

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THE SAGA OF THE "MARIE CARLETON"

A FACTUAL ACCOUNT OF SHIPWRECK
AND OF THE HARSHIPS SUFFERED BY
THE GASPESIAN CREW OF THE
SCHOONER, "MARIE CARLETON",
BOUND FOR GASPE FROM QUEBEC
IN NOVEMBER, 1827.

KEN ANNETT

THE SAGA OF THE "MARIE CARLETON"

Before Martin Sheppard, Notary Public, at Carleton, in March of 1828, appeared Sebastien Landry, Captain of the late schooner "MARIE CARLETON and Isaac Bernard, Mate of the same, to testify as to the circumstances of the loss of their vessel in November, 1827. Prior to an account of their testimony it may be of interest to recall, briefly, something of the background of these men.

Martin Sheppard, a resident of New Carlisle, was a native of the Island of Guernsey. He was a son of William and Ann Grut Sheppard of St. Peters Port. As a Notary Public for 59 years and Sheriff of Gaspé for 45 years he was widely known in Gaspesia. His wife, Jane, was a daughter of William and Ann McKenzie Adams of Cox Township.

Sebastien Landry, Mariner, was a native of Carleton, the son of Claude and Hélène Landry. He traced his descent from René Landry who had come to Acadia from France about 1640. Seafaring ran in his family - Sebastien followed his father as a mariner. He is recalled by the eminent Acadian historian, Bona Arsenault, as the father of Dr. Jean Etienne Landry, noted Quebec surgeon of his time, and the grandfather of Senator Philippe Landry.

Isaac Bernard, mate of the "MARIE CARLETON", had deep Acadian roots. A son of Charles and Elizabeth LeBlanc Bernard of Carleton, he descended from André Bernard who, in 1641, had migrated to Acadia from France to work as a mason at Jemseg. The husband of Genevieve Landry, Isaac was the brother-in-law of Captain Sebastien Landry.

Now, to turn to the story recorded by Martin Sheppard.

7 March, 1828

Sebastien Landry, late Master of the late schooner or vessel called the "MARIE CARLETON", burthen 42 tons and $\frac{2}{3}$ parts of a ton register measure, wrecked at or near "le petit Capucin", 4 and $\frac{1}{2}$ miles above Cape Chat, and,

Isaac Bernard, mate of and on board said vessel,
Allege, affirm, declare, protest and say:

2.

Said schooner, MARIE CARLETON, being tight, staunch and strong, well and sufficiently manned, provided, equipped and furnished with all things necessary for the voyage from Port of Québec to Gaspé Basin and from thence to Carleton.

Two other persons comprising the Crew (absent, but not wilfully) left Port of Québec onboard the said schooner, loaded with provisions, sails and eleven passengers, with their baggage, on 3rd November.

Proceeded without incident till Friday, 9th November. At 10 o'clock in forenoon, opposite Mont Louis and between Mont Louis and La Madeleine, said vessel was overtaken by a tremendous gale of wind with a heavy counter sea and swell, accompanied with a thick fog and snow which came on a sudden - entirely hid the land and nearly threw the vessel on her beam ends. The sea made several clear breaches over the vessel by which she shipped several seas - in which she was sometimes almost buried - she (the vessel) being all this time, and from the first commencement of the gale, under mainsail and foresail close reefed. Tried the pumps at which they had always labored every hour since their departure from Québec and, till this time, always found very uncommonly light and staunch and made no water, but now perceived that she made about the quantity of a barrel full each hour - continued laboring at the pumps as before but could perceive no increase.

At about one o'clock the next day (10 November last) the gale and sea had increased to a violent storm and the wind having veered round to the North with thick fog and snow as before, a violent sea, which it was impossible to avoid, broke over the vessel and with the force of the gale carried away the foremast. It fell on the bulwarks and broke close to the deck, carrying away with it in its fall, the bowsprit, both of which fell with a heavy crash.

Cleared away the deck and rigging as much as lay in their power. Continued laboring at the pumps as before but the vessel made no more water than the quantity before. At about three o'clock in the morning of the same day (10 Nov.) the Captain went up the

3.

mainmast at imminent risk of his life to clear rigging from the foremast and to fix a sail from the mainmast to the forepart of the vessel and to rig and fix the vessel sloop rig in order to try to make her steer, but could only succeed in disengaging part of the rigging owing to the excessive cold added to the violence of the gale and the pitching of the vessel by means of wherefore the Captain was nearly precipitated from the mast and froze the two of his legs in the attempt - the wind and sea all this time driving them towards the South Shore of the River St. Lawrence notwithstanding the unremitting labor and exertions of these efforts and those of the rest of the crew to prevent the same.

About 7 AM (10 Nov.) the fog cleared up a little and found themselves opposite le petit Capucin, above mentioned, about 15 or 20 acres from the shore which is all studded and encompassed with large rocks. Immediately let go the anchor and came to in 3 and 1/2 fathoms of water - remained at anchor about two hours with both anchors ahead - during whole time continued pumps every hour - very light.

10 AM the vessel began to drive with both anchors ahead - arduous, unremitting exertions - spent with exertions and want of sleep. The vessel was forcibly driven on the rocks which extend about six acres from shore. The vessel beat with great violence till her bottom was entirely staved and beat to pieces. Water flowed in and out of the vessel the same as on outside. Till then, all on board - great danger of lives - perishingly cold and wet.

Got boat over the side. It filled once but some of the passengers succeeded in saving themselves. The boat was driven ashore by the waves - some were cut and bruised on the rocks. After which the Captain and those remaining on board threw themselves from the boom and were providentially saved and washed ashore with the exception of one female passenger who was drowned - the boat by this time being filled with water, entirely out of reach and uncerviceable. Had to abandon all behind them.

12 o'clock of the same day, Saturday, with rising tide, the vessel drove ashore on the rocks and some barrels of apples, onions, pork, flour, one puncheon and one barrel of Rum were washed ashore in damaged state.

The next day, Sunday, left le petit Capucin and arrived at Machin, near le petit Capucin on Monday morning for assistance and to get some person to take charge and store the Effects which might be saved. Succeeded in engaging three men who, with the assistance of the crew, saved a large portion of the cargo which was all stored in safety at le petit Capucin and left in charge of a man named Angus McGinnis or McInnes, where they now remain.

The Captain and one of the passengers, having frozen both legs, remained at Machin during eight days to be cured after which the appeared left Machin for Bay of Chaleurs - reached Carleton in Bay Chaleurs on the 23rd December after the greatest exertions.

No fault of unseamanship, mismanagement or neglect.

Sworn to at Carleton.

Witnesses: Thomas Morris, Schoolmaster of Carleton
Hugh McKenzie, Merchant of Carleton

Signed by: Hugh M'Kenzie Sebastien Landry
Thomas Morris Isaac Bernard

Martin Sheppard, N.P.
of Bonaventure but taking
deposition at Carleton.

