

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THE HONOURABLE JUDGE JOHN MAGUIRE

1810-1880

KEN ANNETT

THE HONOURABLE JUDGE JOHN MAGUIRE

A previous article of this GASPE OF YESTERDAY series, "EARLY JUDGES IN THE DISTRICT OF GASPE", published in SPEC of February 21st., 1980, recalled the following early Judges of Gaspesia :

Felix O'Hara

Louis Fromenteau

Charles Robin

William Crawford

Isaac Mann, Jr.

Alexis Caron

Hugh Munro

John Gawler Thompson

Subsequently, the article, "GASPESIA'S FIRST SCHOOL INSPECTOR", recalled the life and career of the Hon. Judge Peter Winter who succeeded the Hon. Judge John Gawler Thompson in 1858. It is of interest to Gaspesians to note that the tombstone of Judge Thompson is to be found in the cemetery of St. Peter's Anglican Church, Paspebiac and that Judge Peter Winter, on retirement, lived in New Carlisle until his death in 1891.

BACKGROUND OF JOHN MAGUIRE

The family of Maguire was native to the village of Maguire's Bridge, County Fermanagh, Ireland. It was there, in April, 1810, that John was born to Matthew and Catherine O'Hara Maguire. His childhood and early schooling were experienced in the "Emerald Isle" until age thirteen when he came with his parents to Canada to find a new home in Québec City. His studies were continued at the Québec Seminary - that educational "cradle" of so many noted Québec leaders. It is evident that he showed exceptional promise in his student years for he was accepted into the legal office of the noted Québec attorney, William Power, to read Law. As this association with William Power would be significant and influential for young Maguire, it is pertinent to recall briefly Power's career.

WILLIAM POWER

William Power's father, a member of a well-known Irish family of County Waterford, settled in Newfoundland where his son, William,

he entered the political arena and was elected as successor to the noted Robert Christie as Member of the Legislative Assembly for Gaspé. The stormy political career of Robert Christie has been recalled by GASPE OF YESTERDAY in a previous article published by SPEC.

William Power married a daughter of the seigneur and author, Aubert de Gaspé.

Appointed Judge in 1840, William Power was named to the Superior Court in 1857. He died at Montmagny in 1860.

In the legal office of this able and influential lawyer, young John Maguire would have heard and learned much of Gaspesian affairs.

CAREER AT QUEBEC

His Law studies successfully completed, John Maguire was admitted to the Québec Bar in 1834. He soon built up a law practice in Québec City. Active in community affairs he was elected as a member of the Québec City Council. He served as Inspector and Superintendent of Police and is credited with the work that he initiated and followed up in installing and extending the Québec City waterworks system.

A close friendship with Louis Hupolite Lafontaine led John Maguire to offer himself as a candidate in the Legislative Assembly election of 1851. His defeat was attributed to the notorious political corruption of that era rather to any lack of personal popularity.

In 1852 he was appointed as Judge of Sessions Court, Québec City, a post that he filled with dedication and general public satisfaction for sixteen years. Then, in August, 1868, he was named to succeed the Honourable Judge Peter Winter in Gaspesia.

THE MAGUIRE FAMILY

The wife of John Maguire was Frances Agnes Horan, a sister of the Bishop Edward John Horan, first Principal of the Laval Normal School. The couple had fourteen children, nine of whom were living at the time of their father's death in 1880.

3.

practiced Law at New Carlisle and held Court posts. He died at New Carlisle in 1915.

A grandson of Judge John Maguire, Francis Gordian Maguire, the son of Gordian Francis and Isabella Patton Maguire, also chose the Law as his career. He practiced his profession at New Carlisle from 1910 to 1914. On the outbreak of World War I he enlisted and as a member of the Canadian Army he lost his life in France in September, 1916.

JUDGE MAGUIRE -- FINAL POST

In 1872 Judge John Maguire was transferred to Rimouski. There, as throughout his career on the Bench, his judgments were distinguished by his keen defence of individual liberty. His judicial courage was tested particularly in 1877 when, with two of his colleagues, Judges Thomas McCord and Louis-Napoleon Casault, he held against the Roman Catholic priests of Bonaventure County who had been charged with supporting the Conservative candidate in an electoral campaign through use of their spiritual influence and authority. As a result of his Judgment in this case, Judge Maguire was excommunicated by Bishop Laforce. Subsequently, as passions cooled, this excommunication was rescinded.

Judge John Maguire was succeeded in Gaspesia by Judge Thomas McCord. He took up his duties in September, 1873 and his career will be the subject of a future article in this GASPE OF YESTERDAY recall of the Judges of Gaspesia.
