

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

A VONDENVELDEN VIGNETTE

Recalling the terms and signature
of the Deed of Sale by which
William Vondenvelden ended a decade
(1784-1794) of residence and work in
the Loyalist settlement of New Carlisle
in Bay Chaleur.

KEN ANNETT

A VONDENVELDEN VIGNETTE

Prior to the current era of radio and television programmes that bring drama and other entertainment into our homes, a feature of community and school concerts in Gaspesia was the tableau. The actors in such tableaux sought to entertain their audiences with graphic descriptions or representations of some situation or event through the depiction of a scene on the stage. Readers of SPEC may well remember having participated in or witnessed such tableaux.

This vignette from the career of William Vondenvelden lends itself to introduction by such a tableau. As the curtain rises the scene is set in the office of Charles Stewart, Notary Public, in the old, fortress city of Québec. The date is March 6th., 1794. Charles Stewart has been joined by four other men: William Vondenvelden, Edward O'Hara, Richard Nevison and Alexandre Dumas, N.P. While the biography of each of these men is worthy of a volume in and by itself, it is only possible here to recall, briefly, their respective background and link with Gaspesia.

CHARLES STEWART, N.P.

By virtue of his notarial practice and experience Charles Stewart was well acquainted with many of the leading persons and events in Gaspesia. He had served as notary for Robert and Annabella Stewart from the time of their arrival in Québec City from St. Johns Island (P.E.I.) in 1780. He had continued to act on behalf of the Stewart sons, Mathew, Dugald, James and Charles in connection with their activities in trade, shipping and land holding in Chaleur and Gaspé Bays. He had many other Gaspesian clients.

and fascinating glimpses into Gaspesia's distant past.

WILLIAM VONDENVELDEN, J.P.

SPEC readers may recall the introduction to William Vondenvelden in the GASPE OF YESTERDAY article, "NEW CARLISLE IN INFANCY - THE 1785 PLANS OF WILLIAM VONDENVELDEN". A veteran officer of the Hesse Hanau Chasseurs, he had come to Canada in 1777, prior to the end of the American Revolutionary War. In 1784 he was posted to Bay Chaleur as surveyor of lands for the Loyalist settlers. He had become a resident landholder at New Carlisle. Appointed as a Justice of the Peace for the District of Gaspé he also served as Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas. At the time of this vignette he had removed to Québec City where, in 1796, he was appointed by the Governor, Lord Dorchester, to be in charge of the Office of the Surveyor-General of Québec.

EDWARD O'HARA

A son of the Hon. Felix O'Hara of Gaspé Basin, Edward O'Hara's remarkable career has been sketched in the GASPE OF YESTERDAY article, THE O'HARA FAMILY OF GASPE. At the time of the event herein described he was a prominent merchant, based in Québec but with strong family and business links in Gaspesia. A measure of Edward's character and influence is that he would, in later life, be awarded the prestigious ORDER OF THE BATH for his military and administrative services.

RICHARD NEVISON

Co-partner with Edward O'Hara in the business at hand in the office

export trade of the District of Gaspé. As a contemporary of such other merchant-traders of Gaspesia as Henry Rimphoff, the Stewart Brothers, Charles Robin, Amos Hall, Daniel M'Pherson and others, Nevison was widely known in Bay Chaleur and his dealings are reflected in many Notarial and Court records of his time.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS, N.P.

Not the least interesting of the men that met that March day in Stewart's office was his notary colleague, Alexandre Dumas. The son of a Huguenot family of Montauban, France, Dumas had come to Québec in New France some five years prior to the British Conquest. Early in his career he had intervened as a creditor in the bankruptcy of Pierre Révol of Peninsula in Gaspé Bay. Dumas had played a prominent part in the defence of Québec from American invasion in 1775 and thus would have known personally those fellow members of the garrison who would later be prominent in Gaspesia - Major Nicholas Cox, Colonel Francis Le Maistre, Captain George Lawe, Sr. and others. A versatile man of many careers, Alexandre Dumas left his mark on all he undertook.

