

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THE CARLETON CONNECTION

Recall of the life and times of  
Sir Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester,  
and his wife, Lady Maria Howard,  
whose names grace the Gaspesian  
communities of CARLETON and MARIA.

Ken Annett

## THE CARLETON CONNECTION

The place-names of Gaspesia are varied and interesting both in terms of their origin and significance. Along Bay Chaleur the names of the neighbouring communities of CARLETON and MARIA are worthy of particular note. Commemorating, as they do, the memory of Sir Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester, and his wife, Lady Maria Howard, these Gaspesian place-names recall the life and times of a most distinguished soldier and Governor of early British North America and his wife. For Carleton's service in war and peace still shines brightly across the two intervening centuries since his able leadership saved Québec from American invasion and his wisdom and resolute action as Governor laid sound foundations for the Canadian nation. At his side, in the important role of chatelaine of the Chateau St. Louis at Québec, his wife, Lady Maria, made a vital contribution to the reconciliation of Québec's unique French-English society. Brought up and educated in the French Court at Versailles, Lady Maria brought to her duties as First Lady of Québec a most helpful training and appreciation of both the English and French languages and cultures.

GASPE OF YESTERDAY proposes to recall in this sketch of the life and times of the Carletons that the links connecting them with Gaspesia extended far beyond the mere naming of Bay Chaleur communities as CARLETON AND MARIA.

### CARLETON'S YOUTH

Guy Carleton, the third son of Christopher Carleton, a land-owner of Newry, County Down, Ireland, was born in 1724. The Carleton family had come to Ireland originally from Cumberland and was of that remarkable Scotch-Irish stock that gave Britain and Canada such an extraordinary roll of distinguished citizens. Guy's father died when he was fourteen and his mother remarried with the Rev. Thomas Skelton of Newry who is said to have contributed to the moulding of the qualities that made Guy Carleton what he afterwards became. Newry was also a center of Huguenot settlement in Ireland so young

## A MILITARY CAREER

That young Carleton had a sound education is evident from his extensive correspondence and official records. When eighteen years of age he joined the British Army as ensign in Lord Rothe's Regiment - the 25th Foot. Subsequently he served as lieutenant in the Regiment of Foot Guards. By the age of thirty-four he had achieved the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and command of the 72nd Regiment.

One of his contemporaries and friends was another rising Army officer, James Wolfe. When Wolfe was appointed brigadier under Lord Amherst for the Louisbourg expedition he sought to have Guy Carleton transferred to his staff but the request was not granted by the King as Carleton was not then in Royal favour. The year following, however, when Wolfe was chosen by Prime Minister Pitt to lead the Québec expedition, he succeeded in having Carleton on his staff as Quarter-Master General. At Québec Carleton was active during the seige and led a grenadier regiment on the Plains of Abraham in the historic battle that saw the death of the French General Montcalm and also his good friend, General Wolfe. Carleton was wounded in the battle for Québec and again later in subsequent battles at Port Andro and Havana. He advanced in military rank and command responsibility until 1766 when he was chosen by the British Government to succeed General James Murray as Governor-in-Chief at Québec. He took up his new and challenging duties in the old fortress city on the St. Lawrence in September 1766.

## FIRST TERM AS QUEBEC GOVERNOR

From the six years of General Murray's administration, which had struggled with the transition from military rule to civil government, Carleton inherited a wide range of formidable problems. Friction existed with respect to religion, race, language, law, commerce and division of loyalty. Government of the colony, still in the throes of transition from a century and a half of the French Regime, required wise and firm policies and decisions on the part

of honour, integrity and responsibility that distinguished him throughout life. Prior to the debates in the British Parliament on the all important Québec Act of 1774 Carleton travelled to London for consultations. His views and sympathies were reflected in that Act - by which, in an unusually generous decision for the times, the French of Québec were granted most of the rights they had enjoyed during the French Regime.

