

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THOSE GASPÉ ROADS

OF

FORMER TIMES

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Testimony of Robert W. Kelly  
of Grand River to Commissioners  
inquiring into the Administration  
of Justice in the Inferior  
District of Gaspé - 1842.

"...Carriage road from Cape  
Despair to Grand River, nine  
miles. Horse road or Bridle way  
from Grand River to Pabos, eleven  
miles, and Rabbit Tracks, at  
present, from thence to Port  
Daniel, eighteen miles..."

KEN ANNETT

## THOSE GASPÉ ROADS OF FORMER TIMES

What possible connection, the reader might ask, is there between the Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Inferior District of Gaspé some 140 years ago and the state of the roads in Gaspesia ?

The answer is to be found in the following item of a searching questionnaire submitted by the Justice Commissioners to the leading citizens of the District of Gaspé as an integral part of their inquiry:

- 2.23. Please to state what roads (carriage roads, horse roads or foot paths) are passable, and for what distance.

That the citizens of Gaspesia took their responsibilities very seriously in reply to the Commissioners questionnaire is evident from their detailed and thoughtful replies. Their comments and suggestions were all carefully preserved by the Commission secretary, Mr. Murdoch, and are to be found in the records of the Québec Legislative Assembly. From the mass of fascinating information on life in Gaspesian a century and a half ago, this issue of GASPE OF YESTERDAY will focus on a specific topic from among many - that of the state and needs of the Gaspé roads.

### THE COMMISSIONERS

Who were these distinguished Commissioners that went to Gaspé in 1842, visited settlements from Gaspé Bay to Restigouche and met most of the leading Gaspesians of the time ?

It was in the 6th year of the reign of Queen Victoria and during the tenure of Sir Charles Bagot as Governor-in-Chief of Canada that a Commission was established to inquire into the

Andrew William Cochrane was born in Windsor, Nova Scotia, in 1792, a son of the Rev. William Cochrane. As a brilliant Law student in Halifax he came to the attention of the Lieut.-Governor of Nova Scotia, Sir George Prevost. When Prevost was transferred to Québec as Governor during the crisis years of the War of 1812-1814, he brought young Cochrane with him as civil secretary - a post that Cochrane continued to fill with distinction under Sir Gordon Drummond, Sir John Sherbrooke and Lord Dalhousie. Admitted to the Québec Bar in 1817 he served as Advocate General of Lower Canada. A member of the Executive Council, he was named Q.C. in 1828 and subsequently appointed Judge. A man of wide interests, the Hon. Andrew William Cochrane, was a distinguished President of the Literary and Historical Society of Québec. He died during the tragic cholera epidemic in 1849.

Pierre Benjamin Dumoulin was born in Three Rivers, Québec, a son of Francois Dumoulin. He chose the Law as his career and was admitted to the Québec Bar in 1821 when he was twenty three years of age. His standing in his native community was such that he was elected to represent Three Rivers in the Québec Legislative Assembly in 1827 and re-elected to serve until 1832. Appointed to the Bench in 1839 he again returned to the political arena as the Deputy for Yamaska in 1851. He served as the Mayor of Three Rivers prior to his death there in 1856. Three of his sons became lawyers while a fourth son was a notary.

These then were the Commissioners that embarked at Québec on July 12th., 1842 for the voyage downriver to Gaspesia. They landed at Grand Grève and began their intensive inquiry at Gaspé Basin. Their subsequent Report to the Legislature recounts that they proceeded to visit successive settlements from Gaspé Basin to Restigouche. They then retraced their steps to Gaspé whence they returned, by ship, to Québec.

TESTIMONY ON THOSE GASPÉ ROADS

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from thence to Ship Head, and again to Cape Rosiers and Fox River, there is only a foot path; and from Fox River to Cloridorme it is over the beach, at low water, that travellers have to perform the journey."

CHARLES DAVIS

"We have no roads in this part of the District fit for wheel carriages any distance."

ANSE AUX COUSINS

JAMES PERCHARD, J.P.

"There is no road fit for carriages at or near Gaspé Basin; the only piece that can be called a road is that which leads from the Basin up the South-West Arm, a distance of about five miles."

GASPÉ BASIN

JOHN EDEN

"The road in the South-West Branch - there is a bridle road for about six miles, quite impassable for a carriage. Some years ago a small grant of money was granted by the Legislature to open a road from Gaspé Basin to Point St. Peter, a distance of twenty-three miles, which was done by cutting down the trees of the forest only, since which time nothing has been done, and it is now almost impassable, there having been no bridges erected over the brooks, ravines or rivers, and can only be considered as a foot path, the underbrush having grown up to a considerable height."

