

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

JOHN FRASER OF CROSS POINT  
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1799 - 1893  
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"This Mr. Fraser was a great man;  
a prominent man in the history  
of the Baie des Chaleurs and the  
Restigouche district.."

(TREASURE TROVE IN GASPÉ AND THE  
BAIE DES CHALEURS-Mrs. MacWhirter)

Ken Annett

JOHN FRASER, ESQ. OF CROSS POINT1799 - 1893PREAMBLE

In the time that Daniel Fraser was the dominant "laird" of Matapedia (GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY - SPEC- 14 January, 1996) a fellow Scot, John Fraser, was the outstanding personality of the Cross Point district. Of him the Gaspesian historian, Margaret Grant MacWhirter wrote, in part, in her book, "TREASURE TROVE IN GASPÉ AND THE BAIE DES CHALEURS" :

"...This Mr. Fraser was a great man: a prominent man in the history of the Baie des Chaleurs and the Restigouche district...

Mr. Fraser was a true public servant, ever faithful and efficient in the discharge of his many and varied duties...

He left behind him the example of a well-spent, active and patriotic life..."

It is fitting to attempt to recall, from a number of sources, some of the career highlights of this widely respected Gaspesian who died in 1893 and lies buried in the historic old cemetery at Athol House on the Restigouche.

EARLY YEARS

John Fraser was born in Scotland at Fort Augustus, some thirty miles south-west of Inverness on the Moray Firth.

His year of birth was 1799. It is evident from his later career that he received a sound Scottish education in youth.

Like many another Scotch lad he decided to emigrate to Canada, arriving in Nova Scotia circa 1820. Soon after he moved on to Fredericton, New Brunswick, where he studied Law for a time in the office of the Hon. J. Ambrose Street. He was evidently lured away from the Bar by the business opportunities of a developing colony and by 1825 was a resident businessman of Chatham, N.B. At the time of the great fire of the Mirimichi he served as an active member of the Relief Committee.

BATHURST  
YEARS

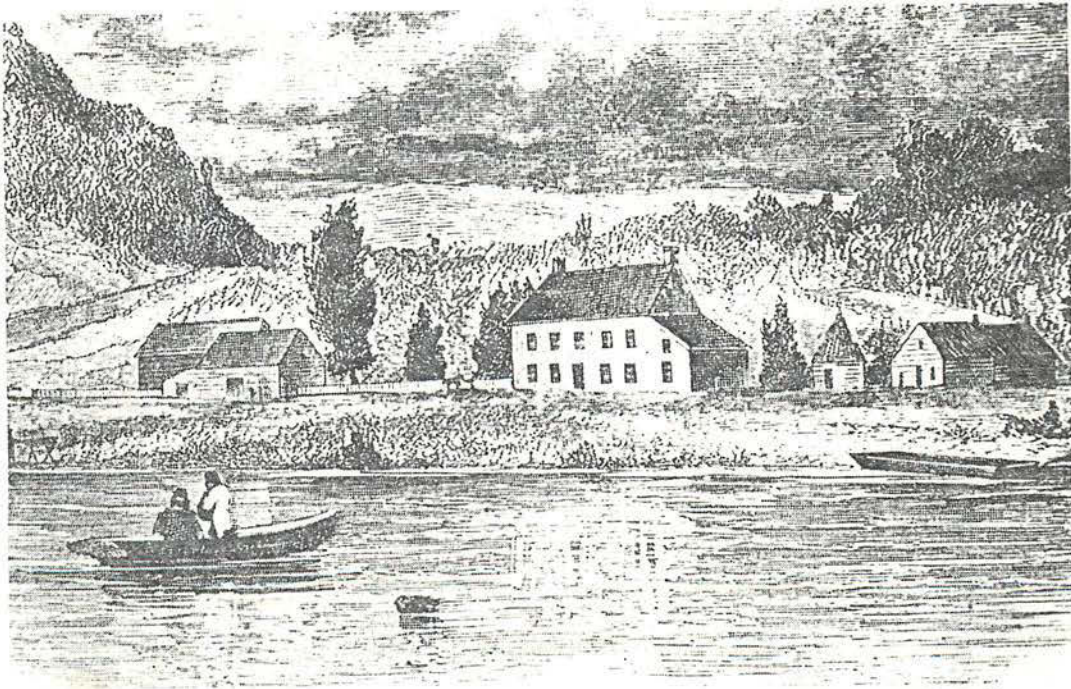
The devastation of the Mirimichi area by the great fire of 1825, vividly recorded by Robert Cooney in his 1832 volume, "A COMPENDIOUS HISTORY OF THE NORTHERN PART OF THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK AND OF THE DISTRICT OF GASPÉ", led to the out-migration of many of the district's people. Among them was John Fraser who moved to the growing town of Bathurst in Gloucester County and established himself there in export trade. In 1830 he was appointed by the widely known firm, LLOYD'S OF LONDON, as their agent and adjuster for Bay Chaleur. He was appointed also as a Justice of the Peace.