#### MARRIAGE

The circumstances of the marriage of Governor Carleton with the Lady Maria Howard, daughter of the Earl of Effingham are of interest. It is said that the forty-eight year old Carleton had remained so long unmarried due to an early disappointment in a love affair with his cousin, Jane Carleton. While in England from Québec for consultations on the Québec Act, Carleton went to visit with his friend of long standing, Lord Howard of Effingham. Lord Howard had as daughters, Lady Anne and her younger sister, Lady Maria. Unknown to her father, Lady Anne was in love with a nephew of Governor Carleton. Offered proposal of marriage by Sir Guy, Lady Anne, tearfully, "had to refuse him, the best man on earth!" To that her sister, Maria, responded, "The more fool you. I only wish he had given me the chance !"

When this comment of Lady Maria became known to Sir Guy he hastened to propose. Maria, though less than half his age, accepted without hesitation and they were married before Carleton returned to Québec.

As noted above, Lady Maria had been brought up and educated at the French Court of Versailles. Small, fair, upright and ceremonious to a degree, she was always extremely dignified. From the time of her arrival at Québec in September, 1774, she brought a new, social dimension to the Governor's residence, the Chateau St. Louis. She would bear a numerous family, including six sons who followed their father's footsteps into active service with the British Army. Such was the character and presence of Lady Maria that more than a half-century later, as the Widow Lady

### IMPACT OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Carleton's ability and experience as soldier and administrator would be severely tested by the outbreak of the American Revolution and the invasion of Québec by American armies. This was a time of great crisis for the very survival of the British in North America. In Carleton, Québec was to find a leader equal to the challenge. Though the American invaders captured and occupied Montreal and the joint armies of Montgomery and Arnold laid seige to fortress Québec the colony was saved by the leadership of Carleton and the efforts of his small Québec garrison of brave and devoted officers and men. It is worthy of note that the officers that supported Carleton in those dark and perilous days of seige included a number of men later associated with Gaspesia - Nicholas Cox; Francis Le Maistre, George Lawe, Sr., George Longmore and others. The military invasion of the Americans was broken by the heroic defence of Québec and their political attempts to win over the French Canadians to their republican cause failed. Canada was saved to develop as a distinctive Dominion under the British Crown.

As Québec is about to observe the 200th anniversary of Loyalist settlement it should be recalled that it was Carleton who first had to cope with the arrival in Québec of those dispossessed and unfortunate refugees from the American colonies. Steps were taken to provide the Loyalists with food, shelter and the basic necessities of life. Those seeking to understand the nature and scope of the Loyalist migration and experience will find much of interest and significance in the records of Carleton's administration and in his correspondence to be found in the Reports of the Public Archives of Canada. Gaspesians, in particular, can gain insight from such records into the activities and experiences of such men as Azariah Pritchard, Sr., Isaac Mann, Sr., Robert Caldwell and his sons, Capt. Justus Sherwood and others, some of whom have been featured in articles of the GASPE OF YESTERDAY series.

### END OF CARLETON'S FIRST TERM

In June 1778 Carleton's term as Governor ended with the arrival

" I have long and impatiently looked out for the arrival of a successor. Happy at last to learn of his near approach...I resign the important commands with which I have been honoured. Thus, for the King's service, as willingly I lay them down as for his service I took them up- the most essential and, in truth, the only service in my power to render your Lordship's administration"

Little did Carleton know, as he and his family sailed from Québec for England that he would be recalled later to serve as Governor in the King's service.

