

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

GRAND ÉTANG

"...Grand Étang is so wild and rugged...a lake, surrounded on all sides but this that opens to the sea, by great hills reflected in its still waters. It is an inviting spot, more so perhaps because of its strangeness here along this rough coast. It has an air of secluded beauty."

(From Blodwen Davies' GASPE - LAND OF HISTORY AND ROMANCE.)

GRAND ÉTANG

Of all the magnificent scenes that greet the traveller along the rugged, sea-washed shoreline of northern Gaspesia that of Grand Étang, described by Blodwen Davies as having, "an air of secluded beauty", must rank among the foremost. For this scene to the west of the community of L'Anse a Valteau is one of remarkable contrast between the tranquillity of its mountain-rimmed lake, or étang, and its adjacent cove, or "anse", open to the tides and waves of the mighty St. Lawrence. The lake and cove are linked by a stream that flows out, over a waterfall, to empty into the St. Lawrence on the shore of the "anse". The Gaspesian highway of today skirts the east shore of the lake and the west side of the cove offering the traveller memorable views of the scene and the opportunity to tarry at the little park or "halte" provided by the Department of Roads. However, in the early period of time recounted in this article of "GASPE OF YESTERDAY" no roads existed and those who came to Grand Étang arrived by sea and landed on the beach of the indented cove.

Though yet today Grand Étang displays little evidence of the intrusion of man and all his works on its scene of natural beauty, this is historically deceptive. For its links with history and early personalities in Gaspesia are significant. This issue of GASPE OF YESTERDAY will attempt to recall briefly some of this early history and some of those individuals who were associated with Grand Etang in days now long past.

Riverin who became active and prominent in the development of Gaspesian fishing establishments from 1688 onwards. One such fishery base was the seigniory of L'Anse à l'Étang granted by the great Governor, Frontenac, to Denis Riverin and Francois Hazeur in 1697. The grant had a frontage on the St. Lawrence of a league, centered on the cove of Grand Étang, and a depth of a league.

While the reader can find a definitive biography of Denis Riverin in the DICTIONARY OF CANADIAN BIOGRAPHY - VOL. III, a brief recall of his interesting career is pertinent to this account. Born in France at Tours, c.1650, he came out to New France in 1675 as secretary to the Intendant of that time, Duchesneau. As a member of the administration of the colony and with connections at the French Court of King Louis XIV, Riverin soon became deeply involved in commercial ventures. From 1688 onwards he was interested particularly in the fishery of the River and Gulf of St. Lawrence - an interest that had the support of the French Crown. Riverin had stated his interest and need for support in a "MEMOIRE" on the fishery which stated, in part:

"...Fishing will not only be advantageous by the returns which it will bring us from foreign countries, but still more because it will afford occupation for youths who now waste much time, either in idleness or in running the woods. It will train sailors and navigators... Boston and the whole colony (New England) set us an example which is not creditable to our nation, since it is growing every day by the fishing that it carries on, for the most part on our own shores, while the French are doing nothing..."

Riverin established the base for his Gaspesian fishery at Matane, "LA COMPAGNIE DES PESCHES SEDENTAIRES DE CANADA." His activities would expand in coming years to Cap Chat, Magdalen River and, in partnership with Francois Hazeur, the guardian of Riverin's wife prior to her marriage, Angélique Gaultier, to l'Anse à l'Etang. Financial support for the fishery was obtained from the French Court and the capitalists of Paris. Experienced Basque fishermen and whalers were engaged to help in upgrading the fishing skills of the Gaspesians employed by Riverin and his associates. An INSTRUCTION issued by the Court of Versailles in 1699 to the Governor of New France, stated, in part:

"...the establishment of sedentary fisheries is one of the best means of employing the King's Canadian subjects and to develop the great riches of the colony. It is necessary for the Governor to support them with his authority and to give all possible assistance to those who undertake to establish them..."

The experience of Riverin in developing the Gaspesian fishery made him the target of envious men in New France. He was accused of trying to monopolize the fishery. From 1706 onwards his career appears to have been in decline and with the death of King Louis XIV his support from the Court of France ceased. The reverse of his fortunes and failure to achieve his dreams for a commercial fishing empire in New France may have hastened his death c.1717. His name, nonetheless, remains associated with Gaspesian localities including that of Grand Etang.

to his descendents it is of particular significance.

