

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

THE SEIGNIORY OF PABOS

JOURNAL of Captain Justus Sherwood-

"June 16, 1783. We arrived at Paboc in the Bay of Chaleurs, this is an exceedingly pleasant place...the prime value.. consists in its eligible situation for an extensive fishery and trade for which it is the best adapted of any place I have seen in the Gulph of St.Lawrence..."

KEN ANNETT

From sources deep in the mountains of the heart of Gaspesia spring two streams which eventually flow out to empty in Bay Chaleur as the Grand Pabos and Petit Pabos Rivers. The mouths of these rivers lie between Grand River to the East and Newport Point to the West. As each reaches the sea it debouches into a barachois with a lagoon sheltering behind a bar of alluvial sand and gravel built up, over eons of time, by the interaction of river and sea waters. Such bars, with a "tickle" or channel providing access to the lagoon, are to be found along the shoreline of Gaspesia from the Bay of Gaspé to Nouvelle. From the earliest days of the fishery such barachois were sought out by fishermen as ideal locations for fishing stations. On the beaches of the low-lying bars they landed their catch and located the flakes and storehouses necessary for the fishery. The sheltered lagoons behind the bars provided safe anchorage for their fishing craft when storm waves thundered on the seaward edge of the bars.

PABOS- ANCIENT FISHING SITE

The earliest use by European fishermen of the barachois of the Grand and Petit Pabos Rivers is lost in the mists of time. It is known that Norman, Breton and Basque fishermen were in Gaspesian waters before Jacques Cartier sailed into Gaspé Harbour in 1534 to lay formal claim to the land for his King and Country of France. Such early use of these barachois would have been seasonal. The fishermen arrived from overseas in the Spring and with the onset of late autumn returned to their home ports, far across the Atlantic, with the dried cod that had been processed on Gaspesian beaches through the summer months. In time, some members of these fishing crews remained behind to watch over the craft and gear left in Gaspesia for the next season. Such was the beginning of European settlement in the Pabos district.

FRONTENAC GRANTS PABOS SEIGNIORY

It was in 1696 that the first grant of the Seigniory of Pabos was made by the Governor of New France, Count Frontenac, to the Sieur René Hubert. Hubert was Clerk of the Superior Council of New France, the administrative body of the colony, located at Québec.

It does not appear that René Hubert was active in his role of Seignior or that he promoted the settlement and development of his lands in Gaspesia. As was the case of other absentee seigniors, the grant of the Pabos Seigniory was likely regarded by him as a mark of esteem and upward mobility in the colonial hierarchy.

It is of interest to note that the Pabos Seigniory was the 12th seigniorial grant in Gaspesia and that, within a year, it was followed by other grants at Port Daniel, Grand River, Anse à l'Etang and Bonaventure. The Pabos Seigniory remained, nominally, in the hands of the Hubert family from 1696 until 1729. It then passed, by purchase, into the possession of the Lefebvre de Bellefeuille family. During that period of more than thirty years Pabos continued to be used as a seasonal fishing station on Bay Chaleur. There is some indication that some permanent settlement began to develop in the 1720's.

PHASE II - PABOS SEIGNIORY - 1729-1758

While it was Pierre Lefebvre de Bellefeuille that negotiated the purchase of the Pabos Seigniory from the heirs of René Hubert, it was his brother, Jean Francois, who became the resident Seignior. With his sons, Georges and Francois, Jean Francois promoted the fishery at Pabos, built up an impressive seigniorial settlement, and developed Pabos into one of the most successful seigniories in Bay Chaleur. While the Lefebvre de Bellefeuille family story is beyond the scope of this review, those interested will find it of interest to read such articles as those written by David Lee including - "THE FRENCH IN GASPE, 1534-1760" (Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History. No.3. Ottawa,1970) and the biography of "JEAN-FRANCOIS LEFEBVRE" (Dictionary of Canadian Biography - Vol.III - 1741-1770. Members of the family played an interesting and significant role in the early history of the District of Gaspé.

Seignior Jean Francois Lefebvre de Bellefeuille died at Pabos in 1744. His sons, Georges and Francois succeeded him and were in possession of the seigniory when it was sacked and burnt by the forces of General James Wolfe operating from Gaspé Bay in 1758.

