

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

"TROIS MILLE CLOUS"

The Life and Influence
of
Charles Francois Painchaud

A mariner's son, born at Ile aux Grues in 1782, Charles Francois Painchaud had a significant influence as a missionary on the early Bay Chaleur communities of Gaspesia.

In recall of his maritime background, the above title, "TROIS MILLE CLOUS", was the name that he gave to the Mission boat that he built with his own hands at Carleton, and in which, for many a year, he travelled to his far-flung, Bay Chaleur parishes.

KEN ANNETT

"TROIS MILLE CLOUS"

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The Painchaud family came to New France from the neighbourhood of Avranches, Normandy - the parish of St.Pierre-de-Varis. At the time of the birth of Charles Francois in 1782, his parents, Francois and Marie Painchaud, were residents of Ile aux Grues, which lies off the South Shore community of Montmagny. The mother of Charles Francois was of Acadian descent and as his father was a mariner it is presumed that they met and married in the course of his voyages in the Gulf and Acadian waters.

The family of Francois and Marie Painchaud comprised - Charles Francois (1782); Victoire (1783); Julie (1784); Joseph (1787); Emerence (1788); Jacques (1789); Marie-Louise (1791); Alexis (1792); and Justine (1796)

It was his father, Francois, that taught his eldest son, Charles Francois to read and write and who took him voyaging on the Painchaud goélette during the navigation season. But in 1797 his father died suddenly and the family moved to Québec City to live on St.Vallier Street in St.Roch.

ILE AUX GRUES (CRANE ISLAND)

As Ile aux Grues has had Gaspesian connections other than that as birthplace of Charles Francois Painchaud, a brief recall of its history is pertinent. In 17th century New France the island was part of the extensive seigniory granted by King Louis XIV to the Governor of New France, Charles Huault de Montmagny. Subsequently the Seigniory passed into other hands, including those of Officers of the Carignan-Salières Regiment. At the time of the American siege of Québec in 1775 it was held by Seignior De Beaujeu who, together with his fellow seigniors, De Gaspé of St.Jean Port Joly and Couillard of St.Thomas and Thomas Ross, a retired Highlander Officer of Beaumont, rallied to the support of Governor Sir Guy Carleton. Later, the island was the seigniorial home of Daniel McPherson whose

the lower, or easterly end of Crane Island, commanded a superb view of the busy, South channel of the mighty St. Lawrence. The Manor House was rebuilt and enlarged by a later seignior, McPherson LeMoynes. It was this unique island setting in which the early boyhood of Charles Francois Painchaud was lived and shaped.

SCHOOLING

Following the death of the father and the move of the Painchaud family to Québec City, it was the good fortune of Charles Francois to have his aptitude for learning recognized and to be sent to study under the Curé of Ange-Gardien, Jean Rimbault. A native of France and a brilliant scholar, Rimbault had fled from his native land to escape the terror and persecution of the French Revolution. In Québec, he had come to the attention of the British Governor who had entrusted to him young Henry Hardinge, son of the Rev. Henry Hardinge of Stanhope, Durham, England, for education. Henry Hardinge, Jr., had come to Canada with his Regiment. In later life he was to have a brilliant career in the British Army and rise to become a member of the British Cabinet as War Secretary and Secretary for Ireland. He never forget his years of study under Jean Rimbault at Ange-Gardien and kept in touch with him and his former fellow student, Charles Francois Painchaud. Rimbault later tutored the children of Governor Sir Robert Shore Milne. An educator of note, he is recalled as a founder of the College Ste-Anne. His pupil Painchaud, in later life, would also be associated with that College

BAY CHALEUR MISSION

In September, 1805, at the age of twenty-three years, Charles Francois Painchaud was ordained to the priesthood. He was chosen by Bishop Plessis for the difficult and challenging task of the Bay Chaleur Mission. Some of the challenges of that Mission have been explored previously in this GASPE OF YESTERDAY series in the article - "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ABBE JOSEPH MATHURIN BOURG - 1744-1797". Not only was this Mission of immense physical scope and lacking in facilities for travel and communication, but the Gaspesian population of 1805 was diverse in origin and religious belief. Represented in Bay Chaleur communities were the native Micmac Indians, the Acadians, the traders and fishermen of Jersey

To serve as the only missionary in this far-flung and primitive region, comprising both shores of Bay Chaleur, was a formidable task.

THE VOYAGE TO BAY CHALEUR

It was on September 17th, 1805, that the newly-ordained Rev. Charles Francois Painchaud, accompanied by his younger brother, Alexis, his sister, Victoire, the widow of the late Francois Normand of L'Islet and her young son, Francois, sailed from Québec on the schooner "ANGÉLIQUE" of Captain Aimé Dugas, bound for Carleton in Bay Chaleur. From Bic onwards the schooner encountered bad weather conditions which persisted until Percé was reached on September 23rd. The worst was yet to come, for on sailing from Percé, bound for Tracadie (Carleton), contrary winds and rough seas drove the "ANGÉLIQUE" far off course to the shores of Ile St. Jean (P.E.I.) and Nova Scotia. The JOURNAL of the Rev. Painchaud reveals that he made the best of a bad situation by taking the opportunity to visit with the parish priests at Arichat and Tracadie and to meet the Abbé Burke, the Irish priest whose interesting career is worthy of a volume in and by itself. In all, it was some six weeks of stormy voyage before Captain Dugas was able to bring his schooner into Carleton harbour and land the weary Painchauds at what was to be their new home.

