

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

CAPTAIN PETER DU VAL AND FAMILY

Ken Annett

CAPTAIN PETER DU VAL AND FAMILY IN GASPESIA

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR WILLIAM SCOTT
JUDGE OF THE HIGH COURT OF ADMIRALTY

Whereas by His Majesty's Commission under the Great Seal of Great Britain, bearing date the 16th day of June, 1803, and in the forty-third year of His Majesty's reign, we are required and authorized to issue forth and grant LETTERS OF MARQUE AND REPRIZALS to any of His Majesty's subjects, or others, whom we shall deem fitly qualified in that behalf, for apprehending, seizing and taking the ships, vessels and goods belonging to the Batavian Republic, or to any persons being subjects of the Batavian Republic, or inhabiting within any of the territories of the Batavian Republic....

...These are, therefore, to will and require you forthwith to cause a LETTER OF MARQUE AND REPRIZALS to be issued out of the High Court of Admiralty unto Peter Du Val, Commander of the ship, "YOUNG PHOENIX", burthen about 82 tons, mounted with 12 carriage guns and swivel guns, and navigated with 30 men, whereof the said Peter Du Val is Commander...

...the said LETTER OF MARQUE AND REPRIZALS to continue in force until further Order. For which this shall be your warrant.

Given under our hands and the Seal of the Office of Admiralty this 24th day of May, 1806.

By Command of their Lordships - STEPHENS
- COLE
- KENSINGTON

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TIMES

At the time that the foregoing document was signed at the Admiralty in London, England, authorizing a LETTER OF MARQUE for Captain Peter Du Val of Jersey, Great Britain was engaged in a life or death struggle with the France of Napoleon. The rise to power of Napoleon from the turmoil and wild excesses of the French Revolution had been meteoric. By the year 1800 he had won control of France and by 1804 had crowned himself as the Emperor Napoleon I. As Napoleon's armies extended French rule and influence across the map of Western Europe it was Great Britain that stood firmly in his path to total colonial and commercial domination. On land, that path would be blocked by such British Generals as Lord Wellington while at sea Royal Navy Admirals, such as Lord Nelson, won brilliant victories. In the long and bitter struggle for control of the seas and oceans an important part was played by brave and relatively unsung seamen, such as Captain Peter Du Val. They helped to clip the wings of the Napoleonic eagle.

THE DU VAL GENERATIONS - A BRIEF CHART

Jean Du Val (1) — M — Marie Piton
1769

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Peter (2) — M — Elizabeth Hubert
1769-1851

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Peter John (3) — M — 1. Donna Julia de Aldama
1794-1835 — 2. Marguerita de Bartoloma

└──┬──┘
Peter Nicholas (4) — M — Anne de Mountenay
1821-1889

└──┬──┘
Peter John (5) — M — 1. Susan Lenfesty
1843-1929 — 2. Catherine McNeill

ABOUT THE DU VAL FAMILY

Having fled from Huguenot persecution in their native France the Du Val family of this account found refuge and British citizenship in Jersey, the Channel Islands. There, Jean Du Val (1) married Marie Piton and their son, Peter, was born in St. Erelade parish, on the south coast of Jersey in 1769. Such records as exist show that Peter had brothers, Philip and Amice and a sister who grew up to marry the Jersey mariner, John Huelin.

Peter Du Val married Elizabeth Hubert circa 1794 and three known sons of this union were Peter John, Nicholas and Philip. As both Captain Peter Du Val and his son, Peter John would be among the members of the Du Val family to die in Bonaventure Island, it is important to note that the death of the son in 1835 preceded that of his father by sixteen years. But of this more subsequently.

CAPTAIN PETER DU VAL - 1769-1851

The maritime environment of the Channel Islands was a potent factor in influencing its native sons to choose ships and the sea as a career. While still in his teens Peter Du Val entered the service of the Messrs Janvrin whose fishing and shipping interests spanned the Atlantic to distant Gaspesia. Peter Du Val's aptitude and ability for seafaring won him early recognition and appointment to the command of the Janvrin vessel, "VULTURE", an armed lugger of some 100 tons.

The struggle between England and Napoleonic France was then in progress on land and sea. It was inevitable that the shipping of the Channel Islands, in the shadow of the coast of France, would be involved. In the defence of his native Jersey and in retaliatory raids on shipping along French shores, young Captain Peter Du Val was drawn inevitably.

The merchant traders of the French seaport of Bayonne, alarmed and angered by the threat of the "VULTURE" to their shipping and trade, fitted out a 16 gun brig of 180 tons to capture the Du Val vessel. This Bayonne brig, with its guns carefully masked, succeeded in luring the "VULTURE" into range. But Captain Du Val, discover-

the trap set for him and that the French were about to open fire, drove "VULTURE" in so close to the enemy that her guns couldn't bear and her shots went over and above "VULTURE" without serious damage. He then proceeded to board and capture the French ship with a minimum of loss to his crew.

The "YOUNG PHOENIX", referred to in the authorization for LETTERS OF MARQUE, above, was another of the Janvrin ships under the command of young Captain Peter Du Val. A LETTER OF MARQUE gave Du Val authority of the King's Commission, issued over the Great Seal of Great Britain, "for apprehending, seizing and taking the Ships, Vessels and Goods" of the enemy. Enemies of Captain Du Val would charge him with piracy but the LETTER OF MARQUE issued to him effectively disposes of such malicious charge. Tradition holds that the success of this intrepid Jersey seaman was recognized by the King who presented Du Val with a cutlass that was a prized possession of his descendants in Gaspesia.