The dramatic events of the raids on Pabos and other French settlements in Gaspesia and the adjacent shores have been recalled to the readers of SPEC in "THE GASPEE EXPEDITION AND OTHER MATTERS-1758" (SPEC, Sept.29,1978) and in "MORE ON BELL'S JOURNAL OF THE GASPEE EXPEDITION AND OTHER MATTERS -1758" by Doris and David McDougall (SPEC, Feb.23,1979) Louisbourg, the great French fortress designed to guard access to the St.Lawrence and Acadia, had fallen to British assault in August,1758. Immediately after, an expedition comprising naval forces under Sir Charles Hardy and army forces commanded by Brigadier-General James Wolfe, was dispatched to harry and destroy French settlements and shipping in Gaspesia, Bay Chaleur and the lower St.Lawrence. This move was preparatory to a planned assault on fortress Québec in 1759. From Gaspé Bay, punitive raiding expeditions were sent forth. With particular reference to that sent to the Seigniory of Pabos, Capt. Bell, A.D.C. to General Wolfe, reported:

" Pas Beau is 15 leagues to the westward of Gaspee. I forget who had the Segniory, they burnt 27 good houses (and) about 17 indifferent ones, about 3500 Quantil of fish, a very good sloop laden with fish, vast Quantities of netts, hooks, lines. Great Quantity of salt destroyed, their Magazine was large and contained all their winter stock, Cloathes, Brandy, etc. and it, together with a good deal of plank and about 40 Shaloupes (fishing boats) were all burnt and then the troops embarked, having left the miserable inhabitants in the woods destitute and deprived of everything..."

To the above JOURNAL entry needs to be added the following extract reported by D.and D. McDougall:

"I (Capt.Bell) forgot to put down Cap. Jacob's return (of the Kensington) on the 16th; having left the Shaloupes he was sent to protect at Sea to find their way back, Sir Charles sent him immediately out again and brought them in on the 17th. This Gentleman soon after he sailed from Gaspee got to the Harbour of Pas beau and told the Land

officers that where he was was a bad place for his ship to lay in, and therefore if they did not go on shore directly and burn everything, he would not stay for them as His Majts. ship was in danger, observe this Capt. Jacobs was sent purposely to protect and wait till the Land officers thought it proper to come off, the General's Instructions to them were to go on shore with the Greatest Circumspection and endeavour by all manner of means to assure the Inhabitants of good treatment and bring them to Gaspee, which they would have done had they not been threatened being left, and also if they did not burn the places, Mr. Jacobs would, who hinted as if the going on shore at all was not agreeable. they immediately went, landed and found the inhabitants all fled and everything was burnt..."

This disordered raid brought to an end the work of thirty years by the Lefebvre de Bellefeuille family at their Pabos Seigniory. Members of that family made their way eventually to Québec and Three Rivers while others of the settlement sought refuge in the forest and in other Gaspesian settlements. The following year Québec fell to the British forces of General Wolfe and in 1760, with the capitulation of Montreal, all of New France passed into British hands.

Five years later, in July, 1765, General Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Québec, acquired from Francois Lefebvre de Bellefeuille, the Seigniory of Pabos

PHASE III. PABOS SEIGNIORY. 1765-1796.

Following the destructive raid on Pabos by Wolfe's forces in 1758 and the subsequent fall of New France, there appears to have been a hiatus in the life of Pabos. That this period was of limited duration is evident from the interest shown by the Huguenot merchant

to restore Pabos as a fishing station in 1764 - only four years after the Conquest. Though their enterprise failed it may well have been through Mounier, whose brother, Francois, was a member of the first Council appointed at Québec under the British Regime, that Pabos came to the attention of the Governor of Québec, Frederick Haldimand. As noted above, Haldimand acquired the Pabos Seigniory in 1765.

It is significant that the tenure of Haldimand as Seignior of Pabos coincided with the period of active life of Felix O'Hara in Gaspé. Haldimand knew O'Hara personally and maintained correspondence with him over many years. The following extracts from this correspondence have been selected for their reference to the Seigniory of Pabos:

May 30, 1780. O'Hara to Haldimand. Sends inventory of movables at Pabos. Placed all but the cow in charge of Fortin and Victor. The cow is in the possession of the poor widow Springfield; its milk, with the charity sent by His Excellency, has enabled her to support herself and family through the winter; has allowed her to keep the cow until further orders. Has supplied Fortin with a musket, powder, etc. and some provisions. He and Victor can prevent depredations, but have too long led an indolent life to make improvements...