In 1837 he married Elizabeth, daughter of the late Robert Ferguson of Athol House on the Restigouche. The Ferguson brothers, Alexander and Robert, natives of Perth, Scotland, had been prominent in Restigouche since their arrival there in the 1790's. Their export business, principally in fish, was a lucrative one to markets in Halifax, Quebec, and the Caribbean region. Athol House, the Restigouche home of Elizabeth Ferguson, was the first great estate permanently established there and the site remains of continuing historical significance.

AS LLOYD'S  
AGENT

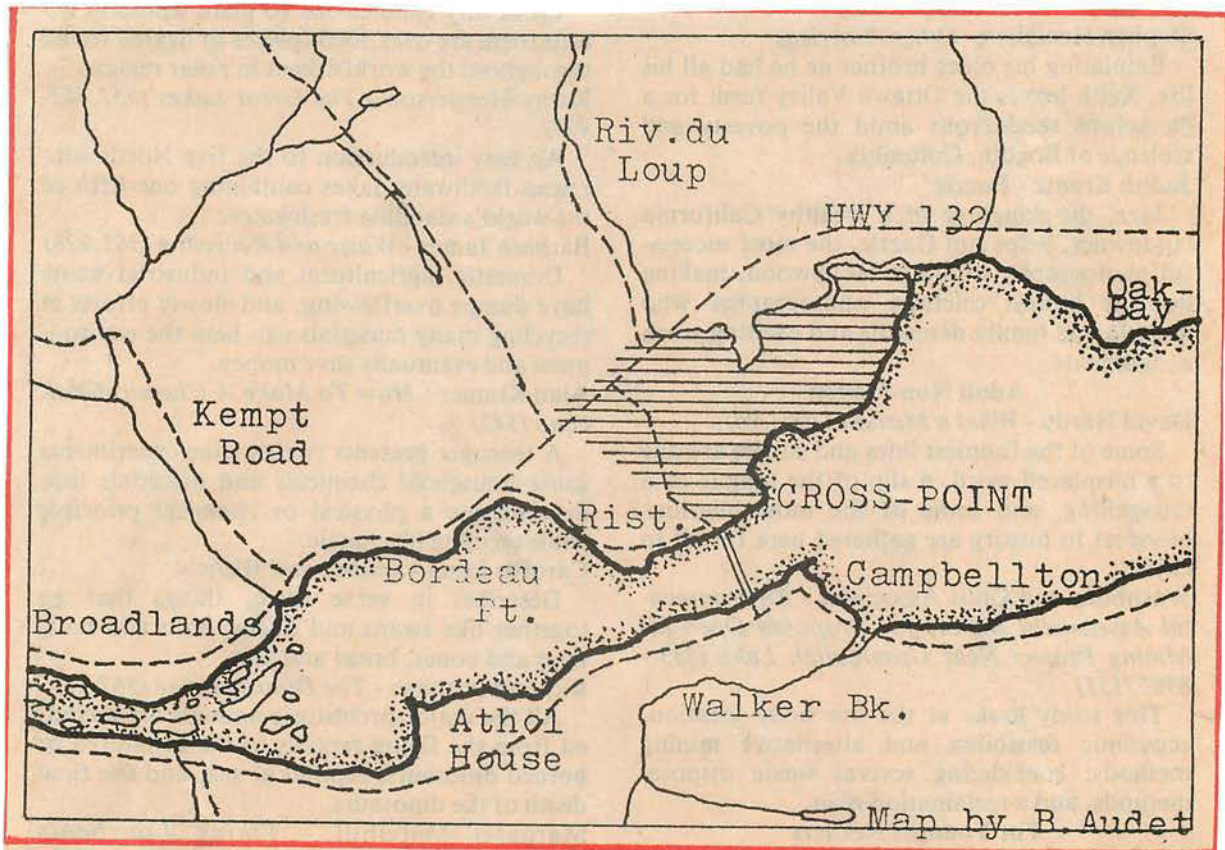
Reference has been made in previous articles of this series to the tragic wreck of the 350 ton Barque, "COLBORNE" near Port Daniel in August, 1838. (Ref. SEASIDE STORIES-PART 2-GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY #242) In addition to a crew of seventeen and thirty-eight passengers the "COLBORNE" had "one of the most valuable cargoes ever shipped out of the Thames", including some £40,000 in gold for the pay of British troops in Canada and for Canadian banks. As the Agent for Lloyd's of London in Bay Chaleur it was John Fraser that supervised the salvage and the disposition of such items of the "COLBORNE" cargo that could be found. This demanding task would have brought him into close contact with the prominent Port Daniel merchant, William Carter (Ref. GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY - THE ESTATE OF WILLIAM CARTER - #315) whose store was converted into a temporary morgue to receive the bodies of the wreck victims.





