

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THE LOYALIST CASS FAMILY IN
GASPESIA

KEN ANNETT

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As Gaspesia prepares to mark and commemorate the bicentennial of Loyalist settlement, 1784-1984, it seems fitting to recall the experience of those families that came to settle on Bay Chaleur shores two hundred years ago.

One such family with inimitable Loyalist background and credentials was that of Cass (pronounced generally as Case in Gaspesia). Descendants of the Cass family have lived in Gaspesia for the past two centuries.

This recall of the Cass family does not presume to preempt the extensive and detailed work on the family history by such descendants as Clarrie Cass of Pointe Claire, Québec, Herb. McKillican of Bath, Ontario, Ted Cass of Wisconsin, U.S.A. and others. However, the Cass family story is not without personal significance for me as my paternal grandmother was a great-grand-daughter of Josiah Cass, Sr., the patriarch of the family that was part of the Loyalist settlement of Gaspesia in 1784.

COLONIAL ORIGINS

Josiah Cass, Sr. was born in the British Colony of Connecticut in 1738. He had the opportunity and good fortune to study at and graduate from Yale College, New Haven, Connecticut, the forerunner of the present Yale University. Yale College, which bore the name of an early benefactor, Elihu Yale, a native of Boston, had held its first commencement at New Haven in 1718.

Josiah Cass qualified as a Land Surveyor. His Surveying M...

and records, including particulars of the lots granted to members of the Cass family in Gaspesia, this Manual contains personal family history data of great interest.

MARRIAGE

In the year 1760, when he was 22 years of age, that Josiah Cass wed Mercy Pomeroy, a daughter of Joseph Pomeroy. Mercy was 20 years of age at the time of her marriage. The first child of the couple, a son, Josiah, was born in 1761 and he was followed into the growing family circle by Joseph Pomeroy, born 1764; Elihu, born 1766; Mercy, born 1769; Amanda, born 1771 and Daniel, born 1778.

REVOLUTION AND EXILE

The growing tensions that preceded the American Revolution, the outbreak of hostilities, and the persecution of those colonists who were determined to remain loyal to the British Crown and cause, brought great hardship and eventual exile to Josiah Cass and his family. This story finds reflection in the evidence that he gave, later, before the LOYALIST CLAIMS COMMISSION :

"EVIDENCE ON THE CLAIM OF JOSIAH CASS, LATE OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY, NEW YORK PROVINCE."

"Claimant sworn : Says that in 1783 he lived at Mackick (the Loyalist refugee Camp Machiche, near the present site of the City of Trois-Rivières, Québec) that he made out his claim, but believes it was not sent to England, being too late.

He is a native of Connecticut. In 1775 he lived in Charlotte County as a farmer. Says he never signed any association to the

3.

"British Army under General Burgoyne in 1777, and did duty with Colonel Peter's Corps until the convention (the treaty that marked the disastrous defeat of Burgoyne's British forces at Saratoga) when he came to Canada. He lived five years at Mackick and now resides at New Carlisle. He has three sons who were soldiers in Sir John Johnson's Corps all the War.

Property: 340 acres of land in Keepport. Produces Deed dated 8 April, 1775 from Jonas Powers to Joseph Pomeroy in consideration of £ 20 New York Currency. Conveys two lots in Keepport and the 3rd Division Lot, with the undivided right remaining. Says that Joseph Pomeroy was his father-in-law. To avoid it being seized by his creditors, he gave it to claimant. He cannot say who is in Possession. Says that the consideration is nominal and thinks he could have sold these 340 acres for £ 232. He had a House, Stable and Barn on it. About 40 acres were improved. He cannot say who is in possession of this but he cannot say that J. Pomeroy is not in possession. 3 rights of land, one in Bradport, one in Shoram and one in Smithfield, Vermont. Produces Deed dated 8 April, 1775 from Roger Rose to Claimant in consideration of £ 100. Conveys these 3 rights. They were Wild Lands. He paid the price. He claims £ 100. He cannot tell in whose possession this is. Swears to all his personal property being taken by the rebela.