GASPÉ

(POSTMASTER)

HENRY B. JOHNSTON, J.P.

"There is only one foot path, which is scarcely passable betwixt the settlements of Point St. Peter and Gaspé Basin, a distance of twenty-two miles, which is intersected by deep ravines, rivers not fordable and brooks: but there are no carriage or horse roads of any description between these settlements, nor betwixt Percé and Point St. Peter, a distance of fifteen miles."

POINT ST. PETER

CHARLES VERDON, J.P.  
MAL BAY "There is only a foot path, scarcely passable, between the settlements of Mal Bay and Gaspé Basin, and also between the settlements of Percé and Mal Bay; and betwixt Gaspé Basin and Percé there are not any carriage or horse roads of any description."

PETER DU VAL, J.P.  
BONAVENTURE ISLAND "Respecting the Roads between Point St.Peter and Grand River, there is great need of improvement."

JOHN BAKER BLONDIN, J.P.  
PERCÉ. "From Point St.Peter to Percé the road is almost impassable, and a river to pass where no bridge can be placed, on account of the current, needs a ferryman to be paid by Crown. Distance from Point St.Peter to Percé, about six leagues and from Percé to Grand River, six leagues. Bridges are much wanted at Little River and Braschimina."

[ The comments above seconded by JAMES ROONEY  
CAPTAIN OF MILITIA and EDMUND FLYNN, LIEUT.  
OF MILITIA, both of Percé]

VICTOR MIGNAULT, J.P. "This part of the Province is, without contradiction, that which has been, and still is, the most neglected in this respect.(roads From Percé to Grand River there is a very passable road, even for vehicles, if I except two considerable ravines which are still without bridges. The path from Percé to Point St.Peter is too dangerous to be travelled on horse back and in some parts even for pedestrians."

REV. JOHN O'GRADY  
PERCÉ " The road from Percé to Grand River may be considered a carriage road as it is open to wheel travelling; it is however, susceptible

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streams over which there is no bridge, and for the erection of which the local inhabitants are unable to provide. There is no road, nor scarcely a foot path from Percé to Mal Bay, a distance of about thirteen miles. Travellers in that direction are exposed to much inconvenience and danger, arising from the rocky nature of the shore beneath and the rugged cliffs above, over which they are occasionally constrained to pass. From Mal Bay to Point St. Peter, a distance of about two miles, the road is partially open as it admits of a horse and foot traveller but is not passable with wheels."

PETER WINTER  
ADVOCATE  
PERCÉ

"From Grand River to Percé there is a tolerable good road for wheel vehicles. From Percé to Point St. Peter, about fourteen miles distance, is but a mere foot path, in some places almost impracticable, so that Travellers and Her Majesty's Courier have to watch the tide to pass along a rugged shore. The most important part of this County, that is to say the distance from the trading settlement of Grand River, of Cape Cove, of Percé and Gaspé Basin, the only safe and very important Port in this County, seems to have been entirely forgotten or overlooked, for if any part of the County had a claim to a vote of money from the Legislature for roads, it was most undoubtedly that part."

JOHN LE BOUTILLIER, J.P.  
PERCÉ  
"There is between the settlements of Point St. Peter and Grand River a foot path from the former place to Percé, distance about five leagues- thence to Grand River there is a

HON. JUDGE JOHN THOMPSON "The road from Port Daniel to Maguashias, PERCE in the upper part of the County of Bonaventure is passable with carriages. It is intersected by the Rivers East Nouvelle, Bonaventure, Little Cascapedia, Grand Cascapedia and West Nouvelle. There is a bridge over the first; the second, third and fourth are crossed by licenced ferry boats or scows, the last is not provided with any regular mode of crossing that I am aware of. The road from Little Bonaventure to New Richmond is, for a few miles, very indifferent, and that on either side of Grand Cascapedia, for at least two miles is very indifferent in summer and scarcely passable in spring and fall. I know nothing of the roads above Maguashia. I can give no information as to the roads in the County of Gaspé, having always travelled in that direction by water."

ANDREW FARGUSON

AND

ANDREW CASS

ANSE À BEAUFILS

"There is a road from Grand River to Percé, for a two-wheel carriage, distance eighteen miles; from Percé to Point St. Peter a very indifferent foot-path, distance fifteen miles."

ROBERT W. KELLY

GRAND RIVER

"Carriage road from Cape Despair to Grand River, nine miles. Horse road or Bridle way from Grand River to Pabos, eleven miles, and Rabbit Tracks, at present, from thence to Port Daniel, eighteen miles."