#### NEW CHALLENGES FOR CARLETON

On his return to England Carleton had some three quiet years spent mainly on his Hampshire estate of Greywell Hill near Winchfield. Then, following upon the traumatic surrender of the British Forces in America at Yorktown in October, 1781 and the start of peace negotiations with the Americans, the British Government turned to Carleton to serve as Commissioner at New York. His title ran, "General and Commander-in-Chief of all His Majesty's forces within the colonies lying in the Atlantic Ocean from Nova Scotia to the Floridas, and inclusive of Newfoundland and Canada should they be attacked". As he prepared to leave England in the Spring of 1782 his mandate was to extricate the British Troops in America, to extend to Loyalist refugees " the tenderest and most honourable care", and, in general to represent and defend British interests in the complex and vexing transition from revolutionary war to peace in America. Carleton's Commission gave him extraordinary powers - in part, it read: "...His Majesty's affairs are so situated (in America) that further deliberations give way to the necessity of instant decision, and whatever the inconvenience that may arise, we are satisfied that they will

Carleton's service in America was both difficult and distinguished. In the supercharged atmosphere of euphoria that marked the success of the American Revolution he arranged for the orderly withdrawal of British troops, the exchange of prisoners and the exodus of thousands of Loyalists to new homes in Canada, the West Indies and other British possessions. A measure of his success and the gratitude of the British Government was the new title of Baron Dorchester awarded on his return to England. But little respite was given the new Lord Dorchester for in 1786 he was offered and accepted the post of Governor-in-Chief of Canada.

#### CARLETON'S SECOND TERM AT QUEBEC

Before turning to consider Carleton's second term as Governor it is interesting to note that the name of his predecessor, General Sir Frederic Haldimand and of the Lieutenant-Governor that welcomed him on his return to Québec, Hope, survive as the place-names of the Gaspesian communities of Haldimand and Hopetown. It is surely unusual, if not unique, that the names of no less than four Gaspesian communities commemorate four individuals of the same era, known to each other and having a significant role in Québec history.

As the Royal Navy ship bearing Lord Dorchester to Québec came in sight of the old fortress city, Carleton may well have been stirred as he beheld the familiar scene and landed to climb the steep, well-known streets to the Chateau St.Louis.

Over the course of the next eight years as Governor-in-Chief of British North America he would face a series of tremendous problems and urgent crises: the settlement of the Loyalists; the clash of English and French Law; bitter educational and religious controversy; Indian unrest on the Western frontier; hostility of the new American nation to the South. In the political arena he would experience the debate generated by the proposed Canada Bill to replace the Québec Act. His administration would be confronted by great events in progress - the French

issues arising from the arrival in Québec of Bishop Jacob Mountain of the Church of England; the insidious efforts of agents of France throughout America as they sought to drag the U.S.A. into war with Britain and subvert the loyalties of the French Canadian population of Québec.

While the scope and volume of Lord Dorchester's work during his second term as Governor is clearly beyond the limits of this sketch his record stands as that of a great proconsul. His resolve to uphold the honour of the British Crown and his impatience with everything mean, dishonest or unjust, distinguished all his acts. Of strong personality and great independence of character, he was never swayed by what men might say or think of him. His instincts were true and his heart sound. Distinctly a "grand seigneur" of reserved manner he was nonetheless regarded with affection and esteem. The Chateau St. Louis in the time of Lord and Lady Maria Dorchester was the center of ever graceful and dignified hospitality to all members of Québec society.

#### THE CLOSING YEARS

With the summer of 1796 Lord Dorchester's second term as Governor-in-Chief at Québec came to an end. As his departure neared he was the recipient of warm addresses of affection, respect and regret in which the population paid tribute to the high example of his public career and to that of the private lives of himself and his family. Dorchester knew now that he was leaving never to return. He was seventy-two years of age and his feelings of regret mingled with his yearning for peace and rest after many decades of strenuous service.

Unknown to him and his family a dramatic episode, that could have been tragic, lay just ahead. The Royal Navy frigate, H.M.S. ACTIVE on which he and his party embarked at Québec for the voyage to England ran aground and was wrecked on the shores of Anticosti Island. Fortunately no lives were lost. A passing Gaspesian schooner conveyed the Dorchester party to Percé. Another Royal Navy ship was sent to Percé from Halifax to permit re-embarkation.