THE BUSINESS AT HAND

The business that brought these men together on March 6th., 1794 was the drawing up and signature of a DEED OF SALE by which William Vondenvelden transferred to Edward O'Hara and Richard Nevison his property, both fast and moveable, together with his outstanding accounts at New Carlisle in Bay Chaleur. The details of this property and of the accounts, of historical significance, were set out in a

" SCHEDULE OF FAST PROPERTY SITUATE AT NEW CARLISLE IN THE BAY OF CHALEURS AND DISTRICT OF GASPE WITH SUNDRY MOVEABLES AND DEBTS SOLD BY WILLIAM VONDENVELDEN TO RICHARD NEVISON AND EDWARD O'HARA, ESQUIRES, JOINTLY, BY DEED PASSED THIS DAY BEFORE MR. CHARLES STEWART, N.P. OF THE CITY AND PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.."

- 1) TOWN LOT NO. 177 with a dwelling house thereon erected. And all other Improvements on the same, formerly occupied by the said William Vondenvelden and now by Mr. Ronald McDonnell.

[Note - On his 1785 PLAN, Vondenvelden was shown as holding Town Lot No.177. It is of interest to know that his residence was on that particular Lot.

Ronald McDonnell was a Deputy Sheriff for the District of Gaspé.]

- 2) TOWN LOTS NOS. 58; 125; 176; 178; 184; 237

[Note - The numbers of these Lots conform to Vondenvelden's holdings on his 1785 PLAN.]

- 3) TOWN PARKS NOS. 4; 57; 58; 59 together with all the Improvements on the several Town Lots and Town Parks made and thereunto belonging.

MOVEABLES AT THE FOLLOWING ESTIMATE, VIZ:

- . A large ox by the name of CAREAJOU£ 10
- . Two cows at £ 6 each.....£ 12

- . A frame of a house. About 10 Cords of firewood.....£ 4
- . Three window sashes in the house formerly occupied
by Mr. Buden (?).£ 1-10

SUNDRY OUTSTANDING DEBTS DUE TO SAID WILLIAM VONDENVELDEN

The statement of these "sundry outstanding debts due", listed in minute detail in the "SHEDULE" is of interest more for the names of Vondenvelden's contemporaries in Gaspesia than for the amount they owed him to the penny. He estimated the total value of his moveables and outstanding accounts in excess of £ 350. However, the wording of the Deed conveys the distinct impression that the collection of all of these accounts might prove to be difficult. The listing (with the spelling of names as shown) included:

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| . Mr. Kampfer | . Joseph Fournier |
| . Francis Lane (?) | . John McNearn |
| . William Garret | . Pat Clansey |
| . John Man, Esq. | . Thomas Rafter |
| . Chas. Dobson | . John Cordew |
| . John Gallant | . William McAdams |
| . Andrew Dun | . William Thomson |
| . Leon Roussey, Jr. | . Robert Loisel |
| . Robert Goodwill | . H. Conners |
| . John Restel | . David Linch |
| . Pat. Brodrick | . John M'Kenzie |
| . Maurice Hearn | . Bloomfield |
| . George Techmar (?) | . Jo. Cormier |

A SACRIFICE

The terms of sale specified in this Deed would appear to support the subsequent contention of William Vondenvelden, made in his MEMORIAL of 1800, that he had thereby, "...sacrificed his whole property" at New Carlisle. For in this "package deal" including eleven lots of land, certain moveable property and significant outstanding debts due, the purchasers, Edward O'Hara and Richard Nevison agreed to pay Vondenvelden the sum of £ 130, Halifax currency. Payment was to be made in three equal instalments on October 1st of 1794, 1795 and 1796. It was further agreed that no interest would accrue unless arrears should occur in the annual payments. That the total sum was paid, as agreed, was confirmed by Vondenvelden's MEMORIAL of 1800.

SIC TRANSIT

In signing this Deed of Sale, William Vondenvelden formally ended a decade of residence and work in Gaspesia - a period of experience with the Loyalist settlement at New Carlisle, with the contentious Micmac Indian land claims at Restigouche and with the equally contentious proceedings of the District of Gaspé's Court of Common Pleas. If he was disillusioned, as the terms of sale would appear to give him right to be, it was temporary and he quickly turned to new fields of endeavour. While a definitive account of his interesting career remains to be published, the emerging story of his years in Gaspesia is a significant part of the record of pioneer days in GASPE OF YESTERDAY.