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CAMP MACHICHE

Prof. Wilbur H. Siebert of Ohio
State University on the temporary
settlement of Loyalists at Camp
Machiche, P.Q.

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CAMP MACHICHEFOREWORD

It has been one of the aims of GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY to bring to the notice of readers accounts by various authors of particular interest to Gaspesians. The following article on the temporary settlement of Loyalists at Camp Machiche by Prof. Wilbur H. Siebert of Ohio State University, presented to and published by the Royal Society of Canada some seventy years ago is of interest as many of the Loyalists that came to Gaspesia staged through Camp Machiche.

As Camp Machiche was established on the Seigniorship of the Gugy family a brief recall of that family is in order. Conrad Gugy, the eldest son of George and Anna Gugy, was born in 1730 at The Hague, Holland, where his father was serving as an officer in the Dutch Army. Conrad opted for a military career, serving first in Holland and then as an officer in a regiment of the British Army that came under the command of General James Wolfe for the Conquest of Québec.

Fluently multi-lingual, Conrad Gugy chose to remain in Québec after the fall of New France. He resigned his army commission and in 1764 purchased the Seigniorship of Grandpré on the north shore of Lake St. Peter to the West of Three Rivers. This seigniorship which was held in the French Regime by Louis Boucher de Grandpré, was bought by Gugy for £ 4850 -one of the first seigniorial sales of the British Regime. Near the mouth of the Yamachiche River Conrad Gugy built his Mamor House where his hospitality became legendary. He served, in turn, as Secretary of the Québec Government, a member of the Legislative Council and of the Executive Council.

The Temporary Settlement of Loyalists at Machiche, P.Q.

By PROF. WILBUR H. SIEBERT of The Ohio State University.

(Presented by W. D. LeSUEUR, F.R.S.C.)

(Read May 27, 1914.)

The flight of Loyalists from the Northern colonies into the Province of Quebec during the Revolution was not confined to those able to bear arms: women and children and old men accompanied, or soon followed, the more vigorous members of their families. By the fall of 1778 such refugees were arriving in considerable numbers at the various posts below Lake Champlain, even as far north as Machiche (now Yamachiche) at the western end of Lake St. Peter. Conrad Guky, seignior of the Parish of Machiche, who was a justice of the peace and a member of the King's council of the province, reported the arrival of such a group to Governor Haldimand in the middle of September of the year named, and wrote that he proposed to lodge them in his neighbourhood "to the end of having an eye upon them." He described the party as consisting of women and children, besides some officers, a dozen men who might be employed as artisans, and one Adams who claimed to have been a schoolmaster in the colonies and now asked for employment in the same capacity in the locality to which he had come.¹

The idea of lodging the Loyalists under proper supervision at once recommended itself to Haldimand, especially as he had confidence in Guky, a fellow-Swiss who had been his secretary at Three Rivers a dozen years before.² The need of succoring these people was already apparent, and the Governor General wished to separate them from the inhabitants as a precautionary measure. He accordingly transmitted his recommendations to his former secretary, who soon selected a site upon which to settle the refugees, and procured a large garden plot and pasture for fifty cows as part of the establishment. The letter containing the formal authorization of these arrangements and ordering the erection of the necessary houses for the accommodation of the Loyalists was issued from Sorel, October 6, 1778, where Haldimand then happened to be. It also empowered Guky to lay down regulations for maintaining order among his wards and requiring

¹ Haldimand Papers, B. 164, pp. 1, 2.

² McLlwraith, Sir Frederick Haldimand, 62, 254.

their services, under penalty of being deprived of the allowance of provisions which they would otherwise receive, and of all other benefits, for such time as he might decide. The Seignior was to have the power of proceeding as a magistrate against any of the present number or of later accessions who should be guilty of "excessive refractoriness."¹

And, indeed, some of the Loyalists at Machiche were not amiable people: Guky was already finding it difficult to please them, and denounced as frivolous the complaint of one Lanan that the site selected was a "drowned bog without water." By October 8 the Seignior had a dozen houses under way, each eighteen by forty feet in dimensions. He estimated that they would accommodate three hundred troopers, but not so many members of the Loyalist families. By making use of corvees drawn from five parishes he was able to complete the structures in a month's time, when they were inspected by Captain William Twiss of the Engineers, who reported that they would commodiously house two hundred and forty women and children for whom bedding should be supplied. Twiss also suggested that if additional buildings were desired, the timber for them could be got out during the winter. Haldimand replied to these recommendations that he was ordering two hundred beds sent to Three Rivers, thence

to be transported to Machiche, together with a supply of household utensils, that refugees were coming in daily of whom, he was apprised, one hundred and eleven women and children were expected from Niagara, and that he was looking for others by way of Lake Champlain. He was obliged, therefore, he wrote, to ask Gury to build more houses as soon as the season would permit. Accordingly, the Seigneur decided to erect six additional houses, besides a small structure for a school, since a Mr. (Josiah) Cass had just been elected schoolmaster. By this time some of the families were moving into their houses; but many others were forced to remain with the "habitants" until their bedding should arrive.²