A native of Brouage, France, Francois Hazeur came to New France in the late 1660's accompanied by two of his brothers and two sisters. He was joined later, after the death of his father, Pierre Hazeur, by his mother and a younger sister. Francois established himself as a successful merchant of Québec with important interests in the fur trade and with commercial ties with merchants of the French seaport of La Rochelle. He first married Jeanne Girardin and, upon her death in 1692, he remarried subsequently with Elizabeth Barbe.

Prior to 1690 Francois Hazeur had acquired the seigniorship of Malbaie but his lumbering enterprise there proved disappointing. His interests then shifted to new ventures and in the course of time he acquired seigniorial grants at Grand Vallee des Monts and Magdalen River. In partnership with Riverin he held the grant at Grand Etang. Nearer his base at Québec he became involved in the development of a whale fishery at River Ouelle and Kamouraska.

A prominent and wealthy citizen of Québec Francois Hazeur had one of the finest homes of the time on Place Royal. He held important Government posts including that as member of the Superior Council of New France. Three of his sons found careers in Church and State. His sole surviving daughter, Marie-Anne became the wife of Dr. Michel Sarrazin and as she brought to her husband by that marriage the seigniorship of Grand Etang it is now pertinent to recall the life of Sarrazin, who would style his name as Sarrazin de l'Etang.

MICHEL SARRAZIN. 1659 - 1734

recorded in many volumes of biography and Québec history. One of the more significant of such accounts is the volume, "MICHEL SARRAZIN - SA VIE, SES TRAVAUX ET SON TEMPS", which won for its author, Arthur Vallee, the prestigious DAVID PRIZE in 1926. Consequently, this brief sketch will be limited to those circumstances that linked Sarrazin with Gaspesia and more particularly with Grand Étang.

At the time of his marriage with Marie-Anne Hazeur in 1712, Dr. Michel Sarrazin, then in his 50's, had been in New France for more than 25 years. He had an established reputation in both France and New France as a doctor, scientist, zoologist, botanist and mineralogist. He was a member of the colonial elite. Marie-Anne, daughter of the late Francois Hazeur, was some thirty years younger than her husband. She brought to their union the Hazeur family name and connections and the seigniories of Grande Vallee and Grand Étang in Gaspesia. It is of particular interest to note that in the course of the year following his marriage, Dr. Sarrazin travelled to Grand Etang and was so impressed with its "secluded beauty" that he chose to style his name thereafter as Sarrazin de l'Etang.

THE FISHERY AT GRAND ETANG

The fishery based at Grand Étang, Grande Vallee and Magdalen River was carried on for a time following the death of Francois Hazeur by contract between his heirs and Jean-Baptiste Gatien of Québec. In 1725 Gatien is recorded as having loaded three vessels of 40 tons with 14 fishing craft for this fishery and engaged some 65 fishermen

6.

the dispute was laid for judgment before the Intendant, Egon, who ruled that the rivals in the fishery must accept a compromise. Sieur Gatien was to enjoy the exclusive right of fishing from Grand Etang and Magdalen River. At Grande Vallee he was to share beach rights but it was specified that he have room there for seven fishing craft.

THE GRAND ETANG SLATE QUARRY

Though the potential of Grand Étang as a source of slate for roofing and other building purposes had been known at the time of the grant of the seigniorship to Denis Riverin and Francois Hazeur and specifically mentioned in the Deed of Grant, it was not until the time of Dr. Michel Sarrazin that steps were taken to develop a quarry on a commercial basis. At the request of Sarrazin the noted Québec engineer, Chaussegros de Lèry, had a survey made of the slate deposits. Samples, reportedly of the finest quality, raised much enthusiasm for the venture both in Québec and in France. One of the first consequences was the roofing of the Québec home of de Lèry with slates from Grand Étang. There were plans made by the colonial administrators to reduce the ever-present danger of fire in Québec by roofing all public buildings with slate. Search was made in France for expert workers in slate to come to Gaspesia for the development of the Grand Etang quarry and the training of local men in the craft. The Intendant, M. Hocquart, became involved in the plans and issued an official ordinance on the subject. Indeed, the name of Grand Etang became very well known both in France and in New France.