The struggle of Napoleonic France with Britain at sea was lost for some time before the final defeat of Napoleon on land at Waterloo and the end of his dream of French domination. In Jersey, the Janvrin Brothers were deeply involved in the fishery of distant Gaspesia and it was in their service that Captain Peter Du Val began his long association with the fishery of Bay Chaleur. In the year following the battle of Waterloo, Du Val and his partners, Philip Godfrey, John Le Gresley, and Nicholas Du Val formed their own fishery with its base on Bonaventure Island and water lot in the more sheltered haven of Gaspé Basin. Bonaventure Island is reported to have been granted, after the Conquest, to Lieutenant-Governor, Major Nicholas Cox. However, a fishing "room" there was included in the holdings of the Stewart brothers and it appears that it was from Captain James Stewart of Gaspé Basin that Peter Du Val and his partners acquired their base on the Island.

Across Bay Chaleur, on the Island of Miscou and at the more sheltered haven of Shippegan, the Du Val company developed another major fishing station. Among the Jerseymen who were agents there were Thomas Falle and Philip Fruing. In addition to residences and storehouses the Shippegan station included a saw-mill, forge and ship-yard. Du Val Company schooners collected fish during the

fishing season and sailed to Jersey and European markets with loads of the dried cod prior to the onset of winter. Among schooners so employed were the "MUSCA", "VENUS" and "MARINE". Among the agents who served at the Bonaventure Island base were George Matthew and Francis Nicolle.

PETER JOHN DU VAL. 1794-1835

Like his father, Captain Peter Du Val, with whom he was, in time, a partner in the Gaspesian fishery, Peter John Du Val grew up to be a mariner and naval officer. Born at St. Brelade, Jersey in 1794, his early seafaring took him to Spain where, at Santander, he met and married Dona Julia Maria Joquina de Aldana in 1819. For some years Peter John Du Val resided in Spain where most of his seven known children were born. Though based at Santander he travelled extensively from Spain to his native Jersey, to England and across the Atlantic to his father's fishery in Bay Chaleur. He invested in that fishery and expanded the operations of the company.

In 1829 Peter John Du Val lost his wife, Dona Julia, leaving him a widower with a family of five children. Six years later he remarried with another Spanish lady, Marguerita de Bartoloma, but their union was to be shortlived as in July, 1835, Peter John Du Val died suddenly at Bonaventure Island. He was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Cap à Canon, Percé, where the following inscription marks his last resting place:

"SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF PETER JOHN DU VAL
NATIVE OF THE ISLAND OF JERSEY
WHO AFTER A SHORT BUT PAINFUL ILLNESS
DEPARTED THIS LIFE AT THE ISLAND OF BONAVENTURE
ON THE 25th OF JULY, 1835
AGED 41 YEARS"

"Time and separation may allay the sorrows
of the soul but never will they belittle the
regrets which the loss of a kind and tender
husband has awakened in the breast of his
afflicted survivors"

THE DU VAL FAMILY CARRIES ON.

The sudden death of his son and partner, Peter John, in 1835 was a sad blow for his father, Captain John Du Val. Now past the age of sixty-five years, and having lived a more active, adventurous and strenuous life than most men, he must have been looking forward to more tranquil times, had his son survived. His grand-son, Peter Nicholas was then but fifteen years old and would require the continuing, active participation of his grand-father and of his grand-father's brother, the Jersey merchant Amice Du Val, in the Bay Chaleur fishery until he was of age and experience to take charge. Thus it was that Captain Peter Du Val had to set aside his plans for retirement and continue to be involved in the Gaspesian fishery for more than another decade.

PETER NICHOLAS DU VAL. 1821-1889.

On reaching the age of majority in 1842 Peter Nicholas married Anne, daughter of William de Mountenay of Bonaventure Island. It was with his generation and in this marriage that the transition of the Du Val family from the life of Jersey to that of Gaspesia might be said to have come full circle. A prominent citizen of Gaspesia in his time, Peter Nicholas Du Val had many other interests other than the fishery. He held a number of public posts and was a Justice of the Peace in the District of Gaspé. The son of Peter Nicholas and Anne de Mountenay Du Val, Peter John, would grow up to marry Susan Elizabeth Lenfesty and, on her death, to remarry with Catherine McNeill.

VALE : CAPTAIN PETER DU VAL.

In 1849 Captain Peter Du Val celebrated his 80th birthday. What grand stories he must have been able to recount to his six-year old great grand-son, Peter John, in the Du Val Bonaventure Island home ! Stories of his youthful exploits at sea off the shores of Napoleonic France, of countless trans-Atlantic voyages in Janvrin and Du Val vessels, of his experiences in the rough and ready fraternity of the Gaspesian fishery.

1851 he died. The following notice from the records of the Anglican parish of Percé, while official, does little in its laconic wording to convey anything of the life and influence of a great man and influential Gaspesian:

"CAPTAIN PETER DU VAL OF BONAVENTURE
ISLAND AND FORMERLY OF THE ISLAND
OF JERSEY DIED ON THE TWELFTH DAY OF
FEBRUARY, ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED
AND FIFTY ONE, AND WAS BURIED ON THE
FOLLOWING DAY, AGED ABOUT EIGHTY FOUR
YEARS, AT PERCÉ, BY ME.

R. SHORT, MISSIONARY

IN PRESENCE,

ANDREW FERGUSON
JOSIAH CASS "

TIME AND TIDE

The fishing stations that Captain Peter Du Val had acquired and operated at Bonaventure Island and across Bay Chaleur at Miscou and Shippegan passed from his descendants into other hands. In the particular case of Bonaventure Island the Du Val property was acquired by David Le Boutillier. But that marks the beginning of a whole new story, that of the role of the Le Boutillier men in the Gaspé Fishery, that must await another article of the GASPE OF YESTERDAY series.