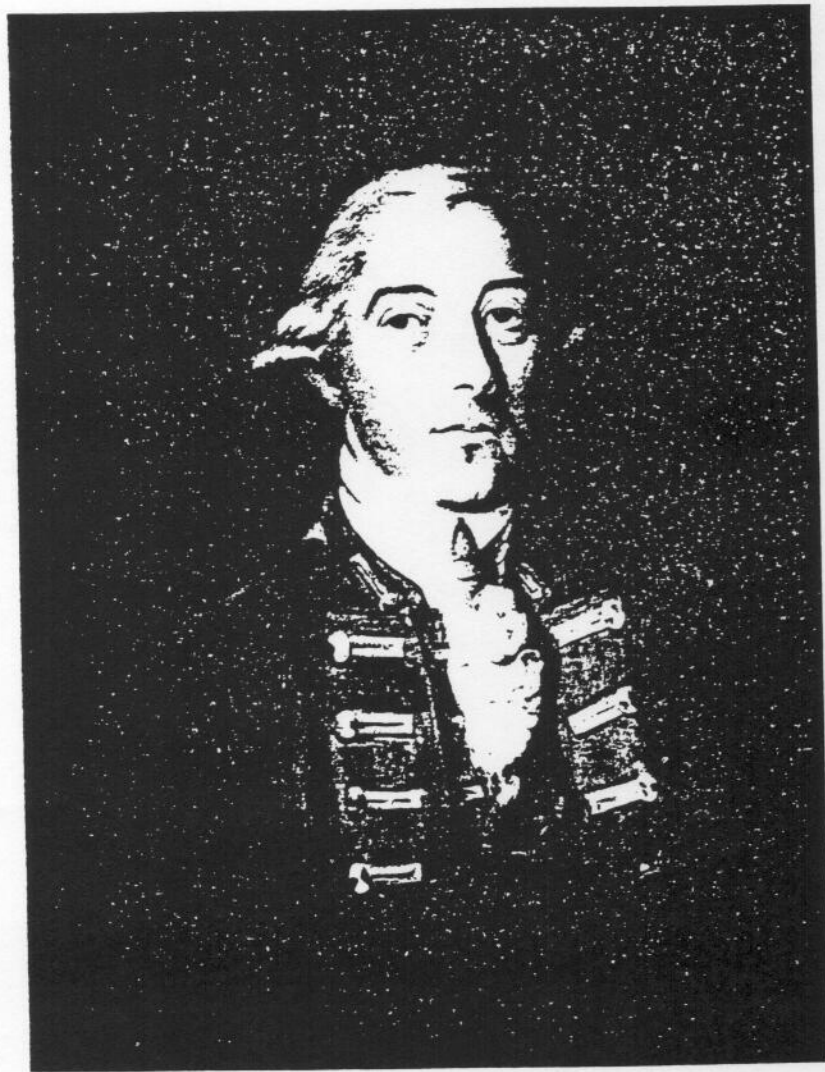
likely saw was the majestic rock at Percé where Jacques Cartier had made landfall more than two and a half centuries earlier.

Lord Dorchester spent the twelve remaining years of his life in rural retirement. He died suddenly at Stubbings, near Maidenhead, on November 10th., 1808.

Lady Maria Dorchester long survived her husband. A visitor with her circa 1830 recalled her with:

"...Her hair lifted high up with lace and scarlet ribbons, her dress costly and elaborate. She wore scarlet shoes with high heels and gold buttons and carried in her hand an ebony cane. On entering she would bow graciously to the assembled company, and no one thought of sitting down till she herself was seated..."

Such was the lady who, some fifty-five years before, had come almost as a bride to preside at the Chateau St. Louis, Québec and whose name, MARIA, lives on in Gaspesia, side by side with that of her distinguished husband, CARLETON.



SIR GUY CARLETON, LORD DORCHESTER

[From a replica in the Public Archives of Canada of the original portrait in oils left by Dorchester in Quebec, later removed to Rideau Hall, and since burned]