THE MISSION IN 1805

At Tracadie or Carleton the Rev. Charles Francois Painchaud found a primitive, roughly-built church and presbytery. There was little in the way of regular church revenue - the first "dîme" or public tithe for the Mission yielding only, "quarante piastres et quelques quintaux de morue sèche". Travel to other communities was difficult and often dangerous - by canoe in summer and on snowshoes in winter. The itinerant missionary often went hungry - on one occasion on his return from a visit to the Indian settlement at Restigouche, Victoire noted that her brother had not eaten for two days.

Restigouche and down the New Brunswick coast facing Bay Chaleur. In addition to the main Indian settlement at Restigouche and the Acadian settlements of Carleton and Bonaventure, the next largest concentration of Catholic families was to be found in the area of Anse à Beaufile, Percé, Bonaventure Island, Barachois and Point St. Peter. Some ten families were found at Grand River where the family names of Beaudry; Beliveau; Blais; Baudin; Couture; Bertrand; Methot; Dupuis and Lafontaine were noted by the missionary. His JOURNAL noted that the Gaspesian economy was controlled by the fishery firms of Jersey and Guernsey origin, whose personnel, predominately Protestant, "did not promote the extension of Catholicism". On balance, he found and reported that there was much disregard for religion, that broken families were all too common and that the great plague was drunkenness.

Of particular concern and seriousness was the sale of liquor to the Indians. The missionary's life was threatened on many occasions by Indians under the influence of liquor. On one occasion, when he seized and broke an Indian's bottle of rum, he was told -

"If you weren't the "pat liache" your blood would colour my liquor"

In an attempt to stem the flow of liquor at its source the Rev. Painchaud pleaded with traders, particularly those based on the New Brunswick shore from Dalhousie to Miramichi, to stop selling rum to the Indians. One of the many interesting items to be found among his papers is a letter dated October, 1808 from Peter Campbell of Miramichi advising him that Cort had ordered Girard not to sell the Indians any more liquor. That the Indians came to appreciate his efforts to protect them from the evils attendant on drunkenness was made evident by the annual summer pilgrimage that the Micmacs made to Ste-Anne long after he had left Gaspesia.

THE "TROIS MILLE CLOUS"

The seafaring heritage of the Rev. Charles Francois Painchaud came to the fore in the building of his own boat, "TROIS MILLE CLOUS" at Carleton. He was able to find the time to complete this

The stay of Fitzsimmons was, however, short lived and the total responsibility for the Mission returned to Rev. Painchaud. The "TROIS MILLE CLOUS" would serve to carry its missionary builder many a sea mile in Bay Chaleur waters and in 1814 would bear him away from Carleton and the Mission to his new parish of St. Anne.

FAMILY STORY

At Carleton, the Widow Victoire Painchaud Normand, who had come as housekeeper for her brother, met and married Gedeon Ahier, a native of St. Helier, Jersey. Victoire died in 1813 - Ahier lived until 1845. It is of interest to note that their daughter, Virginie, grew up to marry Vital Têtu, who would serve as Member of the Legislative Assembly of Québec for Montmorency.

The place of Victoire as housekeeper of the Carleton presbytery was taken by her younger sister, Emèrence. When at Carleton she met and married Sebastien Landry, descendent of one of the pioneer Acadian families of the community. Their son, Jean Etienne Landry, born on Christmas Day, 1815, would become a noted Québec City Doctor and Professor of Surgery at Laval University. His career may have been patterned after that of his maternal uncle, Dr. Joseph Painchaud, who had a distinguished record of medical service in Québec City for sixty years from 1811 to 1871.

Alexis, the younger brother of Charles Francois Painchaud, married, in Gaspesia, a daughter of the pioneer Acadian family of Arseneau of Bonaventure. Their son, Captain Alexis, Master Mariner, a well-known ship-master of his time, was drowned at sea in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1860.

VISITS OF BISHOP PLESSIS

Twice, during his years in the Bay Chaleur Mission, the Rev. Charles Francois Painchaud accompanied Bishop Plessis on visits to the Gaspesian communities. In 1811 the Bishop reached Carleton, as a passenger in the schooner "ANGÉLIQUE" of Captain Aimé Dugas

that occupied some three months of the missionary's time. In the summer of 1812 the Bishop returned. Rev. Painchaud joined him at Percé and accompanied him on visits to the settlements on the New Brunswick side of Bay Chaleur. It is interesting to note that at Shediac the Bishop received news of the outbreak of the War of 1812-1814. He had planned to visit Prince Edward Island but, fearing capture by the armed American privateers that prowled Maritime sealanes, he terminated his visit and returned to Québec via Restigouche and Madawaska.

END OF A CHAPTER

From then until 1814 Rev. Painchaud continued to serve the Bay Chaleur Mission with the help of the Abbé Leclerc. It was in August, 1814, that he said, "Adieu" to the District of Gaspé that he had come to know so well and embarked in the "TROIS MILLE CLOUS", together with his neighbours, Isiah Boudreau and Theophile Dugas, Master Mariner, to travel to his new parish of St. Anne de la Grande Anse. The record of that trip via Percé, Madeline River, Matane and Kamouraska is a stirring one. The "TROIS MILLE CLOUS" almost came to grief in entering the harbour at Matane in stormy seas but was brought safely to anchor by the Matane Pilot, James Forbes. Finally, on September 17th., Rev. Painchaud reached St. Anne and a new chapter of his life, beyond the scope of this article, began.

That the Bay Chaleur Mission was ever in Rev. Painchaud's thoughts finds evidence in his Last Will and Testament in which he bequeathed "dix livres courant" to the church at Carleton and that of the Indian Mission of Restigouche.