To prevent the Loyalists from coming faster than Mr. Gury could provide for them Haldimand wrote, November 30, to Lieutenant Colonel Carleton at Montreal to find places in that vicinity for a party whose arrival the latter was looking for, and directed that its members be supplied with such articles as they might require, including allowances of wood. However, we know that the first complement of houses at Machiche had not been filled to their capacity at this time; for a census of December 2, showing the number of refugees lodged there, gives the total as one hundred and fifty-nine, of whom thirty-

¹ Haldimand Papers, B. 164, pp. 3-5; B. 54, p. 39; B. 62, pp. 237, 238.

² *Ibid.*, B. 164, pp. 5, 6, 7, 8-10, 14; B. 154, p. 106; B. 62, p. 300; B. 164, pp. 16-19; B. 62, p. 301.

two were men, ten, women, and one hundred and seventeen, children.¹ Three weeks later there was still room for forty persons in the little settlement; and Haldimand directed Carleton to send down from Montreal this number chosen out of the Niagara party. For some reason, however, these persons were not sent, but were allowed to remain under Carleton's supervision. That apartments at Machiche continued unoccupied for even a longer period appears from the Governor General's orders of February 8, 1779, to Brigadier General Powell at St. Johns (Quebec) to forward some distressed Loyalists who had arrived at that post to Machiche and to Sorel.²

Meanwhile, Captain Twiss was instructed to return to Machiche to assist Gury in choosing a site for a saw mill; and the Seigneur wrote to Haldimand of the growing need of a school house and an assistant to the schoolmaster, in view of the fact that there were already eighty pupils, and that certain gentlemen, including Captain Munro of Sir John Johnson's corps, were on the point of sending their boys to Machiche to receive instruction. A month later, that is, early in April, 1779, Gury was already well along with the building of nine new houses, instead of the six previously contemplated, and towards the middle of August he wrote that the number of Loyalists had been much augmented by the different parties sent in from time to time, and that the additional houses would soon be ready for the accommodation of others. That he was not beforehand in thus increasing the accommodations for refugees is proved by the figures showing the number to whom he issued free provisions during the summer and fall of this year: at the end of June the number was one hundred and ninety-six, but by October 20 it had mounted to four hundred and forty-two. On December 3, Captain Daniel McAlpin was reported as having departed from Machiche with "other volunteers," his place being taken by Captain (Gersohm) French; but a party of Butler's Rangers had come in, whose families were said to be in dire need of clothing. Among these people from Niagara Gury found some disreputable characters given to what he called "brigandage," which naturally caused complaints on the part of the "habitants."³ Ten months later the Seigneur received an application on behalf of several families belonging to a party conducted by Captain Bird from Detroit to Montreal. At the latter place Bird's party

had to be encamped on St. Helen Island, while a message was sent to Machiche asking accommodations for thirty persons, constituting six families. As winter was approaching a supply of clothing was for-

¹ Haldimand Papers, B. 62, pp. 308, 309; B. 166, p. 2.

² Ibid., B. 62, pp. 344, 367; B. 164, p. 26; B. 135, pp. 22, 23.

³ Ibid., B. 164, pp. 26, 133, 134, 58, 88, 75; B. 166, pp. 9-15, 31; B. 81, pp. 82, 83.

warded from the government stores at Sorel for Gogy's colony, as had been done in the previous fall.¹ Late in December one of the schoolmasters at Machiche, Benjamin Hobson, was assaulted by John Howard, a lieutenant in Sir John Johnson's corps. This affair afforded an opportunity to give a needed lesson to the military and at the same time render the other Loyalists more tractable, as Haldimand expressed it. The assailant was sent to Montreal and placed under bond in the sum of £50 to appear before the quarter sessions and keep the peace. A further lesson to the military came in the form of an order of January 22, 1781, requiring the enlisted Loyalists resorting to Machiche to return to their several corps. However, Sergeants William England and Henry Close were allowed to remain on the score that they were "careful in managing the disorderly set." The order explained that Gogy's settlement was intended only for women and children. It is probably indicative of the discontent of many in the colony that at the end of January fifty-four refugees applied to Haldimand for grants of land at Niagara.²