Jan. 8, 1781. O'Hara to Haldimand. Has received letter by Fortin with four guineas, which he will distribute as intended; charity was never needed more than now, although the people are in a more thriving way than formerly. Necessity has driven them to cultivate the lands, in which they have found ample satisfaction. Will keep an eye to Pabos which industry will one day make valuable...

Aug. 14, 1781. O'Hara to Haldimand. ...approves of his settling Acadians at Pabos, should they be equally industrious with those on the Bay of Chaleurs. An industrious population at Pabos would stimulate the now worthless fishermen by showing them that not only necessaries, but luxuries, could be obtained by putting their hands to the plough and hoe; which hitherto the artful sophistry of codfish merchants has prevented...

Aug. 8, 1782. O'Hara to Haldimand. Geddes, lately at Quebec, showed some desire to settle at Pabos; would give him encouragement if he is a fit person. Asks his opinion of Geddes, and what terms should be allowed him.

Sept. 3, 1782. O'Hara to Haldimand. Recommends Geddes for Pabos, as he would honestly look after its interests, and would be a good officer of militia.

Oct. 8, 1782. O'Hara to Haldimand. Geddes has written an indefinite letter about the terms of his settlement at Pabos; he has gone to winter at Mont Louis. Will try to get a more explicit answer from him during the winter. Pabos, from its soil and situation, may be ranked among the first places on the coast to deserve justice.

May 27, 1783. Haldimand to O'Hara. Introduces Captain Sherwood; his services prevent him returning to the Colonies, and as he is desirous of settling on the sea coast, he is sent down with the loyalists to take a view of the Bay of Chaleurs, Pabos, etc., to form as settlement should he like the situation. From his services, would like him to settle at Pabos, should it prove beneficial to him, but to make it agreeable it would be necessary to settle in the neighbourhood those attached to him. Every assistance and information are to be given to him.. [The article, AN EARLY TOURIST IN GASPESIA, published by SPEC, July 29, 1981, recalled the life and times of Captain Justus Sherwood of the Loyal Rangers.]

Jan. 3, 1784 George Geddes to O'Hara. Accepts his offer concerning Pabos, and begs that he may be allowed as much as possible, having almost nothing to begin with, and that the General (Haldimand) be requested to allow provisions for some time...Will have a constable appointed...

Felix O'Hara accompanied Captain Sherwood on his visit to potential sites for Loyalist settlement in Bay Chaleur in June, 1783. Of their visit to Pabos, Sherwood later wrote:

" 16th. (June) we arrived at Paboc in the Bay Chaleurs, this is an exceedingly pleasant place when one is in the Basin or Harbour, but the entrance is narrow and somewhat difficult for large vessels by reason of a rock in the centre. The land around the Basin, except the south side, is very level for

heavy to clear, the soil is exceedingly good and natural for grass, rye, oats, barley, etc., but I think it is, in general, too low for wheat.

There are two fine rivers put into this bay, the one from the N.W. and the other from the S.W., these are well stocked with Trouts and Salmon, and we found a number of good mill places, especially for saw mills, which will be the more valuable as the adjacent mountains afford a great plenty of good timber.

But the prime value of this place (in my opinion) consists in its eligible situation for an extensive fishery and trade for which is the best adapted of any place I have seen in the Gulph of St.Lawrence..."

Despite the hopes of Haldimand that Sherwood and the Loyalists might choose to settle on his Pabos Seigniory, Capt. Justus Sherwood decided to take up lands on the St.Lawrence to the West of the Island of Montreal. However, the potential value of Pabos was not lost upon Felix O'Hara and in 1796 he acquired the seigniory from the heirs of General, Sir Frederick Haldimand.

PHASE IV. PABOS SEIGNIORY. 1796 - 1843

By purchase of the Pabos Seigniory in 1796 Felix O'Hara of Gaspé and members of his family became the seigniors of Pabos in line of succession to members of the families of Hubert , Lefebvre de Bellefeuille and Haldimand. Felix O'Hara died at his Gaspé Basin home in 1805. His Last Will and Testament made the following disposition of the Seigniory of Pabos:

" I give and bequeath unto Felix, the son of Hugh O'Hara, one third of my Seigniory of Pabo, one third of said Seigniory to Felix, son of Oliver O'Hara, and the remaining third to Felix, the son of James Stewart, and the whole to be held in trust for them until they are of age by Henry O'Hara, and in case the said Seigniory should not turn out to good account, they, with

with the consent of their Fathers, Hugh O'Hara, Oliver O'Hara and James Stewart, may sell the said Seigniory and divide the money arising therefrom equally among them".