Certificate to his having taken the Oath of Allegiance, 16 July, 1777. Signed by Philip Skene. "

The impact of the events, recounted so laconically in this official

seek refuge in Canada. Behind them they left their home and most of their personal possessions.

CAMP MACHICHE

The family of Josiah Cass, Sr. was temporarily reunited at Camp Machiche but the three elder sons returned across the frontier to fight in the British cause. Their father is known to have been engaged in survey work in the Camp Machiche-Three Rivers district and, in company with Ben Hobson, whose career has been sketched in a previous article of GASPE OF YESTERDAY, served as schoolmaster for the children of the Loyalist camp. The family suffered great loss in the death of Mercy Pomeroy Cass at Camp Machiche in May, 1781. The youngest child, son Daniel was then little more than three years old and his two next older sisters, Mercy and Amanda, were but ten and twelve years of age. It is therefore not surprising that on August 1st., 1782, Josiah remarried with Anne McIntyre. The first child of that marriage, daughter Mary, was born at Camp Machiche in 1783, prior to the family's move to Gaspesia. Other children of Josiah and Anne McIntyre Cass were Margaret, born 1786 in New Carlisle, Anna, born 1788, also in New Carlisle, and Moses, Elizabeth and Janet born in 1791, and 1793 respectively in Ontario.

TO BAY CHALEUR

The context and processes of decision making among the Loyalists as to where they should seek permanent settlement is a subject that calls for more historical research than has been done to date. It is known that some Loyalists, including Azariah Pritchard, had high hopes of settling in the Missisquoi District of the Eastern Townships but

at Québec. Plans to settle in that district had to be abandoned. Again, GASPE OF YESTERDAY has recalled the voyage of Captain Justus Sherwood and associates to Gaspé Bay and Bay Chaleur in 1783 to examine potential sites for Loyalist settlement in Gaspesia. Governor Haldimand, himself a Gaspesian landowner, looked with favour on possible Loyalist settlement in the District of Gaspé. But the fact that Captain Sherwood and many other Loyalists chose to settle in the new townships that were opening up along the River St. Lawrence to the West of Montreal indicates that this option had much appeal for many Loyalists and veteran soldiers. Lively debate must have prevailed in the refugee camps before such a major decision was taken. At Camp Machiche, Josiah Cass Sr. and his family chose to move to Bay Chaleur and for that destination they embarked on the Brig "ST.PETER" at the Port of Québec on June 9th., 1784. The passenger list of the "ST.PETER" shows Josiah Cass, Sr., his wife and four minor children. The elder sons, Josiah Jr., Pomeroy and Elihu were also on board but listed separately, befitting their status as, "soldiers in Sir John Johnson's Corps all the War"

Of the voyage downriver of that little flotilla of ships bearing some 315 Loyalist men, women and children, we have little record. We can be sure, however, that it was no pleasure cruise. It was not until the end of June that they reached the shores of Bay Chaleur. Of their experience on landing, the late A.D. Flowers, wrote in his "LOYALISTS OF BAY CHALEUR" - "...the Loyalists were on the beach by July 2nd. Under the supervision of the many officials among them they began to lay out a townsite, prepare logs for their shelters, and to gather fuel...

"of the 84th (the Royal Highland Emigrants Regiment) who wished to settle along the coast. Tents were not mentioned, but tarpaulins and sailcloth must have been in great demand to shelter the women and children while the men hastily erected winter quarters on the beach or Common..."

LOTS DRAWN

A listing of the lots drawn by the Loyalists on August 3rd., 1784, and published by A.D.Flowers, shows Josiah Cass, Sr., Schoolmaster, his wife and four minor children as having drawn lots for a total of 750 acres. The numbers of these lots, with the exception of lot #5 are confirmed by an entry in the Surveyor's Hand Book of Josiah Cass. Sons Josiah Jr., Pomeroy and Elihu drew lots of land independently of their father but discrepancy exists as to the numbers of these lots in various records.

