

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

EXPLORATION AND SURVEY OF GASPESIA'S INTERIOR

KEN ANNETT

It sleeps among the thousand hills
Where no man ever trod,
And only nature's music fills,
The silences of God.

Great mountains tower above its shore,
Green rushes fringe its brim,
And o'er its breast for evermore
The wanton breezes skim.

.....
Sunrise and sunset crown with gold
The peaks of ageless stone,
Where winds have thundered from of old
And storms have set their throne.

.....
'Twas in the grey of early dawn,
When first the lake we spied,
And fragments of a cloud were drawn
Half down the mountain side.

Among the cloud-capt solitudes,
No sound the silence broke.
Save when, in whispers down the woods,
The guardian mountains spoke.

Through tangled brush and dewey brake
Returning whence we came
We passed in silence, and the lake
We left without a name.

From - THE UNNAMED LAKE
POEMS: OLD AND NEW
FREDERICK GEORGE SCOTT

EXPLORATION AND SURVEY OF GASPE'S INTERIOR

An aspect of the story of GASPE OF YESTERDAY that is deserving of more attention and appreciation than it has received hitherto is the exploration, survey and mapping of Gaspesia's vast interior. This is not surprising as it has been the story of activity along the coastal rim of the Peninsula that made news and dominated historical records. The Vikings, Basques, Bretons, Normans, Channel Islanders, American privateers and traders, Acadians, Loyalists and others were all sea-borne visitors to the shores of Gaspesia. Those who remained as settlers looked to the sea for a livelihood and as their highway for travel. Knowledge of what lay beyond the coastal lands and the lower reaches of the rivers would come slowly and painfully. For long the vast hinterland remained the sole domain of the Indian hunter and trapper.

In May, 1979, SPEC published the second part of a two part article in the GASPE OF YESTERDAY series, recalling the work of William Logan in Gaspesia. In July, 1844, Logan and his geological survey party began the ascent of the Chate river towards the mountains beyond the river's headwaters. The SPEC article recalled the expedition's trials and tribulations in crossing the mountains to the headwaters of the Cascapedia river and their descent of that major Gaspesian river to Bay Chaleur, which was reached in September. Among those accompanying Logan on this epic traverse of the Peninsula was Alexander Murray, a retired officer of the Royal Navy, who would subsequently survey and map other important areas of the Gaspesian interior. On this trip, as in other Gaspesian surveys, William Logan, paid tribute to his faithful Indian guide, John Basque of Gaspé, whose wigwam home and life-style were recounted in the first part of the series, as yet unpublished by SPEC.

CROWN LANDS SURVEY REPORTS

For half a century from the 1840's onwards a multitude of reports of Québec explorations and surveys were made and filed away in the vaults of the Crown Lands Department at Quebec. In 1889, George Duhamel, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, decided that these reports were of public interest and should be published. The resulting volume, DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEYED TOWNSHIPS AND EXPLORED TERRITORIES OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, contains a number of fascinating reports of the work of pioneer surveyors in the interior of Gaspesia. The exploration section includes the following reports:

- . Description of the Magdalen River. James Richardson
- . District between the Magdalen River and Gaspé Bay. James Richardson
- . Mont Louis, Anse Fleureuse, Pierre and Claude Rivers. E.A. LeBouthillier
- . Magdalen River Robert Bell
- . Matane, Ste.Anne, Cape Chat and Douglastown Rivers. Alexander Murray
- . St.John or Douglastown and Dartmouth Rivers. R.W.Ells
- . Pabos and Port Daniel Rivers E.N.Legendre
- . Pabos, Port Daniel, Hall, Little Cascapedia and Nouvelle Rivers. E.N.Legendre
- . Bonaventure River. Alexander Murray
Henry O'Sullivan
- . Bonaventure and Cascapedia Rivers R.W.Ells
- . Gulf Shore, Cape Chat and Cascapedia Rivers. W.E.Logan
- . Ste Anne and Cascapedia Rivers A.P. Low
- . Nouvelle River - West Branch F. Murison

- . Casupscull River C.S.Lepage
- . Interior of the Gaspé Peninsula Joseph Bureau.
Casupscull to Cox. (A diary of
survey work from October to March)

Typical of the above reports and illustrative of the observations they reflect are the following extracts from Alexander Murray's exploration of the Matane, Ste. Anne and Douglastown rivers to be found in his report dated April, 1846:

The Matane river falls into the St. Lawrence in latitude 48-51 N., longitude 67-33 W., according to Captain Bayfield's chart, about sixty miles below Bic Island and thirty-five miles above Cape Chat.