ROBERT CHRISTIE, M.P.P.

CROSS POINT

RESTIGOUCHE

"In 1822 the population of the District of Gaspé did not exceed by much, if any, 6000, whereas it now, I have reason to believe, exceeds 15,000. There was not, except in the

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County of Bonaventure in a much better state. The streets in that village were narrow, miserable lanes. Their present enlarged state is an improvement. In 1819 when I first visited Percé the now populous and thriving settlement of Cape Cove was not commenced - there was not even a foot path to it, or to any of the settlements along the coast from Percé, the inhabitants being obliged in their intercourse with each other to pass and repass back and forward in boats, or along the beach, and under the cliffs, sometimes at the risk of their lives. It was then supposed that a road was impracticable. I recollect being told by a respectable inhabitant of Anse à Peaufils, who had come to Percé (five or six miles) and called upon me on business, that a road between Percé and the Anse could never be made owing to the nature of the ground over which it must pass, which he represented as "mountainous" and cut up with "impassable ravines" or gullies. At Cape D'Espoir, Mr. Beck (father of the present inhabitant, John Beck, Esq.) was the only inhabitant - there are now several. From thence to Grand River (twelve miles or thereabout) there were but two or three small houses and these at Little River. There is now a tolerable carriage road the whole distance (twenty-one miles) from Percé to Grand River, passing through the several settlements above mentioned, made by the industry of the inhabitants themselves, without assistance from the Legislature, and the whole well settled. The road from Grand River onward to Pabos Newport Point Mackerel



settlement of Acadians, but from that place to Nouvelle River there was no road, not even a foot path, and but two or three huts at Michigawake Brook. It was a solitary and dreary looking coast. The whole tract is now settled and a good road runs through it. There are several fine farms on this tract and the inhabitants appear in prosperous circumstances. From Nouvelle River to Bonaventure (including Hope and Carlisle) there was an indifferent road. It is now a very good one. But from Bonaventure to Black Cape at New Richmond there was neither road nor settler. There is now a middling good road, and all settled - and at Black Cape, then a wilderness, the best farms and most independent farmers in the District are now to be found. In Maria, the settlement whereof was then only beginning, there was scarcely a foot path. The road through this Township is now excellent and the Township exceeds in prosperity the neighbouring Township of Carleton, a much older settlement and the principal place in the upper part of the Bay des Chaleurs. In Restigouche there were but few inhabitants other than the Indian and no trade but what was afforded by the salmon fishery, now dwindled away to nothing - upwards of a hundred ships laden with timber for Britain, annually, for several years, have sailed from it. There are however, localities sadly in arrear, and among them I regret to point out the Bay of Gaspé which has but slowly advanced in the march of improvement, owing to the great difficulties to be overcome and the neglect it has experienced from the Government and Legislature, and signally so at

JUSTICES OF  
THE PEACE AND  
OTHER LEADING  
CITIZENS OF  
GASPESIA  
INTERVIEWED  
BY THE  
COMMISSIONERS

St. George's Cove.....	Francis Ahier.
Grand Grève.....	Peter LeMesurier.
Cap Beauxeaux.....	Joshua Dennis.
Gaspé Basin.....	John D. McConnell Henry O'Hara. James Perchard. John Eden.
Anse aux Cousins.....	Charles Davis.
South-West Arm.....	J. Languedoc.
Douglastown.....	Isaac Kennedy.
Point St. Peter.....	Henry B. Johnston.
Mal Bay.....	Charles Verdon.
Corner of the Beach.....	Peter Mabe
Percé.....	Hon. Judge J. Thompson. John LeBouthillier. John Baker Blondin. J. Lenfesty. Victor Mignault. Rev. John O'Grady. Etienne Martel. Peter Winter. James Rooney. Edmund Flynn.
Bonaventure Island.....	Peter Du Val
Anse à Beaufile.....	John Beck. Andrew Cass. Andrew Ferguson.
Cape Cove.....	William Tilly. Josiah Cass.
Little River.....	Louis Lelievre.
Grand River.....	Robert Houston. Anseleme Thibaudeau. Robert W. Kelly.
Port Daniel.....	William Carter. William McPherson