The 1785 Plan of Lots at New Carlisle, prepared by Willian Vondenvelden and published in the GASPE OF YESTERDAY series, shows Josiah Cass, Sr. holding Township Lot #6 and Josiah Jr. with Lot #12, both to the East of the Townsite of New Carlisle. However, it should be noted that not all names of lot holders on this 1785 Plan could be read and that the ownership of Township lots may be incomplete.

As to the acre square Town Lots, the records of Josiah Sr. show that he held #132, Josiah Jr. #86, Pomeroy #116 and Elihu #115.

NEW HORIZONS

A number of factors combined to make the Loyalist settlers unhappy with their life and future prospects in Gaspesia. A number

7.

these was Josiah Cass, Sr. and his family, with the exception of the eldest son, Josiah Jr. who, having married in Gaspesia, chose to remain. The move was made to Upper Canada and settlement on the Ottawa River in Hawkesbury Township of what is now Prescott County, near the site of the present village of Pointe Fortune. It was there that the family made their new home from 1790 onwards and it was there, far from his native Connecticut and alma mater of Yale College that Josiah Cass, Sr. died in 1804.

THE ELDEST SON

In the cemetery of the Anglican Church, Cape Cove, one will find a tombstone bearing the following inscription:

SACRED

To the Memory of

JOSIAH CASS, Sen'r

Who Departed This Life

On the 9th January, 1847

In the 88th Year of His Age

"I am the resurrection and the life
He that believeth in me though he be
dead yet shall he live."

It is here, despite the apparent contradiction caused by the suffix, "Sen'r" that the remains of Josiah Cass, Jr., the eldest son of Josiah and Mercy Pomeroy Cass rest.

Prior to the departure of the Cass family from New

of the Gaspé Land Claims Commission can be found Josiah's claim for 600 acres of Cape Cove land together with the additional claims of his sons Andrew and Josiah. As the patriarch of the family, Josiah Sr. had removed from Gaspesia, his son, Josiah, who had remained, graduated from Junior to Senior, and the son of Josiah and Margaret Ferguson Cass became known as Josiah Jr.

Through his lifetime of more than fourscore years, Josiah Cass, Sr. was a prominent and respected citizen of the Cape Cove-Percé District. He was a Justice of the Peace, a strong support of the Anglican Church and active in community affairs. His signature appears often on petitions and in notarial and legal documents. When Captain Peter Duval of Bonaventure Island was laid to rest at Percé in 1851 the burial record of the Rev. R. Short shows that it was in the presence of Andrew Ferguson and Josiah Cass. The Cass home was widely known for its hospitality to travellers along Bay Chaleur and it was there that the Rural Dean of Gaspé, the Rev. George Milne, often found rest and refreshment when en route along the terrible roads of the time from New Carlisle to Gaspé Bay.

FAMILY CONNECTION

One hundred and fifty years ago when William Annett, son of the pioneer Annett family of Peninsula, Gaspé Bay, was gaoler at Percé, he came to know well the Cass, Ferguson, Tuzo and other families of the Cape Cove, L'anse au Beaufils, Percé communities. In the course of time William's daughter, Margaret Annett, became the wife of Daniel Cass. In the LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT of William, dated 1851, and probated by Judge Peter Winter, the following bequest was made:

au-Beau Fils in the District of Gaspé, I bequeath the fifty remaining acres, being situated at the lower extremity of my three hundred acres..."

It was thus that a branch of the Cass family, in descent from Josiah of Cape Cove, was established at L'anse aux Cousins. Between 1836 and the death of Margaret Annett Cass in 1856 two sons and four daughters were born to Daniel and Margaret. The eldest son, Joseph Cass, inherited the land that had been bequeathed to his mother by his Annett grandfather. A sister of Joseph extended the Cass-Annett connection by her marriage to Felix Joseph Annett, grandson of William.

HERITAGE

The official motto of Québec translates as "I REMEMBER". This is most appropriate in the context of the 1984 bicentennial of Loyalist settlement in Gaspesia. For the impact and influence of Loyalist families on Gaspesia was significant and by ripple effect, through time, touch our lives today. To recall the Loyalist story is to understand an important aspect of our heritage.