A lagoon, comprising an area of about forty-five acres, at the mouth, is separated from the Gulf by a long and narrow gravel barrier, at the western extremity of which there is a channel measuring 363 feet across, by which the water of the river escapes to join that of the St. Lawrence. Schooners and other small vessels can pass through this channel, and, when within, find snug harbour, but the approach from without is dangerous in consequence of a sand bar which has formed nearly opposite the entrance.

About three-quarters of a mile south from the entrance the basin contracts to a breadth of from 400 to 500 feet, the river falling rapidly into it, and at a little distance up from the head of the basin, a saw-mill having been established there, the river is crossed by a dam, extending from bank to bank, which gives a fall of ten or twelve feet. Taking the mill dam as a starting point, the total measured distance on the Matane, including three lakes at its head, was a little over sixty miles; the upward course of the stream, without attending to the minor turns, with the measured straight distances to the different and most remarkable points being as follows:

From mill dam to Buteau's brook	6 miles 54 chains
From Buteau's brook to Little Matane	5 " 67 "
From Little Matane to Tawagadee	7 " 15 "
From Tawagadee to Trout river	8 " 53 "
From Trout river to foot of Lower Lake	7 " 36 "
From foot Lower Lake to head Upper Lake	6 " 15 "

Buteau's brook, Little Matane, Tawagadee and Trout river are local names by which the principal tributaries are known to the Indians and others who frequent this region; they each join the river at one of its principal bends.

The height of some of these points above the level of the sea, at high water mark, was approximately determined by barometrical observations and stand thus:

Little Matane	176 feet
Tawagadee	246 "
Trout river	438 "
Foot of lakes	634 "
Head of lakes	721 "

By this it would be observed that the average fall of the river amounts to about 12 feet per mile...The area of the three lakes at the head of the main branch of the Matane is about 667 acres.

Taking its rise in the country to the north of the Notre Dame mountains, where the uppermost of the three lakes is situated, the main branch of the Matane flows south, cutting a deep gorge through the range, which is occupied by part of the middle and the whole of the lower lakes, with their connecting streams. It then runs westerly, between the southern base of the mountains and an escarpment of limestone, to the Trout river branch, which discharges into it a large body of water. Thence sweeping around the western extremity of the range, nearly opposite to the Tawagadee branch, it afterwards pursues a northerly course to the junction with the St. Lawrence. With its tributaries, the river probably drains an area of country extending over about 800 square miles.

The St. Anne river joins the St. Lawrence in latitude 49-10 N., longitude 66-28 W., eleven miles below Cape Chat. The total measured distance up its stream was rather less than 32 miles, the river beyond that distance being found too broken and rapid to admit of a further ascent in canoes. The first general course from the mouth was S 5 degrees W. for a distance of 13 miles 66 chains when it reached the base of the Notre Dame mountains - then S 70 degrees E for 10 miles 8 chains, falling very rapidly along the northern base of the range. At the end of this distance it is joined

by a branch from the north called Marten river, and, turning S 43 degrees E it bears that course for 7 miles 58 chains, the end of the measured distance, where it splits into two streams of about equal size, one sweeping round the great mountain from which we triangulated the surrounding country and taking its rise from a lake about 12 to 14 miles to the southward; the other, after an easterly course for 3 or 4 miles, bending round to the northward, and, after dividing into several minor forks, terminating among the mountains. The breadth of the stream below the junction of the two branches was about 190 feet, and the estimated height at the same part, was 620 feet, giving an average fall of 19 feet per mile. The area drained by this river is probably upwards of 300 square miles.

INTO THE MOUNTAINS

One of the most remarkable features of the Gaspé peninsula is the chain of the Notre Dame mountains. Its western extremity comes to within two miles of the eastern bank of the Matane, bearing from the mouth of that river S 25 degrees E., at a distance, in a straight line, of about twenty-one and a half miles. Its breadth does not here exceed two miles, while the summit heights are on average about 2000 feet above the level of the sea. The mountain range runs nearly due East and West, magnetic, and it increases between the Matane and St. Ann in width and elevation, advancing eastward. At the lakes of the Matane it occupies a width of four miles and its summits are about 2700 feet; while at the Chat, where this river intersects the range of the Old Man and South mountains, there is a breadth of six miles, the most elevated peaks rising to upwards of 3500 feet...