Port Daniel (ctd).....	Matthew Murphy. William McDonald.
Nouvelle.....	S. Talbot.
Hopetown.....	Farquhar McRea.
Paspebiac.....	David LeBoutillier. John Hardeley.
Cox-New Carlisle.....	William Macdonald. Edward H. Enright. John P. Caldwell. Henry Caldwell. Robert Caldwell. Amasa Bebee. James Morrison. Daniel Marrett. John Caldwell. William Mann.
Bonaventure-Hamilton.....	Pierre Poirier. Charles Poirier. James McCracken.
Black Cape-New Richmond.....	John Cruger. Patrick Wallace. John Jamieson.
Maria.....	Joseph Meagher. Amand Cire. Louis Cire.
Carleton.....	Hypolite Landry. Hilaire Michaud. J.G. LeBel. John Landry. John Meagher.
Shoolbred.....	John U. Campbell.
Restigouche (including Cross Point, Flatlands, etc.).....	Rev. Louis St. Malo. Arthur Ritchie. Robert Christie.

ONE OF A NUMBER OF INTERESTING APPENDICES TO THE COMMISSIONERS  
REPORT -

7 Victoriae.

Appendix (G.)

A. 1843.

NAMES of the Heads of Families, Business or Calling, and Number of Persons in each, residing at Gaspé  
Basin, South-West Branch, North-West Branch, Peninsula and Sandy Beach, 14th August, 1842.

Appendix  
(G.)Appendix  
(G.)

4th October.

4th October.

Number of Heads of Families.	Names of the Heads of Families.	Business or Calling.	No. of Persons in each Family.	Name of Settlement.
1	Jeffry Pendergast .....	Farmer.....	8	From the head of the North side of the South-West Branch to the residence of the Rev. William Arnold, near the Basin of Gaspé.
	William Clarke.....	Do. ....	7	
	Daniel Patterson.....	Do. ....	6	
	Thomas Robin.....	Cooper.....	—	
	Lanch T. Patterson.....	Farmer.....	—	
	Louis Kelly.....	Do. ....	5	
	John Redding.....	Do. (Pensioner).....	1	
	Joseph Eden.....	Do. ....	5	
	Richard Patterson.....	Do. ....	10	
	Abraham Coffin.....	Do. and Whaler.....	10	
10	James Boyle.....	Do. do. ....	9	
	Felix Boyle.....	Do. do. ....	7	
	John Eden.....	Post Master, Gaspé Basin.....	7	
	Benjamin Patterson.....	Farmer and Whaler.....	9	
	William G. Annett.....	Whaler.....	—	
	Richard Annett.....	Do. and Farmer.....	9	
	Philip Bachawaise.....	Farmer.....	6	
	John Salvidon, Sen.....	Do. ....	3	
	John Salvidon, Jun.....	Do. and Whaler.....	1	
	20	Samuel Tripp.....	Do. and Cooper.....	7
Martin Moran.....		Do. ....	3	
Edward Quigly.....		Do. ....	5	
John Daoling.....		Do. ....	6	
Daniel Daoling.....		Do. ....	7	
Patrick Moran.....		Do. ....	6	
Duncan Morrison.....		Blacksmith.....	4	
Henry O'Hara.....		Justice of the Peace.....	5	
James Perchard.....		Do. do. and Merchant.....	5	
Edward Raby.....		Carpenter.....	5	
30	James Carter.....	Blacksmith.....	4	
	William Fingleton.....	Farmer.....	6	
	Patrick McKennon.....	Do. ....	3	
33	John Bond.....	Labourer.....	11	
34	Rev. William Arnold.....	Episcopal Minister.....	8	

1	Henry Millar.....	Whaler.....	6	From the head of the South side of the South-West Branch to the lower part of Sandy Beach.
	John Patterson.....	Farmer and Cooper.....	10	
	James Patterson.....	Whaler do.....	—	
	Thomas Patterson.....	Do. do.....	—	
	William Grant.....	Do. and Farmer.....	11	
	John Hackett.....	Farmer.....	5	
	Nicholas Mullan.....	Do.....	4	
	John White.....	Do.....	6	
	Joseph Languedoc.....	Do.....	7	
	James Fitzpatrick.....	Do.....	4	
10	Joseph Falle.....	Ship Builder.....	—	
	John Baker.....	Whaler.....	—	
	Charles Stewart.....	Do.....	—	
	M. Oliver O'Hara.....	Farmer.....	3	
	John D. McConnell.....	Dep. Collector of Customs.....	10	
	Thomas Suddard.....	Farmer.....	11	
	John Adams, Senr.....	Do.....	5	
	Adam Williamson.....	Do.....	—	
	George Miller.....	Do. and Whaler.....	6	
	Robert Harbour.....	Do.....	7	
20	Edward Miller.....	Whaler.....	6	
	Thomas Miller.....	Do. and Farmer.....	8	
	William Harbour.....	Do. do.....	8	
	James Baker.....	Do.....	2	
	William Baker.....	Do.....	2	
	Robert Baker.....	Do.....	3	
	Philip Alexander.....	Farmer.....	10	
	John Lefour.....	Do. and Miller.....	1	
	Edward Hoert.....	Do.....	8	
	David McGra.....	Do.....	9	
			Total. 162	