What action, if any, was taken in regard to this petition is not known. Indeed, for two years and two months following we have little information concerning the Loyalist colony at Machiche, on account of a gap in the official correspondence of the period. All that has come down to us relating to this interval is some figures showing the fluctuations in numbers from September 24, 1781, to July 24, 1783. At the first named date three hundred and twenty-seven refugees were receiving provisions at Machiche, four months later this number had risen somewhat (that is, to 355), while six months later still it had dropped to two hundred and sixty-five, of whom thirteen were men, sixty-eight, women, and one hundred and eighty-four, children.³ Towards the end of March, 1783, Captain Jephtha Hawley was appointed to look after Gogy's colony of Loyalists. Hawley was a native of Connecticut who had joined Burgoyne at Crown Point, and had commanded a company of fifty men in the expedition up the Hudson. Subsequently, he had spent several years at Machiche, and was now being entrusted by Abraham Cuyler, inspector of Loyalists in the Province of Quebec, with the disagreeable task of reducing the provisions of the refugees, as a means of encouraging not a few to renew the occupations of peace, now at hand, and thereby earn a living for themselves. Some of the colonists memorialized Haldimand against the reduction, going so far as to affirm in their communication that they preferred "the last indigence to the idea of going to service

¹ Haldimand Papers, B. 164, pp. 86, 87, 89, 90; B. 163, p. 79; B. 166, p. 173.

² Ibid., B. 164, pp. 86, 87, 89, 90; B. 163, p. 79; B. 166, p. 173.

³ Ibid., B. 166, pp. 83-95, 96, 111-127, 129-143.

or working for a livelihood."¹ The wail of distress on the part of many families who had once known better circumstances was still heard from Machiche in the fall of 1783, when it was voiced by Samuel Adams, who wrote (October 4) to Quebec to say that he and some of his fellow-Loyalists were thinking of settling in Nova Scotia, where they would be able to relieve their necessities by the abundance of fish and game to be found there. Later, Adams and his friends represented that they had been stricken from the provision list by Cuyler. The complaint was promptly investigated by Captain Gershom French, who reported that most of the distress of the people arose from their keeping their older children "out of service."²

For several months past Governor Haldimand had given considerable attention to plans for forming permanent settlements of the Loyalists who had come under his jurisdiction. In November, 1783, the people at Machiche were officially invited to participate in the colonization of Townships Two and Three at Cataraqui, at the head of the St. Lawrence River. However, only twelve or fifteen families showed any inclination to join in this enterprise, and even these families raised objections on the score of the distance of the place, the difficulty of transporting provisions, the unseasonableness of the time, and their lack of cattle and farming implements which the government said nothing about providing. The schoolmaster, Josiah Cass, wrote that these considerations were causing his fellow-townsmen to take lands on seigniories and farms on shares, or try the more disagreeable method of returning to the States for the purpose of gathering "some Fragments of their former Estates." Nevertheless, Cass thought that a considerable number would agree to go to Cataraqui, if they were given encouragement equal to the undertaking. Another objection to the proposed allotment of lands was stated by Jephtha Hawley, namely, that these allotments, according to report, were not to be "free donations," but, on the contrary, were to be by leases on seigniories, with the usual reserves, acknowledgments, and services to seigniors. Hawley made it plain that the people at Machiche wanted free lands to replace the property they had lost, and had not expected that "Loyalty would deprive them of Freedom." Haldimand's secretary, Lieutenant Mathews, hastened to assure Mr. Hawley that his apprehensions were entirely unfounded, and that, although the lands were to be distributed in seigniories in conformity with the laws and customs of the country, the Crown had reserved

¹ Haldimand Papers, B. 165, p. 54; Second Report, Bureau of Archives, Ont., Pt. I, 434; Haldimand Papers, B. 164, p. 125.

² *Ibid.*, B. 162, pp. 112, 113; B. 166, pp. 159, 160; B. 165, pp. 183, 205.

to itself all seigniorial rights. That this reply did not quiet the fears of the colony was demonstrated three weeks later by a communication from Captain Azariah Pritchard, who had recently visited Machiche in the interest of a permanent settlement at Chaleurs Bay, which he was promoting. While in Machiche Pritchard had noted an advertisement posted for signers to settle at the Bay of Chaleurs and at Cataraqui, and another, which Haldimand disapproved of, for signers desiring to go to Mississquoi Bay, at the northern end of Lake Champlain. He also saw a petition addressed to the Governor General, which set forth the alleged unreasonableness of the terms under which the government lands were being offered to Loyalists, and which stated that there were gentlemen in the Province of Quebec who would support such persons as would settle on their estates until these settlers could support themselves. Evidently these were seigniors in search of tenants.¹ Another evidence of the discontent prevailing among the refugees at Machiche is found in the application (December 11) of Stephen Tuttle, formerly justice of the peace of Albany County,

New York, and deputy surveyor general of the province, on behalf of himself and a number of families for permission to settle on the Miramichi River in what is now northern New Brunswick. Although Haldimand made no objection to this plan, Tuttle and his party were still in the colony at the end of April, 1784.²