At the forks, where our measurement terminated, the deep valley which cuts the chain is rather wide. On the East, elevated mountains rise up...on the West a vast mountain rises over the forks, which, on ascending, was ascertained by barometrical observation to attain an altitude of 3224 feet above the point where we left the river, or 3778 feet above the level of the sea. This mountain was named MOUNT ALBERT, in honour of His Royal Highness Prince Albert, as it happened to be upon the anniversary of his birth-day, the 26th August, that we scaled its sides. The summit is a barren waste, extending over an area of between seven or eight square miles, the most elevated parts being

gently towards the centre, where it is frequently soft and boggy, producing a short, wiry grass, almost the only trace of vegetation met with.

From the highest point on the S.W. extremity we had a commanding view and prospect of nearly the whole western range of the mountains, among which the lofty summits of the Flag-Staff Peak and Mount Dayfield were distinctly recognizable. (Peaks scaled and named by the Logan expedition of 1844) The valleys of the upper branches of the Chat and Cascapedia lay to the West and South of us; and, while many of the mountains of Gaspé and Donaventure were presented to us on the south-east, the panorama was bounded on the north-east by the range separating the waters of the St. Anne and Magdalen.

Pools and springs of excellent water were observed in almost every direction over the bare surface of the great mountain, supplying numerous brooks and streamlets, several of which, uniting on the south-east side, form a considerable body which flows rapidly in a deep gorge to the eastward...

Between Mount Albert and the eastern part of the high, continuous chain from the Chat, the mountains do not appear to exceed from 2000 to 2500 feet in elevation and have frequently small lakes on the summits....Crossing this part of the country from a point about two miles below Marten river, and pursuing a S.S.W. course along the banks of a small brook for a distance of about three miles, we came to a ridge separating the waters of the north from those on the south side of the peninsula. On the opposite side of the watershed, we followed the course of a brook flowing southerly and, being on a parallel course for about one and a half to two miles struck a lake which we supposed to be at the head of one of the main branches of the Cascapedia. This lake measures rather upwards of two miles in length, the general bearing down it being S 60 degrees W., and with an average breadth of about 17 chains it contains an area of about 290 acres. A stream flows from the S.W. extremity, measuring about 60 feet across, probably belonging to the fork observed the previous year to fall into the Cascapedia about 6 miles below the Conical mountain.

FOREST OF THE INTERIOR

The whole of the range west of Mount Albert is covered with forest, except on the extreme summits of the highest mountains, which are bare rocks. The growth on the more elevated plains is chiefly dwarf spruce and, in smaller proportion, white birch trees of diminutive size, standing widely apart, the intervals being generally carpeted over with a luxuriant growth of tall ferns. The mountain sides lower down are clothed with balsam-fir, spruce and birch with a few white pine and black birch trees at wide intervals and cedar in the moist places. Mount Albert itself is almost entirely, both on its summits and its sides, a vast bare rock...

THE ST. JOHN OR DOUGLASTOWN RIVER

The St. John or Douglastown river falls into the Bay of Gaspé in latitude 48-40 N., longitude 64-30 W. At the mouth of the river there is a wide, open bay, occupying an area of between two or three square miles, which is entered from the sea through a channel 365 feet across, between two sand barriers, one joining at the village of Douglastown on the south, the other on the north side near the road to Gaspé Basin. A solid jam of drift wood has blocked up the river about two miles above the head of the bay, diverting the currents across the low flat lands of the intermediate shore, which it intersects with innumerable channels, cutting it up into a cluster of islands. Through this labyrinth, the experience of those acquainted with the river was found absolutely necessary for guidance; but, after passing the jam, there is no further impediment to the ascent of the river in canoes, so far as our survey extended.