O'Hara family circumstances that arose to complicate this provision of the Will of Felix O'Hara have been outlined in the article, "THE O'HARA FAMILY OF GASPE", published by SPEC on June 21, 1983. By the year 1836 two of the three heirs that bore the first name of their grandfather Felix had died and this new situation is found reflected in the ACT OF FAITH AND HOMAGE sworn to for the Pabos Seigniory in that year: (Translation)

"Act of Faith and Homage of George Mellis Douglas, Doctor, of Québec, on behalf of Felix Stewart of Gaspé, Annabella O'Hara and Martha Sophia O'Hara of major age and issue of the marriage of Annabella Stewart with the late Oliver O'Hara, and heiresses of the late Felix O'Hara, their brother, also, one of the children, issue of the marriage of Jane Baird O'Hara, wife of John Douglas McConnell, sole legatee of the late Felix O'Hara (son of Hugh) her brother...for the fief and seigniory of Grand-Pabos"

While the years of O'Hara family control of the Seigniory of Pabos remain a fertile field for historical research it would appear that there was little in the way of dramatic growth and development. Perhaps the pattern was set by the owner of the adjoining seigniory of Grand River, Charles Robin, who did not encourage any change that might be inimical to the fishery. The lack of roads was an isolating factor and the main link of the Pabos settlement remained the sea. There was, however, a slow, steady growth of population which included the arrival of families of Irish origin.

PHASE V. PABOS SEIGNIORY. 1843-1872

A new chapter in the history of the Pabos Seigniory opened in the early 1840's with its acquisition by the Gaspé Fishing and Coal Mining Company. Incorporated in London, England, by Act of

was capitalized at £ 150,000. In December, 1843, the Legislature of Québec passed the Act, 7 Victoria, Cap.45, which extended legal recognition to the Company for operations in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Bay Chaleur. This Act gave sweeping powers to the Gaspé Fishing and Coal Mining Co. to acquire land and to develop the fishery and mining potential in Gaspesia and the Gulf. It is of interest to note that the Québec legislation was piloted through the Assembly and Council by Robert Christie, the Member for the District of Gaspé [Ref. ROBERT CHRISTIE, SPEC, Nov.29, 1979.

While the interesting and significant story of the Gaspé Fishing and Coal Mining Co. will have to wait for a future article in this GASPE OF YESTERDAY series, it was an integral part of the history of the Pabos Seigniory. And though the flurry of capital inflow and ambitious development plans were short-lived, Pabos was the beneficiary of national and international publicity and attention. As a sidelight of this era it is of interest to note that Charles Kelly, Esq., J.P. was Superintendent of the Gaspé Fishing and Coal Mining Co. and that Robert Warren Kelly, the great-grandfather of an illustrious Gaspesian, the Hon. John Hall Kelly, published a forerunner of SPEC, "THE GASPE GAZETTE" on the press of the Company at Pabos.

THE LAND TITLE REGISTRY OF 1858

In conformity with an Act of the Québec Legislature concerning the disposition of seigniorial lands a registry of the Pabos families was made in 1858. Included were the following family names:

ANGLEHART	COLLINS	DOYLE
ASPIROT	COSTIGAN	DUCLOS
BEAUDIN	COX	DUGUAY
BLAIS	CRONIER	DUPUY
BOUDREAU	CROTTE	FERLATTE
CARBERRY	CYR	GARRET
COADY	DE LA ROSIVILLE	GIROUX
	DERESCHE	GRENIER

HORLEY
HOUSTON
HUARD
HUNT
JONCAS
LA FONTAINE
LAKE
LAMBERT
LE BLANC

MAUGER
McINNIES
McKENNY
McNEILL
McRAE
McTAVISH
MILES
MURRAY
NICOLAS

O' CONNER
PINEL
REMON
SHANNON
STEBRE
SUTTON
WALL
WALSH
WARD
WHITTLE

END OF THE SEIGNIORIAL ERA

With the purchase by the Québec Government in 1872 of the rights of the Gaspé Fishing and Coal Mining Company to the Seigniority of Pabos, a regime that dated from the grant of Count Frontenac in 1696 came to an end. When one reflects that Pabos had been a seigniority for 176 years and that more than 100 years have passed since it became public domain, the historical scope of this Gaspesian community is striking. The personalities and events that crossed the stage of Pabos over the years were all part of the Gaspesian heritage.