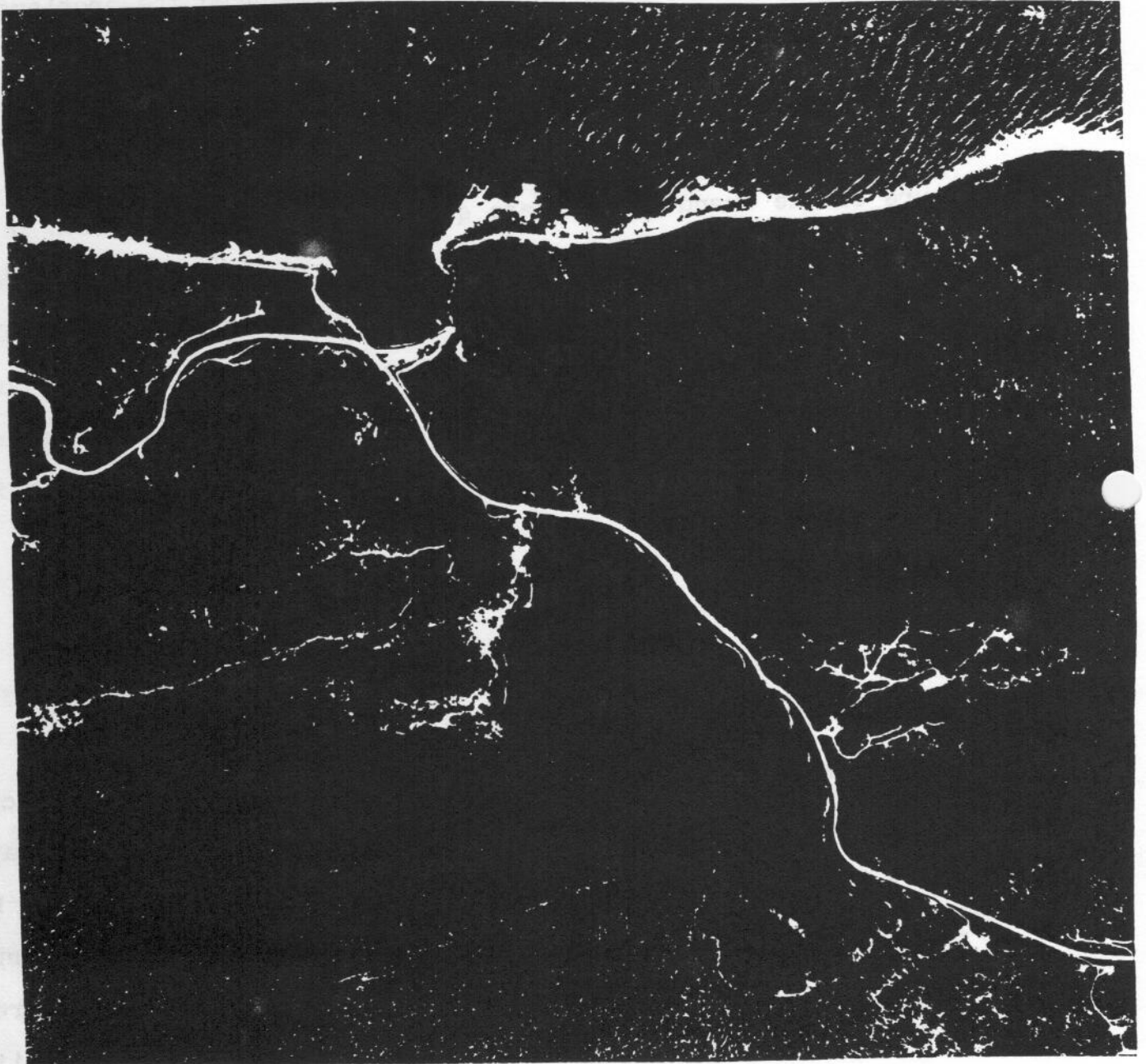
Unfortunately, as has been the case in many high hopes for

premature. Though a quantity of slate was produced the problems of exploitation of the quarry and the cost of labour and transport led the enterprise to decline and fail.

Dr. Sarrazin's interest in Gaspesia continued despite the failure of the Grand Étang slate quarry. In association with Robert Drouard he invested heavily in the fishery of the River and Gulf of St. Lawrence. But the untimely death of Drouard resulted in legal complications of estate settlement that dragged on for many years - long after the death of Sarrazin, in fact, and caused the Gaspesian fishery to be a liability, rather than an asset, for the Sarrazin descendents.

IN PERSPECTIVE

More than 250 years have passed since Denis Riverin, Francois Hazeur, Dr. Michel Sarrazin and their contemporary associates walked on the shores of l'Anse à l'Étang. The story of their successors must await another account of "GASPE OF YESTERDAY". The slow, majestic swing of the cycle of the seasons over two and a half centuries has only enhanced the "secluded beauty" of Grand Etang as one of Gaspesia's scenic gems. But the modern visitor, aware of its long and interesting past, may have little difficulty in conjuring up the ghosts of its ancient owners who walked its shores in those times long past.



GRAND ÉTANG

AERIAL VIEW