The total measured distance, from the coast, of the stream was 48 miles 17 chains, in a general bearing upon N.71 degrees W. Above this, the valley takes a N.W. direction, and I was informed by the Indians, who are acquainted with the country, that the river branches off into several smaller streams at a distance of four miles above the point we reached, ultimately terminating among the mountains near the sources of the Bonaventure and South-West river of Gaspé. Where we stopped the river had a breadth of about 60 feet but, increasing in its downward course proportionally with the supply

of 300 feet across. The estimated average fall in the whole measured distance was 13 feet per mile; the height of the highest point being 643 feet above the level of the sea.

There are four considerable tributaries to the St. John, two joining it within the first seven miles from the mouth and the other two at distances of 39+ and 46+ miles from the entrance, and all coming from the south, besides many smaller ones falling in on either side. The two upper forks are supposed to take their rise near the sources of the upper N.E. branch of the Bonaventure and the lower of the two sweeps past the western base of a mountain known by the Indians by the name of Mount Alexander, one of the high points fixed in our triangulation from Mount Albert.

The lower part of the river, for a distance of about 13 miles, flows through a level country producing white pine, spruce and a species of larch frequently of considerable size and of valuable quality, balsam-fir, cedar and three varieties of birch, with maple, elm, and ash in less abundance. But where the country has been denuded of its original timber by the ravages of fire, which has run over a very large area, a thick growth of small trees occupies the surface, chiefly white birch and pine.

A range of hills bounds the southern extent of this flat tract, commencing near the sea coast at Malbaie, which, running in a N.W. direction and gradually approaching the river, strikes it near the end of about 13 miles of its upward course. On the north side of the river, the country continues to maintain its level character across the South-West river of Gaspé...

The whole of the upper part of the St. John flows through a mountainous region; the valley in some places is wide, with extensive alluvial flats...while at others it contracts to a deep, narrow gorge, the hills rising precipitously over each bank to the height of occasionally 300 to 400 feet. From the hill which rose directly over the point where our survey terminated, we saw Mount Alexander nearing directly south, which, by its long and straight roof-like top, as well as superior elevation, was easily distinguished as one of the most conspicuous points seen on our eastern horizon from Mount Albert.

A vast portion of this region, including nearly the whole of that part of the river flowing among the mountains and the eastern country between Mount Alexander and the upper forks has been completely denuded of its forest by fire and the hill sides, being covered with bare poles and charred logs, among which no new growth has yet sprung, saving a few short shrubs and berry bushes, present a very dismal and dreary scene and render travelling almost impossible.

SURVEY REPORTS

While the reports of exploration, of which the above is typical, established the broad outlines of the Gaspesian interior, together with the relative relationship of its mountains and rivers, it remained for surveyors, working within specific limits, to plot and chart the peninsula. The following survey reports relating to Gaspesia and filed over the years in the vaults of the Crown Lands Department were dusted off and published in 1889:

. Carleton	F. Murison
. Shoolbred	C.L. Lepage
. Causapsal	E.H. Legendre
. Cox	C.A. Belanger
. Mann	E.H. Legendre
. Matapedia	E.H. Legendre/ Lepage/Belanger
. Milnikek	Hector Le Ber
. New Richmond	Geo. P. Roy
. Patapedia	W. Macdonald
. Port Daniel	C.A. Bourget
. Restigouche	E.H. Legendre
. Cap Rosier, Gaspé Bay North, Fox	A.L. Poudrier
. Chloridorme	Ant. Painchaud

. Christie	Ant. Fainchaud
. Duchesnay	C.F. Roy/ Ant.Fainchaud
. Denoue	Ant. Fainchaud
. Douglas	H. C'Sullivan
. Douglastown	G. LeBouthillier
. Fortin	Ant. Painchaud
. Pabos Seigniory	" "
. Percé	G. LeBouthillier
. Rameau	Ant. Painchaud
. Taschereau	" "

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EPILCGUE

Today, when we can obtain a whole range of maps of Gaspesia at nominal cost from the cartographic services of the federal and provincial governments, it is fitting to recall the work of those pioneer explorers, surveyors, geologists and map makers who opened up the interior of the Gaspé Peninsula. Experiencing daily hardships in their way through an uncharted wilderness and lacking most of the scientific tools that are now available to the modern survey team, they not only pushed on steadily to their goal but reflected in their reports a remarkable attitude of wonder and satisfaction in their findings. Indeed the reports of these pioneers are a rich legacy, constituting an important and lasting aspect of GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY.