

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THE GASPÉ BASIN LOT "CROANS"  
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Recalling the lot of land "CROANS"  
bequeathed by the Hon.Felix O'Hara  
to his wife, Martha, in 1805.

KEN ANNETT

THE GASPE BASIN LOT "CROANS"

In his LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT dated August 5th., 1805, a month before his death, the pioneer settler of Gaspé Basin, the Hon. Felix O'Hara disposed of his extensive property in and about the Basin. One item of that WILL reads as follows:

"UNTO MY WIFE, MARTHA, I BEQUEATH MY LOT KNOWN AS CROANS WITH ALL IMPROVEMENTS THEREON, AND AT HER DECEASE THE SAME TO DEVOLVE TO JANE, THE DAUGHTER OF HUGH O'HARA."

As it is unusual in Gaspesia to find a lot of land bearing a name and to retain that name over decades, "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY" considers it to be of interest to recall something of the lot, "CROANS" bequeathed by Felix O'Hara nearly two hundred years ago. While the origin of the name remains speculative, we do know that the family roots of Felix O'Hara lay in Antrim, Northern Ireland and it may well be that he named this lot in Gaspé Basin after an estate or locality in his native Ulster.

THE            The "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY" article, "SPRING GROVE AND ITS  
ARNOLD        GASPE FAMILY LINKS", (SPEC, July 6, 1982), recalled the  
LINK            marriage of the Rev. William Arnold with Maria O'Hara, granddaughter of Felix O'Hara, the building of their home "SPRING GROVE", the premature death of Maria O'Hara Arnold and the remarriage of the Rev. Arnold with Ellen Elizabeth Boyle, daughter of James and Charlotte McKinnon Boyle of the South-West Arm of Gaspé Bay. We are indebted to the daughter of this second marriage, Edith B. Arnold Mills, for a glimpse of the lot "CROANS" some fifty years after the death of Felix O'Hara. In her delightful memoir, "REMEMBRANCE", she wrote:

"...At the end of the Spring Grove land ran a brook called in the maps as Arnold's Brook and sometimes Kronen's (Croans) where it empties into the river.(York River estuary) There was a high hill and on the plateau on top was the Roman Catholic church but the valley beneath was a beauty spot. Beside the brook grew beautiful trees and near by the loveliest wild Iris I ever saw. Under the trees was the burial place of some soldiers mentioned in history. There I loved to sail boats; I think I made them myself for to my great grief they were frequently top-heavy. Nevertheless, true to the family tradition (the Boyle family) I was a sailor and loved boats better than dolls. Truth to tell, I did not have many of the latter. Boats I could make and also bark canoes to fit the occasion. As long as the sun shone I gave little heed to surroundings but when the shadows fell the thought of the soldiers would make me scamper home, wet and draggled, to be reprimanded by my mother for getting in such a condition..."

KAVANAGH  
BROOK

When, many decades after the days of Edith Arnold, my way to Gaspé Intermediate School lay along the highway fronting the former "Spring Grove" property, then the home of the Jopling family, and past the Kavanagh lot to the wooden bridge that spanned the adjacent brook, I did not realize that I was on the lot formerly known as "CROANS" or "KRONEN". The highway turned a sharp angle at the bridge to climb the hill, bordered by the Roman Catholic cemetery and the old Roman Catholic church on the plateau overlooking the entrance to Gaspé Basin. The valley on the seaward side of the hill was still there with the brook wending its way to the Bay. Near the Kavanagh Bridge were the Gaspé homes of Eden, Suddard and McKenzie families.

CHARLES  
STEWART  
BUYS  
LOT

A DEED OF SALE BY ELLEN ELIZABETH BOYLE (Widow of the late Reverend William Arnold) FAVOR CHARLES STEWART dated January 13th.,1859 has significant reference to the lot "CROWNES" -

"...All that certain lot or parcel of land,being a part of Lot No.2 (called Crownes) situate and lying on the North side of the S.W. branch of Gaspé Bay, beginning at the Eastern corner in front at a boundary Mark and running thence West along the Public Road to another boundary Mark two hundred and eighty six feet or thereabout, in front bounded by the said Road, in depth by waste lands of the Crown or the waters of the N.W. branch of Gaspé Bay, on the side towards the East by a part of the said lot No.2, belonging to the said Estate and succession of the said Reverend William Arnold, and on the side towards the West by a lot or parcel of land also belonging to the said Estate and Succession-the which lot of land hereby sold is divided from the said lots or parcels of land by lines running North Magnetically-said Lot or parcel of land containing twenty-eight Acres in superficies,more or less,but without any other guarantee as to the exact quantity comprised within the boundarys (sic)..."

The sale price was "...the sum of two hundred pounds, currency of Canada..."

The purchaser, Charles Stewart, described in this Deed as a Ship Master, resident at Gaspé Basin, was a noted whaling captain. He was a son of John and Mary McKinnon Stewart of New Carlisle. He had close relatives in Gaspe Bay as his Aunt Charlotte was Mrs.James Boyle of the South-West Arm of the Bay and his Aunt Flora was Mrs. John Ascah of Peninsula. He had married Margaret ~~Stanes~~ <sup>T</sup>Stanes of Cox Township (New Carlisle) in 1848. It is interesting to note that Charles Stewart named one of his whaling schooners

the "JOHN STEWART" after his father who was lost on a voyage overseas. His mother, Mary McKinnon, had subsequently remarried with Samuel Christie of New Carlisle.

Thus with the Deed of Sale of 1859 the lot "CROANS" did not escape entirely from the orbit of the pioneer families of O'Hara, Arnold, Boyle, McKinnon and Stewart.

DEED OF  
OBLIGATION  
BY CHARLES  
STEWART

The persistence of the particular name given to his lot by Felix O'Hara in his LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT is illustrated more than sixty years after his death in a DEED OF OBLIGATION BY CHARLES STEWART TO JOHN LE BOUTILLIER dated July, 1866 and made before Anthony Painchaud, Justice of the Peace for the District of Gaspé.

Charles Stewart had borrowed \$3200.00 from LeBoutillier and had pledged as surety - "All that certain lot or parcel of land being part of Lot No.2 called "Crownes", situate, lying and being on the North side of the South-West Branch of Gaspé Bay..." This interesting deed was signed by Charles Stewart, Horatio LeBoutillier acting for his father, John and the witnesses, George Philip Fauvel and Everiste Michaud. There is no evidence that the loan was not repaid in due course and the mortgage on the Lot "Crownes" ended.

GASPE  
TODAY

Were Felix O'Hara to return to his Gaspé Basin of today he would find it difficult to locate the public road of his time and the bridge that crossed the brook of his lot "CROANS". For the highway of today, sweeping in an arc seaward of the old road rests on landfill that has obliterated most former landmarks. The first and second Roman Catholic churches and the old Roman Catholic cemetery are no more. The graves of the soldiers recalled by Edith Arnold Mills are quite forgotten.

"Progress" and the march of time has replaced the once gracious homes near the "KRONEN" brook with garages, stores and a liquor commission ! No longer do beautiful wild Iris bloom in summer along the sheltered, tree-shaded valley where once a "sailor-girl" played with her toy boats until the evening shadows fell. The very name "CROANS" is now but a whisper in the yellowed pages of old archival Deeds. But it still has a power to stir memories of a far distant time in the history of Gaspé town.

