifty leagues.

From Cape Rosier to Newport, near Mackarel Point, there is a road opened along the coast, some parts of which are practicable for carriages, except at certain places between Newport and Port Daniel; there might be a good communication by land between Chaleur Bay and the Bay of Gaspé but for the interruption caused by the Rivers on which no ferries are established, and where there is often not one single inhabitant.

In the Bay of Gaspé they live rather by fishing, and in Chaleur Bay by Agriculture, Lumber making, Ship building and partly by fishing, but they mostly live by cultivation of the land.

There may be a dozen owned in the County of Gaspé and one hundred in Chaleur Bay.

Two thousand persons may be employed in the County of Gaspé; perhaps two hundred people come from Canada; in the Bay the number of persons employed to fish is not so considerable.

Generally they fish for the account of traders coming from Canada, Jersey and Guernsey; the greater number are from those two Islands; some fish for wages, others for half the proceeds of their netts. Then, the barges, implements, and other advances are provided by the Traders; people coming from Canada get from six to ten dollars a month, the

THE COMMITTEE

CAPTAIN BARTH

What are the other trading houses of note in the District of Gaspé?

Is there any misunderstanding between the Catholics and the Protestants in the District of Gaspé?

Is there any misunderstanding between those of different countries?

Did you come by land to Quebec?

greater number go for one half the proceeds.

In Chaleur Bay, what is done in the fishing business, is mostly done for the account of the House of Messrs Robin, established at Paspebiac and Perce. I believe that they also have an establishment in the Bay of Gaspé and in the Island of Bonaventure.

It is Messrs. Janvrin and Nicol; the Janvrins are at the Basin and I believe Nicol is also at the Basin of Gaspé.

No.

No; at Percé some difference occurred between the Irishmen and the inhabitants of that place; generally, in the other places, people live in peace and good understanding

Yes, by Matapédic; on the 12th January I started from Carleton, going along the River Ristigouche to the River Matapédic, and up to the Lake; thence I proceeded to the Portage of Mitis, which I reached on the 21st January., and on the 28th I arrived in Quebec; I walked with snow shoes from the River Ristigouche to Mitis; we have been delayed by the River Matapédic not being frozen.

Thus ended the first session of testimony by Captain Barth.

Later, he was recalled for further examination by the members of the Committee but that must await another issue of GASPE OF YESTERDAY.

After the foregoing testimony of Captain Joseph Barth, the Committee called before them Mr. Abel Lucas of Malbay in Gaspesia and examined him as follows:

THE COMMITTEE

Where do you reside?

What business do you follow?

Have you a farm of your own?

When did you leave Gaspé?

Is there any other Post Office in Gaspé?

What road did you follow?

Where you all alone?

What weight had you?

You used snow shoes?

Are you acquainted with the Bay Chaleur?

What time would it have taken you to go from Point Peter by the way of Bay Chaleur, Ristigouche and Matapédia to Mitis?

In how many days did you make Mitis the other way?

ABEL LUCAS

At Malbay, seven leagues below the Basin of Gaspé.

Fishing and farming.

Yes.

I left the Basin of Gaspé on the 8th January and I arrived at Quebec on the 27th at 8 o'clock in the morning. I was despatched by H.B. Johnston, Post Master at Point St. Peter with the mail for Quebec.

No, not in the County of Gaspé.

I crossed from Grand Grève to Cape Rosier, and from that I followed the sea shore to the Gros Mulle, then I made a portage about one and a half league, another at Marsoin, about a mile to come to Ste. Anne, where there are inhabitants; thence to Cape Chat; thence 18 leagues to Matanne, without inhabitants; thence to Mitis, 12 leagues, no inhabitants; between Cape Rosier and Ste. Anne there are inhabitants at Fox River and at Grand Etang.

Not a living creature was with me; I saw no man for three days and two nights.

Fifty-two pounds weight.

I did, occasionally.

Yes.

About twelve days.

I was a day that I did not walk, the 9th I got to Mitis.

THE COMMITTEE

ABEL LUCAS

Can you give any idea of the distance each way?

I suppose about 80 or 90 leagues by the shore. I am not positive as to the other way.

Do you know Joseph Barth?

Yes.

Do you suppose he is well acquainted with Gaspé and the people of that District generally?

Yes, I believe he is, he knows a great many people

Do you think a practicable summer and winter road could be made along the shore for the conveyance of the mail?

It could be done, I have no doubt, but it would cost a great deal.

What sort of country is it?

Rather mountainous, but fine lands and rivers.

Do you think it fit for settlement?

Yes, if there was any other person to join me, I would as soon settle there as anywhere else; it is a fine hardwood land, black birch and maple, with a good proportion of fir, spruce & etc.

In subsequent issues of GASPE OF YESTERDAY it is proposed to deal with other testimony given before the Committee and to recall the report and recommendations that concluded this Legislative Inquiry into the grievances of the Inhabitants of the District of Gaspé in 1830.