Early in the following May Seigneur Gury was able to send to Quebec lists of those who were ready to locate at Cataraqui and at the Bay of Chaleurs and one of such as were disinclined to go to either locality. As these lists are no longer extant we do not know how many names they contained; but from the testimony given before the commissioners of loyalist claims in Canada several years later we learn that a few members of various corps who had found their way to Machiche by 1783 went soon after to Chaleurs Bay, settling chiefly at New Carlisle. Among these were the schoolmaster Josiah Cass, Lawrence McKenzie, John Lane, Christopher Pearson, Thomas Shearer, Benjamin Betts, and Donald Munro. All of these men had been residents of the Province of New York, although Cass was a native of Connecticut, and Pearson had lived in Philadelphia before removing to Tryon County, New York. Most of them had joined Burgoyne's expedition, and had served afterwards to the end of the war.³

² Haldimand Papers, B. 162, pp. 180, 227; B. 63, pp. 192, 193; B. 162, pp. 270, 271.

³ *Ibid.*, B. 162, p. 127; Second Report, Bureau of Archives, Ont., Pt. 1, 29; Haldimand Papers, B. 63, p. 250.

⁴ *Ibid.*, B. 63, p. 267; Second Report, Bureau of Archives, Ont., Pt. 1, 328, 330, 337, 338, 344.

It seems certain, however, that the greater number of the colony chose Cataraqui as their place of permanent settlement. This we gather from the correspondence between the Baron de Reitzenstein and Governor Haldimand. In his capacity as guide to those who were going up the St. Lawrence the Baron gathered together a party of two hundred and eighteen, of whom forty-five were men, thirty-five, women, sixty-eight, boys, and seventy, girls. This was a larger number than had been expected, and a few days' delay was necessary in order to obtain the supply of batteaux, or large flat-bottomed boats, for transportation purposes. But, even so, the start was made on Monday morning, May 31, with sixteen boats, and June 2 found the party at Montreal. As lodgings and provisions were not available here, the convoy was obliged to go back to Long Point and await there the arrival of tents and supplies from Sorel. On the 15th the journey was renewed, and after stops at various places the party landed at Cataraqui on the 26th. Among the number were Captain Jephtha Hawley, Isaac Briscoe, Pr. Gilchrist, Everhart Wegar, and Conrad Sills. The first two were from Arlington, Vermont, and located at Ernesttown, where Gilchrist, who was from Charlotte County, New York, also located. Wegar, formerly of Albany County, New York, took up his residence at Fredericksburg, while no definite location is given for Sills, who was a Pennsylvanian.¹ Others of the Machiche colony did not go so far as the waters of Lake Ontario to settle, preferring New Johnstown (Township No. 2, or Cornwall) a short distance above Lake St. Francis. This was the place chosen by Alexander McDonell and his two sons, John and Alexander, Jr., who had been tenants of Sir John Johnson in Tyron County, New York, before the latter's flight to Canada. John Dixon, Carton DeWitt, and John Snyder, all from the Province of New York and members of Loyalist corps, likewise settled at New Johnstown.² The location of a number of other men who were at Machiche in 1783, and had served in various corps, is not preserved in the records of the commissioners of Loyalist claims.³

While, doubtless, most of the refugee settlers at Machiche had departed before the fall of 1784, a few still remained after that time. Lieutenant William England and Abraham Crawson, the former from Kingsbury, New York, and the latter from Saratoga in the same

¹ Haldimand Papers, B, 152, pp. 150-153, 157; B, 138, pp. 365, 366; B, 63, pp. 376, 388. Second Report, Bureau of Archives, Ont., Pt. I, 434, 437, 460, 443; Pt. II, 1262.

² Second Report, Bureau of Archives, Ont., Pt. I, 503-394, 455, 458; Pt. II, 1059.

³ *Ibid.*, 1014, 1017, 1027, 1031, 1034, 1036, 1040, 1041, 1042, 1059.

State, gave Machiche as their place of residence in March, 1788, and so also did James Glastford, of Tryon County, New York.¹ However, Gagy's seigniory on Lake St. Peter may properly be accounted as having served as a refuge for Loyalists during a period of six years, that is, from September, 1778, to September, 1784. The erection of the settlement there had cost the government £1,350, including the services of the Seigneur as superintendent. During the interval of its existence it had furnished oversight, lodgings, food, and clothing to hundreds of exiles from the States, most of these being helpless women and children; and it had provided instruction for the young. If many of those who received these benefits were dissatisfied and restless, this must be attributed to their unfortunate condition, rather than to any lack of attention on the part of Governor Haldimand and Seigneur Gagy. It may be added that the Seigneur died, April 10, 1786. His remains were interred in the burying ground, now transformed into a park, at the corner of Dorchester and St. Urbain Streets, Montreal.²

¹ Second Report, Bureau of Archives, Ont., Pt. I, 487; Pt. II, 1079.

² McIlwraith, Sir Frederick Haldimand, 345.