—Ganong Collection, N. B. Museum

ATHOL HOUSE, 1856



**THE VILLAGE OF POINTE-A-LA CROIX** (Cross Point) has an interesting history of settlement dating back to Edward Isaac Mann who gained possession of the large tract of land from the Micmacs in the early 1800s. Mann's land grant totalled 2,400 acres and was eventually partly divided into lots. Horizontal shading on map indicates E.I Mann's grant.



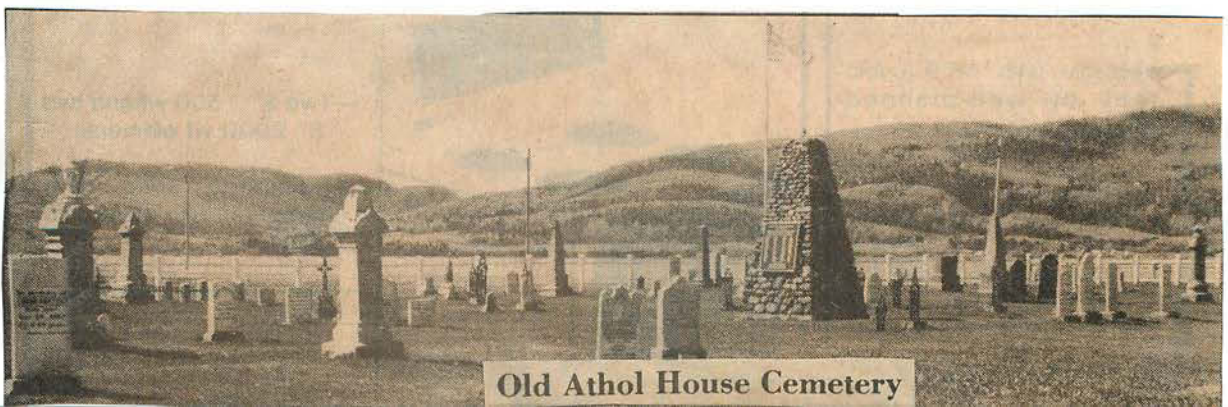
FRASER  
ESTATE  
ACQUIRED

In 1843 John Fraser purchased the vast property at Cross Point that had been the estate of Robert Christie, noted lawyer, distinguished historian and Member of the Quebec Legislative Assembly for the District of Gaspé. (Ref. GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY #015-ROBERT CHRISTIE 1787-1856, published by SPEC 29-11-79). The Christie estate was a part of the 2400 acre land grant made to the prominent Loyalist, Colonel Edward I. Man. The property had been the homesite of Colonel Crawford prior to its purchase by Robert Christie. As the home of John and Elizabeth Ferguson Fraser the Fraser estate was blessed with their family of ten children and remained in that family from 1843 until 1956 through inheritance by Elizabeth Fraser Jellet, daughter of John and Elizabeth.

JOHN FRASER  
AS PUBLIC  
SERVANT

The career of John Fraser was distinguished by a remarkable record of devoted public service.

- \* He was a Justice of the Peace in both New Brunswick and the District of Gaspé.
- \* From 1844 to 1860 he was Clerk of the Circuit Court for the District of Gaspé.
- \* From 1845 to 1873 he was Collector of His Majesty's Customs for the North Side of Bay Chaleur.
- \* From 1846 to 1893 he was Postmaster for Cross Point-his original appointment having been made by the Colonial Office in London, England.
- \* He was a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Bonaventure Militia.
- \* From 1855 to 1873 he was Collector of Inland Revenue.
- \* For more than thirty consecutive years he served as the Mayor of Mann Township and for most of those years as the Warden of Bonaventure County.



Old Athol House Cemetery

AMONG  
GASPESIA'S  
UNTOLD  
STORIES

The Miramichi "ADVOCATE" of September 21st., 1893 carried the Obituary of John Fraser of Cross Point, Bonaventure County, P.Q. who died on September 14th in his 84th year.

Surviving members of his family named in the Obituary were his sons Archibald of Montreal; A. Ferguson, on the homestead, Cross Point; George B., of Chatham; Alfred A. homestead; Fréd W. on his own farm at Cross Point and his daughter, Mrs. Jellett, residing on the homestead.

The story of John Fraser's long and distinguished life would fill a volume. One is reminded of a conversation that the noted author of books on Gaspesia, Dr. John Mason Clarke, had with Commander (Dr.) William Wakeham on the beach at Percé one sunny summer afternoon. Dr. Clarke entreated his friend, Wakeham, to write the story of his career as doctor and Superintendant of the Gulf Fishery. But Dr. Wakeham, ever modest, replied simply, "I wouldn't know where to begin or end". Clarke went on to say that Wakeham, "found the end before the beginning" leaving Gaspesians the poorer for his untold story.

The same could be said for John Fraser whose life and accomplishments exemplified the finest traditions and qualities of many a citizen of Gaspé of Yesterday.