(U.) 4th October.	Number of Heads of Families.	Names of the Heads of Families.	Business or Calling.	No. of Persons in each Family.	Name of Settlement.	(U.) 4th October.
1		Charles Davies.....	Farmer and Millwright .....	10	From L'Anse aux Cousins to the head of the North-West Bay on the South side.	
		Benjamin Coffin.....	Do.....	8		
		John Coffin.....	Do.....	2		
		Bapt. Basque.....	Do.....	4		
		Peter Argono.....	Do.....	6		
		Henry Stanly.....	Do.....	8		
		Edward Lafarrell.....	Do.....	3		
		Joseph Scott.....	Do.....	—		
				Total.. 41		
1		Robert Simpson.....	Farmer.....	2	From the head of the North-West Bay on the North side to the last Settlement at Peninsula.	
		Hugh Cumming.....	Do.....	7		
		Abraham Adams.....	Do.....	7		
		John Adams, Junr.....	Do.....	7		
		Thomas Langloise.....	Do.....	7		
		John Rose, Senr.....	Do. and Stone Mason.....	4		
		Daniel Cown.....	Do.....	9		
		John Rose, Junr.....	Do.....	5		
10		John Sorseliel.....	Carpenter.....	4		
		Daniel Mosher.....	Millwright and Farmer.....	8		

	Richard Mullan.....	Farmer and Whaler.....	8	.....
	Widow Coffin.....	Do. ....	8	.....
	Philip Mullan.....	Do. ....	3	.....
	George Annett.....	Do. ....	5	.....
	William Annett.....	Do. and Whaler.....	9	.....
	John Oscah, Junr.....	Do. do. ....	5	.....
	William Oscah.....	Do. do. ....	8	.....
	Robert Oscah.....	Do. ....	1	.....
	Richard Miller.....	Do. and Whaler.....	5	.....
20	Francis Miller.....	Do. ....	4	.....
	John Oscah Senr.....	Do. ....	6	.....
	David Phillips.....	Carpenter.....	6	.....
23	William Miller.....	Farmer.....	7	.....
			Total 135	

RECAPITULATION of the Population inside of Sandy Beach, including the Peninsula, on the 14th August, 1842.

SETTLEMENTS.	No. of Heads of Families.	No. of Persons in each Family.
From the head of the North side of the South-West Branch, to the residence of the Rev. William Arnold, near the Basin.....	34	192
From the head of the South side of the South-West Branch to the lower part of Sandy Beach.....	30	162
From L'Anse aux Cousins to the head of the North-West Bay on the south side.....	8	41
From the head of the North-West Bay on the North side, to the lower Settlement at the Peninsula.....	23	135
Total.....	95	530

(Signed,)

JOHN EDEN,  
Post Master.

No. 34.

Answers of James Perchard, Esquire, J.P.  
Gaspé Basin, August 15th, 1842.

GENTLEMEN,

In answer to your questions of the 18th July I beg to return the following:—

*First.*—There are five Justices of the Peace residing near the settlement of Gaspé Basin, only three of them have qualified and act as Magistrates.

*Second.*—I have, during the last three years, been but seldom called upon to act in my capacity of Justice of the Peace, and the nature of the cases brought before me have been chiefly for assault and battery.

*Third.*—After the offended parties have made their depositions, a Warrant has been usually given to a Constable who has brought the offender before a Justice of the Peace.

PERSPECTIVE

By coincidence, at the time this account of THOSE GASPE ROADS OF FORMER TIME was in preparation, the following, pertinent, extract from Johnston's engaging book, THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE ROMANS, came to attention:

"...In the 4th century of our era nineteen great roads went out from Rome through the fifteen gates of Wall of Aurelian.

The engineering skill of the Romans and the lavish outlay of money made their roads the best the world has known until very recent times. The grade was always easy, because hills were cut through, gorges and rivers were crossed on arches of solid stone and valleys and marshes were spanned by viaducts of the same material. Roman roads often went 100 years without repair and some portions have endured the traffic of centuries and are still in good condition..."

The passing of fifteen centuries had not contributed materially to the roads of the Inferior District of Gaspé in 1842.